

LETTERS

Two More Bereavements

The eloquent expression of grief by Ed Hart ("Reflections on a Bereavement," Spring 1991), akin as it is to C. S. Lewis's *A Grief Observed*, has given me the courage to write of my own grief, a task I kept putting off. It has also motivated me to make a financial contribution to *DIALOGUE* to honor my husband, Charles H. ("Chick") Bradford, who died of cancer on 11 December 1991, his sixty-third birthday.

Chick's support of *DIALOGUE* was long and faithful. He once totaled the economic cost of putting up *DIALOGUE* in our basement. I have lost that calculation now, but it was considerable. Nevertheless, his loving support of all that the journal was then—and is now—never wavered.

On Christmas Eve, 1991, Virginia Sorensen, my mentor and one of Mormon literature's finest flowers, also died of cancer. Perhaps my contribution will remind you of your duty—to honor her in the pages of *DIALOGUE*.

Mary L. Bradford
Arlington, Virginia

Serious Matters of Morality

Although I have been a faithful *DIALOGUE* subscriber for the entire twenty-four plus years of the journal's existence, this is my first written communication to those responsible for it. *DIALOGUE* has been the source of ideas and concepts that have strengthened my appreciation for the gospel of Jesus Christ and helped me to function more effectively in Church callings. I am deeply indebted to those who have made this possible. I realize that those who have been the instruments of

putting out *DIALOGUE* have, on occasion, had to sacrifice careers, personal time, and Church relationships to get the publication to its eager subscribers.

I write specifically regarding Robert Rees's "Bearing Our Crosses Gracefully: Sex and the Single Mormon" (Winter 1991). This splendid essay treated sexual intimacy in a dignified manner that stressed the positive aspects of sexuality while actively reinforcing the essentially negative mandates of "Thou shalt not commit adultery or fornication."

In serving the past six years as bishop of a ward similar to the Los Angeles First Ward, I have found my experience parallels that of Rees—the major demand on my time and resources has been to counsel with Church members and friends who have tested, strained, broken, or decimated the law of sexual morality. His carefully crafted discussion of this subject concisely verbalizes much of what I have concluded but could not so clearly enunciate. I wish the article had been available to me when the mantle was first placed on my shoulders. I would have been a better bishop.

One additional observation. The current generation of young Church members is far more likely to be tolerant and forgiving of violations of the law of sexual chastity than was mine. In the ward where I am bishop, several unmarried mothers have been welcomed into full participation. Many others guilty of known sexual improprieties have been accepted and involved in social and religious functions.

Most of us who matured in the fifties and sixties were incapable of dealing with such serious matters in any manner that would have done justice to the concepts which Jesus taught and practiced. Regret-

tably, I remember being so fettered by my personal insecurities and insensitivity.

Toby Pingree
Walnut Creek, California

Insight Into Eternal Principles

I was pleased to see Robert Rees address the important topic of sexuality as it relates to single people ("Bearing Our Crosses Gracefully: Sex and the Single Mormon," Winter 1991). His identification of popular "myths" concerning sexuality was generally valid and useful. I was disappointed, however, to find that in many respects, he only scratched the surface, failing to go beyond the relatively easy questions.

Stating that the basis of sexual expression can or should be more spiritual than sensual, Rees danced tantalizingly close to saying something profound and illuminating; then he retreated to the safety of more well-traveled paths. Raw lust and pornography are only straw men. Few would claim that an addiction to pornography is morally superior to (or more satisfying than) a marriage of fidelity, love, and support; yet Rees seemed to offer just such a juxtaposition. The article largely failed to acknowledge that most human relationships, even those with some component of sexual intimacy, cannot be neatly categorized as "giving in to sexual temptation" or marriage. Rees identifies "sacrifice, discipline, gentleness, consideration, patience, and, especially, love" (p.107) as hallmarks of proper sexual relations. Might these attributes be found outside marriage? What then? Might they be found between two people of the same sex?

