

On Being Male and Melchizedek

By Eugene England

From a speech England gave in 1989 at the conference celebrating the first anniversary of the founding of the Mormon Women's Forum.

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ON 27 JULY 1989, in the middle of the night, two people stopped their truck on our street, watched until they thought we were in bed, then ran across our front yard, threw a grenade-sized stone and a brick from the vacant lot next door at our main front windows, ran down the hill, jumped in their truck, and drove off. The stone crashed through a double-paned window, just below the stained-glass fleur-de-lis my wife Charlotte had made for our entryway; the brick struck the large bay window where Charlotte's violin lies on our piano, but it was waterlogged and merely crumbled, leaving on the pane a long, narrow smudge, the color of Utah Valley air above the Geneva steel plant.

A friend of our daughter living with us observed the figures from her upstairs window as they ran off. To her they looked like large men, possibly steelworkers. We had been thinking about steelworkers because our son, Mark, had participated, at the July 4 Freedom Festival, in a demonstration about pollution at Geneva and had published a follow-up letter in the Provo *Herald*. Then Charlotte had received a threatening phone call aimed at Mark the day before the attack. For days, as we looked out through the shattered window, we felt violated and exposed to continuing threat, even when Joe Cannon, president of Geneva Steel, after reading a report of this vandalism in the paper, sent us a very kind letter of apology and said he would be telling his workers not to engage in such actions in the future. We weren't sure his words would stop the fear and scapegoating that tend to produce violence.

Violence is near the surface not just for people who think their jobs are endangered by efforts to stop pollution; it is near the surface for those, men *and* women, whose sense of self in a clearly denned theological and experiential system, no matter how wrong doctrinally or outdated in human experience, is threatened by new ideas about gender. But, you say, surely not for women. Why not? Isn't there implicit in the claim to full equality the right for women to be as fearful, as revengeful, as violent as men? Shouldn't one rallying cry still used to exploit feminism—the Benson and Hedges “You've come a long way, baby”—contain not only the obvious irony that women are no longer prevented from smoking or kept at home by their husbands, so they can now die of lung cancer or executive-stress heart attacks just like men? Shouldn't that rallying cry also announce that women can

enjoy the more violent male privileges? Shouldn't women also participate in what Robert Heilbrun calls the "man-honor-fight" syndrome (in Bamber 1982, 17), one of the major realities of Western culture? And why shouldn't women go for some of the "unrighteous dominion" that almost all of us exercise whenever we get any authority (D&C 121:37)—and that perhaps all of us really want, as Donlu Thayer reminded us at the 1989 Sunstone Symposium.

The only time I've ever felt like a prophet was in 1969, in the midst of the threatened and sometimes actual violence over the Church's denial of priesthood to blacks. In that bleak time, during which I attended the first women's rights meetings at Stanford University, it suddenly was clear to me that much greater anger, hurt, wounding—even violence—would result when Mormondom's various denials to women became unbearable. Is my prophetic intuition coming true? Certainly feelings are running very high—and so is irrationality and scapegoating, an almost inevitable precursor to escalation and violence. And women are certainly equal in this; in fact, *all* of the surprisingly outspoken and frequent denunciations of the Mormon Women's Forum I have heard have been by women. In nearly every Utah ward I have visited during the past six months, some woman teacher or speaker or testimony-bearer has expressed with great emotion her gratitude that she is not like "those women in Salt Lake who are demanding the priesthood" and has exhorted her sisters to renounce any such heresies and heretics.

The message is separation, alienation, with an undertone of fear; and fear clutches at *me*. I know "those women in Salt Lake." Not only are they not at all like the stereotype being projected on them (for one thing they've never "demanded the priesthood"), but one of them is my daughter Rebecca. I think of Christ's frightening prediction about our day and the people *within* his kingdom, like you and me and the women in the wards I visited and "those women in Salt Lake":

Then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. . . . And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But [they] that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matt. 24:9–13)

So, on this anniversary of the founding of the Mormon Women's Forum, as my prophecy, tragically, seems to be coming true, what can I say? How should we speak? How should *I* speak so that love will not wax cold?

