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AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

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- b) To encourage and support members' efforts to actively promote within their other professional organizations and the society at large the adoption and maintenance of moral standards and practices that are consistent with gospel principles.

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## Editorial

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This marks the last editorial I will write for the *Journal* as I was released from this assignment in October. I assumed the editorship for about four years even though I only promised Clyde Parker that I would do it for two. You know how it is: It is hard to look in people's faces who request your help and say no. But I finally did say no, but I promised to stay with it until this issue of the *Journal* was out. Authors and members may wonder why this issue has been so long in coming. The Association put the *Journal* on hold for six months in order to put out the new membership directory. The budget did not provide for both to be done at the same time. But here it is. I apologize to authors who have been waiting for quite a long time.

Many of the articles in this issue are write-ups of presentations made at our conventions. The articles by Allred, Bergin, De Hoyas, and Sorensen were part of a symposium put together and chaired by Burton Kelly in the Spring 1990 convention. Each address the theme of "Integrating the Gospel into Professional Practice." The Koltko article is an expansion of his presentation at the Fall 1989 convention. The Maughan, Nielsen, and Shaw articles have not been presented to an AMCAP audience before this issue.

I have enjoyed being the editor of the *Journal*. It has brought me into more intimate contact with many of you, and I have relished the intellectual and spiritual stimulation of your thoughtful pieces. I have always had the sense that I was involved in some-

thing very fine and that we were being of service to many people. I have been impressed with the appeal our *Journal* has to people—both within and without our profession. My secretary, for example, who has typed many of the manuscripts, never failed to comment on how impressed she was with the articles: she frequently mentioned how much she learned from this task. My colleagues in elementary education have also been excited by what they have seen in the *Journal*.

I have endeavored to upgrade the professionalism of the *Journal* during my stay. I would like to thank the associate editors and many other reviewers who have helped with the issues. I would also like to thank Andrew Ehat who has been our technical editor. Andrew is an unusual combination of Gospel scholar and technical whiz kid. We have continued a rather rigorous review process and the *Journal* is now a bona fide refereed journal, and more influential than a regional journal, with an acceptance rate of about 40 percent. We distribute over 600 copies, and we have over 50 international addresses. The *Journal* is now in several university libraries. We would also like to thank the members who take the time to prepare manuscripts and share their thoughts with us. We have a great new editor in Scott Richards, and I am sure you will be happy with what he produces for the organization.

We welcome manuscripts at any time. As always, we also welcome your comments.

Paul F. Cook, Editor

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# **The Psychological Foundations of the Mormon Client in Counseling and Psychotherapy**

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Mark Edward Koltko, MS

## **Abstract**

This paper comprises an analysis of selected psychotherapeutically relevant aspects of Mormonism, the religion of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Consideration is given to beliefs about religion, one's relationship to God, marriage and sexuality, grace and works, and personal inspiration, and the relevance of these beliefs for counseling and psychotherapy with Latter-day Saint clients. In addition, this paper considers the therapeutic relevance of religious history, demographics, community structure and polity, life-style, and characteristic gender issues arising from the social structure.

**I**t has been suggested that the Latter-day Saint gospel is a therapeutic staircase that an LDS client can use to ascend to wholeness (Christensen, 1990). This presentation concerns another aspect of that apt metaphor. There are occasions, even on the finest of staircases, when a walker will stumble, and sometimes even fall headlong. Therapists need to be aware of how Mormon clients can stumble on the Gospel staircase, and how this can be prevented.

Mormonism, like any religion, has psychological consequences (Kahoe, 1987). These consequences result in part from a religion's axiology (theory of values), ontology (theory of reality), and

epistemology (theory of knowledge). Mormonism presents a very distinct picture on these issues which is quite different from other religions (Christensen, 1990). But any religion, entirely apart from its inherent truth or falsity, psychologically strengthens its believers in some ways, *and* simultaneously will leave them vulnerable to psychological difficulties in other ways. (Why this should be so is a topic for a different discussion.)

The questions then arise, What psychological effect does the LDS religion have upon Mormons? How do Mormon belief, culture, social organization, and practice affect the psyche of the Latter-day Saint? In short, and to make the question specific to our profession, what are the psychological underpinnings of the Mormon client in counseling and psychotherapy?

In attempting to answer these questions, I draw upon clinical experience in conducting counseling and psychotherapy during the last eight years with Mormons, mostly converts, who resided in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. I also draw on other clinical accounts where possible.

This presentation has two objectives. One is to encourage more reflection about the interplay between religion and psychology within the individual Latter-day Saint. The second is to provide an outline for considering the special issues that attend counseling and psychotherapy with LDS clients.

Religion has many dimensions. Religion can involve affective experiences, child-rearing customs, ritual practices, and so forth. This presentation concentrates first on matters of belief and doctrine, and then on issues of culture and social organization, as these have psychological and psychotherapeutic relevance for the Mormon client.

### **Selected Beliefs and their Psychotherapeutic Consequences**

#### ***Mormon Axiology and Beliefs About Belief: "How Important and Potent Is My Religion?"***

The first item to consider is belief about belief itself. For example: "Does it matter if you believe that it doesn't matter what

you believe?" (Kahoe, 1987). This is a belief about the *importance* of one's religion. Another crucial belief regards the *potency* of one's religion: How much do believers expect from their religion? Is it supposed to improve their life circumstances? Does observance affect one's status in an afterlife?

On these issues, Mormon belief is clear. The highest blessings of the Mormon afterlife are reserved for those who accept LDS baptism and fulfill their Mormon religious and moral obligations. Also, Latter-day Saints consider their gospel to be a comprehensive guide to happiness in this life and the next. Thus, Mormons believe that their religion is both very important and very potent. One positive psychological consequence is that Mormons feel that they have a powerful tool for meeting life's challenges.

There are psychotherapeutic consequences to the belief that one's religion is very potent. Many Mormons are subject to what may be called "the Myth of Invincible Righteousness" (Koltko, in press). This myth is expressed in statements like the following: "Since the answers to all problems can be found in the gospel, 'outside' counseling and psychotherapy are not necessary if people are living the gospel as they should." In short, Mormons tend to feel that if they live their religion, they should never need therapy (Clark, 1978; Hunt and Blacker, 1968; Langlois, 1983). When a Mormon appears in therapy, it is often with guilt, with the feeling that turning to treatment is a denial of the power of the faith (L. A. Moench, 1985).

In the face of these feelings, the therapist may wish to model the attitude that an admission of individual difficulty is different from a statement that "my religion has failed." The attitude to convey might be that "the teachings of [one's religion] cannot banish personality problems; they can only offer a program for achieving maturity" (Payne, 1980).

The therapist may need to describe the limitations of therapy. For Mormons, who believe that any blessing is obtainable "by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 130:21), it can be difficult to accept that there is much to gain from therapy, given that we do not know all the laws of

human behavior or therapeutic change. Mormons are typically ill at ease with the notion that therapeutic exploration can be a time-consuming process with many detours and no guarantee of success.

Because Mormons feel that their religion has comprehensive explanatory power, some Mormons describe problems in religious terms rather than acknowledge their emotions. If religion becomes a form of intellectualizing defense, it is important to consistently shift focus to feelings. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi noted this in his work with a Mormon client:

[B., the client,] felt superior to his parents in terms of religious ethics. The superiority feelings had to do with the religious taboo against premarital sex, which he had observed, while his parents had not. . . . He was worried about a lot more than the breaking of the religious taboo, but could express his shame and rage legitimately by reacting to the formal transgression, rather than his own hurt. It was easier for him to claim his superiority . . . than to deal with the way his early impressions of sex had affected him. I attempted to help him go beyond the religious view and into a more personal way of experiencing his relationships to his parents. (Beit-Hallahmi, 1975, p. 358)

***Mormon Ontology and Beliefs About Human Relationship to God: The LDS Doctrine of Ancestry from and Progression to Godhood***

Prominent theorists have hypothesized that one's concept of God affects one's personality (Kahoe, 1987). Some of the most distinctive Mormon beliefs concern God and the relationship between God and people.

A classic Mormon aphorism states, "As man now is, God once was: as God now is, man may become" (Snow, quoted in *My Kingdom Shall Roll Forth*, 1980, p. 68). Mormons teach that all human spirits are the literal offspring of divine parents, referred to as Heavenly Father and Mother. For the Mormon, God and mortal belong to the same race of being, but are at different stages of development. The process of this development is called "eternal progression."

Emotionally, this belief seems to provide a cosmic sense of security and belongingness, purpose and direction. However, the doctrine of eternal progression can expose Mormons to an exquisite sense of shame. The shame centers on the idea, "I *know* that I am



a god-in-embryo; if *I* have problems or do something unworthy, there must be something defective with me”—as if somehow the client were a flawed prototype, bad clay fit only to be discarded rather than further molded into the divine form. For many clients, coming to therapy involves demoralization or an admission of inadequacy (Garfield, 1978). For the Mormon client, however, this sense of inadequacy may have cosmic overtones.

Mormons feel that God is the ultimate role model. They often quote the biblical words of Jesus: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Since, in its full sense, this goal is literally unattainable in mortal life, within some Saints a sense of failure arises regarding the issue of perfection, a sense of failure which is associated with serious depression (Ericksen, 1979).

It may be worthwhile to assist the client to reconceptualize human “perfection,” not as a final state of flawlessness, but as a process, an *orientation* toward goodness (Peters, 1987). Alternatively, one might help the client to *tolerate* imperfection even while striving for perfection.

The LDS concept of the afterlife has kept some Mormons from succumbing to the suicidal ideation which often accompanies major depression (Degn, 1985). For the typical Mormon, suicide is not so much a solution as merely a “change of scenery” where one is still accompanied by one’s problems (L. A. Moench, personal communication, May 30, 1988).

A change in this client attitude can be an important warning to the therapist. When the sense of cosmic purpose completely leaves a Mormon who is usually observant, this may be a prelude to suicide. The therapist needs to beware of “ordinary existential meaninglessness” in the Mormon client; the client’s life is usually so intertwined with a sense of mission that the loss of this sense is very serious.

The practitioner may gain therapeutic leverage from the LDS doctrine of the person’s relationship to God. One of my clients, D., had been a victim of repeated sexual abuse by several family members as a child. This client had internalized so negative a self-

image that as an adult she considered suicide. A turning point in therapy came when we explored her self-feelings and contrasted them with her stated faith in the position that "I am a child of God." D. ultimately agreed that even the horrible experiences she had lived through did not affect either her status as divine offspring, or her eligibility for godhood. This helped the client to refrain from suicide.

### ***Marriage in the New and Everlasting Covenant***

The doctrine of eternal progression has important implications for the LDS concept of marriage. Mormon scripture explicitly states that those who obtain the highest reward available after mortal life first "must enter into . . . the new and everlasting covenant of marriage" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 131:2), which is to say, marriage in the temple for time and eternity. Those who obtain the highest reward "pass . . . to their exaltation and glory in all things, . . . which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. Then shall they be gods" (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 132: 19–20). Such couples will create spirit children eternally, to populate other worlds.

As a result of this belief, one of the central hopes of most Latter-day Saints is to have a fulfilling marriage to another Latter-day Saint which has been celebrated in the temple. Although Mormons may be married in a public religious ceremony in one of their meeting houses, temple marriage (also called "celestial marriage" or "the new and everlasting covenant of marriage") is considered highly preferable. Mormons believe that if the parties to a temple marriage fulfill their moral and religious obligations, the couple's marriage shall last, not "until death do us part," but throughout all eternity.

The doctrine of celestial marriage is a powerful impetus towards making an earthly marriage work. This may account for the finding that Mormon divorce rates are often somewhat lower than those for non-Mormon marriages. On the other hand, one sometimes notes a tendency for Latter-day Saints to remain in unions which are deeply painful or even virtually hopeless, out of a desire to preserve their "forever family." At least until recently,

divorced persons were subject to an unofficial but powerful stigma in Mormon communities.

The clinician may find it useful to help a client understand that the importance of a “forever family” does not require enduring abuse or a hopelessly mismatched marriage. It is particularly important to show respect for the desire to attain a worthy temple marriage, as this is central to Mormonism as a whole. At the same time, it is crucial to attend to issues of shame, feelings of failure on a cosmic scale, and the difficulties which certain demographic groups will face in attempting to find a partner for a temple marriage (see below).

### *Sexuality*

The doctrine of eternal progression has implications for Mormon sexuality. The idea that Heavenly Father and Mother have physical bodies and engender spiritual children such as ourselves gives a positive sanction to some forms of sexual behavior. Mormonism is unique among Christian denominations in its assertions that it is proper to speak of God in the plural, that the Gods have physicality, that the Gods have gender, that the Gods have physical bodies, and that the Gods procreate.

Given what appear to be scriptural statements that some form of sexuality is an important and valuable element of human and divine life, several aspects of contemporary Mormon life appear puzzling. Why are so many Mormons singularly uninformed about sexual matters? Why are Mormon families often unwilling to discuss sexual matters, except to concentrate on what *not* to do?

Recently, the historian D. Michael Quinn (1990) has used the psychoanalytic principle of identification with the aggressor to explain this paradox. In brief, Quinn’s thesis is that the church’s encounter with intense and violent hostility at the hands of mainstream American culture in the late Nineteenth Century resulted in the church identifying with the Victorian morals of that culture in order to vitiate the conflict. Another way to put this is that, faced with a culture which could not be escaped, ignored, or overcome, the Mormon people decided that “if you can’t beat ’em, join ’em,” and identified with their aggressors. Since those

aggressors held to a very repressive form of Victorian morality, at least in public, Victorian reticence to discuss sexuality became grafted onto the Mormon identity. Or at least, so goes Quinn's theory.

Quinn's hypothesis suggests that a therapist may appeal to underlying Mormon values to encourage client openness in discussions of sexuality. That is, the Mormon doctrines which positively value sexuality, and give it a place among the attributes of divinity, may give the therapist leverage against the social Victorian modes of thought which have since come to overlay in part the more basic Mormon belief structure. By appealing to the client's basic belief that sexuality is good, and not inherently sinful, the therapist may help break through the Victorian reticence to discuss sexuality which one sometimes notes in the LDS client, while still not compromising the client's belief structure.

Clinical experience does confirm that Latter-day Saints have characteristic problematic issues regarding sexuality. Mormons learn in various ways that progression to godhood depends in part on a strong commitment to "purity," but there has been confusion in recent years about what constitute "pure" sexual practices. Mormon couples sometimes agonize about issues like the propriety of delaying the conception of children in order to complete education or establish a career; they may be concerned about whether foreplay or certain positions for sexual intercourse should be considered natural or impure (Cannon, 1976; Day, 1988; Mackelprang, 1992).

This consideration of LDS attitudes towards sexuality has therapeutic implications. First, it is useful for the therapist to make clear to clients that, even though the therapist accepts the clients' right to choose their values, it is important in therapy to investigate feelings about those values, even about sacred things like sexuality. Emphasize that investigating feelings is not an attack upon the values or objects to which those feelings adhere. For example, clients must understand that talking about their difficulties in practicing certain aspects of the principle of chastity is not to attack or reject that principle. This approach is useful in addressing many issues in therapy, but is particularly valuable in regard to sexuality.

Second, when clients are confused about religious proprieties regarding sexuality, do not let the sexual nature of their questions overshadow the fact that the client's feelings about spirituality are often central to the issue. One rarely comes to grips successfully with a spiritual issue through a sexual homework assignment.

Third, therapists need to keep themselves informed about several issues regarding sexuality and Mormonism. Being aware of current authoritative church policy and counsel regarding sexual issues is important in order to understand LDS clients's concerns, but even this is only part of the task. Therapists must also be aware of how church policy has developed in regard to sexual issues. It is true that maintaining an awareness of how church policy has unfolded is not the easiest thing to accomplish, because the church does not always call attention to policy developments. However, it is clear that policies regarding sexuality have evolved even over the course of the last decade (Day, 1988; Mackelprang, 1990). It is important for therapists to be knowledgeable in these areas, to be able to counteract myths and misconceptions regarding standards of sexual conduct, myths and misconceptions which are frequently encountered among members of the church.

Fourth, although this should go without saying, do not suggest to clients that they violate authoritatively stated LDS moral standards. This is an extension of a more general principle: If clients of any denomination adhere to a sexual code of conduct which is supported by their religious community, do not suggest that they violate that code (Greenberg, 1987; Maxwell, 1976). If the client accepts such a suggestion, the client may incur a burden of guilt which far outweighs the educational value of the sexual experiment (L. G. Moench, 1970). If the client does not accept the suggestion, the client may feel that the therapeutic alliance was compromised by the therapist's insensitivity to client values. Sexual values are an important part of core spiritual values. Core spiritual values which an individual willingly accepts cannot be violated without a price which probably outbalances whatever "benefit" is purchased.

### ***Grace and Works: The Mormon Doctrines of the Atonement and Free Agency***

The psychologist, Richard Kahoe (1987), has suggested that "there are surely . . . psychological consequences of whether one rests on God's grace or one's own good deeds for relationship with the divine." For Mormons, at least officially, *both* grace and deeds are crucial. Mormon theology states that "it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (*Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 25:23). The Atonement of Christ paid the price for our sins, but we accept this blessing "by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel" (*Pearl of Great Price*, Article of Faith 2). In practice, however, much emphasis is placed on good works and obedience to commandments as demonstrations of faith. Indeed, Mormons may act as if "working out one's salvation" meant earning one's place in heaven through overtime. For Mormons, works are demonstrations of how one chooses to exercise one's "free agency" in the course of one's personal development toward righteousness.

"Free agency" has some nuances beyond what is usually discussed as "free will." Freedom of choice and the ability to largely control one's destiny are considered to be among the greatest gifts of God to humanity thus far. Every Mormon youngster is taught that a war was fought in heaven before the creation of the earth to preserve the agency of humankind. Frequently spoken of, agency is considered something to be cherished, preserved, even fought for.

The agency doctrine has implications for the types of therapy to which Mormons seem to be most receptive. Mormons are comfortable with the notion that one must *do* something to make progress and see change. Mormons prefer therapeutic modalities which seem to emphasize the exercise of agency by focusing on conscious thought and overt behavior, modalities like cognitive or behavioral interventions.

Mormons are averse to therapies which appear to interfere with the exercise of agency. Mormons believe that they can and should solve their problems through diligent work and willpower, rather than rely on medications or hypnosis, which the client may consider "crutches." When medication is indicated, or is a

preferred adjunct to psychotherapy, I have found it helpful to tell the client that, in the long run, such techniques permit a greater exercise of free agency. Like an arm cast, these methods temporarily restrict movement in some directions in order to develop greater overall freedom of movement later on.

Many Mormons feel that dynamically-oriented therapies occupy a suspicious middle ground between methods which deserve outright client resistance and those which can gain tentative client acceptance. Mormonism's emphasis on action (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961/1973) makes it easy for Mormons to undervalue insight. As a group, Mormons have a relatively low tolerance for ambiguity and paradox; they seem leery of the existence of conflicting unconscious motives and drives. They may be concerned that dynamic therapy will be too unfocused or will "take too long."

This is *not* to say that therapists should only use modalities which are an "easy sell" to their clients. There are many situations, for example, where a dynamic therapy is the treatment of choice for a Mormon client. However, to implement any treatment program, it is useful to know what inclinations may exist in the client, to help guide inquiry into this issue.

When it comes to Mormon clients, a therapist must be able to honestly justify a treatment plan on the basis of enhancing the expression of the client's agency. Therapists who ignore LDS concerns on this issue risk encountering massive and avoidable client resistance. I have known LDS clients to flee therapy because of concerns about agency. Some of these clients later found therapists who would listen empathically to client concerns about agency. These therapists could then explain how therapy can enhance a client's ability to exercise free agency. The result was that clients were able to accept and follow the same therapeutic strategies which they had fled before.

The emphasis on agency inclines some Mormons to equate self with action. The biblical statement that "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18) often seems translated by the Mormon to mean "I am what I do." This becomes problematic when a

Mormon does something which violates the LDS moral code. If the client has little tolerance for conflicting desires, this Mormon may interpret a serious (especially a sexual) transgression to indicate that, globally, "I am evil." Mormons typically feel that they are totally responsible for all their actions and feelings—an attitude which, when taken to extremes, can result in despair, depression, and inaction bordering on paralysis. This is manifest in the following letter, written by an alcoholic Mormon.

Right now I am looking . . . down into the sewer through a bottle of booze. I guess I thought it might help to replace the happiness of the morality of which I robbed myself and the last bit of worldly success that my peers rightfully took from me . . . I am alone. On my trip down the gutter I chose to be alone. Now I have no choice. What I do, I will do alone. I got myself here. Sometimes I feel as if I were enclosed by a steel ball. No escape; there is nothing I can do. (Anonymous, 1970, p. 42).

As Clark has observed, "Mormons are forbidden to drink alcohol, but when one does, he is more likely to become alcoholic and more refractory to treatment" (Clark, 1978).

The therapist might help the client to temper the agency orientation with the knowledge that we are *not completely* free at every moment. Mormon doctrine (Oaks, 1987) recognizes that people have different inherent strengths and weaknesses. One might convey the idea that a given limitation in reality should not be translated into a self-derogating fantasy. For example, the fact that the client may always struggle to live up to some standard does not mean that the client is worthless or morally crippled. Mistakes or problems show that one is a limited being, but not a depraved one.

If the client is determined to measure self-worth on the basis of how well she or he "lives the commandments," the therapist might find an interim solution in modeling the attitude that *all* elements should enter the balance—not just the area in which the client may "break the commandments," but also commendable aspects of the client's life, such as "compassion, charity, community service or other virtues and deeds" (Clark, 1978). Ultimately, this may help the client to reach an understanding that is inherent in Mormon



theology, namely, that one's worth before God is independent of one's obedience and one's past. It may be helpful in this respect for the client to be reminded that, in Mormon doctrine, aside from murder and a relatively rare form of apostasy, all sins are potentially forgivable upon repentance.

This knowledge was helpful with D., the adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse mentioned earlier. She revealed that in order to escape from sexual abuse as a child, she diverted the abuser's attention to one of her siblings, preparing the way for her own escape. To help the client cope with the guilt which this invoked, it was critical to appeal to the concept of limited freedom (akin to a plea of "reduced capacity") on the grounds of youth, suggesting that even if this were a sin, it seemed potentially forgivable in the frame of reference of the client's religion.

### ***The Mormon Lifestyle***

The agency doctrine underlies Mormon daily life. Mormons *do* a lot. (Or, at least, they are *supposed* to do a lot.) There are three hours of worship and classes on Sunday, and observant ("active") Mormons typically have at least one teaching or administrative office ("calling") which requires time each week. Mormons are encouraged to hold private and family scripture study and prayer. Beyond these items, which are common to many religions, their church exhorts Mormons to donate 10% of their gross income, to write personal journals and family histories, attend temple worship, plant gardens, store a year's food supply, and be active in civic affairs.

One also *does not* do a lot of things as a Mormon. Pre-marital, extra-marital, and autoerotic sexuality are prohibited, as is homosexuality (Pearson, 1986). Deviations from these standards occur, of course, and "often appear in the clinical situation" (A. E. Bergin, personal communication, October 3, 1988). Mormons are taught not to consume alcohol, tobacco, tea, or coffee. Business and recreation are not to be engaged in on Sunday, and gambling is prohibited.

