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## First Meeting of the Millennium

### The Proclamation on the Family: Who Gets Left Out?

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World," which has achieved near-scriptural status since its announcement in 1994, holds up an ideal and idyllic view of family life: a providing-protecting-presiding father, a nurturing mother and their children. The goal of strengthening families is one everyone can support, but this new ideal raises some unexamined questions:

Who can have/be "the" family? What happens to the individual when the basic unit of Church and society becomes "the family"? Who does this new ideal exclude? What are the costs in human terms of such exclusion? What uncertainty about "fitting in" does the uncanonized but authoritative status of the proclamation itself add?

The Mormon Alliance will sponsor an open discussion of these questions Wednesday, 12 January 2000, at the Salt Lake Public Library, 209 E. 500 South, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the story room. (This room is on the north end of the children's library on the second floor and may be entered either through the children's library or from the a doorway on the northeast side of the atrium.)

Janice M. Allred, mother of nine, will moderate the panel. Panelists are Jay Bell, gay Mormon; Tim Rathbone, at-home father; Vickie M. Stewart, divorced mother. All are Mormons who have families but who find that the Proclamation makes an uneasy fit for their family. Audience participation is welcome.

### Wisdom and "The Heart of Darkness"

*Arthur C. Wiscombe*

As a lad of sixteen, growing up in the culture of the suburbs of Lizard Gulch, Utah, I was stricken by the poetic, literary, philosophic, and noble impulse. I wanted to know, like Matthew Arnold, everything that matters. Where would I find ulti-

mate wisdom and high culture? I had an imagined dream that I died and, in a formal interview, reported to the Gods on the wisdom I had encountered on earth. I awoke in a sweat because, while their faces expected an intelligent response, I was as mute as I was empty and kept looking at my feet in tense silence.

I resolved that day to make a serious onslaught on my inadequacies. Plato taught me that knowledge is the base of a triangle leading upward to understanding and on to the mountain peak of wisdom. Alfred North Whitehead taught me that a person can have knowledge and not be wise but cannot be wise without knowledge. Later, Hugh Nibley taught me that even religious zeal without knowledge can make one a danger one self and to the community.

What I eventually observed is that most of these teachers were transferring to me their own indoctrinations, rather than original thought from their own suffering and experience. I resolved to dig deeper into our common literary, philosophical, religious, and scientific legacy. This quest occupied my interest and my action for the next fifty years. It never once occurred to me that I should make any attempt to save the world--only a portion of my own soul. Here and there, I came upon an insight that rewarded my quest.

One of these struck me with a profound force, destroying the last vestiges of my youthful idealism forever: much of the world's evil has been done by "good" people--the Sunday School-attending types. The essence of this Heart of Darkness is, in my opinion, the misuse of power and the betrayal of social justice. Justice is the least talked-about moral idea in our religious curricula. Why do we continuously tiptoe around the injustice that corrupts us daily? The way we continually exploit one another for supposed private gain and privilege? Why such vast misuse of power? Why, for instance, has organized institutional bureaucratic religion always required its hate groups? Was it not good men who

wrote women, half the human race, out of the original U.S. Constitution? Has not much of the repression of women by men been done out of a sense of decency, God, and the natural order? Why did American Christian clergy hold so adamantly to the policy and practices of racism until public enlightenment and the demands of justice forced them to change against their very will of assumed goodness? Is not the present ethnic cleansing ravaging Eastern Europe this same absurdity? Is it not time to connect justice to wisdom and explore more honestly the very essence of the "heart of darkness"?

### Guest Editorial

## Our Need for the Unconditional Dimension of Reality

Harry Fox

As the twentieth century draws to a close, there appears to be a growing energy crisis--not of energy which comes from fossil fuels, but of human energy. We are finding it harder and harder to muster the energy with which to tackle and solve the mounting problems facing us.

For example, we have not been able to pay off the national debt or to keep crime under control or to adequately meet our social responsibilities to the poor and the oppressed. In our homes, we are finding it extremely difficult to maintain effective communication between husbands and wives and between parents and children. And in the churches we have not yet been able to make much progress toward reuniting the numerous segments into which we have so long been divided.