I have chosen mainly to tell some stories, about what it seems like to me to be male and Melchizedek. You must make of them what you will. I think they have some power to heal us and to teach us how to heal others with love. But that will be up to each of us.

John Taylor, who was President of the Church from 1877 to 1887, was visited once by two men who asked him to resolve a bitter quarrel that had alienated them from each other. President Taylor was an exceptionally good singer, with emotional power tempered in such experiences as singing for the Prophet Joseph in the final hour at Carthage Jail. He told the two, "Brethren, before I hear your case, I would like very much to sing one of the songs of Zion for you." When he had finished, he commented that he never heard one of the Church's hymns without wanting to hear another and so sang one more—and then another, and another. Finally the two men

were moved to tears and left, fully reconciled, without any discussion of their problem (in Grant 1940, 522).

I wish I could sing, as President Taylor did—or as Michael Hicks did at the “Pillars of My Faith” session at the 1989 Sunstone Symposium. I would like to sing to you, as he did, of both individualism and community. I would sing a version of our wonderful old Mormon hymn:

Know this that every soul is free, To choose her life and what she'll
be. [That] this eternal truth is given, That God will force no one to
heaven.

And I would sing a later verse we don't often hear:

It is my free will to believe;
'Tis God's free will me to receive;
To stubborn willers this I'll tell,
'Tis all free grace and all free will. (*Hymns*, no. 240)

I would also ask in song, from the wonderful old Protestant hymn,
Shall we gather at the river Where bright angels' feet have trod?

And I would answer,

Yes, we'll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river
Gather with the Saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.

But I can't sing. So I will tell you more stories.

On 13 May 1843, George A. Smith rode out from Nauvoo with Joseph Smith, to visit a Mr. Mahon. As they waited for him to join them, Joseph asked George A. his opinion of W. W. Phelps as an editor. George A. tells us in his 15 May diary entry that he replied,

I thought Phelps the sixth part of an editor, that was the satirist. When it came to the cool discretion necessarily intrusted to an editor in the control of public opinion, the soothing of enmity, he was deficient, and would always make more enemies than friends. But for my part I would be willing, if I were able to pay Phelps for editing a paper, providing nobody else should have the privilege of reading it but myself. Joseph laughed heartily and said I had the thing just right. ... At the close of our conversation, Joseph wrapped his arms around me and pressed me to his bosom and said, “George A., I love you as I do my own life.” I felt so affected I could hardly speak.

On 29 April 1846, William C. Staines was struggling through the mud of Iowa toward Council Bluffs, with perhaps fifteen thousand Saints, when Brigham Young, who was constantly rushing up and down the trail pushing out mired wagons, encouraging, worrying himself near distraction, visited Staines' camp. In the evening, Brother Brigham gathered around a fire with these weary Saints and, according to Staines' journal entry for that day,

Spoke of the time when the brute creation would be perfectly docile and harmless. It would be brought about by our faith and patience. That we should not kill the rattlesnakes but should cultivate the spirit

of peace with them. Saw two of them in his travels—told them to move out of the way and they did—that Br. Joseph taught this when the camp went to Missouri 13 years ago. As long as the brute creation sees anything to harm them, so long the enmity will remain.

Richard Bushman once said something about Joseph Smith that I believe applies equally well to Brigham Young:

Joseph ... is not like other individuals (notably, revolutionaries, legislators or religious leaders) who become so absorbed in their public life that their private life is neglected, who seem to have little left for the people who are closest to them, but concentrate instead on the public occasion, the public cause, the good of the people, the fight against evil, etc. That was not true of Joseph. Though he was so engaged, he still drew back to his family and there obtained his deepest satisfactions, (in Durham 1975, 13)

In support of this, I offer two letters. The first is from Joseph to Emma, written 12 November 1838, just after he was placed in Liberty Jail:

