



Journal of the Association
of Mormon Counselors
and Psychotherapists

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Editor Henry L. Isaksen
Ricks College

Associate Editor Roy H. Marlowe
(and others to
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Editorial Board Ricks College

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Richard W. Johnson
AMCAP Secretary-Treasurer
Counseling Center
C-273 ASB
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT 84602

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Henry L. Isaksen
AMCAP Journal Editor
Ricks College
Rexburg, ID 83440

PREFACE

You were promised three issues of the Journal this year. This issue completes the promise, even though late. We hope you will read it and let us know what you think of the articles it contains.

Frankly, we are still groping and searching for a way to implement the editorial policy of the Association, which is, we feel, very clearly and simply stated:

1. AMCAP will seek to publish articles that are distinctively concerned with or related to LDS Counselors and Psychotherapists that:

—are authored with members of the Church and not apt to be published elsewhere.

—have been published elsewhere but are such distinctive quality and importance as to warrant republication by AMCAP.

2. AMCAP will not publish material which, in the opinion of the editorial board, might be construed as questioning, taking issue with or contradicting established doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

There are those who would perform a more “liberal” policy to be sure — one that would allow for open dialogue about “controversial” issues. But the Governing Board has wisely, we feel, adopted this policy for the sake of allowing us to share our concerns, experiences, findings, insights, etc. while avoiding the problems that inevitably arrives when dissident, self-seeking voices are given free access to the pages of such a significant publication as ours.

The challenge for us is to use the Journal in a positive and constructive way by publishing articles that are helpful, inspiring, thought-provoking, informative, applicable, mind-stretching and interesting — but not critical, contradictory or inimical of the professions of which we are a part. Are we succeeding, to a degree at least? Do these articles and those published in previous issues meet these criteria? If you feel that they do, please let us hear from you. If not, send us some that do.

Our plan for 1979-80 is to publish the Journal quarterly. We hope to have an issue in the mail by the first of January, April, July and October. We could meet those goals with your help; without it we cannot. May we hear from you.

Henry L. Isaksen

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Depression In Mormon Women — and Men, and non-Mormons, Too.

By Jed L. Ericksen*

“Depression” is a complex concept. To the layman, it simply connotes feeling blue, down, under the weather or unhappy. To the trained professional, however, “depression” denotes a broad group of disorders of mood manifested in several varieties or subtypes.

The key concept in understanding depression is that it is a pathological alteration in mood. The deviation from normal affect, of course, is primarily one of sadness, of being blue, feeling down, helpless or hopeless.

Before pursuing this subject in further detail, the author would like to indicate here that a significant stimulating factor for the preparation of this article was a television series prepared and sponsored by KSL Television in Salt Lake City, Utah on the subject of depression. The author was one of several mental health professionals interviewed along with a number of depressed patients in the particular segment of this series entitled, “Depression In Women”.

It seems probable that a good many readers of this report will have by now seen the television production referred to. It may be interesting to readers to know that after the program was aired, a number of telephone calls were received from all around the State of Utah and even from a number of other Western states in the viewing area. Most of these calls came from women, not all of them affiliated with the L.D.S. Church, but most of whom indicated something to the effect that they had seen a portrayal of aspects of their own life in the program. They said in essence, “Gee that’s me. That program was about my life, and I am anxious to know where I can go or what I can do to get help”. We made several referrals for treatment as a consequence of these calls.

To the best of our knowledge, the program was conceived, produced and directed by people from KSL TV. It wasn’t really designed by clinical people. It portrayed a number of good clinical concepts. The professional people interviewed were simply an aggregate of mental health professionals offering their independent viewpoints with no opportunity to know what others were saying until the program was made available to the public. It is significant that there seemed to be a high degree of congruity among the contributions of each respondent — both among clinicians and patients interviewed.

Now, back to the subject of depression, perhaps some statistics on the magnitude of the problem are in order here. The data vary to some extent depending on the source,^{1,2,3} but generally it is assumed that two to four percent of the population of the United States suffer from depression. That totals about four to eight million

Americans who are thus afflicted. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that 15 percent of adults between 18 and 74 years of age may suffer serious depressive symptoms. Perhaps less than five percent of these may find their way to psychiatric care. Among patients admitted to mental hospitals, about 23 percent are for depression, while psychiatric units in general hospitals admit 30 percent for the same condition. Approximately one out of two hundred people who are depressed will eventually die of suicide. The dollar cost of depressive illness in our economy has been estimated to be between 1.3 and 4 billion dollars per year. The morbidity in terms of personal unhappiness, people being incapacitated, and unable to work or be productive is extremely significant.

There is a noted authority on the subject of depression named Dr. Aaron T. Beck, M.D. He has written a good deal of literature on the subject.⁴ As a matter of fact, he has developed a scale called the “Beck Mood Inventory”. This mood inventory is simply a scale of about 21 items purported to assess depressive moods. The kinds of things studied in the interview are as follows:

1. Sadness
2. Pessimism
3. Sense of failure
4. Dissatisfaction
5. Guilt
6. Expectation of Punishment
7. Self Dislike
8. Self Accusation
9. Suicidal Ideas
10. Body Image Change
11. Somatic Pre-occupations

(Items 1 through 11 are referred to as a the “cognitive set” of depression.)

12. Crying
13. Indecisiveness
14. Fatigueability
15. Work Retardation
16. Social Withdrawal
17. Irritability
18. Insomnia
19. Anorexia
20. Weight Loss
21. Loss of Libido

This mood inventory may serve here as a kind of springboard to plunge us into a further discussion of depression, recognizing now that the thing we’re talking

about includes some of these fundamental concepts specified in the inventory.

For each item in the inventory, a patient is given a series of five statements to rate the relative severity of that item in his life. For example with regard to "sadness", the patient in describing his own feelings would choose between the following five statements: "I do not feel sad. I feel blue or sad. I am blue or sad all the time and I can't snap out of it. I am so sad or unhappy that it is very painful. I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it." These choices are then assigned a numerical weight with the first statement being scored "0", the second "1", the third and fourth "2" each and the fifth statement would be scored "3". The total score on the inventory is simply the sum of the numerical weight assigned to each of the patient's choices on the twenty-one items in the inventory. A patient could score anywhere from 0 to 60 on this scale. Beck says a mean score of 25, plus or minus 10, would indicate moderate depression. A mean score of 30, plus or minus 10, could indicate severe depression.

Now it is important to recognize that when we talk about depression, we are by no means discussing a singular kind of concept. It is a very broad concept, and when a person says he is depressed that really may be no more definitive than when a person goes to the doctor and says he has an upper respiratory illness, which of course could be a lot of specific things with a great variety of causes. There may be a lot of clinical manifestation of the illness and widely variable degrees of severity. So it is with depression. The term, in and of itself, is not a very narrow, strictly defined concept. Perhaps a little illustration here of what might be called the depressive spectrum will facilitate an understanding of the kinds and varieties of depressive illness which may be encountered:

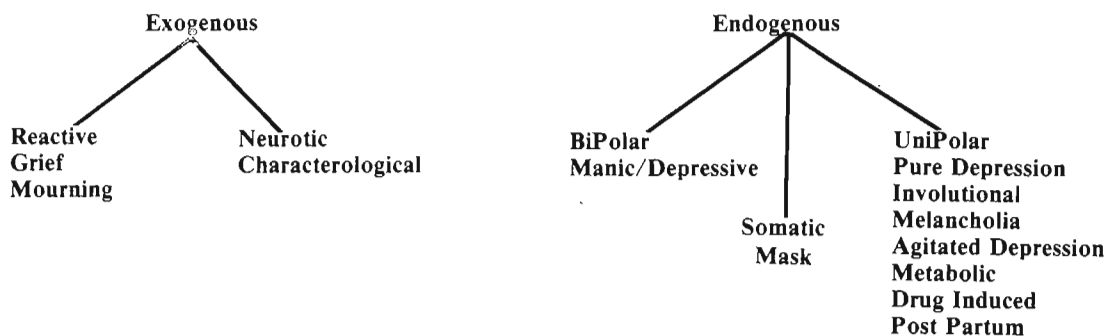
setback or some other significant loss in their life.

"Endogenous" is the term applied to depression which appears to be without cause or precipitant, at least from external observation. As the patient recounts his life history, there may be no clear cut, obvious, or identifiable situational link that explains why the individual is feeling depressed.

Now within the two general categories of exogenous and endogenous depression there may be listed a number of other classifications which demonstrate the variety of clinical manifestations of this disorder. Under the heading of exogenous falls a pattern which may be called reactive depression. This is the kind of experience that perhaps most everyone has experienced in some degree at some time in their life, and up to a point this may be considered a "normal" response. The point is, that once a patient has told his story — given his history, the clinician can logically sit back and think: "Now if that were me ... If I had just gone through that type of experience, I would possibly feel just as this person is feeling. I would be depressed also." So in that sense it is logical, it's understandable, and it may include such things as grief and mourning. Certainly there is a place in life for healthy, productive grief and mourning. We also know there is such a thing as pathological grief and mourning which can become inappropriate, excessively prolonged and morbid. So reactive depression may be relatively normal or it may become pathological.