We are finding that simply to be told of our obligations has not been enough to get us to act. Where, then, can we find the energy to do what we know we must do?

I believe that the answer lies mainly in becoming aware of the unconditional dimension of reality. Too many of us seem to know only the conditional dimension--the idea that every relationship in heaven and on earth requires mutual obligations. For everything I do for you, you must do something for me. To people governed by this mentality, it is inconceivable that there is anything for which a person does not have to do something. For such people there is no "free lunch."

In saying this, I am *not* saying that there is no place for the conditional. Of course there is! I know that most lunches are not free. But the conditional

alone is not enough. What, then, is the unconditional and how does it relate to the conditional?

Consider hurricanes. They straddle water and land as they move along over a continental coast. The half over land is fed energy by the half which soaks up energy from the warm ocean water over which it passes. The half over water is soaking up energy while the half over land is expending it. One half freely "receives" in the realm of the unconditional "ocean" and the other half freely "gives" in the realm of the conditional "land."

The sixteenth-century Reformers knew well what we are talking about, as did the Apostle Paul from whom they learned the gospel of "salvation by grace through faith. Grace is God's unconditional gift to us of his love, mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation in Christ *in spite of* our failures to be what we ought to be. "Faith" is our acceptance of this *free* gift. The more we accept God's grace (the unconditional dimension of reality) the better able we are to fulfill our responsibilities in the conditional dimension. The relationship between these two dimensions is what Paul and the Reformers referred to as the relationship between "faith" and "works." "Faith" which feeds on the free gift of God's grace obtains the energy with which to do the "works" which our situation demands. God will then have from us what we and all others need most: an unconditional love-commitment to him in response to his unconditional love-commitment to us in Christ.

### October Conference Critique

## SIGNS OF SCHISM?

A definite polarization in General Authority ties was noted at the October Conference Critique. President Hinckley wore ties in black and white geometrical designs, followed by seven other General Authorities including Merrill J. Bateman and Russell Nelson. Elder Packer led a counter-movement with a solid-red tie, followed by Elders Oaks, Porter, Porter, Maxwell, and Banks. Straddling the sartorial schism were President Faust, who had a red and yellow tie, a combination also selected by Elders Perry and Monson.

Perhaps a more significant trend showed up in the continued downward trend of talks emphasizing doctrine. Janice Allred identified only three talks in this category compared to approximately six apiece in the previous two conferences. The slack was taken up, not by those focused on the institution (17, up from 15 at the last conference) but by those emphasizing Christian living.

The Relief Society general meeting, which had



featured as its highlight the presentation of the "Declaration" (see accompanying article), drew a range of opinions. "I don't see what the big deal is one way or the other," said one woman. "Some women are so happy and thrilled about it, and some are really upset; but is it really that different?"

"I'm interested in the broader question it raises," commented one man. "Is it a carryover from the mission statement concept of corporate America?" Another speculated that it had been created as part of the Relief Society's new political activities (it co-hosted the Geneva international conference on families with the Howard Institute and Family Voice, headed by BYU law professor Richard Wilkins, in November).

Another woman suggested that, like the Proclamation on the Family, it took common ideas without a scriptural basis and placed them in "an authoritative context. Thus, when questions are raised about how it is used or even what it means, the answer is, 'Because it's an authoritative statement.'" Most of those present agreed that citing the Proclamation on the Family had replaced analysis of the gay-rights issues it was used to attack.

Nearly everyone enjoyed Sheri Dew's presentation, and found her energy a refreshing change in the otherwise low-key evening. "I like the intelligence, the passion, the stronger tone," said one. Another, while agreeing, said, "I was disappointed in the message that 'we are special.' It stereotyped the so-called women of the world and it also deemphasized individuality in women by making it clear that it was the Church that makes women special. I saw the same deemphasis on the individual in renaming homemaking meeting 'Home, Family, and Personal Enrichment.' The individual made it on the list but only in third place."

One woman pointed out an interesting anomaly in Virginia U. Jensen's parable about the mother bird who "protected, provided for, and nurtured" her babies. "Two out of three of those functions are assigned to men in the Proclamation on the Family," she pointed out. "Do we have a subtle form of subversion happening here?"