I received your letter which I read over and over again, it was a sweet morsel to me. Oh God grant that I may have the privilage of seeing once more my lovely Family, in the injoyment of the sweets of liberty and [social] life, to press them to my bosam and kiss their lovely cheeks would fill my heart with unspeakable grattitude. . . . Tell little Joseph, he must be a good boy. Father loves him with a perfect love, he is the Eldest must not hurt those that are smaller than him, but cumfort them. . . . Julia is a lovely little girl, I love hir also. She is a promising child, tell her Father wants her to remember him and be a good girl. . . . Oh my affectionate Emma, I want you to remember that I am a true and faithful friend, to you and the children, forever. My heart is intertwined around yours forever and ever, (in Jessee 1984, 367–68)

The second letter is from Brigham Young to his wife Mary Ann, written 12 June 1844 as he traveled East on his last mission for Joseph:

My beloved wife, while I am wating for a boat to goe to Buffalo, I improve a fue moments in wrighting to you. . . . This is a present evening on the Lake but I feele lonesom. O that I had you with me this somer I think I should be happy. Well I am happy now because I am in my cauling and duing my duty, but [the] older I grow the more I desire to stay at my own home insted of traveling. . . .

. . . How I want to see you and (the children). Kiss them for me and kiss Luny twice or mor. Tel hir it is for me. Give my love to all the famely. . . .

I do feel to Bless you in the name of the Lord.

You must excuse all mistakes, (in Jessee 1978, 326)

In late September 1839, a group of apostles and seventies gathered in the Kirtland Temple. On their way to do missionary work in England, they stopped at

the place they had fled just two years before, at the temple they had abandoned. Some were still very ill from fevers that had attacked them as they started. Brigham reports:

I preached in the forenoon, brother Taylor in the afternoon. In the evening I anointed brother Taylor in the house of the Lord. . . . Brother Kimball opened the meeting by prayer; I then anointed brother Taylor with pure sweet oil, and pronounced such blessings as the Spirit gave utterance. Brother Taylor then arose and prayed for himself. Brother Turley, one of the Seventies, was anointed by D. S. Miles, one of the Presidents of Seventies, which was sealed by loud shouts of hosanna; then their feet were washed and the meeting closed. (Manuscript History, pp. 57–58)

Hugh Nibley, in his Sunstone Symposium address on “Criticizing the Brethren,” told of going with various General Authorities in the 1950s to stake conferences to recruit students for BYU. He once traveled through the Southwest with Elder Spencer W. Kimball, and on a stopover in Los Angeles ran out from the station to a nearby used bookshop and bought a ten-volume set of an obscure theologian’s writings. Nibley reports,

“I barely made it back to the train by running across a lot. I jumped on the train, plunked down beside Brother Kimball, who was already on the train. . . . As we sat talking about the books, Brother Kimball casually took an immaculate linen handkerchief from the breast pocket of his jacket and, stooping over, vigorously dusted off my shoes and trousers. . . . It was no great thing—*pas d’histoire*. Neither of us said a thing about it, but ever since, that has conditioned my attitude toward the Brethren. I truly believe they are the chosen servants of God” (1989, 24).

Hugh Nibley has said that he has never had prominent position in the Church, and the best things he has accomplished were not known by others; he has had the pleasure of that private understanding with the Lord. In the last sequence of *The Faith of an Observer*, the video prepared by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies about Nibley’s life and work, this Mormon high priest, the only time that I recall seeing tears in his eyes, distills the wisdom of his life: “Repent and forgive,” he says, “Repent and forgive.”

Like most of you, I grew up hearing about Mary Fielding, wife of Hyrum Smith and mother of Joseph F. Smith, who anointed and blessed her sick ox out by the Sweetwater so she could bring her family on to Zion. Lavina Fielding Anderson has taught us that most of the repeated stories surrounding Mary Fielding are, for good or ill, folklore, that they reduce our whole sense of the woman while glorifying her mere faithfulness (1980, 5). But, as Anderson reminds us, such stories also keep us continuing in faith, and this story moved me, at a time I felt great need traveling across South Dakota with my young family, to put my hands on my Chevrolet and give it a blessing (England 1974). I thought at the time that the Lord responded so I could serve some pressing needs at the branch in Minnesota where I was president, but I think now it might just as well have been for my wife and children.

