
Mormon Women's Forum

VOLUME I Number 2

MARCH 1990

MOTHER WOVE THE MORNING

On January 5th of this year Carol Lynn Pearson opened her one-woman play, *Mother Wove the Morning*, in Salt Lake City. Since then, she has been performing to sellout audiences in Salt Lake and Provo. The remarkable success of the play has already resulted in three extensions, the latest of which will begin on March 8, after Carol Lynn takes a brief trip back to California.

Forum: Why did you decide to write this play?

CLP: I wrote this play to change the world. I wrote this play because it has been pressing on my mind and my heart for about thirty years. Because I've felt these things so strongly in myself, I've assumed that others, too, must feel that we need the figure of the Mother. We need the feminine in our lives, and the thrilling thing is that today is a day when we can invite the feminine—the Mother—back into our lives. I would rather not spend my energy just blaming the past and our failure there, but rejoicing in the fact that today we can simply move forward and claim for ourselves the feminine, claim our relationship with the female face of God.

Forum: Why do you think the feminine God has been neglected in our religions and in our society?

CLP: History goes through phases. One very early phase was recognition of only

the Goddess. Historians, mythologists and archaeologists are giving us more and more evidence that to those very early people, the Mother God was *the* acknowledged creator. And then—and you can find any number of arguments as to precisely how and why it happened—the Mother Goddess was slowly replaced by the Father God, and that's where we still are. I feel that we're at the tail end of that phase, and that the next phase is one of balance, of acknowledging both female and male.

Of course we could get quite bitter about being deprived of the Mother. I have, at times, been absolutely furious and hurt, and I'm not beyond those emotions. But we need to remember that women have made tremendous progress even in the last two hundred years. We're free to speak out as we wish, and to empower ourselves, asking no one's permission to do so. We're free to invite the feminine back into our lives and into our churches.

Forum: Would you say that there is a cor-

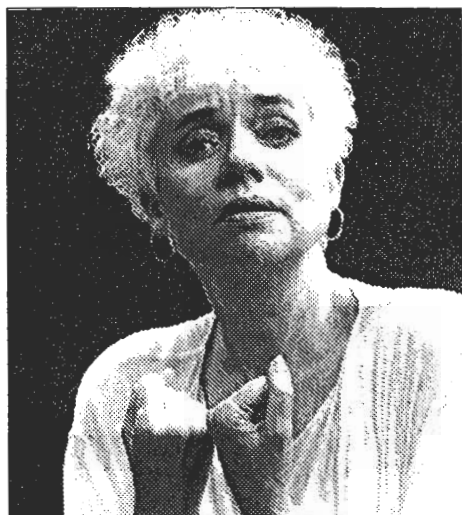
relation between how women are viewed in a society and how the Mother God is viewed?

CLP: Absolutely. I know it's possible for a man to worship Mary and still beat his wife, or to say there is a Heavenly Mother and still degrade women. But in general, the fate of the Heavenly Woman and the Earthly Woman are bound together. Certainly women had a very strong position in society and religion in those earliest days when the Goddess was worshiped.

Forum: Do you have a target audience that you hope to reach with this message?

CLP: I went to great lengths to try to make this a universal piece. I'm getting very positive response from the Mormons who have seen it, from the Catholics, from the Jews and from my atheist friends. That is just too thrilling for me even to tell you.

See MOTHER on page two.



Carol Lynn Pearson



Lydia, Hebrew

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MOTHER

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Forum: Do you have one character that is a special favorite?

CLP: I really love the rape of the Levite concubine. It just knocks me out. It's so wonderful to perform because I always cry—always. Dramatically, I really love that one. And I love the Greek woman at the theatre because she is so much fun to do. But then I love the woman at Ephesus who is kneading bread, and who tells us very apologetically that she has no soul. And I love doing Elizabeth Cady Stanton because she's so strong. But then I love doing the witch. And the black Shaker woman has really been growing with the performances.

Forum: One could get the impression that you love these women

CLP: Oh, I do. It's hard to describe the impact they've had on me. I've been living with this for so long. I feel that I'm living with these women all the time, and I go to bed and I still talk to them. I go over the scenes with them. These women are real to me. I feel I'm doing something for the women who gave their lives, were burned at the stake, and had all kinds of terrible things to endure. I feel an obligation to them to make sure our daughters have a better life.

Forum: Are there any characters that are difficult for you to do?