Along with reactive depression, and it may be debateable about the extent to which this is "reactive" in nature, is another category often referred to as neurotic depression. The very term "neurotic," of course, implies an individual coping with feelings (affect) usually anxiety, but perhaps depression which is

The Depressive Spectrum



Psychiatrists basically differentiate two main categories of depression. As the prefixes suggest "Exogenous depression" refers to the kind of alteration in mood that can be traced to, explained by or understood as the person's response to some identifiable, precipitating event. The depression seems the consequence of some kind of change or experience in the life of a person which helps explain why their mood would be down. It might be a death of a loved one, a financial

subjectively most uncomfortable. The discomfort leads the patient into coping behaviors which may become self-defeating to some extent, i.e. neurotic. To a degree, their coping may become excessively self deceptive, and this interferes with productivity, effectiveness and healthy adjustment. A good and often cited example of a neurosis which grew out of anxiety occurred in Shakespeare's play MacBeth. In brief, Lady MacBeth and her husband conspired and committed murder;

however, Lady MacBeth subsequently developed so much guilt and anxiety over the deed that she became obsessed with a desire to cleanse herself and developed a compulsive handwashing ritual to cope with her feelings. Depressive neurosis may develop something like that in its genesis. Inner conflicts trigger self-deprecation leading to feelings of unworthiness, hopelessness, failure and a spiral down into depressive mood. This may begin so early in life that the pattern becomes built into the character structure of the individual and becomes closely tied to their sense of self-identity. As a brief example of that, we had one patient call from out of state after viewing the TV program on depression and women. She came to the Medical Center for treatment. While under hypnosis one day, with one of our staff psychiatrists, this patient recalled some apparently long unconscious recollections going back to earliest childhood about the effect on her self-esteem of her mother's frequent complaints of difficulty in her pregnancy with the patient, her chronic back pain, etc. The patient unconsciously felt responsible for all those troubles and was consequently a very unworthy, depressed feeling girl.

Let's now spend some time considering Endogenous depression. Research is beginning to strongly suggest that this type of depression may have a fundamentally biological origin. Some of these studies indicate that certain forms of depression tend to show up in family pedigrees more frequently than would be expected on the basis of sheer statistical chance.^{6,7,8,9} Families, of course, share a very common environment as well as a common biological heredity. To control for those variables, there have been studies which attempt to assess the incidence of depressive illness among unrelated persons, ordinary siblings, fraternal twins, identical twins and even twins who have been reared in adoptive or foster homes of totally unrelated environments. The data seem to consistently suggest that the closer the relationship (genetic likeness) the higher the probability of related persons developing similar depressive illnesses. The evidence also tends to support the significant role of environmental (psychodynamic) influences in precipitating overt expression of these illnesses. Presumably individuals who are "genetically predisposed" are more vulnerable to experiences of loss or bereavement.

Among these forms of endogenous depression, it has become fashionable and useful to distinguish between what is called bipolar and unipolar affective disorders.¹⁰ In bipolar illness there are, of course, two kinds of polar opposite manifestations. The more common older term for this is manic depressive disease. Among individuals so afflicted it's a rather dramatic form of illness where for a period of time, usually months or even years, a patient will sink into the depths of depression only to eventually resolve perhaps spontaneously for a period of time into a state of remission followed ultimately by transition into a manic phase where the patient becomes euphoric, elated and grandiose. In extreme cases, the manic patient may write expensive checks without funds to cover them, enter into foolish but impressive sounding business schemes, or begin to traverse the country on airlines because of his extremely exaggerated sense of capability and well-

being, all of which is essentially without foundation in reality.

There are a number of manifestations which may fall under the heading of unipolar depression. Among these would be a pure, simple depressive episode. In people going through the "change of life" i.e. 45 years of age and up, the diagnosis is sometimes referred to as involuntary melancholia. Sometimes there will be a strong component of anxiety in the patient's depression. This may be referred to as agitated depression. In such cases the patient may, in addition to feeling down, hopeless, or worthless, be very anxious and worried and will pace the floor and wring his hands.

There may be metabolic factors which cause depression.¹¹ For example hypothyroidism may produce that kind of reaction. There are a number of biochemical possibilities now being researched.¹² Medication or drugs can be a factor in the onset of depression. Reserpine-containing medicines, for example, are frequently implicated in the onset of depression. Alcohol, minor tranquilizers, sedatives and hypnosis may all exacerbate depression because they are "downers".

One additional form of illness called "post-partum depression" should perhaps be mentioned here.¹³ It is not uncommon in clinical practice to see a rather normal appearing, seemingly well-adjusted, young woman sink into the depths of depressive illness within a few days or weeks of childbirth.

Among these endogenous depressions, it is now known that relatives of bipolar patients tend to have a higher prevalence of bipolar illness and cyclothymic personality pattern than unipolar patients. Conversely relatives of unipolar patients show a high incidence of unipolar illness and depressive personalities as well as a low prevalence of bipolar illness.

Before going on, a few words are in order regarding one more problem sometimes referred to as the "somatic mask" of depression. Occasionally patients present themselves for treatment emphasizing what appear on the surface to be basically physical complaints i.e. gastro-intestinal upset, constipation, headaches, or other symptoms. However, after physical examination tends to rule out organic illness or if the patient does not respond to somatic treatments, it may be discovered that the root of his troubles is really depression. This is called the "somatic mask" because the physical symptoms tend to mask the real underlying depression.

Now we have covered a brief overview of depression. Interestingly enough, this may not really explain what the aforementioned TV program was attempting to get at with regard to the issue of depression and Mormon women.

In my experience as a therapist and as an LDS bishop I have observed something that seemed to be a common theme running through many comments on the TV presentation. The Church as an organization and the Gospel as a philosophy of life teaches perfection. An example is often quoted scriptural verse (Matthew 5:48) "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in

Heaven is perfect". That is quite a lofty ideal — one that most of us would probably feel worthy of our emulation. I think most active Church members would agree. As a consequence of that type of value and because of our emphasis on education, on achievement and on being "doers of the word, and not hearers only ..." (James 1:22); because of the emphasis we have on succeeding in our business and professional lives, and because of the emphasis we place on rearing strong, healthy, well-adjusted close-knit, clean, neat, well-organized, efficient, cooperative, etc. families, there is a lot of pressure on LDS mothers, and fathers for that matter, to measure up to the ideal.

Certainly it is appropriate and praiseworthy that we promote such ideals and have opportunity to do the best and be the best that we can; however, there is a hazard involved. There is a risk that instead of accepting where we are and recognizing that any progress we can make toward our ideals is evidence of satisfying, ego-enhancing progress, we may simply feel that since we haven't reached the ideal, we have failed. Then, more than anyone else, we may begin to feel that great burden of worry, guilt, fear, inadequacy and unworthiness that begins to pull one down instead of elevate one up as is intended. We may become depressed.

Perhaps certain persons are particularly vulnerable to this distortion of what could be a noble ideal. Perhaps it may be those genetically predisposed to endogenous depression. Perhaps it may be those who have unresolved neurotic conflicts from the past. Perhaps, in some cases, it may be an accidental consequence of the perfectionistic ideal itself.

Let's pursue this last possibility. Sometimes persons who emphasize striving for perfection become "perfectionistic" i.e. something clinicians may call the "obsessive personality type".¹⁴ We could discuss depression and a variety of other personality types, but perfectionism may be a particular hazard of our culture. This type of person tends to have very high and severe superego functional. Some such persons may have very stringent consciences with a high ego-ideal and very lofty values and standards to strive for. This type of individual may be punctilious and rigid, fastidious and formal and meticulous and overinhibited to some degree, and essentially perfectionistic. Maybe sometimes this personality is self-doubting because the standards are so high and he may have feelings of inadequacy, insecurity and may be lacking in capacity to relax or in ability to "use wisdom and moderation in all things," including duty and obligation and immediate perfection.

This type of person may have failed to develop the capacity to occasionally put things on the shelf, so to speak, and take some needed time to enjoy life. Perhaps their character structure just won't permit that.

Sometimes this type of attitude and pattern may be evident in the prevailing philosophy with regard to "never turn down a calling from the bishop to serve in the Church". There is a kind of unwritten standard that one should never say "no!"

This is not intended to imply that Church members should respond to such calls with a negative attitude. It is important to be honest with one's self. It is appropriate for the Church member to use his own judgment, wisdom and inspiration, and to remember that the family is the most important organization in time and all eternity. Most bishops would probably welcome some honest feedback, from the members being called to serve, with regard to personal pressures, time available and family needs.

On the other hand, sometimes Church members may suffer a form of depression as a consequence of sin and disobedience. Recall the experience of Zezrom (Book of Mormon, Alma 15:3) who "lay sick...with a burning fever, which was caused by the great tribulations of his mind on account of his wickedness ...". That sounds somewhat like a form of depression — like being overwhelmed with the consciousness of his own guilt. In the case of Zezrom, this was not neurotic guilt. It is important for the Church therapist to distinguish between the two.