Also attracting much commentary was Elder Russell M. Ballard warning to "beware" of "false prophets and false teachers who have or at least claim to have membership in the Church. There are those who, without authority, claim Church endorsement to their products and practices." He reiterated a 1993 statement by Elder Faust, that the Church has "no such thing as loyal opposition."

"It was pretty discouraging," commented one man. "That Joseph F. Smith quotation he used equates personal revelation with being subject to the devil and denying the atonement of Christ."

Another man agreed: "It told me that there was no way to talk about doctrinal change. He claimed that the doctrine was always the same, but what that boils down is to deny that the Church has ever taught anything

different and to demonize those who know history."

Elder Ballard also went farther than most earlier statements by denouncing "self-appointed" "men and women" who are engaged in "sponsoring symposia, books, and journals whose contents challenge fundamental doctrines of the Church. Beware of those who speak and publish in opposition to God's true prophets." It's "the closing of the Mormon mind," summarized one participant.

In the "favorite talks" department, Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone's address, built around several deeply felt personal stories, ranked high, but one woman responded to his grief that his family did not have prayer at Thanksgiving dinner as the bishop had requested: "Why does everything have to be in a family? Why didn't he know that he could pray as an individual?" Others enjoyed Elder Maxwell's analysis of Laman and Lemuel as conveying new information, and one participant hypothesized that, by denouncing them as intellectually lazy, Elder Maxwell was actually sending a covert message that "we should be more intellectual."

## THE "DECLARATION" Duet

*Terry Redd*

[Advance copies of the Declaration were distributed to priesthood leaders with a letter by Elder Boyd K. Packer, acting president of the Quorum of the Twelve, dated 13 September 1999.]

The attached statement affirms the ideals of Relief Society sisters.

*I know this, because I told them so.*

The statement will be introduced during the general Relief Society meeting on Saturday, Sept. 25, 1999. Please provide a copy of the statement to each sister following the general Relief Society meeting.

*And submit the name of any sister who declines a copy.*

This may be done in a Sunday Relief Society meeting or by visiting teachers during the monthly visit. *And you know what I mean by "may."*

Please use the attached order form to obtain additional copies from Church distribution centers. [no charge]

*We printed 10 million, so don't be shy.*

Please encourage priesthood and auxiliary leaders to discuss this statement in appropriate meetings.

*Unt vee hahve vays to "encourage" zem, jah?*

### DECLARATION

We are beloved spirit daughters of God, and our lives have meaning, purpose, and direction.

*(They do! They do! They do! They must! Mustn't they?)*

As a worldwide sisterhood,  
*(dominated by worldwide brotherhood,)*

we are united in our devotion to Jesus Christ, our



Savior and Exemplar.

*(Until our brothers tell us different.)*

Increase our testimonies of Jesus Christ through prayer and scripture study.

*(Listening to our leaders won't do it, as they hardly mention Him except in closing.)*

Seek spiritual strength by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

*(Ditto.)*

Dedicate ourselves to strengthening marriages, families, and homes.

*(Including the marriages, families, and homes of those who do not want them strengthened.)*

Find nobility in motherhood and joy in womanhood.

*(And freedom in codependence.)*

Delight in service and good works.

*(We'd better, because nobody's serving us.)*

Love life and learning.

*("Loveline"? Did someone say "lovelife"?)*

Stand for truth and righteousness.

*(And in case we can't figure these out on our own:)*

Sustain the priesthood as the authority of God on earth.

*(Or be cut off.)*

Rejoice in the blessings of the temple, understand our divine destiny, and strive for exaltation.

*(Start your treadmills, ladies...)*

## Letters

### *Declaration of More Rights*

As I read the Declaration of Beliefs for Relief Society women presented before October conference, the thought came to my mind: If Godhood is the destiny of woman, why cannot the leaders recognize our righteous desires to be useful beyond the home and church? The limitations for women in the Church are unbearable for time and all eternity.

I remember Anne Hutchison's courage in stating: "We can read the Word of God for ourselves. We don't need the interpretations of clergymen"--brave words and true words that led to her excommunication, exile, and, consequently, to her death during an Indian attack. (Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* [New York: Harper and Row, 1990], 107).