Mormonism provides, then, a rich repertoire of coping activities, which constitute one avenue by which religion contributes to

individual adjustment (Pargament, 1988). But while this life-style holds many positive consequences for psychosocial development and physical health, there is a downside as well. "A whirlwind of activity may have the purpose of avoiding emotion and closeness. . . . While the idle mind may be the devil's workshop, frenetic activity is the exorcist of emotion" (L. A. Moench, 1985, p. 70). "The church and church service can become an escape for people to throw their energies into to avoid facing the fact that they have serious marital and family problems" (Langlois, 1983, p. 13). "Mormon burnout" is also a risk, especially for Mormons in the 25-to-50-year-old age range, when children are home, and educational and professional demands are intense.

The activity patterns of the church legitimize obsessive-compulsive tendencies (Payne, 1980). And the activities performed are often not of the reflective variety. For example, more Mormons attend church for one to three hours weekly than engage in private scripture study for one hour; more saints pay a full tithe than engage in meaningful daily prayer (Goodman and Heaton, 1986). Marlene Payne's (1980) case study illustrates many of these issues:

[A] woman in therapy . . . realized that she felt worthwhile only when she was busy. She felt she could not even afford to "waste time" in the evenings by sitting quietly with her husband. She felt anxious at such times, also concerned because he complained that they never talked intimately. Since it took him a while to move from trivia to deeper subjects, her activity destroyed all possibility of this intimacy. . . . She revealed a demanding and critical conscience. Often critical of other people, she was more critical of herself. Her performance was never quite good enough; she was never sensitive enough of others. Tears filled her eyes as she produced painful self-accusation. She suffered frequent depressions because her ideals were so high that she could never live up to them. . . . She realized that she had identified with her mother and internalized her father's voice as her conscience. She also felt that her state of mind was consistent with the teachings of the gospel. Aren't we here to achieve perfection, to improve step by step, to ceaselessly evaluate faults? . . . As this woman proceeded with therapy, she became less critical of herself. She began to see her worth as an individual, quite aside from the worth of her productions. This was possible because she was valued and accepted in the therapist-patient relationship in a way her parents had been unable to offer. She became more able to set limits on the requests of others. As occurs with so

many good church members, she [had] felt guilty if she ever said "No." . . . She set a more reasonable pace for her activities. She was less tired and irritable and more available to others, better able to give loving service. She could pray better because her efforts to concentrate were no longer blocked by obsessive ruminations about her activities.

The therapist might help the Mormon become more "inward-oriented" by using techniques which are compatible with LDS religious practices. For example, since their religion encourages Mormons to keep journals, one might suggest that the client use the Intensive Journal (Progoff, 1975) or New Diary (Rainer, 1978) approaches. Some forms of meditation, used as avenues for self-exploration, may also be appropriate for the Mormon (Koltko, 1989b, 1990b).

Also, the therapist might encourage the Mormon to attend the temple periodically. Temple rites are sacred and are not to be discussed outside the temples—even with one's therapist (Leone, 1985; Talmage, 1912/1962; *Temples*, 1988). However, modern Mormon temples share a number of potentially therapeutic characteristics with ancient temples and ancient forms of proto-therapy (Ellenberger, 1970). The temple is a symbol of wholeness, a vehicle for individuation in the Jungian sense, and a primal source for gaining knowledge about a transcendent reality (Lundquist, 1990a, 1990b). Individuation and transcendence inherently involve a high form of therapeutic activity and healing. Thus, the busy "active" Mormon might benefit from temple attendance, not to do "temple work," but to do "inner work."

### ***Mormon Epistemology: The Doctrine of Personal Revelation***

Mormons believe that people may receive individual inspiration ("revelation") directly from God. Inspiration may come in a variety of ways, such as "pure intelligence flowing into you . . . sudden strokes of ideas" (J. F. Smith, 1938/1976). A small number of Mormons report that they have had a vision. There are similarities between these phenomena and a believer's experiences in the ecstatic or mystical groups which are found in *all* major religious groups (Koltko, 1989b).

The issue of personal revelation raises diagnostic questions, especially, but not exclusively, for the non-Mormon psychothera-

pist. It is relatively easy for a therapist to shrug off most Mormon beliefs as anthropological oddities—unusual, but not pathological. Personal inspiration is a different matter. Some therapists consider the mere occurrence of a supposed personal revelation to be delusional or hallucinatory. Mormons feel that this is a common opinion among therapists. Many Mormons are reluctant to discuss these occurrences with the typical therapist because Mormons (like others) do not wish a sacred part of their lives to be considered a sign of mental illness.

Most Mormons who have confided to me their instances of revelation have been rather “normal” and healthy people. If pathology or maladjustment was manifest, it was usually independent of the occurrence of personal revelation. The small amount of research which has addressed Mormon personal revelation bears out these observations (Bergin, et al., 1988), paralleling results obtained in research with members of other religions who report mystical experiences (Hood, 1974, 1975; Mallory, 1977).

The question of whether or not hallucination or delusion is involved in the personal inspiration of religious people should be answered in the context of the whole lives of the persons involved (Westermayer, 1987). Psychosis and other forms of psychopathology do exist among Mormons with the typical incidences, and pathology does manifest in religious forms (L. A. Moench, 1985); however, the *a priori* assumption that psychosis, delusion, or hallucination explains an instance of personal inspiration is unjustified. Even the DSM-III-R (which is not known for its spiritual sensitivity) states:

Beliefs or experiences of members of religious or other cultural groups may be difficult to distinguish from delusions or hallucinations. When such experiences are shared and accepted by a cultural group, they should not be considered evidence of psychosis (American Psychiatric Association, 1987, p. 193).

The clinician may find it helpful to approach Mormon revelation in a positive fashion through the frameworks of Jungian analytical psychology or one of the transpersonal approaches (for example, Boorstein, 1980; Vaughan, 1985).

## **Selected Aspects of Social Structure and Culture and their Psychotherapeutic Consequences**

### ***History***

Mormon history is largely a history of struggle. Violent and often deadly persecution drove early Mormons from New York and Pennsylvania ultimately to the deserts of Utah in 1847, where they struggled for generations with hostility both from the environment and from the federal government. Although since World War II the balance of public perception has shifted towards a largely positive view of the church, the church today is criticized from both ends of the religion-political spectrum, either because of the church's conservative social policy stances, or because of the non-orthodox character of its doctrines in comparison with other Christian churches.

The exigencies of Mormon history have shaped a cohesive "near-nation" (O'Dea, 1957, p. 115), with a strong ethic of both self-reliance and mutual assistance. But, corresponding to the presence of a helping community is a reticence to seek help outside of that community. There is a particular suspicion about non-Mormon therapists, especially regarding whether such therapists will ridicule or attempt to dissuade Mormons from their religion (Hunt and Blacker, 1968).

The historical need for unity against external hostility has exacted a price. As a group, Mormons do not accommodate criticism well, even when that criticism comes from within, and this has consequences for individual adjustment. As one Mormon put it:

At times, I am uncomfortable at church because I do not always feel or think the way the "orthodox Mormon" should. I sometimes get angry because the church makes people like me feel like they cannot share feelings without being labeled a "liberal," "intellectual apostate," or "closet doubter." (Quoted in Bohn, 1986, p. 134)

Clients like this may seek the freedom in therapy to express and investigate doubts which they feel they cannot express or investigate within the church; they may feel guilt about these doubts, which they may sense as a betrayal of their religion and community.

Therapists should be sensitive to the affect surrounding such doubts, even though therapists must not unethically portray themselves as competent to render authoritative decisions concerning theological questions (Taylor, in Langlois, 1988).

### *Demographic issues*

Two demographic aspects of Mormon social culture deserve attention here: the growth of the church, and the numerical balance of the genders within it.

*Community growth.* Over 330,000 converts to the LDS church were baptized worldwide in 1990 ("Official Report," 1991). I estimate that half of these lived in the United States. Mormon conversion is not rare, but it can precipitate serious conflict between converts and their families. Families may feel hurt by the rejection of the family religion, or by the time which converts devote to new religious roles. If an unmarried convert plans to become a full-time missionary (to serve away from home for about two years), or to marry in a Mormon temple (to which only faithful Mormons are admitted), the family's sense of injury may greatly increase. The thought that they have betrayed their families can create intense guilt for converts, who face the dissonant situation that their new religion, which values family life highly, may itself divide their own families.

The therapist should be alert with converts for themes of family conflict. These issues, often deeply embarrassing for the client, require delicate inquiry.

*Numerical gender imbalance.* Some investigators have noted a substantial numerical gender imbalance in the church in the United States and Canada. For example, there are 89 males for every 100 females aged 20 to 29 years. Considering levels of religiosity, for all singles over 30 there are 19 "active" men (i.e., who attend church weekly) for every 100 active women. "Marriage to an active male is demographically impossible for many active single females over 30" (Goodman and Heaton, 1986, p. 91).

The therapist should be aware of the difficult situation which these demographics dictate for many single active Mormon adult females. Their dilemma is either to not marry, or to marry an

“inactive” Mormon or a non-Mormon—all of which choices are problematic in the LDS faith.

### ***Community Structure and Polity***

Individual Mormon congregations or “wards” are headed by bishops. Wards are directed and staffed largely by a male lay priesthood, with leadership positions rotated frequently. The priesthood line of authority in the church is clearly delineated from the individual member up through the “General Authorities,” who direct the church, to the Prophet himself. This hierarchy is well-known and frequently referred to among Mormons.

Perhaps as a result of their sharply defined hierarchy and a concomitant emphasis on priesthood authority, “too many Mormons seem to suffer from developmental arrest with obedience, always looking up for direction” (L. A. Moench, 1985, p. 67). The therapist should be particularly alert for authority issues. These include masked hostility or resentment towards authority, as well as an exacerbation of tendencies towards dependence or authoritarianism.

It may be difficult for the client to express openly an underlying hostility towards church or other authority. Partly this is because church authorities are powerful parental figures; the bishop is sometimes referred to as “the father of the ward.” Partly this is because some LDS religious authorities teach that criticism leads to personal apostasy. It may help the client for the therapist to convey the view that the uncovering of one’s private feelings in the context of therapy is different from creating disharmony in one’s ward or nurturing personal disaffection. These may all appear equivalent to the client. The client may profit from the concept that an exploration of feelings—*any* feelings—is neither endorsement, encouragement, nor a broadcasting of these feelings.

The emphasis which Mormons put on priesthood authority can result in a misconceived notion about psychotherapy and counseling. Mormons who seriously need professional help but resist it may justify this resistance by reciting “the Myth of the In-House Counseling Staff” (Koltko, in press): “We have bishops and other priesthood leaders to handle all our counseling needs. These men

are entitled to receive revelation from God on behalf of the members under their stewardship, so we should trust in their guidance rather than rely on so-called 'professionals.'" This myth betrays a serious misunderstanding of psychotherapy and counseling, church policy, and the role of bishop. It may be necessary for a therapist to discuss these issues in some detail with a client. (For an illustration of how these issues may be approached, see Koltko, in press).

### *Issues of Authority and Gender*

The Mormon priesthood comprises virtually all active Mormon men. A type of counterpart organization exists for adult women, the Relief Society. However, the direct line of authority between the individual member and the General Authorities, and all of the latter, are composed of male priesthood holders.

In both male and female Mormons, one sometimes senses a tendency to generalize from a situation where specific male priesthood holders direct certain women in particular religious contexts to a feeling that men generally have authority over women generally in all contexts (B. Shaw in Langlois, 1988). Note also that although a woman might seek personal counsel from a Relief Society officer or visiting teacher, "official" counsel comes from a priesthood leader. For "official" counsel about personal concerns, women seek counsel from men, and men do not seek counsel from women.

The psychotherapist may find a special dynamic in the client's relationship to the therapist's gender. The client may tend to see a male therapist as having more "authority" than a female one. In addition, the matter of "appropriate" gender roles may well become an issue in therapy.

Finally, therapists should carefully monitor their own feelings when gender issues are broached with Mormon clients. Whenever the social ideology which is prevalent among university graduates strongly conflicts with a facet of a client's religion (as seems to be the case with contemporary Mormon gender roles), therapists should note that countertransference reactions are easily aroused.



### Conclusion

Religious beliefs can have powerful effects on psychotherapy. As we have seen, such beliefs can influence the client's receptivity to therapy, and can incline the client toward some therapeutic approaches rather than others. More important, religious beliefs help to form a client's attitudes about the self and its worth, about what that self should become, and provide answers to questions such as: What forms of lifestyle are to be preferred? Which forms of human experience are pathological, which are merely normal, and which are genuinely and healthily transcendent? We have seen that aspects of religious culture and social organization can influence a client's attitudes towards therapists, other authority figures, and gender roles. Religious culture can affect not only attitudes, but can shape a client's social reality in ways which will strongly influence the concerns which our clients will present in therapy. In brief, Mormonism as a body of doctrine and as a culture powerfully influences the formation and development of the psyches of our LDS clients.

In conclusion, I would like to share my personal views regarding how the wise therapist handles client religious beliefs. The wise therapist does *not* attempt to excise or change normative religious beliefs and values (in other words, the values and beliefs adopted by a community of believers over several generations). Those beliefs and values have been extant for much longer than the therapist's approach to treatment, simply because they probably have an important adaptive value for large numbers of people (Campbell, 1975).

The wise therapist uses information about a specific religion as a backdrop. It is most important to know what a client's religion means *to the client*, as well as what that religion "officially" states (J. Lopez, Personal Communication, 1988).

The wise therapist attends to the belief issues raised by the client's subgroup *within* the religion. Among Mormons, two subgroups which raise such issues are women (Burgoyne and Burgoyne, 1978; Degn, 1985; B. Shaw in Langlois, 1988; Morris, 1980; I. Smith, 1981; Spendlove, West, & Stanish, 1984; Thatch-

er, 1980) and unmarried people (Anderson, 1983; Johnson, 1983; B. Shaw in Langlois, 1988; Raynes and Parsons, 1983).

The wise therapist is aware that “inactive” or “lapsed” members of a religion may still have active issues relating to their faith. Among Mormons, 25% to 35% of the total membership may be inactive (May, 1980). “Many may disaffiliate from the Church by their actions, but their . . . personality and decision making and belief structure [are] still Mormon. It is important to look . . . for incongruities as clues for anxiety, guilt, [and] depression” (M. Raynes, personal communication, August 30, 1988).

Finally, the wise therapist skillfully uses the power inherent in a client’s beliefs to enhance the client’s functioning. As the statisticians might put it, religion is orthogonal to pathology. Religion can be a “help or a hazard” (Spilka, 1986), and each of the facets of Mormonism which I have mentioned may strengthen clients *and* leave them at risk simultaneously. I have emphasized in this presentation how certain aspects of a client’s beliefs may *bring* the client to therapy and affect the early stages of the work. Given the training in religious issues which most professionals receive (which is to say, next to nothing: Shafranske & Maloney, 1990), this emphasis is reasonable. However, the wise therapist goes beyond this emphasis, and seeks to bring the adaptive and healing powers in the client’s beliefs to bear on the client’s presenting concerns, helping the client progress through and *graduate* from the therapeutic encounter.

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# **From Death Unto Life: The Gospel and Therapeutic Psychologies**

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**B**oth psychological therapies and the gospel of Jesus Christ have as their primary aim “tending the soul,” so that persons can live freer and fuller lives. Indeed, the primary purpose of the gospel is therapeutic—to bring “liberty and eternal life” to persons by “healing” them (2 Nephi 2:27; 3 Nephi 9:13). Quite naturally, questions have arisen in the LDS academic community and elsewhere concerning the effect of religion on mental health, and the part psychological therapies might play in furthering the gospel’s therapeutic aim.

In what follows, I shall address some of these questions by doing two things. First, I will briefly present an overview—my interpretation of the gospel as a therapeutic framework. My attention will focus mainly on what healing the souls consists in; I will also consider how the gospel makes that healing possible. Despite the brevity of my discussion, I hope to expand somewhat our understanding of the therapeutic purpose and power of the gospel. Second, I will consider what roles social science might perform within the gospel framework. My central theme is that such enquiry can make an important contribution to the gospel’s therapeutic aim.

## The Therapeutic Purpose of the Gospel

### *From Death Unto Life*

The gospel has its primary purpose making possible the passing from Spiritual Death to Spiritual Life. We read that “Adam fell that men might be” (2 Nephi 2:2), and Jesus came that all persons might pass “from death unto life” (John 5:24). This transformation of the person—variously described as being born of God, born of the Spirit, purified—represent that core idea of the gospel as a therapeutic system. Clarifying what passing from Death to Life involves is a major concern of this paper.

What does scripture tell us about the nature of Life and Death? In the first place, everlasting Life is humankind’s highest possibility or ultimate good (*Doctrine and Covenants* 14:7; Moses 1:39). Eternal Death, as the opposite of Life, is humankind’s ultimate evil. Further more, eternal life, as the ultimate potential of persons, comprehends all human good, and eternal death encompasses all human evil. In other words, Life in its “fulness” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 88:29-31) and being alive to all good are the same things. Likewise, to be alive to evil, or dead to good, is the same as Death. In the words of the *Book of Mormon*, Death is perishing “from that which is good,” dying “as to things pertaining to righteousness” (2 Nephi 2:5; Alma 2:16; 5:42). Life, as the opposite of Death, is what being alive to good things of righteousness consists in (Mosiah 4:2; Moroni 7:20-21). Accordingly, passing from Death to Life involves moving toward one’s ultimate good by awakening to all that is good, or to things of righteousness. In scripture we read that those who undergo the rebirth of moving from Death to Life have “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2).

Life and Death may also be understood as forms of love—the “love of light” and the “love of darkness.” As we know, the love of light, or divine love, comprehends all good or all righteousness. Love is the mode of being alive; all good is its object; and righteousness is divine loves realization. For this reason, divine love comprehends the whole law (Matt. 22:36-40; Gal. 5:14). Similarly, the love of darkness encompasses all wickedness, or being alive to



evil. Together the love of light and the love of darkness encompass all modes of human pursuit.

To explain further, think of the two-fold relationship between divine love and Life. First, Life is the aim or end of divine love. Divine love seeks the ultimate good of all persons, and Life in its fulness is that good (Moses 1:4). Second, Life in its fulness is divine love's fruition as well as its end. Life in its fulness is what love constitutes when it aims properly at Life. Hence the saying of Jesus that he who loses his Life—he who loves as Jesus loves—realizes Life (Matt. 11:39).

So divine love should not be construed narrowly as one general ethical term among others, such as benevolence or beneficence. Divine love is divine *agape*—being alive to all good or fully righteous. We can see why, in the *Book of Mormon*, the “tree of life” represents both the “love of God” and “everlasting life” (Alma 32:40-41; 1 Nephi 11:22-23). Divine love and Life in its fulness, as well as being alive to good or things of righteousness, are different ways of characterizing the same thing. So to pass from Death unto Life consists in becoming a person of divine love.

What the nature of Life is can be clarified further by observing how scripture describes the experience of moving from Death to Life—of awakening to good or becoming filled with divine love. It is described as a mighty change of heart, as purification, as rebirth, as putting off one nature as a person and putting on another (Mosiah 4:2; 5:7; Alma 5:13-14; Eph. 4:22-24). Alma indicates what the experience of rebirth is like by using the analogy of the seed that grows into the “tree of life,” which represents, as we know, Life in its fulness, or God's love (1 Nephi 11:21-23; Alma 32:40-41). The “seed” in the analogy represents “the word,” or gospel of Christ; and the growth of the seed represent how we will experience the change from Death toward Life. When “planted” in the “heart”—or innermost being—and properly “nourished,” Alma says, the word will actually “swell” within the “breast,” “enlarge” the “soul,” and “expand” the “mind,” until one reaches “everlasting life” or a never ending fulness of existence (Alma 32:41; *Doctrine and Covenants* 88:29-31; 76:20,71). The word's growth in us, says Alma, will be “delicious” to us; and when

our souls are fully enlarged, and we enjoy Life in its fulness, our state of being will be “sweet above all that is sweet” and “most precious” (Alma 32:28, 42). Then we will be everlastingly “filled,” and will no longer “hunger” or “thirst” for purpose or fulfillment, because we will enjoy the final aim of all we desire—fulness of Life in the highest degree (Alma 32:41-42; *Doctrine and Covenants* 13:7; 88:29-31; 76:71).

We can see, then, what the word’s Life-giving growth is like, and what it is not like. For one thing, it is not a peak spiritual experience in which a person briefly but profoundly experiences full and transcendent humanity. Much less is it the feeling of a burning bosom, which may confirm, for example, a critical life decision during a moment of prayer or meditation (*Doctrine and Covenants* 9:8-9). Rather, a person experiences the word’s growth as a profound change in the innermost being or heart, which increasingly animates existence and transforms human nature until that person enjoys a permanent degree of human flourishing without equal. As Alma teaches, the word develops in the individual as a seed grows into a great tree, enlarging the soul with Life as it matures, until a lasting fulness of existence is reached. When a person fully embodies the word—when the tree of Life is fully grown and bears its fruit—he or she enjoys, as a permanent mode of being, that fulness of existence which is God’s greatest gift to humankind (4 Nephi 5:36; *Doctrine and Covenants* 14:7). That is what it is like to be filled with God’s love or to be alive, much like God, to all that is good (Moses 2:31). It is, as scripture sometimes refers to it, a state of “eternal happiness” (Alma 3:26; Mosiah 2:41) or “the fulness of the Father” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76: 20, 71).

### ***The Deep Structure of Human Existence***

One might think that Life and Death are categories peculiar to the gospel. If this were so then the gospel’s therapeutic aim—to make it possible for persons to pass from Death to Life—would be one view of human well-being among others. It would then be necessary to show, if possible, why we should prefer the gospel’s therapeutic purpose to other views of healing the soul. But Life and Death are not categories peculiar to the gospel. According to

scripture, Life and Death help form the deep structure of human existence everywhere. As overall human possibilities, they help constitute the natural frames of ways to live in all cultures. This means that the therapeutic aim of the gospel is rooted in human existence itself.

That this is so comes out in the *Book of Mormon* account of the beginnings and foundations of earthly existence. Consider first the story of the fall. This narrative reveals that, as far as earth experience is concerned, persons first came into existence as human agents—as beings with the power to choose and act—in relation to the grand alternatives of Life and Death. Symbolized by “the tree of life” and “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Moses 3:9), Life and Death made possible human agency in the “state of innocence” which defined the human situation before the fall. We read that without the opposition between Life and Death, “man could not act for himself”—human agency would not have been possible in the state of innocence—and hence, we may conclude, human beings would not have existed (2 Nephi 2:14-16).