Let's consider another depressive reaction which may be encountered by Church members. Consider the experience of a 40 year old faithful, female Church member married to an inactive elder who never really paid much attention to the Church in his married life. The couple eventually divorced. He remarries and life seems to go along nicely for him and his new wife. He makes a good salary, and they are very socially active. Meantime the ex-wife left behind has to make it on very meager income. She is responsible for sole care of the children. She has few social outlets. She complains to her bishop about the Church being so "couple oriented". She feels she doesn't fit in anymore. In fact, she says, "I'm not sure I believe in God anymore. If he really loved us, I would not be getting the short end of the deal. My husband's life is going great and my life is a disaster." She becomes increasingly angry. Soon she cannot approach Diety in prayer. She becomes more alienated and finds fault with neighbors in the ward. And finally her mood has deteriorated to the point that a well-intended basket of Christmas goodies sent to her home becomes interpreted by her as a "dirty trick", because "they didn't send these to everyone in the ward. They singled me and a few others out as single persons, 'special interests' if you will". Here is a great challenge for the LDS therapist.

Certainly there are occasions where depression among LDS members is relatively normal. When we experience life's tragedies, it is a normal thing to feel the hurt and pain and grief. There are numerous examples in the scriptures where even the Diety has wept, mourned and grieved. That type of experience can even make one stronger, more resilient and compassionate.

For an interesting experience sometime, try looking around at fellow ward members while sitting in meeting. You'll see a number of very fine people there. There will be people who are paying their contributions, attending their meetings, serving their fellowman, rearing their families, being good citizens, honorable business and professional people. As you contemplate their lives, you'll recall that some of them have lost children to

death. Some will have had intra-cranial tumors and perhaps subsequently lost hearing or speech functions. Some may have experienced accidents and become quadriplegic and confined to a wheelchair. Some have lost their spouses at an early age. You may discover as you think about their lives that because of their years and their experience some of these people have a depth to their character, a capacity to understand, an appreciation of what is worthwhile in life and a perception beyond people who haven't had these experiences.

The real tragedy in human life is not suffering. It is needless suffering. Christ did not come to earth to end all suffering, he came to end needless suffering. "For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I." (Doctrine & Covenants 19:16-17). So we are all subject to the "natural tragedies of mortality". We needn't be subject to the many forms of suffering which are essentially self-inflicted such as alcoholism, venereal disease, pulmonary disease as a consequence of smoking tobacco or bondage to debt as a result of trying to live on credit beyond our means.

The author works in a setting where all varieties of depression seem to appear sooner or later. Based on that experience along with thorough review of the literature, it seems safe to conclude that there is unquestionably such a thing as biological depression. For that type of illness, one may also observe some dramatic remedies in the form of anti-depressant medication and even electro-convulsive therapy (ECT). Some persons have expressed very hesitant feelings about some of those treatments, but when a patient is totally incapacitated, cannot function, cannot enjoy life and becomes an extreme risk of killing themselves and thus incur not only mortal but perhaps eternal consequences, then it would seem to justify some of those proven remedies.

As for depression in Mormons, the key to effective treatment would seem to consist first and foremost, as it really is in any maladjustment or illness, an accurate diagnosis. Hopefully the foregoing statements have made the point that depression may be essentially biological or situational or both. A few special hazards which may be encountered by Mormon patients have been suggested.

Before concluding this report, perhaps a word about good mental health is in order. In some respects, it is ironic that there are some identifiable distortions of LDS ideals which may lead to depression, because most Mormons would agree that the Gospel may well be the greatest preventive device which we have at our disposal. Properly understood and lived, in a well-adjusted frame of reference, what greater tool have we than that? President David O. McKay said, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ should make bad men good and good men better".

The Natural Association of Mental Health has prepared a little brochure that suggests that good mental health is as simple as 1, 2, and 3.¹⁵ The first measure of mental health is: "How well do you get along with

yourself?" Can you see the implication of that idea with regard to depression? Generally depressed people, at least those who distort their values, don't get along well with themselves. They don't like themselves. They feel unworthy. They feel that they are not adequate. They feel guilty. They don't feel they can make their own decisions. They feel they don't measure up to their sometimes overly perfectionistic expectations.

The second measure of mental health is: "How well do you get along with others?" Depressed people may feel obsessed with a sense of inferiority to others. They may be covertly angry. They may feel jealous or hurt or bitter. They may feel shy, inhibited and insecure. They may feel incompetent, timid, frightened and overwhelmed in relationship to other people.

The third measure of mental health is: "How well do you face, adapt to and cope with the demands of everyday living?" Depressed people feel overwhelmed. They have little energy to apply to problem-solving. They develop anhedonia or an inability to find pleasure in things they once enjoyed. The depressed person often carries an abiding sense of failure and futility.

Depressed patients have problems in each of these three areas necessary for mental health. In some cases the depression, a biological illness, may cause the problems in getting along with self, others and in coping with day to day living. In other patients, the inability to get along with one's self, other people and incompetency in coping behaviors may lead the patient to become depressed. The key to understanding and effectively treating depression comes first in understanding its root causes. Let's not be too quick to oversimplify this most complex problem in the lives of our Mormon or other patients. Let's apply appropriate biological, psychological and or spiritual remedies as the specific case may require.

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*Bro. Ericksen is of Crisis Intervention, Department of Psychiatry, College of Medicine Medical Center, University of Utah.

Conflict Resolution: Helping Families Find Peace

By Richard D. Berrett, PhD*

Conflict occurs daily in our experiences. It may be internal or interpersonal in nature, may manifest itself in confusion, frustration or depression. Helping individuals and families often involves conflict resolution. This article will list some assumptions I make, and strategies I have used to help clients achieve peace in their hearts and in their homes by resolving intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict.

ASSUMPTIONS: I believe that conflicts occur as individuals come together in a relationship. I think that because two people have different perspectives, different beliefs, different attitudes, they must resolve dissonance as they try to achieve unity. The word dissonance can be illustrated by picturing a duet in which each is singing in a different key. The two voices do not harmonize but are in competition with one another in dissonance, being out of tune. Conflict is the result when you and I are not in tune, not in agreement, and it occurs as we try to achieve unity and intimacy.

Second assumption: the counsel that some give to "forget about conflict" is, I believe destructive to unity. I do not believe you can achieve unity by pretending that conflict is not there, or by forgetting about it. I think, rather, that you need to examine conflict, you need to understand conflict, and it is only through examination and understanding that you can then remedy conflict.

A third assumption I make about conflict is that it rarely destroys relationships. I believe that the destructive agent is the inadequate approach to dealing with and resolving conflict, rather than the conflict itself.

A fourth assumption I make about conflict is that it has many sources. For example, intrapersonal sources create conflict. The way I think, the way I interpret the world around me can in itself set me up to be in conflict. Intrapersonal sources occur, as mentioned previously, when two people come together and try to achieve intimacy. There are social or community reveals that poverty, alcoholism, and even inflation are related to family conflict.

A final assumption I make is that in order to achieve the Kingdom of our Father in Heaven, there to live with the Prince of Peace, members of that Kingdom will have learned how to deal with conflict in a Christ-like, caring manner.

STRATEGIES: The first strategy, an intrapersonal one, is based on the wheel of self awareness found in

Alive and Aware (1975), and relates to the therapy approaches of Ellis (1961), Maltby (1977), Dyer (1976), and Chamberlain (1978). In this perspective, conflict is created by our thinking. I generally find that if I can help people recognize the personal responsibility that they have in the process of conflict formation and resolution, part of the conflict is defused. My goal in using these resources is to help the clients focus on their thoughts and how they affect feeling, and that by changing thoughts, feelings can be altered.

For example, Mary is at home waiting for her husband to come. She has an anniversary dinner prepared and she is very excited. She knows that her husband is going to be there right at 6:15 p.m., so at 6:10 p.m. she is going to slide the steak under the broiler. She wants it to come out of the oven just after he arrives. She has the table set with candles, a beautiful tossed salad is ready, everything is prepared for a very romantic anniversary dinner. The time of 6:15 p.m. comes, she expects the door to open and it does not; at 6:20 p.m. she takes the steak out, fearful that it will become overdone. At 6:25 p.m. Mary begins to wonder where he is. "How could he do this to me on our anniversary?" At 6:35 p.m., "If only he knew all of the work I have done just for him." It is now 6:40 p.m., and she feels, "At least he could be considerate enough to phone." At 6:45 p.m., he walks in.

Mary's feelings during this half hour wait are directly related to the thoughts she experienced. She will likely feel anger, maybe some hurt and disappointment. When he walks in her feelings may lead to a desire to punish him; hence, she may state in a tone of voice which suggests anger and accusation, "Where on earth have you been?"