I was also inspired by Elizabeth Cady Stanton's interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27: ("And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness')--as implying the simultaneous creation of both sexes, in the image of God. It is evident from the language, she writes, "that the masculine and feminine elements were equally represented" in the Godhead which planned the peopling of the earth.

To her, as in the Gnostic texts, a Trinity of Father, Mother, and Son was more rational, and she called for "the recognition by the rising generation of an ideal Heavenly Mother, to whom prayers should be addressed as well as to a Father." (Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine*, edited by Gary James Bergera [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989], 104).

We need a broader comprehension of the influence of woman!

Rhoda Thurston  
Las Cruces, NM

### The Book of the Past Stays Open

In ceremonies at Mountain Meadows, attended by descendants both of the slain emigrants and of local Mormons who did the killings, President Hinckley specified, "No one can explain what happened in these meadows 142 years ago" and "That which we have done here [dedicating the monument] must never be construed as an acknowledgement . . . of any complicity in the occurrences of that fateful and tragic day." He also pronounced the fiat: "Let the book of the past be closed" (John L. Hart, "Let the Book of the Past Be Closed," *Church News*, 18 Sept. 1999, 3,8).

I find it extremely unlikely that the spirits of the slain emigrants--120 men, women, and children--believe that there is still no explanation on earth for what happened to them. Likewise, the souls of the fifty-five Mormon avengers and their families surely will not tolerate that the living prophet of 1999 refuses to explain the power of promised celestial rewards for obedience to the covenants and oaths of the temple, particularly, obedience to the covenant to avenge the blood of the prophets. Some may argue that the covenant of vengeance, now removed from the temple ceremony, is no longer sacred. If so, then President Hinckley need no longer honor its accompanying oath of secrecy, thereby removing the embarrassing necessity to feign ignorance.

Moreover, the living descendants of the slain emigrants deserve better, while the descendants of their Mormon slayers also deserve to understand the religious forces that guided their ancestors. Hinckley's silence puts all responsibility on the members but sidesteps the Church's responsibility for its strict authoritarian rule and vitriolic sermons in 1856 and 1857. I think President Hinckley is



loathe to search for explanation because that search inevitably leads to a revolutionary remedy to Mormon authoritarian power, power which his predecessors and those around him are committed to preserving.

In their desire to have the matter die, Church leaders do not see that Mountain Meadows will never be "over" until explanations about it honor the historical quest for determining the facts. To shrink from it, to discredit those who inquire into it, to refuse to discuss it, or to hesitate to accept all the evidence fearlessly will not only keep Mountain Meadows a matter of controversy, but will make even loyal followers doubt the veracity of their leaders in presenting other matters of history. (Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950], 216-17.

The massacre's magnitude is startling--the largest terrorist act against Americans by other Americans until the Oklahoma bombing. Even more startling, it was planned by a religious organization's most prominent local leaders and executed by fifty-five loyal believers and Indians whom they organized. They killed men, women, and children alike, sparing only the youngest. Only twenty years later was one of these fifty-five--John D. Lee--convicted and executed. Mountain Meadows must be understood in part as the culmination of an attitude that had sponsored many lesser acts of violence and justified many other crimes of obedience. (See Samuel W. Taylor, *Rocky Mountain Empire* [New York: Macmillan, 1978, 27; J. H. Beadle, *Brigham's Destroying Angel: Life, Confession, and Startling Disclosures of the Notorious Bill Hickman, the Danite Chief of Utah* [Salt Lake City: Shepard Publishing, 1904]; Harold Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God Son of Thunder* [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983].)

Seven years after Lee's execution, future apostle Charles W. Penrose wrote an account absolving Brigham Young from any responsibility. The story that I was taught in Aaronic Priesthood lessons and which I myself taught as a missionary in the 1960's appears in Joseph Fielding Smith's *Essentials in Church History* (1945 edition), which condemns the single, unnamed individual who committed this crime (Brooks 216-17). *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism* entry, written by Ronald K. Esplin and Richard E. Turley Jr., and approved by two apostles (New York: Macmillan, 1992), contin-

ues the deception by omitting the fact that local Church officers planned the massacre and by describing Lee as "one of the Mormon settlers who were present at the massacre" (3:966-68).