Anderson has also noted that Mary Fielding's story is now what I would call "uncorrelatable"—I think that's a new word I've invented, a useful one that means "cannot be included in official Church materials." Apparently the problem is not so much that a woman did the anointing as that it is no longer orthodox to anoint animals. Or apparently trees, as I found when the *Ensign* sent to the correlation readers my poem about blessing a tree, and it was turned down "for doctrinal reasons."

"Doctrines" are strange weapons. Most Latter-day Saints apparently now believe that there is some doctrine against praying to our Heavenly Mother—or to Christ, for that matter. Yet it would seem hard to misunderstand that when we sing Eliza R. Snow's hymn "O My Father," which was originally entitled "Invocation, Or Our Heavenly Father and Mother," we are literally praying to our Eternal Father *and Mother*. And it would seem hard to deny the testimony of my great-grandmother, who, alone on a homestead in Idaho while her husband served a mission in England, so sick she could not get up for help, called her children around her and asked them to pray to Jesus for her because he loved little children and would hear them—and they did and he healed her.

As for a woman anointing with oil, we have the carefully recorded experiences of Eliza R. Snow and other women at Winter Quarters and the words of Joseph Smith, which I found in Elder John A. Widtsoe's *Priesthood and Church Government* (1954, 357), then the basic Church leadership manual, when Charlotte and I were missionary companions in Samoa and had no other elders nearby. Joseph taught that the gifts to cast out devils, speak in tongues, and heal the sick are given to all who believe and are baptized, "whether male or female." When challenged by doubters, he pointed out that the fact that women actually heal people by anointing with oil proves that God honors it (in J. F. Smith 1964, 224).

What is it like, being male and Melchizedek? In the summer of 1970, my family and I arrived in Northfield, Minnesota, where I had taken a job at a Lutheran college. We went to church the first Sunday in a rented hall over Joe's Bar, a scene literally like those in the old missionary stories, with beer bottles on the stairs and fumes from below. It was testimony Sunday, and after the sacrament the other members of the branch (my family of eight had nearly doubled their attendance) all looked around expectantly to see what we had to say.

I thought, then, that our future in the Church there looked dismal, that we had little in common with the members and that they would have little interest in the doctrinal and ethical issues that had been so important to me as a student and Institute teacher at Stanford. But five years later, when we left that branch, our family had had perhaps its richest time of spiritual growth and happiness in the Church. What had made the change? Well, as you might have guessed, the second week there I was called as branch president. I had the good sense not to begin talking about my theological and moral and political concerns right away but instead tried to be a good pastor for my little flock, visiting their homes, sharing their sorrows and insecurities. I helped a terrified young convert bless his sick daughter, gave encouragement to a woman who worked all night as a janitor to support her drunken husband, and responded to a call in the middle of the night to comfort the parents

of a boy whose brother had just killed him driving drunk—and later tried to help the brother forgive himself. After about six months, I could talk with my branch about anything I wanted to and felt fully accepted. They trusted me because they had learned firsthand that I was true.

In 1978 we built a home just north of Brigham Young University and moved into what we were told immediately was “the best ward in the best stake in the Church.” Each Sunday we were given statistics to back up this claim: percentages for attendance, home teaching, tithing, etc., were all in the 90s, the ward had about thirty missionaries out all the time, and it enjoyed a beautiful rock chapel, with a pipe organ, and dozens of BYU professors to teach the classes and lead the ward. I found myself feeling just the opposite from what I had felt in Minnesota, alienated from all that open prosperity and what I saw as smugness. I seriously considered taking my family over to the southwest side of Provo or out into the country to find a struggling ward like the Minnesota branch we’d known. But I believed in the divine anti-gerrymandering that forms Mormon congregations by geography rather than choice and stayed put. Ten years later, I felt I had had another time of great spiritual growth.