In another home Sue has a 6:15 p.m. anniversary dinner planned and her husband is also late. While waiting Sue has these thoughts: "I wonder where he could be? Maybe he had to stay at the office; perhaps there was heavy traffic; maybe I had better say a little prayer," and then he walks in at 6:45 p.m.

Sue feels relief and desires to comfort, to love, to express affection and will interact with her husband in a very tender way, unlike the punishing interaction that is happening in Mary's house.

It is possible that Sue's and Mary's husbands were delayed by the same problem. However, the independent variable that the wives have some control over, and that has influence on the outcome is the *thinking* of Sue, and the *thinking* of Mary between 6:15 and 6:45 p.m. The awareness wheel will help people become aware of

their thoughts, how they influence their feelings, their desires, their actions, and how they are responsible for these thoughts.

Interpersonal conflict is frequently related to what George Bach and Peter Wyden labeled "gunny sacking" (1969). This is holding our emotions inside until they become distorted and fermented and are expressed in vicious, attacking, and painful ways which contribute to tremendous marital conflict. This is the holding back process: on the other hand, it is an individual who does not monitor his honesty with love and sensitivity. Like a bull in the china shop, the individual breaks delicate and special aspects in a relationship.

Part of my therapeutic responsibility in helping people work through problems is to teach them some skills which help them share aspects of problems without destroying the relationship. The first strategy I find helpful is the marriage conference (Mozak 1977). To carry out a marriage conference, a couple is asked to sit back-to-back so there are no non-verbal cues being exchanged. The purpose of reducing the non-verbal communication is to delete the conflict message sent on this level. When these aspects of conflict are taken out of the communication, it is surprising how the importance of the message is dealt with, and the emotional impact is lessened.

While the couple sit back-to-back, each is assigned the role of talker and listener. They assume one of these roles at a time. The goal is to be able to eventually move them face-to-face, and have them demonstrate careful listening to each other.

Prior to beginning the marriage conference, I explain three levels of communication, e.g., me-to-you about things; me-to-you about me (self disclosures), and me-to-you about you (feedback). I request that they talk at each of these levels. While one person talks, (for a minimum of 15 minutes) the other is encouraged to listen carefully. It is interesting that several minutes usually pass before level two and level three communication is reached.

I have found that psychological and emotional intimacy is achieved as the couple spends time in self disclosing and feedback. As these levels of communication are reached, the individual often moves through the secondary emotions such as anger and shares the primary emotions such as hurt, disappointment, and problems with self-esteem. When they begin to reveal themselves and reveal their fears about the relationship, it is touching the way the listener becomes primarily caring, and supportive rather than an enemy. After person one has talked for the designated period, he or she then becomes the listener and the other person the talking partner. The model used in the therapy session should then be discussed, clarified if necessary, and assigned for a longer period of time as homework.

Caution should be used in that the marriage conference is not assigned if people are in intense stages of antagonism. Antagonism must be defused before the couple can experience the closeness and understanding found in the marriage conference.

Finally, a third strategy, family circles (Lowe 1977), is carried out with several families by having children sit with the therapist in an inner circle with the parents sitting directly behind their children in an outer circle. The parents assume the role of the listener and observer. They hear their child or children and hear and observe the other children in the circle. This accomplishes the defusing of negative non-verbal communication between parent and child and facilitates more openness in problem solving. The goal is to allow people to be heard by giving the role of listener to one group, and the role of talker to another group.

The children discuss their thoughts, feelings, and intentions with the therapist and with each other, a guided catharsis session, then the children sit behind their parents so they hear their parents and see and hear the other parents. The parents now have the time to share thoughts, feelings, and desires with the therapist and each other. It is not long before the therapist can introduce direct discussion by saying something like, "That is an interesting thought. Would you be willing to turn to your child and talk about that for just a minute?" The parents may then turn from the inside circle and talk with their son or daughter for a few minutes and then turn back to the circle of parents.

Ultimately, the goal is to have each of the families involved participate directly in resolving the conflict. The circles break into family groups at this time with the therapist moving, as appropriate, from family to family. As in the marriage conference, the opportunity to speak and listen without interruption serves to reduce tensions and defenses, and opens the way for fruitful cooperation in resolving problems.

In summary, I have suggested several assumptions I make regarding intrapersonal conflict resolution. I have presented individual dyad and familial strategies to assist clients through these problems in a cooperative way. These approaches have been useful in my practice. Perhaps they may aid those attempting to help others.

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*Brother Barrett is an Associate Professor at California State University at Fresno and is also engaged in private practice as a marriage counselor.

"Ye Are Free ..."

by Thomas W. Russell*

ABSTRACT

"Ye are free, ye are permitted to act for yourselves."
Heleman 14:30

The thesis of this paper is that free agency is not only central to our faith and salvation, but is also critical to effective therapeutic care.

Our Father in Heaven has given us the ability to make choices. Some of these choices are healthy and help us grow while others are destructive, stop us from living full lives, and can lead to insanity.

Effective therapy enables us to identify the choices we have made and then decide if we want to make new choices.

The first section of this paper presents an example of a person choosing to step back from a schizophrenic break. He does so by learning that he can ask questions and receive information that will provide him with new alternatives.

The second section describes the structure and importance of free agency as taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This central theme is then explored through a discussion of what therapists have learned in effective therapy.

In the third section, Tina struggles with childhood decisions. Those decisions are destructive and could mean her life. The complexity of the therapeutic process is especially examined.

The fourth section draws on the teachings of Christ and their interpretation of those teachings by Elder Boyd K. Packer. From them we learn how to be effective therapists.

The fifth and final section shows the dramatic use of free agency when terminally ill cancer patients use their agency to decide to live — and they do.

(Please note: So that the people described here will not be burdened with history, but rather live their new decisions, their names have been changed.)

Section One

"How long halt ye between two opinions?"
1 Kings 18:21

The room was cluttered and musty from Mel's long hours of secluded living in the apartment. The shades were drawn and food containers were left lying about. Mel clutched his electric guitar as a child might hold on to his only remaining friend. This last year had been dif-

ficult. His schizophrenic break while in the service, his placement in a closed psychiatric unit, and the terror of that time was still vivid in his mind. He spoke fearfully of the patient who roared all night and beat his head against the wall. Mel did not want to go back. He was more frightened of that memory than of the voices he was hearing and the unreality he was again rapidly slipping into. My last weeks of work with him had not been successful. He had not followed through on weekly meetings with one of the therapists at the mental health center, nor would he attend the partial care unit. Constant worry and excessive planning had prevented him from finding a job, thus leaving him at home with little to do.

He was the worst I had ever seen him. Frightened, face flushed, his speech was random and at times incoherent as he spoke to us. "Why are you so frightened, Mel? What are you doing?"

With wringing hands and long silences, punctuated by rapid explanations, he told me that he had lost all hope. He could not get a job or be loved. He did not live the laws of our Heavenly Father. He was cast out forever. Satan continually chased him, and often caught him. How did Mel know these things, I asked? Accusing, he said "How would you know, you do not sit in this apartment long hours as I do!" Staring off into space, he again slipped into the terror of total condemnation.

"You don't know why," he said, "but I do. Jesus doesn't like what I do. I am immoral and lost."

I was drawn into his world momentarily — assuring him that with a job, less time on his hands ... He did not listen. I spoke of previous discussions, reviewing again that though he feels his thoughts are evil, the fact that his actions are moral and that he lives the Word of Wisdom means there are positive and good elements in his life. Mel acknowledged with a shake of his head, wanting to believe what I had told him.

My companion Bob, having worked well with me before, sits back easily and appears to offer a silent prayer. I no longer lean forward, the muscles in my back relax, and the prayer is with me. The terror will stay with Mel until he learns and decides. The question I ask is:

"Tonight we started with a prayer to Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ. Do you want to talk to him?"

With a quick smile, Mel says yes, not sure how we will do this thing but wanting it. Setting a chair before his chair, I tell him that we will use a Gestalt exercise in order that he might speak. I remind him that he is in control and may stop at any time. But he is eager now

and wants to begin. Following my instructions, he envisions Christ — his Elder Brother — in the opposite chair. Mel describes how Christ looks so that we can see Him. Mel then tells Christ what he has been thinking. "You don't want me. I have sinned. I am abominable in your sight." The words destroy all thoughts of joy. I then instruct him to sit in Christ's chair and be Christ.

"It's hard. This is silly."

"Possibly. But try it. Tell Mel what you think of him, Jesus."

His eyes close as he tries to be Christ, to be his Elder Brother. At first, silence — he speaks wordlessly. No movement, we wait. And then his eyes are opened with the simple words, "It's okay, I love you."

Silence again, and the wonder at what we have heard. Mel sits wordless once more, straining to hear those words again and again. Tears and time. I encourage Mel to say why Christ loves him. And he does so. Mel returns to his own seat again and again to ask those questions that haunted him. He gets his answers — yes, he is loved; yes, he has not always lived as his Elder Brother would want him to, but He still watches over him; yes, yes, yes.