Only lives conditioned by obedient submission to authority could have disciplined the fifty-five Mormon men to set aside their consciences and individual opinions to carry out the tragedy at Mountain Meadows. Of the men who went to Mountain Meadows, only one reportedly had the courage to leave before the slaughter began (Brooks, 90). In his autobiography, John D. Lee clearly knew, even while he made preparations for the killing, that it was wrong, yet he did not act on his conscience (*Mormonism Unveiled; or The Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop John D. Lee* [New York: Bryan, Brand, & Co. 1877], 228-29, 233-35).

As in the past, Church members today cannot publicly criticize or challenge Church leaders as a matter of conscience without threat of excommunication. The *Case Reports* show that conscience-killing authoritarianism is still at work in the Church today. Today's Mormons hear "follow the Prophet" when they should be hearing "Follow the Savior" and nod agreement to "listen to the Brethren" rather than "listen to your conscience." They accept the conscience-smothering reassurance, "God will never permit him [the prophet] to lead us astray" (Harold B. Lee, qtd. in *Living Prophets for a Living Church*, Institute manual [Salt Lake City: Church, 1974], 33). That a large group of priesthood-holding men could be organized by their local priesthood leaders to commit murder directly measures their submission to authoritarian expectations.

It dishonors the Fancher party that President Hinckley asserts, "No one can explain" the murder. We know better. Thus, as leader of the corporate church, he postpones the painful institutional repentance their murder requires. The proper memorial would instead be unflinching truthfulness, public disclosure, the renunciation of authoritarian values, and teaching the primacy of individual integrity. Until then, the book of the past stays open.

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## Uncommon Dissent

*Gene Mahalko*

The "Mormon Olympics" are coming to Utah in two years. Technically, they are the Salt Lake City Olympics, hosted by the mayor, but everyone appreciates that it will be a spotlight on Mormon culture. In the November mayoral election, Stuart Reid was seen as the "establishment" candidate. He had been on the city council, was the city's Economic Development Director, supported a very law-and-order police chief, and had worked for the LDS Church's Public Affairs Department. He had lived and worked with various minority groups, favored building a large mall by the international airport, and had no hint of scandal in his past--a good trick, considering how much scandal there was in the mayor's office and the Olympic Bid Committee that could have spilled over on him. He was endorsed by the *Deseret News*, was in a bishopric, and had a wife and children. Reid seemed to have all the credentials and all the opinions that would resonate well with Mormons. One of their own, hosting the Olympics--a picture-perfect solution.

His opponent, Rocky Anderson, favored ousting the police chief as being too authoritarian, was attorney with several high-profile ACLU or liberal cases (perhaps most notably Rachel Bachman's Mormonism-at-West-High case), wanted to scrap the mall proposal, favored affordable housing downtown, supported gay rights, was a very lapsed Mormon, and a liberal, even by Utah Democratic Party standards. He had little direct government experience, little business administration experi-

ence, had never held elective office, was not an insider with the LDS hierarchy, had two ex-wives, and no current spouse.

Salt Lake City is more liberal than the rest of the state. Still, popular wisdom predicted a slam-dunk for Reid. What actually happened was a most amazing political event. During the hard-fought campaign, all the "liberal" labels that had successfully damaged political candidates in Utah were hurled at Rocky Anderson. Only this time, they didn't stick.

To say the man works like an ox is an understatement. Take my word for it. And, even to people who disagreed with him, his integrity was beyond reproach. I wouldn't describe him as a knee-jerk opponent of people with power, but he clearly had spent years working to help people who didn't have a lot of power. He inspired a amazing support.

Some 400 volunteers came together to support his candidacy. By and large, I would describe this group as True Believers, rather than people from special interest groups trying to get their person in office. They had a vision for what Utah should be like, and they felt Rocky Anderson could do a better job of creating that vision than "The Establishment." He won by a landslide--60 percent of the vote.

Bucking the establishment is not often a good bet, especially in Utah. And having the supporters of a "liberal" candidate simply out-believe and out-hustle the opposition is even rarer. I was surprised. And pleased. And encouraged. And proud.

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