What made the difference? Again, as you might have guessed, I was called into service. Four years ago, a new bishop, a person quite different from myself, a business type who seemed to me an obvious Philistine and who I had been convinced thought of me as a pinko egghead, called me to be his counselor. He must have been hit hard on the head by an angel even to think of me. But, because of that priesthood calling, we prayed together, wept together over others’ heartbreak and sin, comforted the dying together, and now I love him as I do few others, would give my life for him. I have also come to realize that this “best ward in the Church” is just like the rest, full of people with grief and problems and people who are willing to quietly help and comfort each other. We have recently been released because that bishop needed to give fuller attention to his family—and perhaps because I did too.

There is another part of being male and Melchizedek. When I helped found *Dialogue* in 1965, I was serving in the Stanford Ward bishopric. We editors invited friends and Church members and leaders in Palo Alto to a meeting to explain what we were doing and to invite support and contributions. My stake president approached me afterwards and said, “Gene, I think this journal can be a good thing, but if you are involved you will never obtain high position in Church.” I replied, “Why are you telling me this? It’s fine with me if I never have high position.” Besides, I thought, if you really believe, as you often say, that the Lord inspires such calls, independent of the prejudices of those who make them, how can you know whether he will call me? But his prophecy has come true.

Two years after this experience, in 1967, I wrote an essay stating why, as a Mormon Christian, I could not support the war in Vietnam (England 1967); and I began to point out, in the Institute ethics class I taught, the scriptures and First Presidency statements that had influenced my decision to oppose the war. One of my Institute students had been thinking about conscientious objection for his own reasons and decided about this time to apply. His parents assumed (wrongly, I believe) that I was responsible for his decision; they spoke to that same stake

president, who then called the Institute supervisor in Provo. He directed me to stop discussing the war in my classes or be fired. After a month of thought and discussion with Charlotte, and prayer, I stopped.

In April 1989, Charlotte and I saw the Ballet West production of Act II of *Swan Lake*. I had been thinking about a panel presentation I was to make at the BYU Women's Conference and could not resist interpreting the ballet as a parable about men and women and marriage in Western culture. Prince Siegfried has come of age and, in keeping with the central human tradition, must choose a bride. He is out hunting swans with his companions but is in a meditative mood about his upcoming responsibilities. He sees a swan come out of the lake and turn into a beautiful woman, who tells him that she and her companions are under a spell and only at night can take on human form. When the sorcerer, Von Rothbart, appears in the form of an owl, the Prince wants to shoot him but is prevented by the woman, Odette. She and the maidens dance in a glade as the prince searches for her among them, and then in a marvelous pas de deux they fall in love. But, with the dawn, Odette succumbs again to the spell and turns back into a swan.

This ancient story is perhaps the most popular modern ballet, and extended commentary about its relevance to us is tempting; but let me mention only two things: First, there is a strange confusion in the prince's companions, who aren't certain which to shoot, the owl or the swans. They can't decide whether to attack whatever it is in our culture that enslaves women and turns them into passive, less-than-human creatures—or to attack the women themselves. Certainly this has been one of the amazing reactions to the Mormon Women's Forum, which is somehow seen as more dangerous—and more to be opposed—than the sexism that so horribly abuses and endangers women. Perhaps the prince's friends recognize their kinship to the owl, the male sorcerer, and cannot attack what is deep in themselves.

Second, viewed from our seats back in the mezzanine, the dancing of Daniela Buson was elegantly shaped, flawless, and wonderfully expressive, in Lev Ivanov's classical choreography, of her transitions from swan to woman to lover. But as I looked through my opera glasses at Buson's face, I saw a constant mask of pain, tragic yearning, and fear combined in this woman escaping enchantment in response to her womanly nature. I remembered that most of the great ballerinas, beginning at least with Pavlova, have naturally taken on that face. Is it fear of being drawn back into the enchantment or of being taken out into something even more terrible and demanding—mature love and marriage? I found it hard to watch that face, perhaps because I have seen such a face of combined fear and yearning on Mormon women, young and old, who have come to my office for counsel in the last decade, perhaps even more because I have begun to recognize such fear and yearning combined in myself as a married Mormon man.