The hour is gone and Mel knows by his discussion that he is not condemned and that when Satan chases him, he is not alone.

With plans made that result in his getting a job a few days later, we close with a prayer of thanks. Our discussions continue over the year and a half we are friends. They end as I move away and he is speaking of buying his first home.

Section Two

"Isn't it time then that you decide that you're making a choice? Not just a choice, but you're making *the* choice. Once you've decided that, with no fingers crossed, no counterfeiting, no reservations, no hesitancy, the rest will fall into place."

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Mel made a new decision, a new choice. He learned that he was not damned, but, rather, loved. And he chose to live on the basis of that information. Many more choices must yet be made, but that night he chose to step back from the edge of terror and insanity.

I slowed Mel's progress down in arriving at that choice when I tried to save him from the terror, or more accurately, when I tried to deny it. I helped him make the choice when I honored his free agency. In 2 Nephi 10:23 Jacob speaks:

Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for

yourselves — to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.

How often do we get in our own way or in each other's way when we are trying to make a difficult decision? How often do we want to rescue ourselves and those we help from the terror? Yet we are taught by our Heavenly Father that man "should be an agent unto himself." (D&C 29:35) To be an agent is to act, to exert power. As a therapist and a friend I must make my own decisions and honor the decision making authority and responsibilities of all other men. President Brigham Young said:

The Lord Almighty has organized men for the express purpose of becoming an independent being like unto Himself, and has given him his individual agency. Man is made in the likeness of his Creator, the great archetype of the human species, who bestowed upon him the principles of eternity, planting immortality within him, and leaving him in liberty to act in the way that seemeth good to him — to choose or refuse for himself...

As I grow in the Church, the seed ideas of predestination from youth wither. I am taught that I am free, that I can choose. The old games of "there's nothing I can do," or "if my parents had only," or "if only I had" fall away. I am given what I require. I have only to use it.

Wanting to help is not enough, of course. All building takes skill and the skills of therapy can give to the client the permission to act as Mel did. From the time of birth we learn about ourselves from the way others transact with us. From the words, looks, actions, and inaction of those around us, we make decisions about ourselves. Are my parents interested when I am active or do they ignore me? Am I just as important as everyone else in my family or are there others more important than I? As tiny children we work long hours learning about ourselves and how to get along in our family. From a child's perspective, we make the best choices for ourselves. The baby that is picked up and carried about learns that she is included, a part of the family. The child that is left on its own continually decides that that is the way life should be — do not be close, do not include others. We are all a mixture of these positive and negative learnings or messages. Some of us received many more negative messages and learned that we must be closed, not so sure of ourselves or others. Muriel James, in *Techniques in Transactional Analysis*, says it best this way:

To become autonomous, most people need to rethink the decisions they made in early childhood about themselves and about other people. Many of these decisions were a result of parental programming.

Parental programming is not the "fault" of parents — since they are only passing on the programming they got

from their parents — any more than the physical appearance of their offspring is their “fault” since they are only passing on the genes they got from their ancestors.

Parental programming is a fact of life and is both negative and positive.³

As professionals, therapists spend their time with people who have gotten too much negative information about themselves and the world. Often these people wait for something to happen. The information is so debilitating that they do not know that they are worthy and able to make a change. They wait, possibly for a type

... of Santa Claus who will bring the individual a magic to crown his life. People wait varying lengths of time before fall into despair which, other things being equal, determines when they seek treatment — some at 20, some at 40, and some at 60. Failing ‘Santa Claus’, there are four alternatives from which the individual can choose. The most decisive is suicide in one form or another, (2) sequestration from society — state hospital, prison, rooming house, (3) get rid of the people held to be responsible for the failure — divorce, homicide, children to boarding school, (4) ... redecision ...⁴

When I worked with Mel, we did not get to his early decisions as described above. We were at the critical stage of just keeping him from losing control of his life. Those more basic choices, or as Elder Packer says, “the choice,” will come as Mel is ready to handle them.

Tina did make the choice and it was a stirring time, not only for her but for me and the members of the therapy group.

Section Three

“And death shall be chosen rather than life...”
Jeremiah 8:3

In *The Magic Years*, Selma Fraiberg ably describes the wonder and yet the lack of information with which little children must start to understand our world. A face appears above the baby, smiles and coos to it, and moves away. Daddy is here and then gone — disappeared? The toilet flushes and all is gone — curious. The warm carrots squish delightfully between my fingers and Mom is mad? We are limited in our experience and decision making ability at this early time. In a happy, supportive home we are allowed to grow. In an unhappy home the ‘magic’ becomes destructive and is best stated this way:

Many of these childhood decisions are positive and have an overall beneficial effect on our lives. Many of them, on the other hand, do not. In some cases, these decisions were made as the result of traumatic or painful experiences. If children see their parents engaged in terri-

ble fights ... consequently they set rules for themselves that they must always be good, pleasing, and cheerful, no matter what their real feeling are.⁵

Both Tina and I were members of the same group and Bill Hawley was the therapist. Bill functioned as an artist among us, helping us remember those early decisions made during the magic time of our youth and asking us if we still wanted to keep them.

Tina was there but resisted everything. Severe hair cut, a lovely woman clothed in baggy jeans, flannel shirt, and boots — and sadness. Tina had told us she wanted to die. Scared as she was by that thought, she was moving closer each day to that choice. She lived a grim life. Parents crazy and dangerous, and now a boyfriend who cheated on her with other women in their bed while she was at work. She had a job that stifled her both intellectually and physically. Tina was going to kill herself and be done with this existence. That would stop it once and for all. As she talked, her anguish and her solution of death filled the room and depressed us into our chairs. Was there no way out? Our solutions — moving out of town or getting her to agree not to commit suicide — made little impact.

Bill said to her, in a quiet voice that she could respond to, “You’re right, you should be committing suicide.”

“What do you mean by that?” Tina asked, angrily pulling her flannel shirt tight across her and looking away.

Bill went on. “You were the oldest child. Even at age six you had to get the smaller children out into the back yard when your mother would fly into dangerous rages. You, as a six-year old, had to confront her so that you could protect your sister. And your mother’s reaction? ‘You know too much.’ You were the problem because you told mother what she was doing wrong. Your father accepted your mother’s craziness and disapproved of a daughter who would suggest such things.”

That is the way life had been taught to Tina and she accepted it. The messages Tina had learned from her parents were, “Life is tragic, I am the trouble-maker, and I can’t change things.”

As Bill spoke these words he shattered her world and Tina was angry, very angry. It was frightening learning that she no longer had to live life as she had been. It would be scarier still, learning how to live her new life.

“You’ve chosen a crazy relationship with a man because that is what you know — living in a crazy situation. You know no other way.”

Tina wouldn’t accept this new picture of herself and remained angry. She did agree not to commit suicide this week and she promised to come back. While others of us worked, she spent the remainder of the session half listening to us and wondering at what she had just encountered. While protecting herself with anger, she knew her life had changed.

It took Tina months to make new decisions about life and herself. Gold pierced earrings, warm yellow blouses, and well-pressed slacks showed us that she was growing and becoming healthy in her life.

Tina now faces the process of forgiving those who had trained her to die or to live in destructive ways. The Simontons say it in this way:

Some people allow resentments from countless sources to mount for years. Many adults carry such feeling from childhood experiences which they remember in great detail. These may be over what they felt was a lack of parental love, over rejection by other children or by a teacher, over specific acts of parental cruelty, and endless other painful experiences.

No matter how justified those feelings may have been when the experience first occurred, continuing to carry them has tremendous physical and emotional cost. *If you are harboring such feelings, the first thing you must acknowledge is that you — not the other person — are the ultimate source of your own stress.*⁶ (my emphasis)

It is not the purpose of this short paper to also describe the complex process of forgiveness. But it is important to use this point as a way of indicating the depth and the difficulty faced as a therapist and a client work together.

“Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men...” (2 Nephi 28:31). Through all this complexity we need a vision to guide us.

Section Four

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

Proverbs 29:18

Jesus Christ and his teachings must be our guide as therapists. The process of decision making, of choosing, and honoring each person’s free agency is an exciting and complex process.

How often do we analyze beyond what is required? How often are we caught in our own unmade decisions to the extent that we cannot help others with theirs? Do we have all the skills we need in order to help?

Christ teaches us that Satan cannot cast out Satan (Mark 3:23). If we are wrestling with the same problems and not making decisions *ourselves* we will be a hindrance, not a help to those who come to us.

No man can enter into a strong man’s house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then will

spoil his house.

Mark 3:27

Christ is my Elder Brother. As I read and study his works, my trust grows in Him and I find great joy in His healing the afflicted. He is my teacher and guide. We both have known those who have chosen insanity in order to protect themselves.

And (he) cried with a loud voice, and said, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.”

Mark 5:7

We have worked with those who finally let the torrent of grief flood from them:

And the spirit cried, and rent him sore and came out of him: and he was as one dead.

Mark 9:28

It is Christ and His life that should be our vision and our goal as therapists.