CLP: Rachel is difficult because she has to win the audience over. She's the first point of conflict in the play, and it's always challenging for me. Of course the Nazi woman is difficult because I hate her situation so much. She's joined this tremendously negative conspiracy, and I feel as though I become part of the enemy every evening when I do her. Her story frightens me; it represents how all of us can be wooed into a system that's against our best interests, and against our best selves. We are all capable of supporting something that is clearly against us.

Forum: I understand the last scene, the therapist, has undergone some changes during your Salt Lake run. Are there more changes to come?



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

CLP: I'm still in the creative process on this play. I did completely rewrite that last scene, and more changes may be coming. I'm not completely sure yet who she's going to be. We'll have to wait and see.

Forum: How does your play deal with maleness?

CLP: There have always been men who have seen the injustice to women and have tried to do something about it. They have not always been able, and they have often been in the minority. I tried in my scenes to create a few sympathetic male characters. I do not believe that women can reform the world in a separatist organization. I have sympathy for women who have become bitter, but I think that we have to create some kind of a structure where women and men can serve in partnership. This is not to say that women have to wait for men. We need to move forward.

I have found many men in my audiences to be quite responsive. Whether they go home and do anything different remains to be seen. But at least they are no longer unaware of some things in our history.

Forum: Has anyone given you any feedback as to how your play has had impacted their lives?

CLP: One of the women who came to my reading in Utah said to me, "Toward the end of the play I felt myself feeling somehow proud to be a woman. That's something I haven't felt as often as I should have." A fourteen-year-old boy said, "I had the problem of being a woman myself."



Rebecca, Jewish

I've fallen in love with the idea of a "Heavenly Mother." I've had a number of older women come up and embrace me in tears and tell me they've been waiting forty or fifty years for something like this to happen.

But one of my favorites was a young man named Paul Whiting. Paul was sitting on the front row of my performance, smiling all the way through. Afterward he approached me and said this was his second time seeing the play, and that he wanted to give me something. He handed me an envelope. Inside was a poem he had written:

If you listen,
you can hear
sixteen women
singing
through her, and
sixteen billion
humming along



1615 Foothill Drive
Salt Lake City, Utah 84108
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FROM THE EDITOR

by Kelli Frame

It has taken three extra months to get the second issue of the newsletter out. For those who have been frustrated at the delay, I implore your forgiveness. The Forum has literally been buried by *Mother Wove the Morning*. While I can have no regrets for the amount of support we have given this worthy production, I have missed the regular work of the Forum, especially the newsletter. But we're back on track and will publish again in May. I assure you that you will receive all six issues in spite of this unexpected delay.

Producing a successful play requires a staggering amount of effort. Dozens of women and men have devoted inordinate amounts of time and energy to make *Mother's Salt Lake City* debut the solid success that it was. Very special thanks and credit to:

Shauna Clinger for the use of her woman on our poster. Having the sense to know the drawing would sell the play, we flooded the valley with posters and flyers. Carol Lynn's daughter Emily walked into a supermarket in Orem and was struck by the beautiful drawing of the woman on the poster. Then she realized it was for her mother's play.

Sally Smith and the women of *A Woman's Place Bookstore*. Always supporters of anything which heals and promotes women, Sally and her women graciously agreed to sell tickets and stock us with the books sold at the performances.

The staff and volunteers at the Salt Lake Art Center. It is a pleasure to do business with these helpful and professional people. In addition to providing us their beautiful, intimate theatre, they fielded scores of frustrating phone calls ("I can't believe SmithTix charges \$1.80 extra for tickets. Do you really expect me to pay an extra \$1.80 just to get tickets?" and "Where am I supposed to park? Why don't you people have a place for people to park when they come see these plays?"). There were a dozen things we didn't think of until the show was underway. Special thanks to director *Allison South*. I can rest assured that when she says something will be done, it will be done.

Rosemary Holt and the women of *Women Concerned About Nuclear War* who, as co-sponsors, sold tickets and gave us space in their newsletters. The work they

do is so important; I felt graced by their sponsorship.

Jeff Frame, who set us up in the Main Gallery for a special performance, including assembling a stage made of risers which wouldn't hook together. Fearing that Carol Lynn was going to crash down between the risers during her performance, Jeff suggested we rename the play *Mother Bites the Dust*.

The volunteers, who worked four hours a night and heard the play more times than anyone should have to: *Raeann Peck, Jan Keller, Betty Finnas, Dennis and MaryAnn Payne, Frank McIntyre, Heather Nibley, Jeff Laver, Janeen Rees, Larry Tuscano, Linda Wilcox, Ellen Fagg, Mark Freeman, Marie and James Rushforth-Ott, and Maggie Harrison*.