In the past ten years, I have become increasingly unsure about the value and satisfactions of my traditional male role as aggressive achiever, doer, decider, spokesman—which, for all my achievements, has left me lonely and defensive, in some ways emotionally immature. I have become uneasy about what our culture has traditionally designated the “masculine” virtues of courage, pride, self-confidence, rational assertion, generalization, decisiveness—which, for all their apparent

value, seem to leave individuals and societies in constant, unsatisfied desire, engaged in endless envy, rivalry, and imitative violence. I have found inadequate, for my own needs as a poet and essayist, the traditional male style of straightforward narration, logical conclusiveness—which, for all it says, leaves much of what is most important to me unsaid. Instead, I find myself, though I'm still not very good at it, wanting to listen, cooperate, nurture with presence, learn rather than teach. I yearn to *be* more than to do, to give mercy more and seek justice less, to heal rather than to help, to be meek. I want to hear my inner voices, record their circling presence, trust my unconscious mind as it moves upon silence, as it responds to the unpredictable, uncapturable breeze of the Holy Ghost. I do not want to be the sorcerer, to hold power that changes women into something else.

My best piece of writing so far, I believe (and more objective critics have agreed), is a personal essay called “Easter Weekend” (1988). In writing it, I began to discover the “woman” in myself, a voice that hovered and circled rather than thrusting to conclusions, that combined narratives like a mosaic to get at emotional patterns rather than moving through logical exposition to a rational conclusion. With increasing assurance, I listened for and finally heard and expressed new voices, different from my own but part of me. No, I don't believe women naturally write that way or that all men should. I only know that I discovered important things, things I am excitedly exploring, that cultural male modes and models had not provided me. To paraphrase Dustin Hoffman in *Tootsie*, “I was a better man when I was a woman than I was when I was a man.”

Let me conclude with some remarks on what I see beyond patriarchy, beyond polygamy, perhaps even beyond priesthood. I only ventured a prophecy once, remember, and it is becoming so true I am loathe to venture again. But some reflections: One of the women I heard fulminate against “those women in Salt Lake” was teaching a Gospel Doctrine class. Later in the lesson, she talked about the angels that appeared at the Kirtland Temple and recalled that it was Gabriel who also appeared two times to Mary. Then this modern Mormon woman said, “When the angel spoke, Jesus leapt in her *wound*.” She repeated it, unconsciously I'm sure, three or four times, “. . . Jesus leapt in her *wound*.”

I cannot imagine what strange kind of Freudian slip this was, but it frightened me with its bland but violent irrationality. I do not believe God wounded women in the womb. It frightens me that many, perhaps most Western Christians, apparently including most Latter-day Saints, still believe that. The idea that Eve, because of her womanly nature, was the first to fall and the cause of Adam's fall, and that thus all women are inferior and must be punished in childbirth and subjugated by men, persisted into Joseph Smith's time; but one of the most remarkable achievements of the Restoration was to denounce it. In fact, the Lord warned Joseph many times that the plain truths of the gospel had been lost to God's children because of what he called “the tradition of their *fathers*” (D&C 74:4; 93:39; my emphasis). Joseph was given to understand specifically that “our wives and children” have been made to “bow down with grief, sorrow, and care” because of “that spirit which hath so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children, and filled the world with confusion” (D&C 123:7). Nothing has

more literally fulfilled that description than the false Christian creeds concerning the Fall, teachings which have directly obscured the central truth that both male and female are alike unto God and have caused women and children sorrow and all of us great confusion.

Given the deep entrenchment of that false idea about Eve in American religion of the early nineteenth century, one of the most amazing revelations of the Restoration was received right after the Church was organized in 1830. In Doctrine and Covenants 29, the Lord explicitly denies the idea of Eve's prior transgression by saying *Adam* was the one who initiated the Fall: "The devil tempted Adam, and he partook of the forbidden fruit and transgressed the commandment. . . . Wherefore, I . . . caused that he should be cast out from the Garden" (29:40–41). But of course God is using the term Adam, a plural proper noun, to mean here *both* Adam and Eve, Mr. and Mrs. Adam as President Spencer W. Kimball called them. The scripture affirms what we might have expected: Our great, divinely chosen first parents, the first eternally married couple on earth and the model for us all in our marriages, made that crucial decision through consultation and agreement and some kind of *united decision and action*. Much of the pain I have seen on the faces of Mormon women in the past few years could be removed, I believe, if we taught this true doctrine, which honors women and men equally and gives them equal responsibility.