We have guides that live with us on the earth today. In two different talks, Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke on counseling and free agency:

There are those who want to draw out and analyze and take apart and dissect. While a certain amount of chatharsis is healthy and essential, over much of it can be degenerating. It is seldom as easy to put something back together as it is to take it apart.⁷

...we seem to dole out counsel and advice without the slightest thought that the member *should solve the problem himself* or turn to his family.⁸ (my emphasis)

When you are discouraged and feel that you cannot solve a problem on your own, you may be right, but at least you are obligated to try. Every personal resource available to you should be committed before you take another step, and you have powerful resources.⁹

Elder Packer goes further to sound the alarm of the possible loss of our emotional and spiritual independence. He emphasizes the critical drain that occurs when chronic individuals seek endless counsel in our ward and branches. “It drains more strength out of humanity than any other disease.”¹⁰ Elder Packer hammers at the notion of “instant gratification” and the thought that “somehow we should always be instantly emotionally comfortable.”¹¹

When that is not so, some become anxious and all too frequently seek relief from counseling, from analysis and even from medication.¹²

Dr. Eric Berne, quoted in *Techniques in Transactional Analysis*, says, "The transactional analyst says, 'get better first and we can analyze later.'" ¹³

We are taught in Doctrine and Covenants 9:8:

...then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

"Do it" is the motto of our Prophet, Spencer W. Kimball. To "do it" is to act, to choose, and to act on that choice. We are put on this earth to decide.

Section Five

"Therefore has man been placed upon earth subject to the influence of good and wicked powers, with a knowledge of the conditions surrounding him, and the heaven-born right to choose for himself." ¹⁴

James E. Talmage

Nothing shows the power or the importance of free agency and decision-making so dramatically as the findings of the Simontons at their Cancer Counseling and Research Center in Fort Worth, Texas. In their just published book, *Getting Well Again*, they state:

It is our central premise that an illness is not purely a physical problem but rather a problem of the whole person, that it includes not only body but mind and emotions. We believe that emotional and mental states play a significant role both in susceptibility to disease, including cancer, and in recovery for all disease.

We believe that cancer is often an indication of problems elsewhere in an individual's life, problems aggravated or compounded by a series of stresses six to eighteen months prior to the onset of cancer. ¹⁵

Dramatic? Yes. But no more dramatic than Christ's telling the man to get up out of his bed and walk or the power of today's priesthood blessing.

The Simontons have worked with 159 clients, all of whom had malignancies *deemed medically incurable*--each had no chance of living. The national average indicated that they would die of cancer within twelve months. Ninety-six died, but lived an average of 20.3 months. And rather than dying drugged and in deep pain, many led full lives until shortly before their death. And the 63 that still live?

As of January 1978, the status of the disease in the patients still is as follows: ¹⁶

	No. of Patients	Percent
No evidence of disease	14	22.2
Tumor regressing	12	19.1
Disease stable	17	27.1
New tumor growth	20	31.8

Caution must of course be taken. The sampling of 159 terminal cancer patients is small. Working with these patients takes years. But just as Alma says, "For every man receiveth wages of him who he listeth to obey..." (Alma 3:27), the same decision process is required with these patients as it is in Mel and Tina's lives. The Simontons explained:

Experiences in childhood result in decisions to be a certain person. Most of us remember a time in our childhood when our parents did something we didn't like and we made an internal pledge: "When I grow up I'm never going to be like that." ¹⁸

They, with Dr. Lawrence Le Shan in *YOU CAN FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE: EMOTIONAL FACTORS IN THE CAUSATION OF CANCER*, have found that cancer patients are people who have: (1) a youth marked with isolation, neglect, and despair, (2) a disruption in later life--"as though the 'bruise' left over from childhood had been painfully struck again," and (3) bottled up despair. The Simontons have found that the cancer is either stopped or retarded in growth when the patients,

believe they can solve whatever life problems faced them before the onset of cancer ... or ... they believe they can cope with them more effectively. ¹⁹

The possibilities are exciting. Combined with good medical care and chemotherapy, the cancer patient has a way back to renewed life by making new decisions. This is the frontier of clinical care today.

Free agency is the most precious gift we have. With it we can change our lives and live anew. Without it we are lost, caught and condemned. The great battle of heaven raged on this very issue. Our Elder Brother led us in the fight. We who are on this earth were on Christ's side. We have only to honor who we are.

It is critically important that you understand that you already know right from wrong, that you are innately, inherently, and intuitively good. When you say, "I can't, I can't solve my problems!", I want to thunder out, "Don't you realize who you are? Haven't you learned yet that you are a son or daughter of Almighty God? Do you not know that there are powerful resources inherited from Him that you can call upon to give you steadiness and courage and great power?" ²⁰

*Brother Russell is Director of "The Gathering Place" in Provo, Utah which is sponsored by the Utah County Council on Drug Abuse Rehabilitation.

FOOTNOTES

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Marital Adjustment in Mormon and Non-Mormon Marriages

By Richard A. Heaps and Karen M. Walker*

As evidence of the major social impact marriage has on our society, it has been estimated that 90 percent of Americans marry at sometime during their lives (Cavan, 1969:1). During 1975, there were 2,126,000 (10 per 1,000 population) marriages performed in the United States. Unfortunately, there were also 1,026,000 (4.8 per 1,000 population) divorces during the same period (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976). In recent years only one-fourth of the total increase in divorce can be explained by changes in the size of the married population (U.S. Dep't of HEW, 1970:iv).

This alarming incidence of marital failure should be of significant social concern in America. In fact, it is not likely that there will be any lessening of such marital deterioration since modern social pressures and practices will likely promote a further weakening of marital and familial relationships (Novak, 1976; Reuben, 1972; Sullivan, 1975). It would be of particular practical value to identify variables associated with marital adjustment in the hope that such knowledge would be helpful in bringing about a lowering of divorce rates and marital failure.

It is an assumption of the present writers that the types of mutual commitments explicitly made by a couple entering a marriage contract provide the parameters within which a marriage can be expected to function. However, even casual observation indicates that the commitments entered into at the time of marriage range from being quite perfunctory (e.g., civil and many Protestant ceremonies) to being highly structured and demanding (e.g., traditional Jewish, Catholic, Mormon ceremonies) (Bunbaum, 1964; Christiansen, 1971; Thomas, 1958).

One might assume that more rigorous marriage commitments would lead to greater marital longevity. This assumption seems to be supported by marriage and divorce statistics within the state of Utah, which are generally comparable to the national average and which indicate an important difference between divorce rates of the population in general and divorce rates for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) who are married in "temples". During 1975, there were 13,899 marriages and 6,160 divorces in Utah (World Almanac, 1977:952). In Salt Lake County (the most populous Utah County)

There were 832 marriages in a single month, and there were 414 divorces. That is half as many divorces as marriages. There were 364 (Mormon) temple marriages and of the temple marriages, about 10 percent were dissolved by divorce (Kimball 1976:11).

In attempting to discover why marriages performed in Mormon temples do not dissolve with the same frequency as other marriages one must realize that members of the Mormon Church may choose one of three possible marriage ceremonies. The first ceremony, preferred by Church leaders, takes place in designated temples, and involves a commitment by and a promise to the couple that their marital relationship will continue after their lives on this earth are over, upon the condition that they remain faithfully committed to each other and maintain high standards of personal conduct. The significance of this marriage agreement is made even more apparent when it is realized that Mormons may choose to marry outside the temple without an "eternal" obligation. The other two ceremonies, performed outside the temple, are much like those provided by other religions and by civil authorities wherein a couple is promised that their relationship may continue only for the period of their earthly lives. These marriages outside of the temple involve no stronger marital commitment or promise than those of other religious denominations.

Since a difference evidently exists in the divorce rates between Mormon temple marriages and non-Mormon marriages, it would be of potential value to discover variables influencing this difference. One might wonder whether this is because the strong religious and marital commitments made by Mormons married within the temple lead to a greater level of marital adjustment or simply a greater tenacity in keeping the marriage intact regardless of marital satisfactions (or dissatisfactions). Laws (1959) found that Mormon couples married in the temple did exhibit a significantly higher level of marital adjustment than Mormon couples married outside of the temple. Since these latter marriages involve no greater commitments or promises than non-Mormon marriages it was assumed that a similar difference between Mormon couples married in the temple and non-Mormon couples could be found. Consequently, the hypothesis tested in the present study was that Mormon couples initially married in the temple would exhibit a higher level of marital adjustment than non-Mormon couples in the first year of marriage.

Method

Sample

The two groups studied were Mormon couples who participated in a temple marriage and non-Mormon married couples. In an attempt to make the two samples as reasonably comparable as possible, a systematic sampling technique was used and the following four limitations were placed on the selection of respondents for the study: (a) Each respondent was to be experienc-

ing his/her first marriage: (b) Each respondent was to be in the ninth to eighteenth month of marriage; (c) Each respondent was to be between the ages of nineteen and thirty; and (d) Each respondent or his/her mate was to be attending college.