The fall not only marks the beginning of human existence as we now experience it, but establishes the ongoing basic structure of that existence as well. Though transformed by the fall, the human situation everywhere is still one in which persons exist as agents in relation to the possibilities Life and Death, although now they face these grand alternatives in a state marked by the ways of Death rather than in a state of innocence. As Lehi says, all humankind in all times and places are “free according to the flesh” to choose “eternal life” or “eternal death” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Alma, in his teaching on the restoration of all things, also teaches that Life and Death help form the structure of human existence everywhere. In the resurrection and final judgment, he tells us, “all things” will be “restored” to their “natural frames” or “natural states.” As for humankind, the “soul” will be restored to the “body,” as will every “limb” and “joint;” “even a hair of the head shall not be lost” (Alma 40:23). Furthermore, persons shall be restored to the sort of persons they had become, the kind of lives they had lived, while in mortality. If, Alma says, the “works” of persons were “good in this life,” and “the desires of their hearts

were good," then they shall, "in the last day, be restored unto that which is good." But "if their works were evil, they shall be restored to that which is evil" (Alma 41:3-4). Being restored to good or evil means that persons enjoy either Life or suffer Death. As Alma puts it, they will receive "according to their desire, whether it be unto life or unto death" (Alma 28:4-5; 41:10-11). We should here bear in mind Alma's teaching, considered earlier, that Life comprehends being alive to good, or things of righteousness, and Death is perishing to good or righteousness (Alma 5:42; 2 Nephi 2:5).

So as we can see, Alma teaches that good and evil, Life and Death, help order the "natural states" of persons, just as "limb" and "joint" help form the human body's "natural frame." This is true of all persons everywhere, since the restoration of people to their natural states includes members of all cultures. All persons, whenever and however they live, face Life and Death as overall possibilities intrinsic to their natural state as human beings.

This being the case, it is natural and inevitable that all persons desire Life over Death. As we observed earlier, Life in its fulness consists in having a fully enlarged soul and expanded mind, being alive to good, enjoying a human flourishing that is "most desirable above all things" and "most joyous to the soul" (1 Nephi 11:21-23; Alma 32:28, 40-42; 5: 42). Whereas Death as the opposite of Life consists of having an impoverished soul and mind, a state of having perished to all good, a human misery that never dies and is the "gall of bitterness" (Alma 41:11), so no one can desire Death alone for its own sake. For anyone to have such a desire seems unintelligible. In fact, we should not wonder that persons everywhere typically "hunger" and "thirst" for Life, and Alma implies when he says that only "the word" can fully and lastingly satisfy the universal desire for Life (Alma 32:41, 43). Indeed, given the picture of human situation revealed in the story of the fall, the very point of human existence is to pass from Death unto Life.

### *The Light of Christ and Degrees of Life*

The deep structure of human existence being what it is, it follows that Life must serve as the universal measure of human good; so whether a way to live, or a therapeutic psychology, is good depends on its power to give Life and to avoid Death. That Life does serve as the universal standard of good comes out in Alma's teaching on the Universal "experiment" by which everyone can evaluate the adaptability of any way to live—or for that matter, a psychological therapy.

In teaching the gospel to the poor among the Zoramites, Alma uses the language of "experiment" to answer "the great question" in their "minds" concerning how they can know "whether the word be in the Son of God" (Alma 34:5; 32:26). In response to that question, Alma explains how anyone can discover that "the word," or gospel of Jesus Christ, is "good or true" by comparing it to "the seed" which grows into "the tree of Life" and thereby fully satisfies the measure of truth or goodness that applies to any way to live considered as "a seed" (Alma 32:28-33). He says that if any word about how to live gives Life (Alma 32:40)—if it enlarges the soul and expands the mind when planted and nurtured properly (Alma 32:28-29, 34), then it is good. But if it does not give Life under those circumstances, then it is not good. In Alma's words, "therefore, if a seed growth it is good, but if it growth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away" (Alma 32:32). So clearly, as Alma indicates, Life is both sufficient and necessary as a measure of how best to live. He tells the Zoramite poor that if they experiment upon the word using this universal measure, they will come to know that the word is good above all ways of living. For the word, and only the word, makes possible "everlasting life" (Alma 32:41)—or fulness of Life in its highest degree (*Doctrine and Covenants* 88:29-31)—Life that is "most precious" and "sweet above all that is sweet" (Alma 32:42).

We can see, then, what form the experiment takes by which anyone can know how best to live. It consists of determining the truth or goodness of any way to live, notably the word in Christ or

his gospel, according to its power to produce fulness of Life and thereby satisfy the universal measure of what is true or good.

The idea that Life constitutes the universal measure of good, because of how it helps from the deep structure and defines the point of human existence everywhere, explains how “the light of Christ” enlightens “every man that comes into the world” so he can discern good from evil. Consider further Alma’s teaching on the universal experiment. Alma understands, as *Book of Mormon* prophets before and after him do, that the “light of Christ” is “given to every man” so that he “knows good from evil” (Moroni 7:16, 19; Mosiah 16:9; Alma 38:9; 28:14). Now as Alma teaches, a person knows good from evil by means of Life as a measure of good. This means that the light of Christ, insofar as it enlightens humankind so that they can discern good from evil, must be Life (Alma 28:14). As Alma says, the word’s growth is good both because it produces “everlasting life” (Alma 32:41) and because it is “light” (Alma 32:35). His teaching here appears later in John, who says of Christ, “in him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). By that “light”—by that universal “measure” of good (Eph. 4:13)—every person may “lay hold on every good thing” and “be raised to eternal life” (Moroni 7:16:25, 48; Alma 32:32, 41).

Because Life through the light of Christ enlightens every person who comes into the world, Alma says that anyone will naturally “know” the word is “good” when it grows in him and gives him Life. Indeed, if a person completes the experiment upon the word, he will have a “perfect knowledge” of the word’s goodness because the word fully satisfies the measure of good within. As Alma puts it, the goodness of the word disclosed by its growth will be “real”—an undeniable actuality—for anyone who experiences it “because it is light”—because it fulfills the standard of good that helps form his or her very being. The text here is worth quoting in full:

O then is not [the word’s Life-creating growth] real? I say unto you, yea, because it is light and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good. (Alma 32:35)

Alma means that the realness of the word's goodness in indisputably discernible and therefore knowable by anyone because it fulfills the light, or Life, as the measure of good, by which all persons by nature "lay hold upon every good thing" (Moroni 7:16, 20:25; Alma 28:14; 38:9; 32:33-34, 41).

It is important to emphasize that Life as the measure of good is pluralistic as well as universal. What makes Life pluralistic is that it admits many degrees. This means that many ways to live—and perhaps many therapeutic psychologies as well—may have the means to give Life, though only the word can create Life in its fulness. Through modern revelation we know of three degrees of glory; and within the lowest degree there exist further degrees as numerous as the stars of heaven (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:98). Yet all three degrees of glory are organized according to whether they make possible a higher or lower degree of "fulness" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 88:29-31), meaning fulness of Life. All other ways to live—those whose purposes are evil—bring Death, or the denial of Life. Together the many degrees of Life and ways of Death, ordered as they are by the universal measure of good, encompass all possible natural states of persons now and in eternity.

So as we might imagine, within this legion of possible ways to live there is room for many different therapeutic psychologies, some that may promise some degree of "fulness," and others that may actually help bring Death. However, it is important to emphasize that the many degrees of Life made possible by different ways to live, and perhaps different psychological therapies, form a hierarchy in which the highest degree of Life—Celestial "fulness" or "fulness of the Father" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:71; 88:29-31)—is made possible only by "the word."

### ***Healing Awareness of the Word***

I have briefly reviewed the two basic aspects of the gospel as a therapeutic system. Its therapeutic aim—to enable persons to pass from Death unto Life—involves the purpose of human existence itself. And the gospel's power to realize that aim resides ultimately in the fact that it can enlarge the soul until a person is alive to all good and enjoys Life in its highest degree of fulness. The question

remains how that transformation comes about. The familiar answer is that the person must have faith in Christ, repent of sins, and be born of water and of the spirit. Then that person must continue in obedience to God as a reborn person. Though much could be written about how gospel principles and ordinances make possible the mighty change of self that constitutes rebirth, I will emphasize the special healing awareness that motivates and gives context to the process.

One does not put off the old person and put on the new merely through disciplined study and conscientious practice. We may be very good students of the scriptures, and diligently keep the commandments, finding a certain peace and satisfaction in doing so, and still remain unhealed and without much fulness to our lives. In fact, typically “the word” must break through our habitual and ordinary ways of interpreting and living its precepts in order for it to work the “mighty change of heart” that heals us. For most of us, as I want to illustrate, that breakthrough typically begins when one profoundly and personally experiences one’s human situation—that is, experiences movingly the way in which that person fails to promote Life, and participates instead in the ways of Death, suffering deeply from their effects, while at the same time realizing that becoming a being of divine love and enjoying its fulness lie open through the word.

Consider the rebirth of King Benjamin’s people recorded in the *Book of Mormon*. As prophet, Benjamin labored many years in the hope that his people might be made whole through the gospel (Words of Mormon 1:12-18; Mosiah 1:1). No doubt, because of his many years of teaching them, there was much about the gospel which the people, as he himself says, had “been taught” and “knew” (Mosiah 2:34-36). Indeed, just three years before Benjamin died, he described his people as “a diligent people in keeping the commandments” and a “highly favored people of the Lord” (Mosiah 1:11-13). Because of their obedience, the people “prospered” and their “enemies” had “no power” over them (Mosiah 2:31; 1:7). We can imagine that many among the people may have thought they were already enjoying the blessings of well-being promised by the gospel in this lifetime.



But as Benjamin knew, and his people needed to discover, they had not yet undergone the rebirth that marks the passage from Death to Life as part of earth experience. Though they had been taught the word and had conscientiously obeyed its precepts, their current understanding and obedience had not, and could not, give them that fulness of existence which the gospel promises even in this lifetime and which is “sweet” and “precious” (Alma 32:42; Mosiah 2:41). Before the word could truly transform them, they had to reach a new healing awareness of it—a heart-felt understanding that revealed their situation in relation to Life and Death.

As a result of his last address to them, King Benjamin’s people finally reached that awareness. They awakened to the fact that, despite their diligent obedience and prosperity (Mosiah 1:11-13), they were still in a “carnal state,” in which they now viewed themselves as “even less than the dust of the earth” (Mosiah 4:2). It was then that they “cried aloud with one voice” to be made whole. The “spirit of the Lord” then “wrought a mighty change” in their “hearts,” that they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 4:2; 5:2). As we see, they were transformed by being made alive to good, or, in other words, by being “filled with the love of God” (Mosiah 4:12).

People reach a healing awareness of their situation in relation to Life and Death and awaken to good, in the words of Alma, when they let “the justice of God,” and his “mercy,” have “full sway” in their “heart” and come “down to the dust of humility” (Alma 42:30; Mosiah 4:11; 3 Nephi 12:2). This first moment of humility—the first moment people understand with their “heart” where they stand before the requirements of justice and let God’s saving love enter the “heart”—marks the first moment in the passage from Death to Life.

Consider further the healing experience of King Benjamin’s people. To move beyond carnal obedience and become pure in heart, King Benjamin’s people had to be brought down to humility by experiencing their own “nothingness” and “unworthiness” in light of God’s “power” and “goodness” (Mosiah 4:4-6, 11). They awaken to their own nothingness and unworthiness when they realize they cannot as carnal persons redeem or sanctify them-

selves—they cannot by themselves, through their own works, satisfy the demands of divine justice and change themselves from a carnal to a spiritual state. At the same time, they experience within their hearts that they mean everything to God, and that he reaches out to them with pure love, through Christ's atoning sacrifice and the healing power of the Spirit, to justify and transform them (Mosiah 3:16; 4:2; 5:2).

It seems that King Benjamin's people thought they must and can, through their diligent obedience, repay or merit God's saving blessings. But King Benjamin makes plain to them that, when all is said and done, they cannot "say aught" of themselves in this regard. In the first place, he reminds them, God created them and granted them their lives (Mosiah 2:23). He preserves them from day to day by "lending" them "breath" and supporting them "from one moment to another" (Mosiah 2:21). All their riches of every kind come from him (Mosiah 4:19). Indeed, all they "have" and all they "are," that is good, they owe to him (Mosiah 4:21). Even their very lives, and the "dust" out of which their bodies were made, "belong to him" (Mosiah 2:25; 4:24). So they are, says King Benjamin, "still indebted unto him, and are and will be, forever and ever" (Mosiah 2:24). "Therefore," he goes on, "of what have ye to boast?" He asks: "can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay" (Mosiah 2:24-25).

Finally the people awaken, in a way that results in a "mighty change of heart," to the deeper message of King Benjamin's address. They discover their divine worth and identity as subjects of God's love. For one thing, it finally becomes apparent to them that God is not interested in coming out ahead or in breaking even in an exchange of his blessings for their obedience. Nor is he interested in keeping them in debt so that they remain unworthy of his goodness to them. All that is beside the point. The point simply is that God loves them.

Implicit in God's love for them is a deeper message still. The people discover, in light of their nothingness and unworthiness, that the origin and purpose of their very existence, with all its everlasting possibilities, are grounded in the pure love of God. They finally understand, with their innermost being that they have

come to be through divine love—that through divine love they were created, that love arranged the fall for their progression, that it made the great atoning sacrifice to quiet justice, and that it made possible as its greatest gift: Life without end in its fulness. Once they conceive themselves in their own carnal state,” even less than the dust of the earth,” and earnestly desire the Spirit to purify them (Mosiah 4:2), through the healing power of the Spirit they are “filled with the love of God” (Mosiah 4:12), and become alive to good (Mosiah 5:2), and enjoy a new fulness of existence (Mosiah 2:41).

It seems that unless, in our carnal state our being nothing and unworthy before God’s goodness fully dawns on us, the sense in which we are everything in light of God’s love eludes us, fulness of life cannot be ours. In our carnal state, and in light of divine justice and God’s love, we awaken to good through personally experiencing the contrast between the way of Death and the possibility of Life. We grasp the nature of pure love as the ground and purpose of our very existence, and view our carnal ways as without worth. The basic insight is that God’s creating us and granting us our lives, his supporting us from moment to moment, his opening eternal Life to us—all flow freely, without cost, from his perfect caring for us. We need not, and indeed cannot, earn our being everything to him. We need not and cannot make ourselves “worth” of our supreme worth as persons and the supreme value that our fulness of live without end has. Our life and personhood simply do have supreme value and worth. Our worth and value are a given, wholly unearned and without price, in view of divine love.

Once we fully grasp, through awareness of divine love, that in our carnal state we are nothing and yet everything, unworthy and yet of supreme worth, then we grasp the meaning of divine love and being alive to good; and if we fervently desire to become persons of divine love, the Holy Spirit will purify us (Mosiah 4:2). Then we love even as God loves—without charge, freely, purely (John 4:7-8). We do the works of righteousness he commands us to do, no longer in a carnal way but spiritually (Mosiah 1:11; 5:5). We become a people pure in heart and partake of fulness of Life.

King Benjamin warns his people that to remain pure in heart they must never lose the healing awareness of divine love that their own nothingness and unworthiness before God made plain to them. He told them they must “remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility” (Mosiah 4:11). They must, in other words, always remember that divine love is the origin and grounding of their own existence. If “ye do that,” he says to them, then “ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God” (Mosiah 4:12). The healing understanding that God’s love and his justice awakens in them must always have full sway in their hearts if they are to remain pure in heart and alive to good.

So as mentioned earlier, planting and nourishing the word in a way that truly heals and gives life are different from ordinary ways of learning and knowing by which we master various theoretical or practical subjects. And, in summary, I repeat, we do not put off the natural person and become saints merely through study and disciplined practice. We may be very good students of the scriptures, and diligently keep the commandments, finding a certain peace and satisfaction in doing so, as King Benjamin’s people no doubt did, and still remain unhealed and without much fulness to our lives. In fact, usually the word must break through our habitual and ordinary ways of interpreting and living our lives according to the gospel in order to create a “mighty change of heart” that heals us. This is because the tendency of the natural man, even one who knows about the word and diligently keeps the commandments while still in a carnal state (Mosiah 2:34; 1:11; 4:2), is to “resist” a mighty change of self (Alma 32:28; *Doctrine and Covenants* 108:2).

## **The Role of Social Science Enquiry in Serving the Gospel’s Therapeutic End**

### ***1. Faith and Social Science Enquiry***

The question I now want to address asks what role social science enquiry, of the kind typically carried out by American social

scientists, can play in serving the gospel's therapeutic aim when that enquiry is conducted from the viewpoint of the gospel itself. My own view is that although the gospel places certain limits on what that role can be, social science enquiry can and should make an important contribution in realizing the therapeutic end of the gospel.

What I mean by social science enquiry includes both its theories and methods. I have particularly in mind those theories that concern psychological therapy and the role human groups, especially religious groups, play in affecting mental well-being. The general logic of testing involved in such enquiry usually consists of setting up a hypothesis or theory, deriving empirical consequences (test implications) from it, determining by observations produced by controlled procedures whether the consequences are true or false, and concluding whether the hypothesis or theory is confirmed or disconfirmed.

One general limitation on how such enquiry can serve gospel ends seems apparent. Ideally, the pursuit of knowledge from the point of view of social science does not begin by presuming a theory to be true. A theory should remain in doubt, even when highly confirmed. But from the perspective of faith we presume the truth of the gospel with its power to heal and give Life. Indeed, the gospel's power to heal depends on our faith that it is true (Alma 32:21, 27:42). In this context, the doubt typical and otherwise appropriate to social science is not consistent with the faith required by the gospel when the gospel itself provides the purpose for the use of that science. When conducted from that perspective, social science enquiry cannot be employed to determine the truth or falsity of any of the primary propositions that form the gospel as a therapeutic system. It cannot call into question the content of the word and its power to heal. In fact, it must assume that humankind cannot reach their highest possibility of fulness except by incorporating the word of Life from the viewpoint of faith.

## ***2. Incorporating the Word Through Words***

So in order for social science to play a part in furthering the gospel's therapeutic aim, it must assume the word of Life to be true and develop and weigh theories that help make possible its healing work. But how does the gospel make room for social science theory and method to play such a role? To better see what that role might be, let me first briefly summarize the general therapeutic features of the gospel already discussed. The gospel's primary end is to heal the soul—enable the person to pass from Death to fulness of Life in the highest degree. This healing occurs through an intimate relationship between the individual person and his Father which, because it has as its purpose making the person whole, may be rightly described as a therapeutic alliance. The transformation that takes place through this alliance consists in the person becoming really alive to all that is good or righteous through the growth of divine love within him. That growth takes place when the person becomes profoundly aware of his situation in relation to Life and Death in view of divine justice and God's absolute love for him, repents of his sins through faith in Christ, undergoes rebirth; through the power of the Spirit, and expresses and nurtures the goodness awakened in him through spiritual obedience. Alma describes the healing process just summarized as an "experiment" upon "the word."

To better see what part social science enquiry might play in this healing experiment, let us consider further how this experiment works. In explaining the healing experiment, Alma implicitly distinguishes between "the word" and the "words" he uses in teaching it. He invites his people to plant and nourish the word through an "experiment"—"upon my words" (Alma 32:28, 27). He knows that the word he teaches is not his (Alma 34:6), but the words by which he makes known the word are. He called them "my words" (Alma 32:27). It does seem that throughout the *Book of Mormon* the particular words used to express the word are distinguished from the word itself. Accordingly, the word can be taught using different languages (2 Nephi 31:31). Some languages may become "corrupted" in their capacity to "preserve" the gospel's

saving message (Omni 1:17; 1 Nephi 3:19). Even a language that has preserved “the words” that reveal the word may be inadequate for speaking and writing some of its deeper meanings (3 Nephi 9:32). And from other scripture we learn that Adam’s language was “pure and undefiled,” thus presumably making it a perfect embodiment of the word and its healing power (Moses 6: 5-6).

But still, as Alma’s teaching implies, in undergoing the healing experiment, the word and the words used in describing it are inseparable. The word heals through the words or language of a people (*Doctrine and Covenants* 1:24; 29:33). The experiment upon the words (Alma 33:1; 34:4) is carried out as an experiment upon the word that present it (Alma 32:27-28). The words containing the word serve in making possible the process of incorporating it, helping to form a healing awareness of it and the power to nurture it.

An assumption underlying Alma’s teaching seems to be that a person’s world is defined and lived in language (words) from the beginnings of his postnatal existence through to his receiving fullness of life in the highest degree. It seems that persons come into existence by learning a view of themselves provided in their language, and then pass for being one kind of person into being another by embodying a new view of themselves contained in those words of their language which are enriched by the gospel. As Alma’s account of the experiment upon the word brings out, the word itself has within it a view of being alive to good, of being a person of divine love. That view of self transforms the person through faith and the power of the Spirit as he comes to have a profound healing interpretation of his situation made possible by the words through which he understands the gospel. And becoming a new person in this way itself seems to rest on the idea that he became the person he originally was by incorporating a view of personhood implicit in the language by which he understood himself in the first place. So words can form persons, and some words can heal by being used to reinterpret who and what they are—and can be—in accordance with the word of life.

### ***3. Enriching the Word That Heals***

I think a major way social science enquiry might serve the gospel's therapeutic purpose is to help make it possible for persons to experiment upon the word by enriching the words through which the word that heals and gives life. Social science theories and methods are themselves languages or words. They can, possibly, enrich the "words" that transform us by developing and confirming theories and therapeutic techniques which address the process of incorporating the word. Two kinds of social science enquiry seem especially promising. One involves developing, evaluation, and applying therapeutic theories and techniques that help open up to persons the healing and Life-giving power of the word. The other concerns the study of the effectiveness of various church programs and activities in generating mental health or human well-being in the gospel sense.

First, a few remarks about making therapeutic theories and techniques useful in the service of the gospel. Social science has already developed and somewhat evaluated various therapeutic psychologies. This experience constitutes a valuable resource from which to draw in deepening the words of healing by which we currently interpret the gospel. The problem—and it is a formidable one—is to select from the large number of psychological therapies in use today those that are both conceptually in harmony with the gospel and have been shown to be therapeutically effective.

The task of laying out criteria of conceptual compatibility with the gospel, and determining which psychological therapies best satisfy them, requires painstaking analysis involving both the gospel and each promising therapeutic system. But enriching the word by which to heal the soul is very serious business, and it demands that only those psychological therapies deeply in harmony with the word be used to help tap its healing power.

Psychological therapies used in the service of the gospel should also be selected for their therapeutic effectiveness. It follows from the gospel itself that only those therapies in harmony with the word can help heal and give Life in its fullest degree. But the fact that



a therapeutic psychology and the word are conceptually compatible is not by itself a sufficient reason for assuming that the therapeutic psychology will be effective. It should be shown effective through controlled investigation of the kind developed and practiced by social science for that purpose. One large problem I see in testing therapeutic theories is distinguishing between those which make possible a lower degree of “fulness” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 88:29-31) and those that can help produce fulness in the highest degree in this lifetime (though this fulness falls short of the “fulness of the Father” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:71) that is finally enjoyed only in eternity).

Therapeutic psychologies shown to be effective and compatible with the gospel—I will dwell only on these from here on—can help achieve the gospel’s therapeutic aim in two very closely related ways. First, they can, when necessary, help make available to the person the essential freedom to choose how that person lives. Second, they can help awaken a person to the possibility of a fuller Life and improve the capacity to plant and nurture the word when the desire is present.

We may divide the psychologies that may contribute in these ways into roughly two kinds: those that heal primarily through interpretative insight or corrective emotional experience, and those that employ primarily other approaches. As we have seen, “the word” gives life through the “words” available to a people; this helps make possible a healing awareness that can transform their natures. So the first line of therapeutic psychologies that may serve gospel ends are those that can expand the person’s ability to reinterpret who and what he is so that he can live more freely and more fully.