Margaret Toscano and others are right, I believe, in analysis that shows that Joseph Smith intended a shared priesthood of some kind, higher than the Melchizedek or at least more inclusive, and actually succeeded in giving it, at least in part, to the temple couples in Nauvoo (Toscano 1985). Why was it lost to women—or at least increasingly hidden? Perhaps for the same reason that the priesthood, given to blacks at the beginning of the Restoration, was later lost to them. Perhaps it took Joseph Smith to bring off something so radical in a Western culture, and his premature death prevented the complete revolution. Perhaps the reasons are historical, involving the old paradigm from Leviticus of God's chosen people living a lesser law. We, meaning white males, given the racism and sexism intrinsic to our culture, were simply not ready for blacks—or women—to have the priesthood and function in it in ways that would be a blessing to blacks or women. When we became ready enough to accept black men in that role, priesthood power was given to them through revelation. We are becoming ready, I believe, to accept women in that role, and perhaps it will be given, through revelation.

But, of course, the situation is not the same, despite the parallels. Many more people are involved, and the threats to our past identity and traditional gender roles in Mormonism are much greater. In addition, it may be more difficult to overcome the powerful false popular theology about Eve that was developed to explain sexist practices than the false theories concerning Cain or our premortal existence that were developed to explain our racist practice of priesthood denial (see England 1990).

What then can we do now? One thing might be to do what faithful members did in the sixties and seventies regarding blacks and priesthood: expunge sexism from ourselves, struggle to understand that we are indeed alike to God and what the full consequences of that equality are. We can insist on equality as a principle, work patiently toward countering in effective ways the sexist false theology concerning

Eve and polygamy, and wait for God slowly to change the sexist practices of the Church when it will indeed be a blessing to both women and men for him to do so. That time will not come without spiritual preparation.

The last official Church statement on blacks and the priesthood invited people all over the earth to pray that all the blessings of God will come to all his children—which, of course, could only happen when blacks were given the priesthood (First Presidency 1969). Few obeyed that invitation. Maybe there are important things we are not yet doing concerning gender roles, such as that kind of prayer. And maybe we are focusing too much on our wounds. We are all wounded in various ways, whether we hold the priesthood or not, whether we are the victims or victimizers in the war of the sexes; but God has not done the wounding. We must not wear our wounds as stigmata. Only Christ has a right to those.

Certainly we are not living the fullness of whatever priesthood men and women have right now, in order to prepare for the fullness to come. We must, I believe, hold to the basics, the covenants we know are true, such as the law of the gospel. We need to obey *all* the temple covenants, and we need to renew them often, even if the experience is partly painful. We can be practical about this and reduce the pain.

I was once wounded by some things I had to do in the temple, which I didn't understand, except as products of the deep and understandable paranoia of nineteenth-century Saints about the betrayals and violence inflicted on them. Perhaps those parts of the ceremony wounded me as much as the figurative enactment of Eve's apparent punishment and submission did some women. At any rate, I dealt with my problem by focusing on healing and central gospel principles that overwhelmingly contradicted the negative implications I otherwise could let come in—and now the recent changes have removed the problem. May I suggest to any who are still troubled by the Adam and Eve enactment that you memorize D&C 29:40 and Eve's great speech in Moses 5:11 about "our transgression" and 2 Nephi 26:33 and repeat them when it would help.