The original sample was comprised of 220 individuals. Sixty Mormon couples married in the temple were randomly selected from the lists provided by Church leaders in the Provo, Utah area. Provo maintains a large population of Mormon married students attending Brigham Young University who are representative of all states in the Union. Fifty non-Mormon couples were randomly selected from lists provided by colleges and universities in the Seattle, Washington area.

The final sample was comprised of 207 individuals who returned the marital adjustment inventory described below (a 94 percent return rate). Fifty-seven (95 percent) of the Mormon wives and fifty-six (93 percent) of the Mormon husbands returned the inventory. Forty-eight (96 percent) of the wives and forty-six (92 percent) of the husbands in the non-Mormon sample returned the inventory.

Measurement of Marital Adjustment

The instrument used to measure the respondents' general level of marital adjustment was The Locke-Wallace Short Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959). In addition, respondents were asked to provide the following background information: age at marriage, educational level, length of premarital acquaintance, length of engagement, husband's feelings about wife's employment status, number of children, ordinal position in family or origin, and religious affiliation.

Date Collected

After the original sample was identified, each potential respondent was telephoned and informed of his/her selection. Materials were mailed to each couple selected to participate in the study, with separate but identical packets for both the husband and wife. Each packet contained a letter of explanation, a copy of the marital adjustment inventory, and an addressed stamped envelope for the respondent to use in returning the completed inventory. Each respondent was instructed to complete the inventory in private.

Statistical Analysis

Each individual's responses to the Locke-Wallace Short Marital Adjustment Test were combined into a general adjustment score and group means were computed for both the Mormon and non-Mormon samples. A t-ratio assessing the significance of the difference between the means for the two groups was computed to determine if a significant difference existed in the general levels of marital adjustment of the two groups.

Results

A comparison of the marital adjustment scores for the Mormon couples ($X = 128.46$; $SD = 10.30$) and the non-Mormon couples ($X = 120.52$; $SD = 19.59$) yielded a significant difference in favor of the Mormon sample ($t = 3.53, p < .01$). These data supported the hypothesis that Mormon couples married in the temple would ex-

hibit a higher level of marital adjustment than non-Mormon couples.

Although the present study did establish four criteria for inclusion as a respondent, there were some observed differences between the groups: (a) the non-Mormon sample was slightly older at the time of marriage (model age for men = 22-25 years, for women = 22-23 years) than the Mormon sample (model age for men = 22-23, for women = 19-21 years); (b) the non-Mormon couples knew each other longer and had a longer courtship before their marriages (model time = 1.3 years) than the Mormon couples (model time = 6 months - 1 year); (c) more of the non-Mormon husbands had received a college degree (41) than the Mormon husbands (15), although 96 percent of the entire sample had received some college training; and (d) 84 percent of the Mormon couples had one child or were expecting their first child, whereas 19 percent of the non-Mormon couples had one child or were expecting their first child.

Discussion

The major finding of this study was that Mormon couples married in the temple reported a higher level of marital adjustment in their first year of marriage than non-Mormon couples. There were a few descriptive differences between the Mormons and non-Mormon samples although both groups were well within the established guidelines for inclusion in the study.

The difference in marital adjustment of the two groups studied is especially interesting in view of the fact that the small descriptive differences observed between the two groups "could" have been associated with greater marital adjustment in the non-Mormon sample. This leads the authors to believe that although variables such as age, length of engagement, educational level, etc. may be associated with increased marital adjustment, they appear to be superseded by stronger value commitments of religion and mutual, personal commitment, etc. Apparently when considering levels of marital adjustment, external or extrinsic characteristics are more associational than causal and have a lower priority power than the more internal or intrinsic value commitments referred to above.

Could it also be that the commitments made during the marriage ceremony have little binding power for most couples? It appears that most churches, and certainly civil authorities, do not have a "doctrine of marriage," but are concerned only with establishing external contractual agreements rather than personally involving commitments between the couple, Church and society. There seems to be little concern within our general society about the personal aspects of the marital relationship between partners in a marriage, unless they engage in acts which encroach upon public awareness (Mace, 1977). In contrast, the Mormon Church has a very definite and well-articulated philosophy or doctrine of marriage which establishes significant standards for personal and mutual conduct within marriage. These are not limiting regulations, but are definite expectations which not only allow for, but promote full and mature human expression and mutual development within the bounds of propriety. In addition, the Mormon Church generally views divorce as an escape rather

than a cure for marital difficulty (Kimball, 1976).

It is not assumed that temple marriages, *per se*, created a higher level of marital adjustment, but that the more rigorous and definite personal commitments to each other and to a way of life expected of couples married in temples allow for those conditions which lead to marital adjustment:

...the mere performance of a ceremony does not bring happiness and a successful marriage....Happiness is a state of mind and comes from within....It must be earned(through)sacrifice, sharing, and even a reduction of some personal liberties(Kimball, 1976:12 and 18).

In addition, the personal qualifications required of individuals entering into a temple marriage probably lead to a type of pre-selection which results in individuals who are somewhat more mature in their views of and their preparation for marriage.

The presence of the above variables of commitment, well-defined life values, pre-selection, and pre-marital maturity, as well as their relationship to marital adjustment should be fruitful areas for future research investigation. It would also be worthwhile in future studies to control for such variables as religiosity and religious commitment, and to use better, more explicit measures of marital commitment than to make the assumptions used in the present study.

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*Brother Heaps is Professor of Educational Psychology and Coordinator of Group Programs for the Interpersonal Relations and Communications Laboratory at B.Y.U. Sister Walker, at the time of the study, was Ph.D candidate at Walden University at Naples, Florida.

HIDDEN IDOLS

By J. Frederic Voros, Jr.
Honors Program Keynote Address
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I hope you won't object to my taking you on a bit of a journey. It is one recorded in a book called *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis. Ghosts of former inhabitants of our planet are living in a grey and dreary town somewhere in the twilight zone of the spirit world. The weather in the town is continually overcast, and although the townspeople are always waiting for the sun to rise, full daylight never quite arrives. Some of the ghosts who live in the town have been allowed to take a bus tour to a faraway land: the outlying countryside surrounding the Heavenly City, which is visible atop a distant mountain. The bus streaks through the air and finally touches down in the beautiful country. The passengers scuffle off the bus amid much shoving and pushing. Each of the ghostly passengers is then greeted by a spirit, a representative from the Heavenly City, who tries to persuade the ghost to give up the grey town and travel to the Heavenly City, where the Lord reigns. Would you feel bad if we listened in on one of their conversations? One of the ghosts was on earth an Episcopal priest. The spirit pleading with him was evidently a friend of his on earth named Dick. The Episcopal ghost is speaking ...

"... Do you really think people are penalized for their honest opinions? Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that those opinions were mistaken?"

"Do you really think there are no sins of intellect?"

"There are indeed, Dick. There is a hide-bound prejudice, and intellectual dishonesty, and timidity, and stagnation. But honest opinions fearlessly followed — they are not sins."

"I know we used to talk that way. I did it too until the end of my life when I became what you call narrow. It all turns on what are honest opinions."

"Mine certainly were. They were not only honest but heroic. I asserted them fearlessly. When the doctrine of the Resurrection ceased to commend itself to the critical faculties which God had given me, I openly rejected it. I preached my famous sermon. I defied the whole chapter. I took every risk."

"What risk? What was at all likely to come of it except what actually came — popularity, sales for your books, invitations, and finally a bishopric?"

...

"I'm not sure that I've got the exact point you are trying to make," said the Ghost.

"I am not trying to make any point," said the

Spirit. "I am telling you to repent and believe."

"But my dear boy, I believe already. We may not be perfectly agreed, but you have completely misjudged me if you do not realize that my religion is a very real and a very precious thing to me."

"Very well," said the other, as if changing his plan. "Will you believe in me?"

"In what sense?"

"Will you come with me to the [Heavenly City] ...?"

"Well, that is a plan. I am perfectly ready to consider it. Of course I should require some assurances ... I should want a guarantee that you are taking me to a place where I shall find a wider sphere of usefulness — and scope for the talents that God has given me — and an atmosphere of free inquiry — in short, all that one means by civilization and — er — the spiritual life."

"No," said the other. "I can promise you none of these things. No sphere of usefulness; you are not needed there at all. No scope for your talents: only forgiveness for having perverted them. No atmosphere of inquiry, for I will bring you to the land not of questions but of answers, and you shall see the face of God."

What do you think happened? Did the Episcopal priest get to the Heavenly City? Of course not. Had he broken a Commandment? Yes: the first of the great Ten Commandments. It is no coincidence that the first Commandment is the first; it is the key to all the others; to break it will eventually lead to breaking the others. The first Commandment is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." That priest had another god: his own mind. He revered and obeyed his own mind, even when doing so required discarding his faith in the true God. He was not so unusual.