But some persons suffer from severe mental disorders (for example, certain psychotic character disorders) that prevent their achieving or benefitting from a healing awareness of the word, disorders that are not, at least initially, amenable to insight therapy. These persons—these brothers and sisters—must first develop the capacity to plant and nurture the word before it can be realistically offered them on a level that can heal them. Their only hope of enjoying in this life the gospel’s healing promise may be to undergo

treatment using therapeutic processes (for example, supportive forms of therapy or chemotherapy) developed through social scientific (or other) enquiry.

Other mental disorders (for example, borderline or dependent personality disorders), prevent persons from living so freely and fully as to be amenable to the healing understanding of the word. But the modes of understanding (“the word”)—for example, the typical view of the simple steps involved in repentance—by which persons typically interpret how to change their lives in light of the gospel seem too impoverished to enable most of those burdened with such disorders to incorporate successfully the word. Here again the language and techniques of interpretative therapies, developed and confirmed by social science, may greatly improve the opportunity that a person with any of these disorders might have of enjoying the full Life offered by the gospel. In fact, as things stand, such therapies may be the only opportunity many of them have in this world to avoid years of suffering which accumulate in a lifetime marked by comparatively little real joy.

But those with severe mental disorders are not the only persons who might benefit from the development of effective psychological therapies. Even those classified as “normal” can be limited in their ability to experiment upon the word, because the language available to them for understanding the gospel is relatively impoverished, unable to move them through their resistance to that deep healing awareness they must reach in order to become alive by the word. They may be stuck in a cognitive grasp of the gospel which cannot open the heart and which can only produce a weighty routine of obedience that cannot give much fulness to life. Even superbly normal persons, who have an excellent theological understanding of scripture and who diligently keep the commandments, may not yet be awakened to the possibility of Life’s fulness and may—for instance, through a sense of their own righteousness for which they have labored hard—resist a deeper healing awareness of the word.

Recall King Benjamin’s people. I do not wonder but what there are many “normal” people in the Church today who are much like King Benjamin’s people. They accept the gospel, they try hard to live it, they experience certain secondary rewards from their

diligence, but their lives lack that fulness available to them in this lifetime through a transforming understanding of the word. Like King Benjamin's people, if they could be awakened to their situation and the possibility of a much fuller Life, they, too, would "cry aloud" for it (Mosiah 4:2). I think the language of certain psychological therapies, when harmonized with the gospel and translated into ordinary language, can help clear away resistance to deeper change, open the mind to yet unexperienced degrees of Life, and prepare the heart for a healing awareness of the word and spiritual obedience to it.

### **The Church and Perfecting the Saints**

Social science enquiry might be used in a second way in serving the gospel's therapeutic end. We know that the church's purpose is to accomplish the purpose of the gospel. This means that the church's mission includes realizing the gospel's therapeutic aim of transforming the lives of its members. But how effective are church activities and programs in realizing this aim? How can they be made more effective? I think social science enquiry can be used to help answer these questions. The following illustration indicates what the focus might be of such enquiry.

The primary point of church activities and programs is to teach the word so that persons can incorporate it into their lives. We have considered the idea that incorporating the word requires that persons reach and work through a profound healing awareness of it which enlarges their souls and brings fulness to their lives. This rebirth process occurs through an experiment upon the "words" by which a people learn "the word." So one question social science enquiry might address is how the words that present the gospel can be enriched so that they can more effectively open the heart to receive and nourish the word. For example, is it true, as I suggested earlier, that the language of certain psychological therapies—ones in harmony with the gospel—can expand and deepen the words that enable us to live freer and fuller lives?

The next question asks how the word, or the words that make it known, can best be taught. It is, of course, one thing to have a language sufficient for healing and another to create a situation of

healing. Typically, in church meetings and classes the word is taught discursively by means of formal address, lecture, or discussion. It might be wondered how effective these methods usually are for illuminating lives in a way that transforms them. Given a good teacher and eager students, a certain level or kind of knowledge of the gospel can be attained which may lead to diligence in keeping the commandments. But as in the case of King Benjamin's people, a more profound healing experience must occur before a people can enjoy the fulness promised by the word. In fact, teaching the gospel primarily in a discursive fashion seems comparable to exposing persons, who want to live more freely and fully, to a proven psychological therapy only by having them read about it from a textbook on psychology. They may learn all about the therapy they need without benefitting much, if any, therapeutic effect from it.

The same seems to be true in learning the gospel. Years of discursive learning may result in a form of knowledge and diligent obedience devoid, however, of fulness of Life that can only be experienced when the word enlarges the soul through the Spirit and a healing understanding. Recall how King Benjamin's people, despite their knowledge of the gospel and diligent obedience, had to reach a truly healing awareness of their relation to Life and Death before they underwent rebirth. So perhaps more experiential modes of teaching the word, ones that enable persons to use the gospel to attain deeper interpretative insight or corrective emotional experience, might be devised to support currently used discursive methods. Social science enquiry might help work out means for tapping the transforming power of the word.

Let me mention one more way that social science enquiry might contribute to the word's healing process. The Church can help perfect its members—transform their souls through the word—only as it becomes a true human community, a community of the saints. The formal institutional church becomes a human community to the extent that persons active in it participate together meaningfully in achieving the very point of their existence as human beings and as a religious group—passing from Death into Life through the healing power of the word. In its heart, a community of the saints

is a therapeutic community. It is a safe place in which persons can share and support each other in becoming alive to good through the power of the Spirit and a healing understanding of the word.

Here social science can offer assistance by drawing on what it understands about the dynamics of human community and therapeutic processing. For instance, it can help lay out particulars of how a religious organization can better carry out its therapeutic role, how the willing and able can get through their resistances to a healing awareness of the word, how to recognize and care for those psychologically unable safely to participate in the healing process, and how to provide room and acceptance in the community for those as yet unwilling to make the necessary commitments to personal change.

### **A Concluding Remark**

I conclude with a note of caution. A major thesis of this paper has been that social science enquiry, and particularly psychological therapies, can play an important role in serving the gospel's therapeutic purpose. But the opportunity to serve the gospel also constitutes a possibility of corrupting it. This could happen if the words by which the gospel heals were "enriched" by concepts not in harmony with the gospel. This possibility is especially acute in light of the fact that social science theories about persons, especially theories concerned with healing the soul, can transform persons. As Alma seems to think, people come into existence by virtue of learning "theory" (a view) about himself implicit in the language (the words) by which they interpret who they are and what they can be. So a view of the person made up of social science concepts foreign to the word may deeply change the possibility of rebirth implicit in the word. A second possible kind of negative effect is for social science enquiry to introduce ineffective therapeutic procedures into the word's healing process, thereby seriously weakening or undermining it.

In order to present or minimize these corrupting influences, it is important to keep a critical eye on social science enquiry as it serves the gospel, and its status as servant must be strictly maintained. It is particularly important that the gospel's cloak of final

truth not be allowed to fall upon any such enquiry, however therapeutically effective and harmonious with the word it may seem to be, by reason of its association with the gospel. Of course, what is true for social science enquiry holds for any mode of thought—for example, business or law—that may enrich or corrupt the words through which we understand the word.

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## Some Current Themes in Harmonizing Spiritual and Secular Approaches to Mental Health

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Allen E. Bergin, PhD

I've published a paper entitled, "Three Contributions of the Spiritual Perspective to Psychotherapy" (Bergin, 1988 a; b). Those three contributions are: a conception of human nature, including a theory of personality; a moral frame of reference; and, specific techniques. Those are the three areas in which we contribute. Within that frame of reference, there are three guiding principles: (1) We need to be empirical and base all three of these areas in research; (2) We need to be eclectic and integrate what is virtuous and valuable from diverse sources; and, (3) We need to be ecumenical—that is, we need to reach out to ideas of people from diverse religious backgrounds. If we do these things, I think we can build a new orientation. We build it brick by brick in an evolutionary way, not by revolution, and we build a literature, textbooks, articles, and so forth. In doing so, we participate in a worldwide phenomenon, a phenomenon that is marked by the work of many people around the world at this time. It's been interesting to me since I published my first major article on this topic (Bergin, 1980), to have had the opportunity to associate with and travel to many parts of the world to participate in activities, publications, conferences, all geared to doing the kinds of things that I've just listed.

Let me expand a few specific concepts that derive from the orientation that I've outlined. A conception of human nature, or theory of personality derived from the scriptures requires certain concepts to be well developed. One of these is the concept of identity. I think that is the first important notion that the

scriptures teach us and it is basic to a gospel-centered theory of personality and of change. Our concept of identity can then be merged with secular concepts in a comprehensive perspective. The second most important concept has to do with agency: both the impairment of agency and the enhancement of agency. The third concept concerns integrity, for at the root of most disorder is deception or self-deception. The fourth concept is intimacy: emotional, social, spiritual, and physical intimacy. The fifth is power: how we deal with power. And the sixth is values: that is, if there is not a system of value regulation within the person, then problems follow.

With respect to techniques, I say first, be careful. My experience is that we have not yet discovered specific gospel techniques that successfully treat severe mental disorders. Severe mental disorders need to be treated by standard professional methods. If you are dealing with schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, obsessions, and other disorders, you're not going to get very far by applying a value system to them. Medication may often be essential to helping the person in crisis relieve their distress. Until you've significantly relieved the distress and moved the person along by virtue of standard professional techniques, dealing with the value issues or lifestyles issues of the kind I've just listed, would be unfruitful and possibly even harmful. If, however, you can help a person get out of the stage of most severe distress, then you can deal with the particular techniques derived from the gospel. I'm not saying, by the way, that powerful gospel techniques can't be invented that might be effective with severe mental disorders. So far, however, I haven't seen one documented.

What I have seen is that with mild disorders, with some moderate disorders, or with severe disorders that have been moved to a point of progress, we can do certain things. One of these is the "transitional figure technique," which has been discussed by a number of people. It involves, in interpersonal conflict situations, principles of forgiveness, reconciliation, and self-sacrifice. There is another class of techniques that derive from the gospel that have to do with self-regulation of impulse-control disorders. Lastly, there's



a third set of techniques that have to do with spiritual communication between therapist and client.

I'm not going to try in the next three minutes, to illustrate those things, but I will say that it is very exciting to me to see what AMCAP is doing. It is exciting also to be involved with colleagues from the Christian Association for Psychological studies, with people from different institutions who are devoting themselves to the integration of Christian principles and professional practices and research. One manifestation of this type of work is the development of new organizations, new journals and new books. A new journal is beginning this year which I hope some of you will contribute to, *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. It's very thrilling to go to Western Europe, Eastern Europe, South America, Australia, and to other parts of the world and find colleagues who are deeply caring and are committed to the goals that we have in mind. There is a network out there, an interdisciplinary network of people who are interested in these matters. Don't be mistaken, however, their interests, are not casual: they are rigorous. They challenge us to think clearly and to support what we say with good statistics.

I will mention one anecdote along this line. Probably, some of you were at APA in Los Angeles in 1985. There Albert Ellis and I, and some others, talked on this subject to a packed audience. Ellis presented his standard dogmatic diatribe against religion, asserting that it was a form of emotional disturbance. Instead of arguing with him, I simply presented the statistical results of five years of standard psychological tests and interviews we had conducted between 1980 and 1985 on religious people, as well as a summary of samples from other places. I thought that it was unlike the audience in 1979, in New York, where there was a similar symposium where religion was basically ridiculed by about 500 people. Unlike six years before, at the Los Angeles conference, there was, I thought, tremendous emotional and intellectual support for the integration position. I believe this was true because the integration position was beginning to be rooted in scholarship and backed by good studies. It was interesting: we pointed out that we used Ellis' irrational beliefs test on 32 returned missionaries at

BYU. The results were very favorable. Ellis replied by saying that he didn't like the statistics, that he didn't believe them, and that "BYU students will just tell you what you want to know." I replied that we had used fake-good scales, and the students didn't look like they were faking. He said he didn't believe the MMPI results either. I concluded by saying that obviously the acid test of the effect of religion and irreligion on personality would be for him and I to take the MMPI and simply compare the results!

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## **Relational Learning Theory: An Effective Integrative Bridge Between the Sacred and the Secular in Therapy**

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Garth L. Allred, Ph.D

The early Saints who settled that quintessential Mormon community of Laie, on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu, recognized the need to integrate the academic and the spiritual. These pioneers of the Pacific went so far as to lay out two of their streets in such a way as to dramatize a unification of the sacred and the secular. The street running directly from the Temple toward the ocean is called Hale Laa, or "House of Light." The street running from the Church College of Hawaii, now known as BYU-Hawaii, is named Kula nui, meaning "Big House." The confluence of these streets forms a large circle near Temple Beach. From the air, the streets would be seen as a giant V, or a huge compass attached at the bottom to a large circle. This esoteric mapping of streets appears eccentric to the uninitiated but the symbolism is glaringly obvious to any adult practicing Latter-day Saint.

Sometimes we Mormon therapists are not as determined at unification as were those early settlers of Laie. Occasionally we are accused of preaching for doctrine the commandments of men, mingling them, of course, with a smattering of scripture—to provide a form of godliness but still denying the power thereof. I think we are guilty of that charge unless we honestly seek to integrate secular knowledge with what has been given by prophets, both ancient and modern. Both therapeutic theory and practice can and ought to be better screened through the mesh of generally recognized and accepted gospel principles. The teachings of the Church have helped many of us sort through and single out appropriate and effective therapeutic concepts and procedures. On

the other hand, we must admit that many important principles have come also by way of the “Gentiles.”

Robert F. Bennet and his associates at the Relational Learning Center (Bennet, 1987) suggest that each of us see the world through a system of beliefs which they call, by way of metaphor, a “belief window.” We live our lives by the principles we have written upon our belief windows. We act in accordance with our beliefs or expectations for a return. Belief precedes action. In this regard, belief and faith are similar motivators. What is said of belief can also be said of faith. Dennis F. Rasmussen (1990), associate professor of Philosophy at Brigham Young University, has suggested that:

Even actions performed by habit, which seem to involve no aim, were not always so. They were once subject to choice, and they became habits by choice, even if the choice was simply a passive refusal to prevent them. To choose something actively means to pursue it as an end to be achieved in the future, even if that future reaches no further ahead of the present than a brief moment. An action is voluntary, chosen, done on purpose. The aim of actions may vary, but every action has an aim, some result intended. Because faith is the principle of action, action has faith as its source. Action is faith at work; without faith, there would be no action.

In the words of the first Lecture on Faith, taught and approved by the Prophet Joseph Smith, we read that:

If men were duly to consider themselves and turn their thoughts and reflections to the operations of their own minds, they would readily discover that it is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them; that without it both mind and body would be in a state of inactivity, and all their exertions would cease, both physical and mental (*Lectures on Faith* 1:10).

Belief windows can be collective as well as individual. The insiders of one group will sometimes not consider the worth of an outsider’s idea because it did not originate within their group. Sometimes religionists will not consider the ideas of therapists. Sometimes therapists will not consider the ideas of religionists. This, unfortunately, is too often the case.

From the writings of Nephi we read: “Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the

precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 28:31). From this passage we can conclude that some precepts of men are given by the power of the Holy Ghost. That being the case, we Latter-day Saint therapists have a responsibility to sift and seek through ideas and principles that exist in the world and bring home to Zion that which is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report and praiseworthy” for “we seek after these things”—whatever their source.

My thesis in this presentation is that educational learning theory, especially Relational Learning theory can serve as an effective integrative bridge joining the sacred and the secular in therapy.

Relational Learning theorists suggest that learning is best facilitated when teachers (therapists) help students (clients) to: (1) See patterns that repeat themselves; (2) Extract principles and see their contrasting principles; (3) Make connections in other contexts; (4) Become empowered to make wise decisions; and, (5) Experience peace and happiness in this world and eternal life in the world to come (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 59:23).

Too often what happens today in educational as well as therapeutic contexts is simply informational learning and is centered in analysis of parts. Memorization of categories, applying labels and being able to so classify behaviors and thought patterns is heavily emphasized. Relational Learning, by way of contrast, focuses on helping students (or clients) to see patterns that repeat themselves, extract principles and their contrasting principles, and then make connections with these principles in their own lives. Nephi referred to such a process when he said, “For I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23). Once clients are able to make connections between abstract principles and their own lives, they can then establish bridges to many other contexts and make connections there also. They see these same principles operating in the lives of their parents, employers, and neighbors. The principles might apply the same to fishing, athletics, as to scriptural stories.

From the *Teacher Development Manual* we read:

The basic goal of teaching in the Church is to help bring about worthwhile changes in the lives of people. The aim is to inspire the individual to think about, feel about, and then do something about gospel truths and principles.

It is useful to view therapists as educators having similar goals. When such is the case, effective therapists/educators will be skilled both in content and process—or, in other words, both in principles and methodology.

A therapist's instructional methods should provide for the highest levels of cognitive and spiritual processes. While it may be sometimes helpful to have clients categorize and memorize such thought patterns and behaviors such as *vicious cycles*, *divine discontent*, *anxiety*, *depression*, *inhibition* and the like, higher order learning is much more useful. While some informational learning may be necessary in therapy, it is not sufficient to enable the client to be self correcting and self healing. Understanding concepts and principles with their contrasting concepts and principles and then making connections in various contexts facilitates a much higher order of learning and healing.

We learn the meaning of abstract principles by way of specific examples. A therapist should use such examples in efforts to instruct the client. Examples may be given by way of stories, anecdotes, allegories, metaphors, and similes. Who can forget Carlfred Broderick's example of comparing his attempting to intervene between hostile spouses to poking a stick into the spinning spokes of an upside down bicycle wheel. Metaphor can also be very helpful, but the meaning must be clear or no learning will take place. For example, Isaiah's imagery in 3 Nephi 22:1 regarding a husband, fruitful and barren wives, would be meaningless unless one understood that Isaiah was making reference to Jesus, the Church, and the latter-day gathering of Israel.

A therapist will help clients see patterns that repeat themselves. Seeing patterns helps clients predict future events. Once clients can see patterns, they can then see their part in a collusion cycle and also predict, with the help of the therapist, what will happen if they make various choices.

From cognitive and behavioral patterns therapists help clients extract principles and see contrasting principles. Therapists help clients understand such principles as: “for every action there is a reaction,” “ask and we shall receive,” “if we are one, we are the Lord’s,” “if this . . . then that.” Joseph Smith said that we do not understand a principle unless we understand its opposite. Accordingly, therapists also help clients understand that “no action brings no reaction,” “if we do not ask, we do not receive,” “if we are not one, we are not the Lord’s,” and “if we don’t do this . . . then we don’t get that.”

Knowledge of principles in a gospel context will facilitate clients making connections in a therapy context. For instance, Joseph Smith taught that “we can be saved no faster than we gain knowledge.” Some therapy connections to that principle might be the idea that therapy is an educational process by which clients can gain knowledge, and that we can learn new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. By contrast, when clients resist learning new ideas and say they can’t change, it may mean that they either don’t know how to change or they don’t want to change. Therapists may be able to help with the former, but they find it difficult to help those who are closed and choose not to learn new ways of relating.

Another example of bridging from gospel to therapy comes from the *Doctrine and Covenants*. From it we learn that “there is a law upon which all blessings are predicated.” A therapy connection might be that “If I learn new communication skills, I can improve my marital happiness.” A contrasting principle would be: “If we are not receiving certain blessings, it is because we are not obeying the correct law.” A contrasting connection might be, “If I don’t learn new communication skills, my marriage may continue to stagnate.”

Another example of going from gospel to therapy is the important *Book of Mormon* principle that “man is free to act.” Therapy connections have us understand that “we can choose our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.” Or “no blame allowed: we are about as happy as we choose to be.” A contrasting principle is that some brands of psychology would have us believe that “man is

simply a reactor,” and the connection we often hear in therapy, “You mean you expect me to be happily married to a man like that?”

Knowledge of principles from a therapy context will facilitate clients making connections in a gospel context. This can be seen in Parson’s spiral of therapeutic processes. Parson holds that “establishing rapport with a client is a prerequisite to achieving change.” Gospel connections might be: “he that preacheth and he that receiveth understand one another” and “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained . . . only by persuasion.” A contrasting principle is “no rapport, no change.” This is likened to some Church leaders who moralize without rapport and wonder why change does not take place among their people.

Another example of going from therapy to gospel is Broderick’s therapeutic triangle principle. “Each spouse must feel equally accepted and supported by the therapist.” Gospel connections are obvious: “Judge not unrighteous judgment,” and “I will forgive whom I will, but of you it is required to forgive all men.” A contrasting principle would be: “Loss of symmetry is a loss of effectiveness.” Gospel connections might be: “My disciples forgave not one another, and for this were sorely chastened.”

A final example of going from therapy to the gospel is found in the process of therapeutic intervention. “If you want another person to change, you may have to change the way you relate to them.” Gospel connections might be: “As I have loved you, love one another,” and Christ’s charge to “return good for evil.” Can you think of other connections? If you can, you are beginning to understand how relational learning takes place.

Principles remain abstractions until clients can make connections in their own world. Until that takes place, there is no insight. Once a connection is made and the light turns on, they then can make connections in many other contexts.

The Ah Ha! experience is a client’s recognition reflex.

A clinician’s therapeutic lead can be too close or too distant in either the affective or the cognitive domains and the client will not



be able to gain the spark or insight so important to the self-correcting and self-healing process.

This idea of making connections from gospel or therapy contexts ties in with a statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He said, “the spirit of revelation is in connection with these blessings”—of ultimately seeing the Lord! “A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas.” I believe that Ah Ha! experience is a form of revelation. Making connections between principles, from whatever source, is a form of revelation.

Alma explained how we can tell if a principle is true or if our connections are accurate. He said, a true seed or principle will “swell within our breasts, enlarge our souls, enlighten our understanding, and become delicious to us.”

The ability to make connections from one context to another empowers us and our clients to become self-correcting and self-healing. When crossroads are encountered, if we have an assortment of principles to operate from then we are in a position to make wise decisions. The greater the selection, the more control we will have of our lives.

In conclusion: I believe that educational learning theory, especially Relational Learning theory, can serve as an effective integrative bridge in combining principles from both secular and sacred sources.

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# Psychotherapy and the Gospel

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Genevieve De Hoyos, CSW, Ph.D.

Why should the gospel be implemented into our professional practice? This is the question for this session. We all go through our own process of sacred/secular dissonance resolution. To resolve my own dissonance I went through three distinct stages: (1) Mormonizing of secular models; (2) Practicing secular therapies with the help of God and of the gospel; and, (3) Developing my own Mormon psychotherapeutic model. Let me briefly describe these three stages of my personal experience.

## **Mormonizing of Secular Models**

Early in my life, I filtered everything I read and heard through my belief in God and the awareness of a plan of salvation. At that time I could look at and explain my reality through these emerging “Mormonized” models, with no sense of dissonance.

I am sure I still do that. But I can no longer feel totally comfortable doing it. This is because so many of us are Mormonizing any and all models even when these models are based on basic assumptions that are totally inimical to Mormon thinking. When I hear other professionals present their Mormonized versions of Humanism, of Behaviorism, and of the Conflict school, totally ignoring their false theoretical underpinnings, I shudder—I shudder because I strongly suspect that I do the same. I have no problem with the story of the broken mirror which explains the presence of some truth everywhere in the world. However, by now I feel that,

as a group of Mormon psychotherapists who believe that the *whole truth* has been given to us through the gospel, we could do better than simply distorting secular knowledge to make it fit, one way or another into our idea of truth.