The central question is this: What is it that makes sexual intimacy good or holy in one context and sinful in another? What does marriage have that makes such a difference? Surely, the morality of an act depends not solely on a person's marital status, but also on other characteristics of the relationship. What are those other salient characteristics? If right and

wrong reflect eternal principles rather than divine caprice, we should address that underlying structure. While it is certainly true that our limited and temporal perspective precludes having all the answers, I suspect that asking the right questions would be fruitful.

Rees pointed out the folly of trying to sort specific sexual acts as being within or beyond the pale, though he had already identified specific acts as improper, and then failed to describe how individuals could identify impropriety for themselves. According to Rees, we should be concerned with the spirit of the law rather than the letter, but he neglected to explain what constitutes the spirit of the law. By studying a matter in one's own mind and praying, a person can obtain divine guidance, but this article has not provided the logical framework by which a person can do that studying.

By reminding readers of Church teachings and the Savior's burden of the cross, Rees offers encouragement for those Mormons who feel isolated from the world and unsupported in their beliefs; insight into eternal principles, however, is surely more useful than encouragement.

Peter Ashcroft
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Amazing Grace

As I read over the table of contents in the Spring 1992 issue of *DIALOGUE*, the word *grace* immediately caught my eye, and I was soon buried in Erin R. Silva's article. Even now I struggle to find words for my feelings. Grace has for a long time been an enigmatic term for me, one I have sought to understand for years. Silva's sensitive and elegant prose have led me to a better understanding. I must identify personally with the concepts Silva so starkly challenges. I have been there and have considerable feelings of guilt as well as a deeper understanding of the marvelous lesson taught by the Master in John 8:1-11. How I wish that the Silva family lived in Tallahassee, where we in the Tal-

lahassee Florida Stake could be exposed to such a sweet and compassionate spirit.

Don F. Driggs
Tallahassee, Florida

Mental Health Resource

As a psychologist-in-training interested in providing services to an LDS population, I consider DIALOGUE to be a valuable resource. It is my opinion that LDS church members are a unique group with their own specialized needs, fears, and conflicts. Your journal addresses important elements directly relating to the work of mental health professionals as they serve this population. I look forward to the day when I can make a scholarly contribution to DIALOGUE, adding to our understanding of what it means to be a Latter-day Saint.

David K. Carlson
Springfield, Missouri

Where's Oliver?

"Is there a soul so dead, who never to himself has said" (to paraphrase), *where in the world has Oliver Cowdery gone?*

That diminutive gentle person who stepped out of the schoolroom into the greatest event of the era stepped forward to assist in the work of preparing the Book of Mormon, Book of Commandments, and other key publications. He was the person selected by God to share witness of Jesus and the great prophets in Kirtland's Temple. He shared the bestowal of the restoration of the Priesthood—then faded away—not quietly—but surely: Out of sight, out of mind.

I observed that the DIALOGUE twenty-year Index, like most recent publications, completely omits references to him.

So far as I can see, he got lost between the cracks, as did many others in those early days when personalities and events were so plentiful that, like converts, they appeared and disappeared without undue alarm. However, in his case, there is too much to let fade away. He was at God's command, the Second Elder, and he labored with the best of this dispensation. Right or wrong, he is Mormon history.

Several very taxing questions come to my mind when I think about Oliver.

1. What did Phineas Young's dealings with Oliver Cowdery (his brother-in-law) over the years reveal about Cowdery's relationship with the Church during the last decades of his life?

2. Did Brigham Young ever offer special inducements to Oliver Cowdery, such as restoration of Second Elder and business opportunities like exclusive nursery sales in Utah?

3. Did Oliver Cowdery and his family have any ties or dealings with the Joseph Smith family before 1828?

4. Why did Joseph Smith order that both temple property deeds and other valuable lands be ceded to Oliver Cowdery's wife and children in 1839?

5. Did Oliver Cowdery ever receive compensation for services to the Church after his excommunication?

6. Has recent research modified the supporting facts regarding Oliver Cowdery's trip in the fall of 1848 to Kanesville?

The questions multiply—because he never really was laid to rest, only to bide his time for the day when it will be "opened like the pages of a book" for all to see.

T. C. Hilton
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