The BYU Committee to Promote the Status of Women. They helped staff the huge Orem performances, sold tickets, and plastered Orem and Provo with posters. Special thanks to *Kristin Rushforth, Jackie Rollins, and Leslie Sutter*.

Ann Richardson and the staff of *Utah Valley Community College*. That we played so successfully to such large audiences

was no accident.

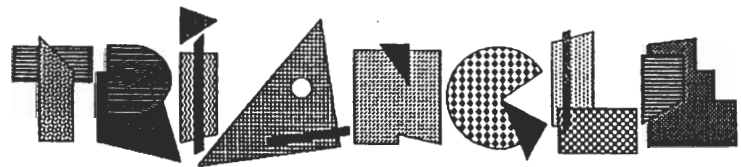
Eugene England for getting the play on the BYU campus.

Mark, Jim, Jordan, Jeff, Larry, and Steve, Forum husbands, who tolerated, "Hey, I need a man over here", whenever something unsavory needed to be done.

The women and men of the Mormon Women's Forum. They staffed every performance with ticket takers, lighting people, and book tables, and effectively orchestrated everything from promotion to refreshments. A special place in heaven is being saved for *Andrea Emmett* and *Karen Case*, ticket mistresses, who daily heard, "Umm, I have three tickets for Friday and four for Saturday, but I only need two for Friday, and I need to use my friend's Wednesday tickets for two more on Saturday and..."; *Jan Tyler*, who was the lighting and wardrobe mistress; *Yvonne Wright*, for her graphic design work; *Rebecca England, Martha Pierce, Sylvia Nibley, Melissa Nibley, Betina Lindsey, and Marti Esplin* for being there so many nights; and *Sidni Jones*, who, by her own accounting, "always had to do everything." They worked hard and, as women should, looked good doing it.

And finally to *Carol Lynn Pearson*, whose modest contribution was to have written and performed a full-length one-woman play. Brava.

SALT LAKE ART CENTER



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READERS' FORUM

The comments, suggestions, thoughts and feelings of women and men of good will are welcome. Calls to repentance and threats of eternal damnation are tolerated. Spiteful or abusive letters on any side of the issues will not be printed. Unsigned letters will be rejected, though requests to withhold names will be honored. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

Although the proponents of "women's rights" in the Mormon church probably don't want to put it this way, they are trying to pressure Church leadership into giving them something that the leaders cannot give. Only God can give a revelation to give women the priesthood. The prophet does not tell God how to run the show; it's the other way around. The lack of reasons for the doctrine of women not receiving the priesthood frustrates me as much as anyone, and I can't give a good answer for why women are denied this role, but I certainly do not go around recommending that the prophet change a doctrine just because I don't understand it.

Karl Best, West Jordan, UT

It is hard to see how we can be instrumental in moving the Brethren on the position they take on women. You might have heard or read Russell Nelson's talk at the [October 1989] General conference. There seems to be little hope if the younger Quorum members are taking up the traditional attitudes toward women. However pessimistic the picture looks, I decided to work on recruiting people to write Elder Nelson. Even if it is only a paragraph, I think we need to communicate with him. Write to: Elder Russell M. Nelson, Quorum of Twelve Apostles, 47 E. South Temple, SLC, UT 84150. Hopefully, we will be heard. Shoulder-to-shoulder into the fray—

Carlan Yorkstetter, San Marino, CA

[See "Woman—Of Infinite Worth," *Ensign*, November 1989, pp. 20-22]—Ed.

By chance, a copy of your first issue came into my hands. My first reaction was revulsion, but later some acceptance. I'm responding now after some space—some time after reading it, and several years since I was first thrown, against my will, into contact with many of the ideas and feelings in it.

What you wrote was heresy. But I've been guilty of some heresies, too. Your heresies will be harder for male brethren to relate to, so they might be judged more harshly than mine. You say that you are trying to supplement the Father-God with a Mother-God. But to say "She was the

Creator", dressing her in Christ's blood-red robe, and restating Isaiah's prophesy of Christ, is substituting her for God the Father and Christ. Being a writer I make some allowance for creative license, but taken at face value, it is heresy.