### **Practicing secular therapies with the help of God and of the Gospel**

Consequently, I have more recently used the Gospel more liberally in my practice. Having a great desire to use my therapeutic skills to help others, but also holding a teaching job, I felt I had to pray for clients. And they came. Then, very naturally, whenever I felt my client and I had hit some impasse, I quickly and silently prayed for inspiration, for some direction. When I saw my clients facing difficult decisions, or struggling in pain with some crucial issue, I prayed for them. And I saw the results of my pleadings.

Many of the problems brought to me by my clients required understanding the true purposes of life, required repenting, forgiving, healing, changing one's heart. I became aware of the many scriptures that indicate that there are therapeutic models built into the gospel itself. *Doctrine and Covenants* 9:8 helped me teach how to make good, inspired decisions. Ether 12:27 gave hope that we can give up on our hang-ups and change. And everywhere I found that God inspires our minds and changes our hearts, and that he willingly and lovingly forgives and forgets our trespasses.

In the process, I felt I was becoming more loving, more emotional. At first this worried me: I was afraid I was losing the rationality, the professionalism of which I had always been so proud. But unable to deny the empirical evidence that my clients were helped, I could not go back.

### **Developing My Mormon Psychotherapeutic Model**

So I developed a model that helped me become aware that I was moving from a more rational, secular realm to a more emotional, religious realm. In turn, this model provided me a framework and rationale which helped me identify and evaluate the quality and appropriateness of my moving from one realm to the other.

This model is not a theoretical model since it does not explain. It is a conceptual model that simply describes and defines three realms and three types of therapies, based on the terms explained in "The Vision" of *Doctrine and Covenants* 76.

### ***The Telestial Realm***

Some clients have immediate, hedonistic, and selfish goals. They want gain and pleasure without regard to others. They are willingly following Satan, but they hate to pay the consequences that follow.

### ***Telestial-oriented Therapy***

Telestial-oriented therapy lets, perhaps even encourages, these clients to work toward their telestial goals while escaping their consequences.

### ***The Terrestrial Realm***

Most of our clients have Mosaic goals. In an atmosphere of fairness, they want peace and happiness. They may be quite troubled and mixed up, but basically they are the honorable men and women of the world.

### ***Terrestrial-oriented Therapy***

Terrestrial-oriented therapy is to use our therapeutic skills, our rational, professional knowledge, thinking and common sense to promote with our clients, resolutions that bring peace and contentment to all involved, while upholding our societal norms, mores, and laws at their best.

### ***The Celestial Realm***

Some of our clients strongly desire the goals of Christ. Eventually they want to gain the joys of eternal life. They may experience all types of negative feelings, yet ultimately, they want to do what is right, even if it hurts.

### ***Celestial-oriented Therapy***

Most of us therapists, barely hang on to the terrestrial realm, with occasional dips in the telestial and celestial realms. However, when we do act as celestial-oriented therapists, we occasionally and appropriately, (1) use the scriptures to teach eternal principles; (2) if needed, help clients re-establish a working relationship with

God; and, then, (3) help them seek God's help to modify their negative feelings.

### **Function of the Model**

By using this model, I can hopefully ascertain when I am near to doing something remotely like telestial-oriented therapy. With this framework, I can quickly see that I spend most of my time doing terrestrial-oriented therapy. And I can also easily identify the moment when I go into celestial-oriented therapy. With that awareness, I can consciously choose to go back and forth between realms.

How do I know when I need to use celestial-oriented therapy? I typically start a session by asking the question: How is your relationship to God these days? Then, depending on the answer I get from the client, I can go ahead, I can back down, or I can help repair my client's relationship with God. Asking this question has taught me that many non-LDS clients depend on God through prayers, and that life crises often impair our relationship to God. It has also taught me that many clients want help to repair their relationship to God, because they see their own healing as depending on it. These clients can apply the following eternal principles:

- Only God can change feelings; we can only repress or deny.
- Sin cannot bring happiness.
- We need to forgive, then move on with our lives.

In the same way we develop social skills, we need to develop spiritual skills to identify basic eternal principles of life, to obtain answers, to get closer to God. As we do so, we will, no doubt, often switch between the roles of *facilitator* and *teacher*.

### **Conceptual Challenges to the Model**

The main problem is that our training has taught that we should always be based on scientific knowledge, and always professional, meaning rational. In reality, whether we are aware of it or not, the gospel (or the lack of it) is implemented into our professional practice, because psychotherapy cannot be value-free. Our values get in the way, even the value of being value-free. As an example, a student who prided himself on being value-free was

observed making the assumption that a client wanted to be an overt homosexual, when, in fact, he was very obviously coming for help *not* to become homosexual. The student, wanting to prove that although he was LDS he would never want to impose his values on somebody else, could have done a lot of damage.

We are afraid of being branded as too emotional, too subjective, of pushing our values on our clients, and therefore of being “unprofessional.” We are afraid of losing our credibility and legitimacy as responsible professionals and psychotherapists.

### **Practical Challenges to the Model**

The major practical and professional barrier to using this model is our lack of rational models. We need rational models. Many of us develop our own models. We need to share them so that we can eventually come up with a functional one. They must be rational and professionally sound. These models need to set boundaries, provide awareness and insight, be professional—and when they gain legitimacy, they should be passed on to students.

In this panel, two major sides were represented. One side suggests using secular principles to live better Christian lives. The other side suggests using the gospel and the scriptures to derive principles of life. Perhaps both voices should be identified and respected. For myself, the time to Mormonize secular models is past. I would prefer going to the gospel and the scriptures first. So many models could be created. However, both sides must be respected and can work together to make us as Mormon psychotherapists attain our present and eternal potential.

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## A Chronic Identity Issue: Singleness and Divorce

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Beverly L. Shaw, Ph.D.

As I grew up in a small Mormon community in Wyoming, family example, church doctrines, and community customs all emphasized marriage as the primary goal of life. Activities, social occasions, and lessons reinforced that attitude. Girls were taught homemaking skills at home, school, and church, and since it was primarily a farming community, boys worked alongside their fathers from as early as age six or seven.

I remember learning to embroider in my MIA class and being told to do it neatly so that my future husband would be impressed with my sewing abilities. I remember planning parties with friends where the real goal was to show boyfriends, i.e., prospective husbands, that we could cook well. (Although how they were to discern that from taffy and popcorn balls I'm not sure). I remember the female members of my extended family arranging to let me prepare and serve a dessert for a social occasion where all of "his" female family members would be present and would be able to see my suitability for marriage into their family. The goal of marriage was pervasive, and the resulting message was that it was not only the path my parents and church leaders wanted me to follow, it was the path that God wanted me to follow.

The importance of being married has been a major theme throughout recorded history, but its significance in the Mormon culture far surpasses that of non-Mormon cultures. My experience therefore, was not an isolated case, but was representative of the

norm, not only for my era, but also for those that preceded and followed it. Because of that extraordinary importance, the absence of marriage has not met with any amount of support or approval from General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS).

Statements made between the years of 1831 and 1982 by LDS authorities with regard to unmarried members were reviewed by Raynes and Parsons (1983). The authors reported that the communications "take the form of both blessings and cursings, with little non-judgmental material" (Raynes & Parsons, 1983, p. 35). Their analysis indicates that these communications also reflected the broader societal viewpoint: "to be single is a personal and societal curse which can only be changed by marriage."

They found three themes which were quite consistent throughout the years. First, being that there is nothing positive for society that comes from the unmarried state. Single individuals were considered unrighteous or abnormal. The second theme was that women are single by circumstance. While not legitimizing women's singleness, L.D.S. authorities saw women as victims and with promised future blessings, rather than characterizing them as deliberately unrighteous. The third theme was that single men were irresponsible, sinful, selfish, lazy, or suffering from a chemical imbalance (homosexuality). That is, they usually had only negative reasons for being unmarried; therefore, they had no promises in their present or their future (Raynes and Parsons, 1983).

With the increasing awareness within the church that a substantial minority of adult Mormons are single, official communications in the past few years have focused on more positive themes emphasizing not only each individual's value, but also more practical helps such as the importance of self-esteem, the ability to love, single parenting, and, for women, preparation to support themselves (Benson, 1988; Bergin, 1989; Carmack, 1989; Decker, 1989; Hadley, 1985; Hanks, 1989; Hardy, 1989; Hyde, 1984; Linford, 1985; Lubeck, 1987; Miltenberger, 1988; Morris, 1989; Searle, 1988 Underwood, 1984; Warden, 1988).

While this is a positive shift, it does not mean there has been an abandonment of the traditional viewpoint. Although each succeeding generation has had more enlightened insights as to the sources of one's value and somewhat broader definitions as to legitimate life goals, the emphasis on marriage, particularly temple marriage, has continued. As a primary tenet of the church relating to eternal progression and celestial life, the message remains that marriage was and is the worthwhile life goal. Marriage is still, by inference and by direct statement, the life function approved of by God.

It follows that notwithstanding this increasing acknowledgment of unmarried individuals within the membership of the church, there has been and is still an ongoing assimilation of the notion that personal value and worth to God is directly correlated to marital status. For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, being single brings with it an identity crisis that is the result of the dissonance between the reality of their lives and the values they have assimilated regarding the theological importance of marriage.

In a random survey published in 1986 (LDS Church Demographic Profile), the number of church members who were single was found to be just over 30 percent. With the church membership currently totalling over 6,720,000 (News of the Church, 1989), this statistic would mean that over 2,000,000 adult Mormons are single and must confront and resolve the issue of their value and their worthiness to God, and by extension also their identity as a Mormon and as a daughter or son of God.

As a body of professionals, it is vital that we develop as complete an understanding of that reality as possible. It is important that we avoid the cliches and stereotypes as we deal with those who turn to us for help in resolving the pain and turmoil that comes from that dissonance.

Single members of the church come in three varieties: the widowed, the divorced, and the never-married. Each category has its unique problems with singleness and has its unique identity

issues. They have some general issues in common and all face the problem of determining their value with a married church.

### **The Widowed**

The widowed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which currently total 4 percent of the membership (L.D.S. Demographics, 1986), have a more accepted place within the church than either the divorced or never-married members because of the eternal marriage doctrine. If the couple was “sealed [married] for time and eternity” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:19), the surviving spouse can find comfort in the belief that the separation is temporary and can look forward to a reunion at some future date. For those who have not been “sealed” prior to the spouse’s death, this ordinance can be performed vicariously, resulting in the same type of emotional comfort.

Initially, the focus of therapy with the widowed individual is movement through and understanding of the grieving process that follows loss through death. It is only after that work is essentially completed before we will focus on the feelings of dislocation through loss of the married identity. The transition from feeling like an abandoned half of a whole to feeling complete in one’s self can be difficult and is often resisted. For some there is a flight into the presumed safety of another marriage, for others a stubborn clinging to a lifestyle that belies the death of the partner, and for still others there is a blossoming which may or may not include another marriage.

The belief in eternal marriage removes the widowed individual from some of the turmoil that comes from not being married within a marriage-oriented church, but it does not help alleviate the problem of simultaneously no longer feeling accepted by other married couples while not feeling comfortable with the singles groups. Nor does it solve the dilemma of feeling disloyal when contemplating remarriage. All of these identity problems can become therapeutic issues.

### The Never-Married

In companion articles, "Ministering Angels: Single Women in Mormon Society" and "On the Edge: Mormonism's Single Men" published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Anderson (1983) and Johnson (1983b) reviewed the history and explored the status of the never-married female and male of the church. Anderson (1983) states that for women there was the

automatic presumption that she was never single by choice. Instead she was viewed as a victim—primarily the victim of man's selfishness, occasionally of her own "ugliness," or her lack of sufficient social standing to win a "self-respecting" man for a husband (girls who had "lost their virtue" were presumed to be in this category), or of some other defect such as feeble-mindedness, although that was not an absolutely insuperable bar to marriage either.

There is a caveat, however, that "if they live worthily and are not married for eternity in this life, . . . they shall not be deprived of the blessings in the hereafter" (Smith, 1959, p. 358). Unfortunately, this message is frequently stated in the "you'll be given to a good man" format which objectifies the individual and is heard as "you're less than we are, but we'll do something for you anyway." As the object of these unflattering messages, never-married women have a difficult time building or keeping a healthy self-identity.

Never-married women suffer great pain over the absence of marriage. The majority believe marriage to be an important part of "God's plan," and many have patriarchal blessings that promise a husband that will take them to the temple, and children, if they live righteously. It is the last phrase that is a large source of turmoil, for active unmarried women usually have tried to do just that. Since they aren't married, their first response may be a feeling of betrayal by God. But because betrayal is not in keeping with the loving Father of their belief system, they then deduce that there is something inherently bad about them—bad enough that God would deprive them of the important key that would enable them to return to him and to be "Mothers in Zion." Common sense may tell these women of the real causes of non-marriage, but deep inside there is often a feeling of unworthiness.

Therapy for never-married women has to address not only self-esteem issues, but often, because of the value-to-God component of their pain, theological issues as well. As therapists, we must take great care not to add to the body of pain by reinforcing any of the discounting and demeaning rhetoric, or by using platitudes, or patronizing comments or solutions. It is important to separate and work on the underlying causes (low self-esteem, dependency issues, addictions, dysfunctional family of origin, etc.) for non-marriage from their value-to-God issue so that real change can occur in these women's lives.

In Johnson's (1983b) article about single men, he refers to the specific instructions (*Doctrine and Covenants* 133:1-3) that men must enter into marriage here on earth in order to receive the promised celestial blessings. This doctrine immediately puts single men in a disenfranchised category.

In an article for *Exponent II*, Johnson (1983a, p. 13) goes on to show how those who do not marry find they must "struggle with stereotypes." They are often treated as adolescents whose opinions and suggestions are discounted because of their alleged "inexperience," or they face the inference of perversion. Most importantly, they are considered rebellious for not obeying the commandments of God. All of these overt and covert messages damage a single individual's sense of self, especially if he has strong beliefs in the principles set forth by the church. Like never-married women, never-married men may also have a strong feeling of betrayal or of inherent unworthiness because of unfulfilled promises.

Therapy with single men occurs less frequently than with single women because of the norms that prohibit men from needing or seeking help. Single men frequently are in the position of not understanding the reasons for their unmarried state, yet they "cannot" seek assistance in unraveling it. One contribution therapists can make is to take advantage of opportunities to normalize and legitimize the therapy process for men. As Dr. M. Scott Peck (1978) accurately states, those that seek therapy are not only more courageous than average, they are usually more mentally healthy. Perhaps hearing this message would give them the needed reinforcement to seek whatever help they do need.

For the majority of the single men, it is as much of a surprise to them that they have not married as it is to those who are urging them to do so. But there are few insights into the patterns which block emotional availability and commitment.

Fear of emotional intimacy, sexual repression, homosexuality, and misunderstanding of God's role in marriage choices are among the many avenues that may need to be explored.

Along with addressing the self-worth and the damaged identity issues with those who come to therapy, therapists should always explore commitment-phobia, a problem that is rampant within this population. Commitment-phobia has a distinct pattern, so it can be identified and confronted, if present. Commitment-phobic behavior is characterized by an obsessional pursuit of a female who is or appears to be unavailable. The man's behavior patterns include daily (or more often) phone calls, a desire to be together constantly, immediate or early declarations of love and marriage desires, discussion of intimate feelings, thoughts, and historical information not congruent with the length of time they have known each other. The obsession lasts up to the moment she decides to become available. At that point there is an immediate reversal of affect, a loss of interest, usually excessive fault finding, and a desperate need to distance himself from involvement with her. Depending upon the seriousness of the phobia, the switch in feelings and behavior can occur when she agrees to date him, begins to love him, or marries him.

The "in" cliché of the 80's is *self-esteem*. We may get tired of hearing about the lack of it, the need for it, and the growth of it. But clichés become clichés because they are true and because they are obvious. Never-married men and women suffer more chronically from problems of damaged self-esteem than either the widowed or divorced men and women. As a group, those Mormons who have never married seem to have a higher incidence of psychic injury coming out of their childhoods and more self-defeating defenses as a result. This sets them up for repeated re-injury and reinforcement of their belief in their lack of self value. Therapy with this particular segment of never-married singles can

often be lengthy because of the time needed to heal the damaged self-concept and to build (or rebuild) a sense of personal value.

At times the injuries caused by parents or other significant individuals are a result of misunderstood or misapplied Gospel concepts. This dynamic may make them even more vulnerable to inferences or messages about their marital status being a result of their unworthiness to God. It may also cause them to blame the church for the pain they feel. These religion-based issues are likely to become part of the problems addressed in therapy.

### **The Divorced**

The largest contribution to the church's single population comes through divorce. The most recent available church estimates are that by age 60, 35 percent of the female and 32 percent of the male membership will have experienced a divorce (Van Leer, 1983). Being divorced within the L.D.S. Church can be particularly painful, since divorce offers neither the status of the widowed nor the feeling of "purity" that can be associated with the never-married.

When an active member divorces, many changes take place in his/her relationship with the church which reinforce unworthy feelings and a sense of being a "second-class" Mormon (Raynes, 1981; Norton, 1967). Divorced individuals may be released from callings or may not be asked to serve in particular positions. Where in the past an individual's opinions and expertise may have been valued, often requested, and used, when a divorce occurs those same attributes are frequently deemed valueless.

Currently, bishops and stake presidents are counseled to carefully review the status of any temple recommend holder who is separated or in the process of a divorce, and to make individual case determinations as to each individual's continued worthiness to retain it. This constitutes a slight shift in emphasis over past procedures where as soon as a separation or divorce occurred, a temple recommend became void, and new interviews regarding worthiness were required prior to receiving a replacement.



One large area of consternation is how divorce impacts the temple sealing, since divorce does not automatically cancel it. Even those divorces which also result in excommunication only suspend the sealing and do not cancel it. For the men and women who never remarry, the sealing status brings up a number of perplexing dilemmas. Are the ex-spouses to be sealed in the eternities when they don't love each other on earth? Or does the failure of the marriage on earth make eternal togetherness null and void? And if so, why cannot a cancellation in the now be obtained? Who are the children sealed to, if both parties remain worthy and active? Does the priesthood take precedence in that case, as well? To whom are the children sealed if the priesthood holder is excommunicated and the wife never remarries? These, and a myriad of other questions like them, plague divorced women and men, and may well come up as therapeutic issues as he/she tries to integrate the new marital status with her/his belief system.

Of the three groupings of single church members, divorced Mormons seek therapy far more often than the other two. This is because of the pervasive nature of the damage that occurs with the divorce. With every aspect of life affected, women and men usually need some assistance in restructuring their lives and in moving through the healing process.

Those who are in the process of separation and divorce frequently turn to their bishops and stake presidents for counsel and solace. With few exceptions, the divorcing individual receives compassion, love, and guidance. However, bishops and stake presidents are at a disadvantage in dealing with the many complexities and the far-reaching ramifications of divorce because the focus of their calling, and also their training, is on building marriages not on divorce and its fall-out. Divorce also is not a topic for lessons or sermons except as negative examples. The result is that the divorcing individual may feel further injury, unintentionally, or, in rare cases intentionally, coming from the church organization or the leaders.

Most of the religious ramifications of divorce result in identity issues for both women and men. Some, however, are pertinent only to women. Because women do not hold the priesthood, it

leaves when the husband leaves. Temple ordinances and church doctrine teach that priesthood power is intrinsically intertwined with a man's relationship to God and that it is through his priesthood that the wife has a relationship with God. A divorced woman is cut off from that direct priesthood-God connection.

Because of the importance of the married state, many women have been mistakenly counseled by their church leaders to stay in marriages even when abuse is occurring. This instruction, which implies she deserves or somehow causes the abuse, is shattering to the identity of being a person of value. When God's representatives imply or even directly say that the victim in some way causes the abuse and that the solution is for them to try harder and live more righteously, reality is denied. For individuals who already have identity confusion, these messages just increase it. In general, because of the heightened awareness of the causes and course of abuse, this type of stance by bishops and stake presidents occurs less frequently, but unfortunately is still prevalent enough that it may be one of the problems that will have to be addressed in therapy.

The church's stand that mothers should stay at home and raise their own children is one that can bring great distress to a woman whose divorce forces her to leave her children in order to support them. Because there is no equivalent instruction for men, if men have custody, they face the problem of what to do with the children while they work, but they don't have the added burden of religion-based guilt about leaving them.

In addition to theologically-based losses and injuries for women, divorce brings real-life losses of such gargantuan proportions that her whole being is affected. While like the widowed woman, she no longer has the man she married in her life, she is unlike her in that the absence of her husband is just one of the many losses with which she must contend. The most painful additional factor in many divorces is the rejection that accompanies the loss of love from the primary person in her life. Gone also is her identity as a wife, and with it certain understood responsibilities and functions.

More frequently than not, a divorced woman will also lose her home. If it is not required that it be sold during the division of assets, women rarely have the financial resources to pay the mortgage and upkeep. Recent research shows that a "typical woman with young children experiences a 73 percent decline in her standard of living in the first year after divorce" (Harvey, 1986, p. 73). Since a woman rarely has the training or earning power to match that of her former husband's, her standard of living, and with it her perception of herself within the society in which she lives, dramatically changes. A wide variety of special extras in which she may have been participating, such as donating time and money to charities, attending plays, participating in sports, giving parties or showers, giving community service, travelling, even giving gifts, more often than not will have to be given up.

Newly divorced women frequently find that although the former tangible assets are divided between her and her former husband, the intangible assets accumulated during the marriage, such as education, insurance, access to company stock options, matched savings plans, company cars, pensions, and future earning power, leave with the husband. Further, if she wasn't farsighted enough to establish her own credit history, she will be unable to obtain any, since it will not be given to divorced women with no regular income. If she was active in clubs, organizations, and auxiliaries, they often are also gone since they frequently are in the husband's name or in conjunction with his profession.

Another loss is that often her social life stops, since prior to the divorce most socializing would have been established as couples. Even those social activities that are in conjunction with the church are effected, since they often take place under the auspices of the priesthood quorums. Married female friends may avoid her for a variety of reasons: fear of the "dreaded divorcee," because she's a reminder that it can happen to anyone, or because of uncomfortableness with the pain.

As she joins the ranks of single women, the divorced woman may find that the rules changed while she was married. Growing up in a religious culture that emphasizes the woman's role in the home, she may be unprepared for the expectation that she be self-

supporting, self-sufficient, and emotionally independent as a single woman.

Men do not escape additional areas of identity damage that result from a divorce. The most devastating one, and the one that might bring them into therapy, is the loss of the in-the-home father role. While there is a national trend toward awarding joint custody, the reality is that children usually live the majority of the time with their mother. Even in the best of cases, time spent between a father and his children is short and often strained. In the worst case scenario, the divorced father may encounter insurmountable roadblocks to his continued relationship with his children.

Another area where damage is inflicted is the assumption by others that men are at fault if there is a divorce. No matter what the real reason may be, men carry the stigma of being the one who wanted it or caused it. While this is true some of the time, it is, of course, not true all of the time.