Brigham Young was admonishing the departing missionaries to obey this first great Commandment when he told them to keep their minds "riveted — yes, I may say riveted — on the cross of Christ." (JD 12:33) Why? Because, President Young also said, "we are so liable to forget [our God and our holy religion] — so prone to wander, that we need to have the Gospel sounded in our ears as much as once, twice, or thrice a week, or, behold, we will turn again to our idols. It is immaterial what the idol is ... if we are not constantly exhorting the people and setting before them the necessity of living

their religion, calling back their minds that have been wandering, and preaching and praying with them, behold, they would turn to their idols." (JD 6:195) And we do. "We are, on the whole, an idolatrous people." Who do you suppose said that? Mohammed? Martin Luther? Joseph Smith? No: President Spencer W. Kimball, less than three years ago.

What then is idolatry? Again, the answer was given by President Kimball: "Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god; and if his god doesn't also happen to be the true and living God of Israel, that man is laboring in idolatry." It would be easy if all the things in the world could be put into two categories: "idols" and "all other". That is impossible, though, because, as is said of beauty, idolatry is in the eye of the idolator. Whether something is an idol depends entirely on how it is treated. If a man loves, honors, reverences, trusts, serves, defends, or obeys anything more than he does God, that thing is an idol to that man.

I believe that George Bernard Shaw once quipped that there has been a medium for expressing appreciation ever since the Phoenicians invented money. Our own prophets have pushed the point a step further. "Property", taught Orson Pratt, "is the Gentiles' god; ... it is worshipped by them, and their hearts are set on their treasures; ... and it will take a long time for the Saints to get rid of their old idols — their idolatrous notions and traditions." (JD 2:261) Brigham Young, too, pinpointed the problem (JD 1:164):

Elders of Israel are greedy after the things of this world. If you ask them if they are ready to build up the kingdom of God, their answer is prompt — "Why, to be sure we are, with our whole souls; but we want first to get so much gold, speculate and get rich, and then we can help the Church considerably."

And of course our own President Kimball also

I am afraid that many of us have been surfeited with flocks and herds and acres and barns and wealth and have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have power over us. Do we have more of these good things than our faith can stand? Many people spend most of their time working in the service of a self-image that includes sufficient money, stocks, bonds, investment portfolios, property, credit cards, furnishings, automobiles, and the like to guarantee carnal security throughout, it is hoped, a long and happy life.

If wealth were the only false god with which mortals had to contend, we at Ricks College would, I think be relatively safe, having virtually banished it from our midst. But I believe that there are other potential idols which, although no more sinister, are equally able to lure us from the worship of the one true God. They may in fact be better able to do that because they are less conspicuously dangerous. Mammon, no matter how

hard she tries to doll up, never fails to creak on the makeup until it is painfully obvious that beneath it all she is only another prostitute. Some other idols, I contend, are liable to lead us away from the Lord precisely because they appear — and indeed are, if we will only keep them in their places — as wholesome as Donny and Marie.

There is a story in the Old Testament which I think illustrates the problem. You remember that there is quite a long stretch of Old Testament history during which the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah were ruled by a series of kings. A good share of the kings were wicked and, like King Noah of the Book of Mormon, they led their people into unrighteousness. When Hezekiah took the throne of Judah at the age of twenty-five, everything changed. The scripture says that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did." (2 Kings 18:3) The first thing he did was start smashing idols: "He removed the high places [where the heathen worshipped], and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made ..." (2 Kings 18:4) You remember the brazen serpent. When the fiery serpents were biting the children of Israel, Moses, at the Lord's command, "made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." (Numbers 21:9) Alma says explicitly that the brass serpent was a "type" of Christ. (Alma 33:18,19) Anyway, Hezekiah broke it into pieces, the scripture says, "for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it ..." The Israelites were worshipping a symbol of the Savior, a symbol that the Savior Himself had commanded Moses to fashion. But the fact that the object of their worship was only one step removed from the true God did not keep their worship from being idolatry. The serpent was really a good thing, given by God, to direct them to Him, but they made it an idol by worshipping it instead of Him.

The golden calf presents another, although less vivid, example. For many years I wondered at the foolishness of the Israelites in turning from the Lord to worship a statue. It is obvious from the scripture that it held great allure for them, and was much more of a temptation than you or I might at first expect. Some people suggest that at the root of the matter was fornication, which typically accompanied such worship in Egypt. But there is, I believe, more to the story. Aaron explained to Moses that the people gave him their gold, and then, in his words, "I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." (Exodus 32:24) But then Aaron proclaimed a feast to the Lord. (Ex. 32:5) How could he have been so confused? The calf was not new to the Israelites as a religious symbol. Part of the law was to offer up a bullock, on an altar, to the Lord. Why? The answer is given in the book of Moses: "This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth." (Moses 5:7) The golden calf was a symbol of Christ. Of course, making it was a sin. Jehovah forbade it because He knew that once they made it they would worship it.

What I am trying to say is this: nothing is so good that, if we worship or adore it more than we do the Lord, it does not become an idol. The insidiousness of

some idols is that they appear to be so innocent. Perhaps they are good things. Perhaps they are given or revealed by Jesus Himself. Perhaps in 99% of the cases they are not idols. Perhaps the Lord wants us to love them, although not more than we love Him. None of those facts can obscure the first of the Ten Commandments: nothing is so good that, if we worship it instead of God, it does not become an idol. You may be surprised at the idols people can choose.

Jesus told the Pharisees, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39) Wasn't it rather odd for Jesus to be telling the Pharisees that they needed to read the scriptures more? It would indeed have been odd if He had meant that. No one needed to tell them to put in their 15 minutes per day. They had probably begun as small boys to memorize long passages of the books of Moses. By the time they were trying to catch Jesus in His own words the scriptures had become to them — as you might by now guess — an idol. Jesus told them so: "in them ye think ye have eternal life." They believed that the scriptures, not the Savior, were the key to salvation. The point Jesus made was that the very scriptures which the Jews used against Him actually testified of him: "they are they which testify of me." The key word there is "me." Jesus is our God. The function of the scriptures is to lead us to Him, not to substitute for Him. If they become more important to us than He is, it is as if we are travelers more interested in our road map than in the destination it is supposed to guide us to. Even the scriptures can become an idol.

Nearly anything can. Consider these words of the Savior: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37) That is hard doctrine. Brigham Young also taught it: "While we live, it is our duty to love the Lord with all our might, and with all our strength, and with all our souls. This is our duty first and foremost; we ought to love Him better than our wives, children, and brethren and sisters, and all things besides. Is this our duty? verily yes." (JD 1:32)

My, President Young, what hard doctrine you teach! Don't you believe the family is important? No one, I think, could fault him on that score. His doctrine was no harder than that of Jesus before him, or President Kimball after him. The Lord is our God, we must love Him first. Does that mean that I ought not love my wife and children? Of course not. Does that mean that I should not honor my parents? No: by all means honor them. Does that mean that I must love Jesus more than I love my mother? Yes, that is what it means. More than your mother, and your father, and your brothers and sisters, and your wife, and your husband, and your house, and your car, and your country, and your stereo, and your mission, and your scriptures, and your ward, and the temple, and everything else. That is what Jesus meant when he said that the first great commandment was to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind.

By now you are probably asking yourselves why I am talking about this. I will tell you. Remember the Episcopal priest? He was working on an intellectual

challenge in his Pursuit of Excellence. Remember the Jews who thought they had eternal life in the scriptures? They were working on a spiritual challenge. And those Jesus warned not to love their families more than Him? They were working on a service challenge. Don't misunderstand — I am not suggesting that you abandon the Pursuit of Excellence. If I believed that pursuing excellence were wrong I would certainly not be speaking here tonight. By all means, pursue excellence. By all means, develop your minds. We are in fact commanded to serve Him with our minds. By all means, study the scriptures diligently. By all means, love your families. By all means, develop your bodies, make them strong and healthy. All those are good things and we are in fact duty-bound to do them.

My message is very simple, perhaps redundant: anything, even a good thing, perhaps most of all a good thing, can become an idol; all we have to do is worship it. Beautiful art is, I believe, inspired by God, but for that reason it can easily be taken as a substitute for God. Worshipping Michelangelo's David is no more righteous than worshipping Baal; it is only more tempting. The question is not whether the image was graven by an artist or by a priest, but whether anyone is kneeling before it.

The Gospel is not so much a self-improvement program as it is a self-sacrifice program. The archetypal Christian is not Sir Walter Raleigh, the last and foremost of the Renaissance men, but Abraham, who put his all on the altar, a sacrifice to God. If our eyes are riveted upon the Savior, we can safely pursue whatever paths He leads us to. We can enjoy the abundant life by developing our talents, our bodies, our minds, our characters, and our spirits. Indeed it is likely, I believe, that we will do so out of devotion to Him. And so I hope that you all enjoy your workshops; I hope that you never abandon the pursuit of excellence; and, most of all, I hope that none of us will ever let our devotion to any other thing weaken our devotion to the One whose devotion to us withstood even the jaws of death. In His holy name, Amen.

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