The testimony of Washington, D.C., attorney Kathleen Flake at the 1989 Sunstone Symposium's "Pillars of My Faith" session may also be helpful. After she tells of her separation for a time from the Church (mainly because of its sexism) she relates her tentative and painful beginning to return:

Finally, one day having escaped to the Blue Ridge at a Yoga retreat, I sat meditating upon the conflicts which I tolerated, even fostered, in my life in my attempt to ward off the threat I felt from the institution of the Church. It came to me as surety as any revelation I have ever received that, if I truly wanted to know God the Mother and be called her daughter, I would have to conform myself to the law of the gospel and make peace with her Son's Church. I bowed to this necessity and in doing so found the pillar to my faith.

In the few months from the time I submitted to his will and travelled the distance from the [legal] bar to the temple without so much as a touch of vertigo, Christ has cared for me with a sweet genius I cannot adequately describe. It was in those days of learning of him that I found the thing upon which my life could be ordered in such a way

as to bear all the old and some new stresses. It is, I think, this pillar that will remain standing into eternity, years after other parts of my temple have worn away. It is simply and ambiguously stated as the love of God. I fear this answer will disappoint you. That you would have me say something that sounds less sentimental, more exotic. Or, maybe I'm the one who is embarrassed to be talking this way after all the years of intellectual pyrotechnics. Nevertheless, I must say unequivocally, with John, that God is defined by the love he offers us and that this love is enough, his grace is sufficient. (Flake 1989, 36)

With Kathleen, I testify that Christ's grace is sufficient to take us where we need to go. I believe we are moving quite quickly past patriarchy in its negative sense. My children's generation is almost there, and remarkable new helps are coming regularly. Here is one such help, a passage from Carlfred Broderick's book on building a celestial marriage, *One Flesh, One Heart*:

Immediately after setting me apart as a stake president, Elder Boyd K. Packer sat me down to give me a few points of advice on how to succeed in my new calling. I was fully prepared to be receptive to his counsel, but I couldn't help being taken aback by his first admonition.

"Now, President, I don't want you treating your wife like you do the stake."

I was mildly offended. I said, "I wasn't planning on treating either the stake or my wife badly."

"I know," he continued, "but you need to treat them, well, differently. In the stake when a decision is to be made, you will seek the opinion of your counselors and other concerned individuals. Then you will prayerfully reach a decision on the matter, and they will all rally round and support you because you are the president and you have the mantle of authority. In your family when there is a decision to be made that affects everyone, you and your wife together will seek whatever counsel you might need, and together you will prayerfully come to a unified decision. If you ever pull priesthood rank on her you will have failed in your leadership." (Broderick 1986, 31–32)

Finally, as an indication of progress and hope, I don't believe we will ever, and I mean *ever*, practice polygamy again. I cite my reasons in my essay "On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage": Mainly that a requirement so central and important to our eternal salvation should be firmly grounded in the scriptures, but eternal polygamy is not. Even D&C 132 supports such an idea only ambiguously (England 1987).

Gradually women are realizing that they don't have to believe polygamy is the ideal nor continue to be dishonored by the thought. One of the things I feel best about in my life is the women who have read my essay and told me it freed them

from the necessary expectation of polygamy, enabling them to feel honorable for the first time.

What lies “beyond priesthood”? I don’t know. I believe the Melchizedek Priesthood is a preparatory priesthood, like the Aaronic. Perhaps, rather than being given to women, since it carries with it the trappings of authority and power that have been so misused by some men, it will wither away in favor of the temple priesthood. That priesthood, though we don’t know much about it, is already shared fully and equally by sealed men and women as kings and queens, priests and priestesses. But those tides seem, in light of Joseph’s teachings, to be clearly figurative. We will be monarchs only in the sense that a chief must be the servant of all, and priestly only as we become bearers of the healing and serving gifts.

The glass is dark before me, but I see some things clearly: Wherever we are going, it will not be by force or by fear, by imitation or by rivalry, but only as described in our greatest revelation on priesthood, Doctrine and Covenants 121, especially verses 41–46, which all of us who hold or wish to hold any kind of priesthood should study regularly. If what is coming has anything at all to do with priesthood, it must come by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned. It will distill upon our souls as the dews from heaven and flow unto us, without compulsory means, forever and ever. It will come only to those whose faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

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