Men also suffer financial losses. However, research (Harvey, 1986) has shown that a man's standard of living increases 42 percent within a short time after the divorce. So as a rule, financial instability is more transitory than for women. Men suffer rejection, the loss of the family home, and their couple friendships. They may outwardly have an easier time establishing new relationships and moving on to a new marriage because of the role of men in society. Inwardly, the movement from being married to being single may be as painful and difficult as it is for women.

Because of the cultural rules—men should be able to take care of themselves and men do not unburden themselves on their friends—we may see them in therapy only if they become incapacitated with depression or anxiety. The therapeutic process is more extensive under those conditions, but the issues affecting identity are the same.

Both divorced women and men face pain and many problems being a single parent, beginning at the moment the children are told there will be a divorce. Helping the children release their anger and sadness can be wrenching. When it is added to the

personal anguish, it is devastating. The sense of failure is palpable. It is difficult being a parent when there are two working at it. When one is alone, the untold numbers of problems can be overwhelming. All of which can add to the feelings of inadequacy and failure. The emphasis on the family and the lack of any sustained or formal help under the auspices of the church can only add to that feeling and to the pain that the children carry. Sometimes our role as therapists will have to include teaching single parenting and practical problem-solving skills as well as the regular healing therapy.

Even if the divorce is the obviously correct solution, no one walks out of a divorce unmarked. And because of the intimate knowledge of personal faults and failings, self-blame is usually high, and by extension, God's blame is high as well. Being divorced in a religion that has marriage as a tenet brings with it tremendous personal struggles involving feelings of unworthiness and unacceptableness both before the Lord and the organizational structure. "Becoming unconnected, unsealed when all the outside forces were saying 'stay bonded, stay sealed' . . . [is] an arduous, tortuous journey" (Raynes, 1981, p. 76). For the divorced, there is the "damning banner invisibly strung across every Church entryway . . . [which reads] *"No other success can compensate for failure in the home"* [italics in original] (Broderick, 1986, p. 63).

### Sex and the Single Mormon

It is hard to describe the intensity of the pain that single Mormons bear because of the issues surrounding sex. Research (Shaw, 1987) in this area confirmed that it is one of the most pressing and conflicted problems with which singles in the church have to deal.

Exhortations to live a chaste life, coupled with lessons, sermons, and articles warning against transgressing the church's norms are part of a religiously active Mormon's life from childhood on. Single Mormons are also faced with the knowledge that if they allow the biological or worldly influences to prevail, there is the risk that they will be cut off from participation in the religion in which they believe, and, by implication, from God.

At the same time, single Mormons have the same drives and sexual drives that married individuals have. Further, the major part of this population has been married before, and has experienced the full range of sexual functioning. With the death or divorce of a spouse, elimination of another major part of their identity—their sexual identity—occurs: this because masturbation is discouraged and celibacy is immediate.

The majority of active single Mormons hold and believe the sexual values as proclaimed by the church. However, a sizable percentage engage in some level of sexual activity which ranges from intercourse to masturbation (Shaw, 1987). Although the deviations were “seldom” in frequency, and, in many instances, minor in seriousness, these behaviors added the element of guilt (Shaw, 1987) to the identity problems that have to be addressed in therapy.

Another category of sexual problems for some single Mormons is that of homosexuality. These individuals face dreadful identity issues as they struggle to reconcile their sexual orientation with their commitment to their religion. To help those who seek our assistance, an excellent referral source for us is Thomas and Ann Pritt’s article, “Homosexuality: Getting Beyond the Therapeutic Impasse” published in the 1987 *AMCAP Journal*. Corrections to that article appear in their letter to the editor in the journal the following issue.

Sexual identity issues of unmarried Mormons are some of the more difficult they face. As therapists we can help women and men who struggle with sexual issues understand that

[s]exuality is the general quality of being—one aspect of our total self, that is with us from birth to death and is indivisible from our soul. . . [That] there is an inner quality of sexuality, that we didn’t create but that simply is and that we can foster. . . . And then there is an external action that we can make choices about (Raynes, 1987).

Single men and women, widowed, divorced and never-married, feel they don’t have an identity that fits the official image of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These feelings are a chronic problem. However, statistics show that only 20 percent of

the Mormon households fit the official image of a temple-married couple with children at home (Heaton, 1987).

So resolving the identity crisis is not so much a matter of unmarried Mormons changing in such a way to fit some norm, but rather changing in such a way as to accept themselves as intrinsically valuable. The process of finding personal worth can be of enormous assistance in attenuating the assault upon their identity. It will also enable them to understand the importance of their role within the church organization and their personal value to God. If we are fortunate, we as therapists can participate in that important journey.

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## Using the Experiences of Older Adults In Counseling with Young Adults

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Michael L. Maughan, EdD

Could my young adult clients benefit from knowing how middle-aged and older people have dealt with their problems during their adult years? What advice and counsel would older adults give to those just beginning their adult life? These are two questions I have asked myself as I have counseled young adult college students and taught classes in adult development over the years.

I wonder if we, as counselors, have been so concerned during the past two or three decades about seeing and treating our clients's problems as individually unique that we have ignored the fact that we are all human beings, and as such, have a number of commonalities which make it possible to learn from each other as we go through the different stages of life. There is little disagreement that each client is different and that his or her problems are never really the same as another person's, but we have often carried this perspective to the extreme and focused on the differences rather than the similarities our clients have with others. When we view our clients from the "differences" perspective, we are likely to focus on helping them come up with their own individual solutions to problems. An example of this therapeutic perspective is Carl Rogers's client-centered therapy which was very popular in the 1960s (Rogers, 1965). When we view our clients from a "commonalities" perspective, we are more inclined to focus on helping them find solutions to their problems within the context of a

supportive society. That society, according to Martin Seligman (1988), can help them cope with personal loss and failure and give them a framework of hope when individual problem-solving efforts are not adequate. Our clients can obtain particular help from older adults in society who have gained years of experience in dealing with the challenges and problems in life.

Historically speaking, the early work of Albert Bandura (1969) emphasizes the importance of learning from others as a therapeutic procedure. Bandura's experiments on observational learning demonstrate that desired behavior can be learned much more rapidly when seen being exhibited by others rather than having to personally experience it through the process of trial and error. He comments, "There is considerable evidence . . . that the behavior of observers can be substantially modified as a function of witnessing other people's behavior and its consequences for them" (Bandura, 1969, p. 48). Using Bandura's conclusion, it is reasonable to believe that young adults can increase the possibility of making wise and rewarding choices in their lives by learning what choices older people have made and the consequences of those choices.

Another historical perspective which emphasizes the importance of learning from others is the developmental approach of Erik Erikson (1982). Erikson suggests that we progress through a series of developmental stages during our life. At each stage, we are faced with an issue to resolve. How well we deal with the issue determines our psychological adjustment and well-being. Middle-aged adults face the challenge of being generative. This involves extending outward from oneself and generating products, ideas or environments which add to society and assist in the development of the next generation. Adults in this stage of life can increase their generativity by teaching, guiding and helping younger people with the struggles they are facing at their developmental stage. Older adults face the challenge of developing ego integrity. Adults in this later stage of life can enhance their integrity by successfully integrating the wisdom they have obtained from their many experiences in life and passing it on to younger generations. According to Erikson's theory, middle-aged and older adults are in

an excellent position to guide and help younger people just beginning their adulthood years.

What can we learn from older people about the way they have dealt with their challenges and problems in life that will help our young adult clients become more effective in dealing with their problems? This study is an attempt to answer that question by finding out about the struggles middle-aged and older people have had during their adult lives, the ways they have coped with them, and what they would do differently if they were to live their lives over again.

### **Method**

Students from nine undergraduate upper division psychology classes at Brigham Young University conducted structured interviews with 480 individuals of their choice who were over forty years of age. All nine classes were taught by the author of this study. Most of the students were members of the Mormon Church as were the subjects they interviewed. The subjects consisted of relatives, friends, and local acquaintances of the students. The subjects included 322 women and 158 men. Sixty-three percent of the women were between the ages of 40-55, twenty-one percent between 56-70, and sixteen percent 71 or older. Fifty-nine percent of the men were between the ages of 40-55, twenty-eight percent between 56-70, and thirteen percent 71 or older. The interviews were part of a class assignment and they were conducted over a three year period. They consisted of eighteen open-ended questions about the present and past lives of the subjects. Seven of the interview questions addressed topics which seemed particularly relevant to the lives of young adults as they progress through their adult years. The responses to those seven questions were tabulated and compared statistically using a chi-square analysis to identify any significant differences between women and men in the way they answered the items.

### **Results**

The responses obtained from the seven interview questions are listed in the following tables with the most frequent response listed

first and less frequent responses listed in descending order. Responses showing a statistically significant difference between women and men are noted.

Table 1  
Frequency of Responses to Questions  
"What have been the most rewarding and satisfying times in your life?"

		<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
*1.	Raising my children and seeing them grow, mature, learn, perform, achieve and succeed; teaching my children and seeing them learn skills and understand principles; seeing my children happy.	(f) 207 (%) 64	78 49	285 59
*2.	Birth of my children.	(f) 123 (%) 38	39 25	162 34
*3.	Getting married; marriage	(f) 90 (%) 28	62 39	152 32
*4.	Seeing my children go on missions and get married in the temple; seeing my children do what is right; seeing my children find good mates; seeing my children start their own families	(f) 103 (%) 32	35 22	138 29
5.	Being with my family; feeling loved and being a part of a loving family; times together as a family.	(f) 90 (%) 28	45 28	135 28
*6.	Getting, maintaining, and progressing in a good job or career; becoming an owner of a business; becoming an authority in my profession; teaching; working with handicapped children	(f) 61 (%) 19	57 36	118 25
*7.	Joining the church; serving in a particular church position like a bishop or Relief Society president; going on a mission; working in the temple; someone you know joining the church	(f) 47 (%) 15	57 36	104 22
8.	Going to school, particularly college; graduating from college.	(f) 47 (%) 15	27 17	74 15
*9.	Achieving personal success like playing the piano or winning athletic tournaments; creating, building, or producing something	(f) 34 (%) 11	33 21	67 14
10.	Time spent with my spouse; recognizing growth and happiness in my marriage; solving difficult problems in marriage; building a relationship with my spouse.	(f) 38 (%) 12	22 14	60 13

\* = Significant difference in sex at the .05 level.

As can be seen from Table 1, the most rewarding and satisfying time in life for both women and men is raising their children. Women reported significantly higher satisfaction than men from

(1) raising and teaching their children, (2) the birth of their children, and (3) seeing their children establish themselves as adults by making wise religious choices, getting married and starting their own families. Men reported significantly higher satisfaction than women from (1) getting and being married, (2) obtaining a good job and progressing in a career, (3) serving in the Church, and (4) achieving personal successes in their lives.

Table 2  
Frequency of Responses to Question,  
"What have been the most difficult and stressful situations in your life?"

		<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
1. Death of a family member (spouse, child, parent, etc.).	(f) (%)	113 35	43 27	156 33
2. Financial strain; losing a job or business; not enough money to support family; unemployment; financial reversal	(f) (%)	74 23	50 32	124 26
3. Raising a family and trying to satisfy everyone; rebelliousness of children, particularly teenagers; family conflict; problems with children	(f) (%)	86 27	34 22	120 25
4. Seeing my children struggle with problems; watching my children make mistakes and do things which are not right; seeing my children not living up to their potential; seeing my children unhappy; seeing my children get divorced	(f) (%)	73 23	28 18	101 21
5. Serious illness or health loss of family member	(f) (%)	60 19	21 13	81 17
*6. Work problems; work related stress and pressure; firing employees; getting a business started; turned down for promotion	(f) (%)	17 5	64 41	81 17
7. Divorce	(f) (%)	55 17	21 13	76 16
8. Personal health loss; poor health; major sickness; serious accident; serious operation and not being able to care for myself	(f) (%)	42 13	24 15	66 14
9. Conflict and discord with spouse	(f) (%)	46 14	10 6	56 12
10. Adjusting to marriage; first year of marriage; making the marriage work	(f) (%)	35 11	12 8	47 10

\* = Significant difference in sex at the .05 level.

The data on Table 2 shows the most difficult and stressful situation in life for women to be the death of a family member, whereas for men, it is the stress and pressure of work. Statistically speaking, the stress men experience in conjunction with their work is significantly greater than for women.

Table 3  
Frequency of Responses to Question,  
"How have you coped with setbacks, disappointments, losses, and disasters in your life?"

		Women	Men	Total
*1. Prayer; fasting; faith in the Lord to help	(f) (%)	157 49	55 35	212 44
*2. Positive attitude; look to the future; don't dwell on the past; block disaster from mind and refuse to dwell on them; try to accept what happened and go on; don't waste time feeling sorry for myself, but instead, go on; keep a stiff upper lip, realizing things will get better; try to enjoy life	(f) (%)	114 35	82 52	196 41
3. Reach out to others for support and counsel; talk to spouse and loved ones or friends; follow example of those who cope well	(f) (%)	94 29	31 20	125 26
4. Use statements like "This too will pass," "It could be worse," "I can endure this," "Everything will work out," "Life goes on."	(f) (%)	71 22	40 25	111 23
5. Take one day at a time; flow with life; be patient; ride the waves and let time pass	(f) (%)	66 20	21 13	87 18
6. Keep busy working at job and responsibilities; work harder; put in extra effort; keep busy with things that bring satisfaction; keep mind occupied	(f) (%)	54 17	28 18	82 17
7. Try to learn from my problems and move on; let disappointments make me stronger and better prepared for the future	(f) (%)	37 11	32 20	69 14
*8. Evaluate my situation; reorganize, make alternative plans and move toward new goals; see if I am doing the best I can, if so, don't worry about it.	(f) (%)	37 11	32 20	69 14
9. Keep proper perspective by remembering what is of eternal worth; maintain hope for future based on eternal perspective	(f) (%)	43 13	19 12	62 13
10. Spend time by myself; read scriptures, literature, help books, patriarchal blessing; write in journal; listen to music	(f) (%)	45 14	13 8	58 12

\* = Significant difference in sex at the .05 level.

Table 3 shows that the most frequently used way to cope with disappointments and disasters in life for women is prayer and having faith in the Lord, whereas for men, it is having a positive attitude about the future and not dwelling on past failures. Both of these differences between women and men are statistically significant. Also significant is the fact that men, more than women, successfully cope with their disappointments and disasters by evaluating their difficulties, reorganizing their efforts, and moving toward new goals.

As can be seen from Table 4, the most frequent discovery women make about themselves is finding out that they are competent and capable in reaching goals and surviving hardships. This discovery is significantly greater for women than men. The most frequent discovery for men is that they do not have the physical endurance they had in the past. Statistically speaking, women are also more likely than men to discover they have the power within themselves to create personal happiness regardless of outside circumstances.

As can be seen from Table 5, the most frequently used step by both women and men to keep control of their lives is to establish goals and organize themselves to reach those goals. Statistically speaking, women are more inclined than men to pray and seek God's help as a control procedure, whereas men are more inclined than women to try to stay out of debt and maintain financial independence.

From Table 6, it can be seen that if both women and men were to start their lives over, they would obtain more education and career preparation. Women were statistically more inclined than men to wait to marry until later in life and to marry a different person, one who was a more faithful member of the Church. Men were statistically more inclined than women to seek to establish their own business and financial independence earlier in life.

Table 4  
Frequency of Responses to Question,  
"What are some recent discoveries you have made about yourself?"

		<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
*1. I am a strong and capable person—I can do whatever I set my mind to; I can set goals and achieve them; I have confidence in myself and my abilities; I can accomplish more than I thought possible; I am more creative than I ever thought; I can make it on my own; I can survive.	(f) (%)	116 36	27 17	143 30
2. I can't endure as much physically; I don't have the stamina I used to have; I can't do things I would like to; I have to ask others to help.	(f) (%)	40 12	37 23	77 16
3. I am an important and valuable person; I have more esteem and confidence in myself; I like myself; I feel better about myself as a person; I am an individual separate from my spouse and children; my feelings are important; I can live with my imperfections and shortcomings; it is okay to make mistakes.	(f) (%)	58 18	14 9	72 15
4. I have good intellectual abilities and can still learn; I need intellectual stimulation; I like learning new things and new skills; my view point is as valid as anyone else's; my body is getting older but my mind hasn't changed.	(f) (%)	43 13	21 13	64 13
*5. Only I can make myself happy and life meaningful; I have the power within to be happy; I can be happy with my lot in life and don't need more things to make me happy; I am a happy and optimistic person; if I have a positive attitude, I can get through most anything.	(f) (%)	50 16	9 6	59 12
6. My relationship with God and my family is the most important thing in life; living my values are more important than material things; I don't need material things like I used to think; relationships are more important than material things.	(f) (%)	25 8	22 14	47 10
7. I can accept people for what they are and work diplomatically with them; I am more tolerant and less judgmental than I used to be; I am more liberal in my thinking than I used to be; it is easier to control my temper and forgive others.	(f) (%)	25 8	20 13	45 9

\* = Significant difference in sex at the .05 level.



Table 5  
Frequency of Responses to Question,  
"What steps do you take to keep control of your life?"

		<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
1. Organize and plan what I do; set goals, work toward them and evaluate my progress; prioritize; commit time to important things; schedule and plan in advance; think of the consequences before jumping in with both feet; associate with those types of people who help me obtain my goals in life; try to prepare for the future.	(f) (%)	110 34	56 35	166 35
*2. Pray; fast; maintain faith in God; meditate; try to be spiritual.	(f) (%)	100 31	30 19	130 27
3. Keep commandments; live gospel; stay involved in church; read scriptures.	(f) (%)	72 22	31 20	103 21
4. Make decisions for myself and family without letting situations control me; follow my own good judgment rather than someone else's opinion; do what I want to do or feel I need to do for my own best interest rather than trying to please others all the time; saying "no" sometimes; only commit to those things I can do and let others carry their share of the load; Do not make too many commitments at once; make my own plans knowing I have the ability to choose how to live.	(f) (%)	73 23	23 15	96 20
5. Keep physically fit; maintain my personal health; eat well; exercise.	(f) (%)	53 16	26 16	79 16
6. Keep positive outlook and don't dwell on problems; keep attitude and thoughts on an optimistic level; talk to myself about my problems but remain positive; realize I can make something of my life and be happy with it.	(f) (%)	54 17	21 13	75 16
*7. Try to keep ahead financially and stay out of debt; maintain financial independence from people; manage my own financial affairs; careful handling of resources	(f) (%)	29 9	35 22	64 13
8. Keep a perspective and focus on important things in life—do things which are important to me—step back and view life from a distance.	(f) (%)	38 12	20 13	58 12
9. Keep mentally active and continue to learn; read for information; keep up on current events; read professional and fictional books.	(f) (%)	35 11	22 14	57 12
*10. Talk with others, like family and friends; try to understand both sides of an issue.	(f) (%)	39 12	16 10	55 11

\* = Significant difference in sex at the .05 level.

Table 6  
Frequency of Responses to Question,

"If you were able to start your adult life over, what would you change and do differently?"

		<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
1. Obtain more education and career preparation; take my education more seriously and work harder in school; finish school earlier.	(f) (%)	131 41	66 42	197 41
2. Spend more time with my family and friends; not take my family for granted, but try harder to unite them; be more involved in my children's lives; gone on more trips with my kids; take the time to communicate with my loved ones each day.	(f) (%)	40 12	24 15	64 13
3. Stay closer to the gospel and stay active in the church; try to be more spiritual and rely upon the Lord; make choices more in line with my moral values.	(f) (%)	40 12	23 15	63 13
*4. Wait to marry until later; have a longer courtship; gain more maturity and wisdom before marriage; learn to know myself before I got married; marry after my education and exposure to the world.	(f) (%)	55 17	5 3	60 13
5. Be more people-oriented and more outgoing and friendly; concentrate more on relationships instead of being so task-oriented; try to lift others; be more considerate, tolerant and understanding of others, including my children; get rid of my anger which hurt people.	(f) (%)	30 9	17 11	47 10
*6. Marry differently; would marry a faithful church member; would be more careful about who I married.	(f) (%)	41 13	6 4	47 10
7. Be more goal-oriented; establish goals and priorities; be more organized and plan for the future; seriously pursue those things which matter the most earlier in life.	(f) (%)	22 7	21 13	43 9
*8. Start my own business rather than investing my life for someone else; start my investments earlier; change profession earlier in life; select a more established area of employment.	(f) (%)	5 2	24 15	29 6

\* = Significant difference in sex at the .05 level.

Table 7  
Frequency of Responses to Question,  
"What advice and counsel would you give a young adult starting his or her adult years?"

		<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
1.	Get the best possible education as early as you can; learn as much as possible; prepare for a career; learn to love learning; stay intellectually and creatively stimulated; get training in a usable skill; select a livelihood you are good at and enjoy.	(f) 114 (%) 35	66 42	180 38
2.	Put your trust in the Lord; stay close to the Lord; keep spiritually strong; pray regularly.	(f) 103 (%) 32	44 28	147 31
3.	Make short and long term goals and work hard to reach them; be willing to pay the price for success; practice self-discipline; choose and order priorities in life; decide early what you want your life to be.	(f) 81 (%) 25	53 34	134 28
4.	Stay active in the church and keep the commandments; stay close to the gospel; don't be fooled by worldly temptation; keep a balance between spiritual and temporal things.	(f) 76 (%) 24	41 26	117 24
*5.	Be careful about your selection of a mate; marry wisely; make sure who you marry is your friend; don't be in too big of a hurry to marry; be sure you know and love yourself and have a good self image before you marry; have common goals and commitments with your future spouse; take time to meet the right person before getting married; look for someone you want to make happy, not someone to make you happy; don't marry young; consider other people than the most popular as possible marriage partners.	(f) 86 (%) 27	25 16	111 23
6.	Enjoy each day of life while in it; don't be in such a hurry; take yourself and life less seriously; develop a sense of humor; be flexible; learn to laugh at yourself and others; enjoy the journey as well as the destination; smell the roses; try new things; take a vacation trip at least once a year.	(f) 63 (%) 20	22 14	85 18
7.	Spend your money wisely; don't spend all money on one thing like a car; save at least 10% of what you earn; stay out of debt; don't get caught up in accumulating the material things of life; learn what is necessity and what is want; avoid letting money manage your life; spend less than you make; save and budget your money; become financially independent.	(f) 46 (%) 14	33 21	79 16
8.	Serve others unselfishly and treat others with respect; show love for others and be forgiving; help others; be kind and thoughtful; be considerate and patient; don't get angry at the same time as your spouse.	(f) 47 (%) 15	29 18	76 16
9.	Live your own life; be an individual; don't give into peer pressure; associate with friends with high standards and similar goals; stand up for your rights; be assertive and say what is on your mind; be a risk taker; be independent; see what is in the world.	(f) 45 (%) 14	26 16	71 15

Table 7  
Frequency of Responses to Question,  
"What advice and counsel would you give a young adult starting his or her adult years?"

		<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
10. Stay close to your family; make families first and spend time with them; tell your family about important things in life and teach them about Heavenly Father and His love for them; devote time, talents, love and energy to your family; do things together like play games; help children feel like an important part of the family unit.	(f) (%)	49 15	19 12	68 14

\* = Significant difference in sex at the .05 level.

As can be seen from Table 7, the most frequent advice and counsel both women and men would give to young adults is similar to that which they would do if they were to start their lives over, that of getting as much education and career preparation as possible early in life. Statistically speaking, women are more inclined than men to counsel young adults to avoid marrying too young and to marry wisely when they do marry.

## Discussion

The findings from this study provide information which can help counselors assist their young adult clients in coping with current problems and better preparing for future ones by understanding the way older individuals have dealt with their problems during their adult years. The findings have particular applicability to young adult Mormons since many of the subjects in the study were of the Mormon faith.

The first finding has to do with marriage and raising a family. The majority of subjects in this study reported that the most satisfying times in their lives centered around their marriage, the birth of their children, and the raising and teaching of their children. This finding is compatible with Helen Bee's (1987) conclusion from a number of studies on life satisfaction showing that "the single most potent variable in predicting overall happiness has been the person's reported happiness in marriage or family relationships" (Bee, 1987, p. 376). Marriage and raising a family can bring much satisfaction, but it also can be a major source of stress. A number of subjects in this study reported the most

stressful times in their lives to be the raising of rebellious children and watching their children make mistakes and unhappily struggle with difficult problems. Counselors can first of all help their clients realize that educational, career, and other personal achievements can be fulfilling, but over a life time, the energy and resource invested in marriage and family relationships will bring more satisfying returns. Secondly, counselors can help their clients see the challenges as well as the satisfactions of marriage so they do not think of it as an easy escape from unsatisfying educational and work situations. And thirdly, counselors can help their clients by increasing their understanding of how challenging it has been for their parents to raise them and their siblings. This knowledge can better prepare them for what to expect when they marry and have children.

The second finding from this study relevant to counseling is the way we treat others and the impact the death of a family member has upon us. The subjects in the study wished they had been more considerate, tolerant, understanding and loving of others in their past lives. They wished they had spent more time with their family and friends and not taken them for granted. They wished they had been more people-oriented than task-oriented, and more outgoing and friendly. And they regretted not helping and serving others more. The realization of their neglect in nurturing important relationships often came when someone important to them died. Overall, the death of a family member was the most stressful event in life they had to face. This finding correlates with Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe's work in developing the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (1967) where they found the most stressful event in people's lives to be the death of their spouse. Young adults, particularly newly married couples, can often be so task-oriented in getting their education, establishing a financial base, and moving ahead in a career, that they often neglect their relationships with their spouses, children and friends. It is not until they lose one of these people to death that they realize the full value of close relationships. Counselors can help their young adult clients avoid getting so caught up in their schooling and career development that they take their loved ones for granted and fail to foster their relationships with significant others.

The third finding concerns money, debt and financial management. Subjects in this study report financial hardships such as not having enough money to support their family, burdensome debt, losing their job, and financial reversals to be very stressful. These conditions have a negative impact on personal happiness and marital stability, particularly if couples perceive material possessions and affluence to be a key ingredient of marital happiness (Jorgensen, 1979; Price-Bonham, & Balswick, 1980; Schaninger & Buss, 1986). It is easy for young adults to get caught up in the accumulation of the material things in life and overextend their financial resources. They frequently find themselves in financial difficulty due to the ease of obtaining credit cards and borrowing money. Older adults warn about the perils of such a situation and strongly advise sensible management of financial resources. They suggest staying out of debt and maintaining financial independence as a major step in keeping control of one's life. Even though psychotherapists usually do not think of themselves as financial counselors, it would be wise to become apprised of their clients's financial status. Therapists who know something about their clients's spending habits and indebtedness can have a better picture of their clients's values, goals, personal discipline, capacity for delaying gratification, and general management skills. A knowledge of these variables can be useful in helping clients deal with other problems in their lives.

The fourth finding involves work and employment. Subjects in the study, and particularly men, report their jobs and work to be a source of satisfaction, but at the same time a source of pressure and stress. They report getting, maintaining and progressing in a good job or career to be rewarding, but dealing with job pressures, getting turned down for promotions, firing employees, and getting one's business started to be very stressful. Young adults often have an unrealistic picture of the working world and frequently find themselves disappointed with their first job following their career preparation. They expect their ideas to be acknowledged, their skills to be utilized, and their work to be challenging and rewarding. This seems to be more the case with today's new graduates than previous generations according to the opinion of many managers (Phillips, 1987). If these expectations are not met, job satisfaction

declines and absenteeism and eventual withdrawal from the job are the usual results (Lee & Wilbur, 1985; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1983). Counselors can help their clients more realistically prepare for the work-setting by discussing possible disappointments related to unmet expectations as well as the anticipated satisfactions of their future jobs.

The fifth finding in this study has to do with the importance of the spiritual dimension in the lives of older adults. Subjects report staying close to the Lord through prayer and fasting, living the Gospel, and staying active in the Church as effective ways to deal with setbacks and losses, and to keep control of one's life. They also report they would make more effort to maintain a strong spiritual life if they had their lives to live over again. Many do not realize how important the spiritual dimension is until they reach their mid-life years and are able to look back and evaluate how they have lived life up to that time and how they want to live it in the future. They counsel young adults to stay spiritually strong, to make the Lord and the Church a central part of their lives, and to keep a balance between the spiritual and temporal things in life. This balance is difficult for young adults to achieve because, of necessity, they are so involved in the material aspects of establishing themselves in their careers and communities. To become established requires having appropriate clothing, the right tools of their trade, a dependable car, a suitable home, and other items needed to raise a family and fit comfortably into a neighborhood. Often, they have sacrificed so many material items while going to school that they are "hungry" to get out into the world and make up for the material deprivation they felt while in school. Counselors can be sensitive to this materialistic pull and help their clients avoid becoming consumed with worldly necessities at the expense of their spirituality. The spiritual area is a valuable barometer. When clients keep their spirituality nourished, they usually feel better about other areas in their lives. The reverse is often the case when their spiritual life is weak and malnourished.

The sixth finding concerns discoveries adults make about themselves later on in life. Adults, and particularly women, discover they have the power within themselves to create happiness regardless of their outside circumstances. They realize they do not

have to depend on others nor the things of the world to make them happy. Young adult women often conclude their life would be happy and complete if they could just find the right husband and devote themselves to raising a family. They think their happiness is somehow dependent upon marriage and family. Counselors can help female clients who think this way work toward creating their own happiness and avoiding the romantic naivete that a husband, children, and home will automatically provide fulfilling happiness. Adult women also discover they have other strengths and capabilities which lay dormant within them. In a study of middle-aged women, Erdwins and her colleagues found "that mid-life students describe themselves as significantly more achievement-oriented, particularly as it is characterized by independence and self-reliant action, in comparison to the students in their twenties" (Erdwins, Tyler, & Mellinger, 1983, p. 149). In our society, women do not get the same opportunities as men to develop and test out their skills and capabilities in a socially recognized way, particularly if they become homemakers right after getting married. It is easy for these young women to feel inadequate or inferior because of a lack of societal validation. Counselors can watch for these feelings, and if they occur, help their clients recognize their inner strengths so they do not have to wait until middle-age to discover them.

The seventh finding involves self-esteem and seeing oneself as important and valuable regardless of societal definitions of value and worth. Older adults report being more able to accept and like themselves in spite of their personal imperfections and shortcomings. They report being able to separate themselves from their spouse and children and feeling good about their individuality. They keep control of their lives by making decisions for themselves and following their own good judgments rather than trying to please others and live up to their expectations. This can be useful information to counselors as they help clients feel a sense of worth based on personal qualities rather than on societal portrayals of popularity and success. They can assist clients in developing their individual talents and following a course of life primarily based upon those talents rather than a course solely based on a secure financial future. Arthur Chickering (1969) views this effort to



define one's value and worth as an essential aspect of establishing identity. He likens identity development to a piano wire that resonates at a different level of intensity and frequency for each individual. The young adult must find out which intensity and frequency best fits his or herself. Counselors can help their clients develop this individuality and make decisions more in harmony with it.

The eighth finding has to do with keeping a sense of control of one's life. The main way adults do this is to decide what is most important in life, set goals based on that decision, and organize personal resources to reach those goals. Decision-making and goal-setting seem to be important parts of personal growth at any age. According to Daniel Levinson, "The primary task of every stable period is to build a life structure: a man must make certain key choices, form a structure around them, and pursue his goals and values within this structure" (Levinson, 1978, p. 49). The decisions and goals made in young adulthood lay a critical foundation for the building of a life structure in the adult years ahead. It is essential that counselors have expertise in defining values, setting goals, and making decisions so as to optimally assist clients in shaping their future and moving on to higher levels of development.

The ninth finding concerns getting an education. The subjects in this study emphasize the importance of getting as much education and career preparation as early in life as possible. Many older adults regret not taking education more seriously and studying harder when they were in school. If they had their lives to live over again, they would stay in school longer, set educational and career goals earlier, and work harder at reaching those goals. Also, they would learn to love learning so they could stay intellectually alive throughout their life. Young adults often feel burned-out from being in school so long and it is a challenge for counselors to keep them interested in education so they do not prematurely discontinue from school and eventually develop the same regret as many of the adults in this study. Counselors need to explore creative ways to help their clients see the value of education in their future lives as well as the present. This includes being knowledgeable of the informal as well as formal educational options in the

community so alternative learning experiences can be offered to clients to meet their individual needs and interests.

The tenth finding concerns marriage and preparation for it. Adults, and particularly women, report that they would be more careful about who to marry and they would make sure they knew themselves and had a good self-image before getting married. This finding could easily reflect what Turner and Helms say about many young people who marry early, in that, "often, marriage comes before they really know who they are, since they are still in the midst of psychological and philosophical growth" (Turner & Helms, 1989, p. 140). The development of individual identity seems to be important for marriage stability, particularly for women (Kahn, Zimmerman, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1985). If this identity has not been fairly well established by the time women reach the late adolescent and young adult years, they may think that marriage to a stable partner will solve any unresolved identity issue. Marriages build on this assumption are often stormy and one or both partners wish they had not rushed into marriage without first getting to better know themselves and their future spouses. Marital success is usually greater when both partners have compatible backgrounds and are stable and happy before marriage. The subjects in this study advise young adults to be careful about their selection of mate, to get to know and love themselves before marriage, and to take time to get to know the other person. Counselors can use this information to encourage their clients to be discerning and patient when it comes to selecting a marriage partner. They can also help their clients grow to a point of feeling stable, whole and happy as individuals before marriage. Sensitive but direct counseling at this important time in a young adult's life can save misery later on.

The eleventh finding involves enjoying the present without always looking to the future. The subjects in this study advise young adults to enjoy each day of life rather than always seeing happiness as coming in the future when school is completed, marriage takes place, or a good job is obtained. Older adults suggest enjoying the journey as well as the destination. They also suggest taking time to try new things and not be in such a hurry about everything. Many young adults tend to be very future-oriented in

what Sheehy (1974) calls “working out the externals” in their lives: they are blind to much of the satisfaction which can come from daily living. Counselors can help clients find more enjoyment in the happenings of the day and help them establish a healthy balance between the present and the future.

### Summary

This study examined the joys and heartaches experienced by middle-aged and older people during their adult years and how they successfully dealt with the problems and difficulties they faced. Many of the 480 subjects in the study were of the Mormon faith and their responses reflected their religious background. Collectively, the subjects reported the most satisfying time in life to be the raising of children and watching them grow, learn and succeed; the most stressful situation in life to be the death of a family member; the most useful coping procedure in dealing with difficult times to be prayer and staying close to the Lord; the most frequent discovery made about themselves to be an ability to survive hard times and to achieve personal goals; the most effective way to keep control of life to be the making of plans and working toward high priority goals; the most frequent regret of the past to be the lack of enough education and career preparation, and the most frequent suggestion given to young adults to be the obtaining of as much education as early in life as possible. Eleven findings in the study were discussed which have application for the counseling of young adults. These findings deal with the cherishing of marriage and family relationships, fostering kind and thoughtful relationships with others, managing financial resources, adjusting to employment after graduation from school, maintaining spiritual strength and closeness to the Lord, recognizing the power to create personal happiness, enhancing feelings of personal worth, setting goals and making wise decisions, taking advantage of educational opportunities, selecting a compatible marriage partner, and enjoying present circumstances. Suggestions were made to help counselors implement these findings into the content of their counseling sessions so as to assist their clients obtain a more realistic perspective of the future and better prepare to live in that future.

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# Religious Orientation Among Mormons

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Michael E. Nielsen

## Abstract

Richard Poll's Iron Rod-Liahona view of LDS religious orientation is addressed in a study of Utah and Illinois Mormons. Measures are developed, and discrete and continuous scaling is examined. Of the demographic variables considered, only age influenced participants' Iron Rod-Liahona score. The measures are compared to the views of religious orientation held by Allport and Batson. Significant correlations exist between the Iron Rod-Liahona orientations and most of the traditionally used measures, with Allport's Extrinsic orientation being an exception.

Using terms from the *Book of Mormon*, Richard Poll (1967, 1983) characterizes active and faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or "Mormon") as having either an Iron Rod or a Liahona approach to their religion. According to Poll, the Iron Rod saint considers the road to Eternal Life to be unambiguous; as in Lehi's dream of the iron rod, "the way was not easy, but it was clear" (Poll, 1967, p. 108). The Liahona saint has a different perspective. The Liahona described in the *Book of Mormon* "was a reminder of . . . temporal and eternal goals, but it was no infallible delineator of [the] course" (Poll, 1967, 108). For the Liahona saint, guidance depends on a variety of factors, such as one's worthiness to obtain revelation,

paralleling the experiences of Lehi and his followers in the *Book of Mormon*.

In the two decades since its inception, the Iron Rod–Liahona classification scheme has interested many Latter-day Saints. The concept was even considered important enough to deserve mention in the church's general conference (Lee, 1971, in Poll, 1983). The typology has continued to circulate among members of the LDS church; four republications of Poll's first (1967) article, and frequent mention of the idea in other LDS writings, indicate the continuing interest in Iron Rod and Liahona Mormons.

In spite of the interest that Poll's views have generated, empirical work on the topic is quite limited. Nielsen (1989) has examined the possibility of considering both Mormons and non-Mormons as using an Iron Rod or a Liahona approach to their religion. That study supported the distinction between the Iron Rod and Liahona religious orientations; a person may have either an Iron Rod or a Liahona approach toward religion, but is unlikely to strongly endorse both types of items. In addition, among Mormons, but not among non-Mormons, Liahona scale scores were related to another measure of religious orientation, Batson's Quest factor, often used in social psychological studies of religion.

While Nielsen (1989) included members of various denominations, the present research focuses solely on Mormons. More specifically, attention is directed toward the relationship between Iron Rod and Liahona religiousness. Poll considers the two to be discrete categories, while other theorists have indicated that the Iron Rod and Liahona may represent ends of the same continuum (Cornwall, 1988; Jacob, 1989). The purpose of this study is to examine Iron Rod and Liahona religious orientations among LDS church members using both discrete and continuous approaches. A second purpose is to consider how the constructs relate to traditional measure of religious orientation: Allport's Intrinsic-Extrinsic, and Batson's Means-End-Quest, religious orientations. The following is a brief discussion of these issues.

### **Discrete vs. Continuous Scaling**

As stated in his 1967 paper, Poll believes that the Iron Rod and Liahona describe “two distinct types of active and dedicated Latter-day Saints” (p. 107). Later, however, Poll notes that there are “people who object to being pigeonholed, . . . [who prefer] a continuum along which individuals may be categorized in terms of their interpretation and application of the gospel rather than being placed in a discrete category.” (Poll, 1983, p. 71). Indeed, in his 1983 paper, Poll describes three types of responses: those from “Liahonas,” those from “Iron Rods,” and from those “who object to being pigeonholed,” (p. 71) and who apparently recognize benefits in both approaches. Often, writers commenting on the typology advocate a continuum (e.g., Cornwall, 1988; Jacob, 1989). Clearly, many people view the Iron Rod–Liahona relationship as not simply an “either/or” relationship, but one in which there are varying degrees, with a gray area between the poles.

### **Traditional Measures**

Social-psychological studies of religious orientation have emphasized Allport’s Intrinsic-Extrinsic view (Allport, 1950; Allport & Ross, 1967). Briefly stated, Intrinsic religiousness is religion that structures and endows meaning to all aspects of an individual’s life. In contrast, Extrinsic religiousness is used to fill needs of comfort and social convention. Well over 100 studies have compared the relationship between Intrinsic and Extrinsic religiousness, or how Intrinsic-Extrinsic religiousness may relate to other personality and behavioral variables (Donahue, 1985a, 1985b).

Batson (Batson & Raynor-Prince, 1983; Batson & Ventis, 1982) has modified the Intrinsic-Extrinsic typology by including a third orientation, Quest, on grounds that the concepts underlying Allport’s theory of mature religiousness are not completely realized in Allport’s scales. The Quest approach to religion emphasizes “an open, responsive dialogue with existential questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life” (Batson & Ventis, 1982, 152–54).

To this end, Batson adds four scales to Allport's Intrinsic and Extrinsic scales; these are the Internal, External, Orthodoxy, and Interactional scales. Briefly stated, the Internal scale is intended to measure a person's internal need for religious strength and direction. The External scale measures the influence of external, social factors on an individual's religious orientation. The Orthodoxy scale is a measure of Christian (Protestant) orthodoxy. Finally, the Interactional scale is intended to measure the Quest orientation described above. Factor analytic studies show that the Interactional scale defines the Quest orientation. The other scales most frequently load with the Intrinsic scale to form the End factor, with Allport's Extrinsic scale most strongly defining the Means factor.

In summary, the purpose of the present study is two-fold. First, Iron Rod and Liahona religious orientations among LDS church members will be examined using both discrete and continuous methods. Secondly, the relationship of Iron Rod and Liahona orientations to the approaches commonly applied in current social-psychological research will be considered.

## **Methods Used**

### ***Subjects***

The 79 adult Latter-day Saints who participated in this study were residents of Utah (45) and Illinois (34). Participants were primarily from two wards in the Salt Lake Valley and one ward in Illinois; a second ward provided four of the Illinois participants. In six instances, a participant had recently (within five years) moved from Utah to Illinois. When it was known that a participant spent most of his or her life in Utah, but was then living in Illinois, that person was classified as a Utahn. Three additional participants did not complete all items on the questionnaire, and were excluded from the analyses.

### ***Materials***

Forty-five questionnaire items (Appendix A) were developed from statements in Poll's writings. Subjects also completed Allport's Intrinsic and Extrinsic scales, and Batson's Internal, External, Interactional, and Orthodoxy scales.



### *Method*

Participants were informed that the questionnaire was made up of statements about religious beliefs, such as whether or not prayers are answered. They also were informed that there was no consensus regarding how the items should be answered, and that all responses would be confidential. All participants signed an informed consent statement. Participants first answered items regarding demographic variables, including age, state of residence, educational level, and gender, as well as indicating their level of interest and participation in religious activities. Participants then rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each questionnaire item on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree), the format used by Batson and his colleagues.

### **Results**

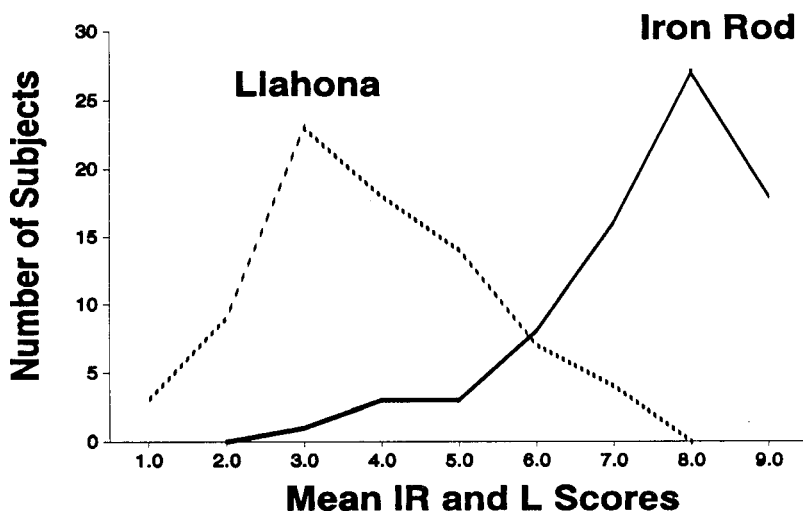
Responses to the questionnaire items were factor analyzed (varimax rotation). The first set of items identified by the factor analysis corresponds to the Iron Rod, eigenvalue = 4.35, alpha = .819. The items in this set are listed below. Preceding each item is the number indicated its relative position in Appendix A; following each item, in parentheses, is the loading of the item on the factor.

6. I find answers to my questions about the gospel through the scriptures, church leaders, and/or Holy Spirit. (.87)
7. The scriptures give definitive answers to important questions about today's world. (.77)
4. On any question, the will of God may be obtained through the scriptures, church leaders, and/or Holy Spirit. (.77)
5. I try to obey a commandment even if I don't fully understand it. (.75)
42. A true answer to every gospel-related question is available to me today through the scriptures, the church leaders, and/or the Holy Spirit. (.73)
36. My church leaders agree on doctrinal matters. (.65)

The second set of items identified by the factor analysis corresponds to Poll's Liahona, eigenvalue = 2.01, alpha = .719. The items in this set are listed below.

16. I frequently ponder questions that seem to have no answer. (.80)
23. I am intrigued by unanswered questions. (.74)
21. I would describe myself as being preoccupied with questions and skeptical of answers. (.74)
15. I wonder why, by a prayer of faith, one person will find a lost item, and in spite of a similar prayer, another will lose his eyesight. (.69)
44. I challenge the answers given to questions. (.65)

Next, participants' ratings of the Iron Rod and Liahona sets of items were averaged, giving each person a rating on the Iron Rod (IR) and on the Liahona (L) scales. Figure 1 shows frequency distributions of the Iron Rod ( $\bar{M} = 7.36$ , S.D. = 1.39) and Liahona ( $\bar{M} = 3.91$ , S.D. = 1.49) scales, respectively.



**Figure 1**—Frequency distribution of subjects' mean Iron Rod (IR) and Liahona (L) scale scores.

*Discrete Scaling*

For analyses using the discrete categories view of Iron Rod and Liahona religious orientation, average item responses for each set were dichotomized into low (5.0 or less) vs. high (greater than 5.0) categories. Using this classification system, participants in this study include the combinations of high-low Iron Rod and Liahona religiousness shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
High vs. Low Iron Rod and Liahona Orientations

		<u>Iron Rod</u>		
		Low	High	Total
<u>Liahona</u>	Low	3	56	59
	High	3	17	20
	Total	6	73	79

Number of participants in each cell, using a dichotomous view of Iron Rod and Liahona religious orientation.

As Table 1 indicates, the majority of participants scored higher than the midpoint on the Iron Rod scale, and lower than the midpoint on the Liahona scale. Twenty participants are classified as either low or high on both scales.

To examine the relationship between the two scales and their items, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed on each item with the discrete Iron Rod and Liahona classifications as between subjects factors. For each Iron Rod scale item, a significant main effect was found for the Iron Rod factor, no effect for the Liahona factor, and no significant interaction effect was found. Likewise, for each Liahona scale item, a significant main effect for Liahona score was found, and was most often unaccompanied by effects for either the Iron Rod factor or interaction term. There are two exceptions to this pattern. The first is item 21, which also showed

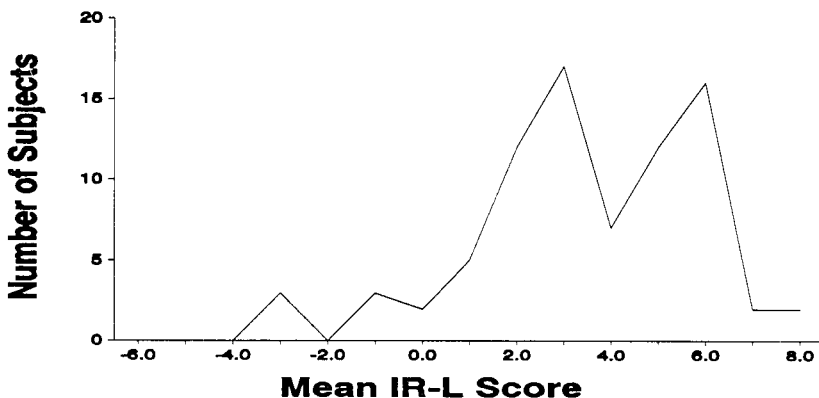
an effect for Iron Rod classification,  $F(1,75) = 6.49$ ,  $p < .02$ . The second exception to the general pattern is item 23 which, in addition to a main effect for Liahona score, showed a significant interaction,  $F(1,75) = 4.49$ ,  $p < .05$ . In this interaction, low Iron Rod/high Liahona persons agree more strongly,  $\bar{M} = 8.33$ , with this item than do other participants,  $\bar{M} = 4.17$ . However, this interaction must be regarded with a measure of caution, considering the very uneven cell sizes discussed above. Taken as a whole, these analyses indicate the Iron Rod and Liahona scores are not significantly predictive of one another.

Finally, an ANOVA was used to test for main effects of age, education, gender, Utah/Illinois residence, interest in religion, and participation in religious activities. None of these measures significantly influenced either Iron Rod or Liahona standing.

### *Continuous Scaling*

The empirical nature of the Iron Rod–Liahona relationship can be demonstrated by subtracting each participant's Liahona average score from the Iron Rod average score. If participants generally view the Iron Rod–Liahona (IR-L) distinction as discrete, the scores that result will be concentrated toward the ends of the IR-L scale in a bimodal distribution. On the other hand, if scores are concentrated more toward the center of the scale, then this suggests that people tend to be partly Iron Rod and partly Liahona in their thinking. Figure 2 illustrates the resulting IR-L frequency distribution, scores for which range from  $-3.37$  to  $8.0$ ,  $\bar{M} = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 2.42$ ,  $\alpha = .865$ . The theoretical range of the scale is  $-8.00$  to  $8.00$ , with a midpoint of  $0.00$ . As Figure 2 shows, the distribution more closely resembles a normal curve than it does a bimodal curve; the Martinez & Iglewicz test confirmed the normality of the distribution.

The IR-L scores were used in tests for demographic differences. An ANOVA indicated a significant effect for participants age,  $F = 4.16$ ,  $p < .01$ . A Fisher LSD test indicates that participants ages 26–35 score lower on the IR-L scale ( $\bar{M} = 2.13$ ) than other participants ( $\bar{M} = 3.75$ ). No other significant effects were found.



**Figure 2**—Frequency distribution of subjects' mean Iron Rod-Liahona (IR-L) scale scores.

What other beliefs might be associated with an emphasis in one concept rather than the other? Some insight to this question is gained by examining the relationship of the Iron Rod and Liahona to the other items on the questionnaire. The item-total correlations are shown in Table 2. As Table 2 indicates, most of the questionnaire statements are significantly correlated with the Iron Rod, Liahona, and/or IR-L scales.

Table 2  
Correlations of Items with Iron Rod, Liahona, and IR-L Scales

<u>Item</u>	<u>Iron Rod</u>	<u>Liahona</u>	<u>IR-L</u>
1.	.439**	-.382*	.500**
2.	-.225*	.298*	-.321*
3.	-.309*	.359*	-.409*
4.	.760**	-.195	.567**
5.	.730**	-.216	.563**
6.	.885**	-.401*	.772**
7.	.738**	-.266*	.599**
8.	.472**	-.179	.389*
9.	.644**	-.101	.439**
10.	.367*	-.005	.217
11.	-.255*	.219	-.288*
12.	.276*	-.181	.277*
13.	-.175	.307*	-.298*
14.	-.457**	.439**	-.546**

Table 2 (Cont.)  
Correlations of Items with Iron Rod, Liahona, and IR-L Scales

<u>Item</u>	<u>Iron Rod</u>	<u>Liahona</u>	<u>IR-L</u>
15.	-.317*	.749**	-.662**
16.	-.255*	.810**	-.665**
17.	-.567**	.301*	-.523**
18.	-.346*	.354*	-.427**
19.	.471**	-.383*	.520**
20.	-.429**	.402*	-.507**
21.	-.322*	.747**	-.664**
22.	-.549**	.362*	-.551**
23.	-.180	.727**	-.568**
24.	.550**	-.347*	.542**
25.	.369*	-.211	.350*
26.	.187	.208	-.023
27.	.557**	-.221	.466**
28.	-.479**	.439**	-.559**
29.	-.216	.234*	-.275*
30.	.540**	-.036	.338*
31.	.247*	-.054	.179
32.	-.051	.219	-.169
33.	-.355*	.345*	-.427**
34.	.065	.163	-.066
35.	.087	-.051	.084
36.	.702**	-.261*	.576**
37.	-.585**	.375*	-.579**
38.	.093	-.165	.160
39.	-.397*	.467**	-.528**
40.	-.057	.142	-.124
41.	.520**	-.234*	.452**
42.	.778**	-.254*	.615**
43.	.270*	-.134	.243*
44.	-.186	.656**	-.527**
45.	.292*	-.140	.260*

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\*  $p < .05$       \*\*  $p < .0001$        $df=(79)$

### *Traditional Measures*

Using the discrete Iron Rod and Liahona scores as between subjects factors, ANOVAs were performed on responses to the Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Internal, External, Interactional, and Orthodoxy scales. No significant effects for Iron Rod or Liahona scores were found on the Extrinsic, External, or Interactional scales.

The remaining three scales, Internal, Intrinsic, and Orthodoxy, were influenced similarly by Iron Rod main effects. Iron Rod standing affected Internal scores,  $F(1,75) = 6.86$ ,  $p < .05$ . High

Iron Rod scores were accompanied by high Internal scores ( $\underline{M}$  = 5.75), while low Iron Rod scores were associated with lower Internal scores ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.98). The same pattern occurred with Intrinsic scores,  $F(1,75) = 6.20$ ,  $p < .05$ . High Iron Rod scores were accompanied by high Intrinsic scores ( $\underline{M}$  = 7.38), while low Iron Rod scores were predictive of lower Internal scores ( $\underline{M}$  = 6.37). Finally, in spite of the Orthodoxy scale containing items that do not concur with LDS doctrine, high IR scores were accompanied by higher Orthodoxy means (7.80) than were low IR scores (6.26). There were no significant Liahona or interaction effects in these analyses.

Correlations of the Iron Rod, Liahona, and IR-L scales with the scales developed by Allport and Batson are presented in Table 3. Iron Rod scores significantly predict External, Orthodoxy, Intrinsic, and Internal scale scores. Liahona standing is significantly related to Interactional, External, Orthodoxy, and Intrinsic scores; the same pattern is present in IR-L scores, although the direction of the correlations is necessarily reversed. Extrinsic religiousness is not significantly related to Iron Rod, Liahona, or IR-L scale scores.

Table 3  
Correlations of Iron Rod, Liahona, and IR-L  
with Traditional Measures of Religious Orientation

	<u>Iron Rod</u>	<u>Liahona</u>	<u>IR-L</u>
Intrinsic	.305*	-.265*	.368*
Extrinsic	-.201	.074	-.178
Internal	.246*	0.000	.159
External	.465**	-.338*	.519**
Interactional	-.221	.592**	-.526**
Orthodoxy	.311*	-.290*	.384*

df = 79

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .0001$

### Discussion

Poll's Iron Rod–Liahona typology of church-going Latter-day Saints may be viewed in two ways. Poll originally conceived of it as a dichotomous relationship; others have advocated a continuum on which there may be a mixture of both characteristics present in an individual. While both approaches to the typology have some merit, a continuum may present researchers and practitioners with a more detailed picture of the dynamics present in a given person.

Many of the characteristics which Poll proposed to be typical of Iron Rod and Liahona church members are indeed significantly correlated with the Iron Rod and Liahona scales. Two of these correlations, in particular, deserve comment. Recently, a number of writers have been interested in a relationship between Mormonism and literalism (Crapo, 1987; Cummings, 1982; Hansen, 1981; Heeren, Lindsey, & Mason, 1984). The correlations of statements 12 and 31 with the Iron Rod scale show that an admitted tendency toward literalism in understanding the scriptures is moderately related to one's Iron Rod score. Liahona scores, however, are not significantly correlated with a literalistic interpretation of scripture.

The Iron Rod and Liahona are related to measures of religious orientation commonly used by social psychologists. In particular, the Iron Rod is positively related to measures of an intrinsic orientation toward religion—religion viewed as an end itself, and not as a means to some other goal. The Liahona is related strongly to the Interactional scale, and negatively related to the External, Orthodoxy, and Intrinsic scales. It is interesting to note that neither of Poll's types is significantly related to the Extrinsic orientation, that is, to religion used as a means to achieve some other goal.

This study seems to demonstrate applications of the Ninth Article of Faith, "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." The LDS church membership includes some who emphasize the revelations that have already been received and the guidance that is provided by them. Others place greater weight on the potential in the LDS church to gain answers to their (as yet) unanswered



questions. Between these two poles are many who try to strike a balance between the revelations received and the revelations anticipated. As letters to the editor of *Dialogue* and Poll (1983) demonstrate, people see good, desirable characteristics associated with both the Iron Rod and Liahona approaches.

This is only a first step in understanding the concept of Iron Rod–Liahona saints. The following are a few possibilities for future research:

The processes by which one becomes more or less an Iron Rod or Liahona saint are not addressed by this work, but deserve attention. Interesting research could also be conducted regarding those people who agree with both Iron Rod and Liahona items. Do these people experience a conflict between the two views?

A variation of the Iron Rod–Liahona typology has been proposed by Jacob (1989). In addition to an Iron Rod–Liahona continuum, Jacob theorizes that a “charismatic” dimension, possibly orthogonal to the IR–L continuum, would enhance descriptions of Latter-day Saints. Jacob considers the Charismatic saint to be one who emphasizes a personal relationship with Christ and God. Furthermore, Jacob asserts that social and economic class would affect the relationship between the IR–L and Charismatic views. Research should be conducted to examine these possibilities.

A pragmatic vein of research might take a cue from Batson, who has examined behavioral implications of religious orientation. For instance, he and his colleagues have considered whether religiousness affects prejudice (Batson, Naifeh, & Pate, 1978), and helping another person in distress (Batson & Gray, 1981). Research along these lines could determine whether the different beliefs carry important behavioral consequences.

Finally, in this study, a conscious effort has been made to be faithful to Poll’s original wording (perhaps, at times, to the detriment of item clarity). This has been done because the essence of what it means to be an Iron Rod or a Liahona saint may have changed in the 22 years since Poll’s first article. For instance, the term “Iron Rod” is sometimes transformed to “Iron Rodder,” with a clearly derogatory connotation; an example of this is Bagley’s (1986) cartoon of an “Iron Rodder” grasping to a rod seemingly

tied in knots. Future research could consider whether the evaluative meaning of the terms has actually changed since Poll first proposed them as labels.

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### Appendix A

1. Religion is a source of answers more than a source of questions.
2. An unquestioning attitude in gospel-related matters is a sign of a closed mind.
3. I am more likely to “prove all things” than to rely on faith.
4. On any question, the will of God may be obtained through the scriptures, church leaders, and/or Holy Spirit.
5. I try to obey a commandment even if I don’t fully understand it.
6. I find answers to my questions about the gospel through the scriptures, church leaders, and/or Holy Spirit.
7. The scriptures given definitive answers to important questions about today’s world.
8. Prayers are always answered.
9. God is intimately concerned with our daily lives.
10. God knows the solutions to all problems, but man’s stubbornness prevents access to this knowledge.
11. No human is capable of transmitting the word of God so clearly that it can be understood by all people.
12. I accept the literal translation of the scriptures.
13. I would prefer to study than to rely on faith.
14. The church leaders are special witnesses of God, but leave many important questions uncertainly answered.
15. I wonder why, by a prayer of faith, one person will find a lost item, and in spite of a similar prayer, another will lose his eyesight.
16. I frequently ponder questions that seem to have no answer.
17. God is not intensely involved in our daily affairs.
18. Many people tend to develop answers where none exist.

19. I find more comfort in knowing that the church rests on a solid foundation of revealed truth than I do in the fact that God has not revealed the answer to every question.
20. The scriptures are a source of inspiration, but leave many questions unanswered.
21. I would describe myself as being preoccupied with questions and skeptical of answers.
22. Miracles are actually a matter of coincidence.
23. I am intrigued by unanswered questions.
24. I read the scriptures daily.
25. After death, previously unanswered questions will be answered.
26. The conflict between good and evil is due to mankind's nature.
27. Obeying God's will is easier for me if I make guidelines for myself to follow daily.
28. A true answer to every gospel-related question is not available to me today through the scriptures, church leaders, and/or Holy Spirit.
29. I try to obey a religious guideline only if I personally feel it to be true.
30. Criticism of church policies or programs can be called "evil-speaking of the Lord's anointed."
31. The scriptures should be interpreted literally.
32. The gospel is basically incompatible with science.
33. My occupation raises questions that challenge my beliefs.
34. A questioning attitude in gospel-related matters is a sign that one's faith must be strengthened.
35. I have suffered an emotional trauma or heartache at some point in my life.
36. My church leaders agree on doctrinal matters.
37. I have concealed doubts about my religion.
38. The conflict between good and evil is eternal.
39. Truth is elusive, and all answers to questions are subject to scrutiny.
40. I have read literature about my religion that did not present it in a favorable light.
41. God will never allow my church leaders to lead the membership astray.
42. A true answer to every gospel-related question is available to me today through the scriptures, the church leaders, and/or the Holy Spirit.
43. The study of religion and/or religious history should emphasize church-approved sources and topics.
44. I challenge the answers for questions.
45. The answers to presently unanswered questions will be revealed.

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## Developing My Own Identity as Therapist: A Shaman

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Richard C. Ferre, MD

I find it very hard to express in words what has happened to me in pursuit of a disciplined, professional identity. What has transformed me has been an integrated, poetic experience. It is not so much a change in my thinking as it is a change in how I feel—a welding of mind, heart, and spirit.

Somewhere between conspicuous pimples and manly stubble,  
I projected myself, as egocentric adolescents do,  
As the hero of my own myth:  
Not really slaying dragons and mounting flying horses,  
But surviving a desert fast,  
A sun-scorched meditation,  
Where inner calm eventually eradicates fear.

A resolute strength empowering me  
By finally accepting my aloneness.  
I would wish it otherwise.  
I would have rather united with the universe  
And have it consume my separateness with its energy.

But the journey of a hero is alone  
into the world  
into himself—  
To be a shaman was the vision of that adolescent idealism.

Society confers status by birth, by privilege,  
 Power is granted by appointment,  
 Position given by loyalty to authority,  
 By the color of skin, wealth or beauty,  
 By talents or personalities currently in fashion.  
 One may wait endlessly to be inducted,  
 Wait to be called in order to simply share yourself.

To be a shaman  
 I could call myself.

I could call myself to a desperate discipline of internal integrity,  
 pay the price of personal cleansing,  
 By choice to purge in order to serve.  
 As an adolescent new with energy and thoughts of adventure,  
 I had not grown far from the child  
 Who still embraced the idealistic songs of childhood  
 And sang within:

give said the little stream,  
 give oh give, give oh give,  
 give then as Jesus gives.  
 do as the streams and blossoms do.  
 for God and others live.

To be a shaman:  
 To give,  
 To share,  
 To find within myself the courage to make my life's journey a  
 heroic odyssey.

A shaman's journey is no ordinary reality:  
 He or she enters altered states of consciousness  
 to make "journeys" to other dimensions  
 for the benefit of the community.  
 He interacts with beings and energies found there  
 in order to use them for the benefit of the sick person.  
 He sharpens senses, breaks conditioned responses,  
 and discovers all things are interconnected  
 and interdependent.

His is a spiritual transformation,  
a change in his perspective of the world.  
He cannot lead others without confronting the unknown in  
himself.  
He cannot lead a journey he has not taken himself.  
He must face his own fears, his unconscious,  
The dread of his own destructive anger,  
His fears of overwhelming need,  
and passion out of control.

The shaman must ask:  
What truly lies at the center of my soul,  
And motivates my being?  
Can I live with what I find in my heart?  
Can I live with who I am?

The study of man and woman,  
History, culture, literature, art,  
Opened the door of the journey for me.  
I sensed knowing intuitively what I must pursue,  
Human physiology, human personality,  
The body,  
The mind.

I discovered in the search for understanding psychological process  
Verifiable principles of human interaction.  
My own mind was challenged to comprehend another traveler,  
To accurately communicate.  
To master the discipline of communication,  
I had to confront my own distortions, past history, and projected  
perceptions of the world.  
To learn truth was to experience being confronted  
by others over and over and over again.  
To understand transference,  
To understand countertransference,  
A purge of comfortable cliches.  
To fast from looking without seeing,  
to accept my nakedness before patients  
who often see me more clearly than I see myself.  
To be vulnerable to their scrutiny,

To see myself in the mirror I hold up to them,  
and wrenchingly witness my own manipulations,  
controls, defenses and fears.

This journey required continual recycling of moments confronting  
my own feelings.  
Of searching within myself while in a heightened state of con-  
sciousness,  
To reveal the world of my own unconscious.  
The hero laboring with agonizing honesty.

It was not my mind that bore the courage  
to keep laboring within.  
But my heart.  
My heart would not relinquish the quest to connect with another  
heart,  
To touch and resonate,  
To create together.

Not to change myself within was inevitably  
to sever connection with another.  
Not to be vulnerable to accepting my part of the interaction was  
to grow distant,  
A feeling I grew to know as clearly as connecting.  
I must be there connected,  
Yet stand apart sufficient to learn from my interaction.

The hero takes a journey to his soul,  
A spiritual transformation of his heart:  
Continually confronted throughout my journey  
A spiritual transformation took place within me.  
A cleansing of my heart,  
A stretching of myself through the shared pain of another,  
To honestly give myself,  
To connect in spite of personal safety.



I risked the traverse across the desert to connect,  
To touch  
To be touched  
To not be safe from feeling,  
To be alive to another at that moment  
To bond in spirit.

An integration evolved.

Distance taught as professional objectivity  
    was retreating before heart's need to connect  
    and be connected.  
Not destroying intellect's objectivity to my own role and personal  
    agenda,  
Yet I accepted the place of my feelings as essential teachers of  
    what is true at any given moment in a relationship.

Jennie was a patient I had seen in therapy over several months. The therapy had been successful in helping her to improve symptomatically and she was now ready to reenter school.

She had learned to be in touch with her feelings and was able to more appropriately assert herself to meet her needs. As is often done, I visited her school to consult with the counselor to help her secure a more appropriate class placement. The outcome was only marginally successful.

In the following session as I approached the problem of the placement, she turned away in her chair and became quiet for several minutes.

"You're not there," she broke the silence.

"I don't understand. We were talking about your classes at school," I replied.

"Forget it."

"What?"

"You're just like my parents," she snapped.

"I'm not getting it yet," I persisted.

"I don't want you going to my school anymore. I'll do it myself," she continued looking out the window.

"What happened when we went to school last week that has you so upset?"

"Nothing."

"I thought we were able to make some progress, but . . ."

"Oh yes, you tried to be very helpful," she interrupted, "but now you're not here."

There followed an extended pause and then she continued.

"It seems it's so darn important for you go get me in all the right classes. It's more important than how I feel. What about me?"

"I thought we had discussed this before and those classes were ok with you. What is it?" I was still unable to hear what it was she was angry about. Was it really the school issue?

"You're not here."

Tuning into my feelings, I could begin to sense that I was not listening; an awareness I have progressively become more able to acknowledge. I was not connected to her. "You feel distance from me?"

"Yes," she turned and looked at me.

"How come?"

"You tell me. You're angry you couldn't get the classes we worked out," she said with more energy.

"No," I responded.

Listen—listen to yourself—mirror yourself. It finally came to me. It is so important for me to get things right. Though what I am doing is ostensibly for her, my feelings are telling me that I am so invested in the outcome, I am really doing it for me. If I cannot get it right I get frustrated. No,—I get anxious when I want things to turn out a certain way. I then explained to her that when I get anxious in this way I get self-absorbed and I distance myself. This has to do with being afraid of disappointing her and projecting her being angry with me. I was anxious about the class schedule working out for her. Yes, I could now feel that I had distanced her and acknowledged this to her.

“So don’t take responsibility for me,” she rejoined, “don’t be anxious for me. I don’t need you to do this for me. I want you to be here, now. I need you to be here to share my feelings, and nobody else can do that. Be here for me now, for how I feel whether you’ve got it worked out at school or not.”

At this point, I gave up taking responsibility for her possible disappointment and we connected. We looked at each other and felt the pain of not getting it right and knowing that neither one of us could make it better. We were together in accepting this pain and that was what mattered.

I feel a poetic sense of my own passage,  
The central hero of my own journey.

Imperceptively technique and discipline absorb into my cells  
And the integration of mind and heart begins to intuitively  
respond to the moment.

Sometime ago an adolescent idealism called me to be a shaman  
The journey to heal the estrangement of my own soul required  
being vulnerable to the refining pain of self-honesty—  
Then stretched to master intimacy with another.

What was once a vision is now reality.  
Myth is the metaphor of this passage.  
The myth speaks of a journey to mastery,  
Mastery requires change,  
Change demands loss and pain,  
aloneness and intimacy,  
Sharing then separating.

These themes repeat themselves in cycles  
And stitch my moments as with strong thread so that I see the  
meaning of who I am in the pattern.

Themes stretch across life.  
Touch someone for a moment,  
Inevitably accept pain and traverse loss.  
To master myself,  
I must master who I am with another,

share the pain and struggle with another,  
Knowing I cannot carry their pain,  
Yet be vulnerable,  
Vulnerable to connect, to teach, to learn.  
Reflect to another their own spiritual force,  
The generative desire that entices to do good,  
That which whispers truth to the soul  
And speaks of their worth.  
To increase the faith of another for having felt their worth  
And reflect a vision.  
Love is that shared vision.

I am on the journey of a shaman.  
To take a journey for another  
Is to undertake a journey for myself.  
Risk connecting with another fully in the moment  
Alive to dispelling the separateness,  
Share intimacy  
And let go.

To face the loss  
The pain of letting go,  
Is to have fully loved another,  
Conquered my own estrangement  
And feel whole.

*Richard C. Ferre is In-Patient Medical Director at the Primary Children's Medical Center*



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