Beyond heresy, it denies maleness. And men take that very personally. It leads to blaming maleness for all the evils—violence, war, abuse, rigidity, sterility, pollution. And taking for women all of the virtues—creativity, warmth, flexibility, communication. This is a dangerous position. Men see little support for their role or appreciation for their struggles. It is a position that can isolate women into a female world very quickly.

The disharmonies are not just in the Church and in men. Some of the disharmonies are inside you. That's why so many women don't relate to your position. Many women who are alienated by the maleness of the Church have been abused—or have had male relationships disrupted by divorce or other loss. Trust in authority or in men is very difficult for such persons.

Another issue is the rejection of their mother's expression of femaleness. Often instances where mothers allowed themselves to be walked on by husbands, children, or church, trigger this reaction.

C.L. Christensen, North Salt Lake, UT

Congratulations and best wishes on your newsletter. I used to bemoan the loss of the Relief Society magazine because it was the only (though controlled) avenue for LDS women to express themselves. Your newsletter promises not only to close the gap but to allow a more "free press" approach. Unfortunately, with free religious speech comes also free religious criticism, a fact which can make the editor feel like she is riding the ocean waves on a skateboard! This comes with the territory, so "labor, and don't despair," as Carlyle used to say.

Mimi Irving, SLC, UT

Bravo! Your first newsletter was a good read: a combination of information, humor, pathos, and it is an absolutely necessary voice—not just for us women, but for everyone in and out of the Church, of

every age, and both sexes. It takes courage to go against the current. My hat is off to you. I'm excited and thrilled.

Anne Milliken, Los Angeles, CA

I am looking forward to hearing more topics on women's issues in the Church, and less about women getting the priesthood. I need a place where I can strengthen my self-esteem, feel free to voice my concerns, gain knowledge, and learn both the positive and negative aspects of the Church so I can sift and decipher the truth for myself.

Don't use my name. Can you believe my bishop said you were the tools of Satan!?

Name Withheld

Please be careful not to focus too heavily on Utah. Remember that those of us in other areas have the same Church to deal with. I frequently feel very alienated from the women's movement because I don't live in Utah or Massachusetts.

I am currently pregnant with my fourth child. Has anyone recently addressed the issue of lack of female/mother participation in the blessing of the new baby? I have heard rumors and know there is a new "tightening" of the policy from the powers that be at 50 E. North Temple. I feel very strongly that this new girl will not be surrendered to the manhandling of the "blessing" procedure in order to be legitimized. My bishop, who feels he is quite reasonable and tolerant, is quoting me D&C scriptures along with the new policy. This reminds me of plantation owners quoting Paul in the New Testament ("Slaves, obey your masters") to prove that slavery was right and moral. I smell a rat. It's wrong not to allow women to add to this experience, and no amount of proof-texting male-written and male-dominated scriptures will convince me otherwise. I don't know how to handle this situation without a radical outcome in either direction.

Cindy LeFevre, No. Highlands, CA

Readers?—Ed.

May Mother in Heaven bless you a thousand fold in your work. You in the Forum are true pioneers, and every bit as brave as those who faced hostile forces and natives.

Kathryn Jones, Moses Lake, WA

Bully for you!

Shirley Paxman, Provo, UT

One of the most pervasive problems in the Church is intolerance. Your organization has been victimized by intolerance. At present, I am trying to become tolerant of that intolerance, and seek truth regardless of its source. I welcome this new source.

Enclosed please find my financial contribution to Freedom of Speech in 1989-90. I realize the tremendous commitment (and the money) which this publication and organization will take.

Bonnie Esplin-Boyce, Las Vegas, NV

It was with great joy that I received my first copy of the newsletter. I did not know that so many other Mormon women felt as I did. Heavenly Mother has begun a great work with Her children and you are a part of it. It is the mothers and women of this earth who will bring about peace. The coming years should be very exciting ones.

Aleta Fernandez, Orem, UT

You women are choosing darkness instead of light. The path you are embarking on will only bring you heartache in years to come as you drift further from the "IRON ROD." Please understand that priesthood is a heavy burden to bear, as is leadership. I am thankful my own loving wife of twelve years appreciates the true calling of womanhood. She is my wife, the mother of our three children, and she sustains me in my priesthood callings. A man could have no greater blessing in his life.

Steven Leitch, Kearns, UT

Reading this editorial has given me a new insight to the meaning of "iron rod." —Ed.

Being now in the process of my own spiritual healing and expansion, I'm excited to offer some of what I'm experiencing. A recent discovery that began my process was this: as I perceived narrowness and restrictiveness of the religious culture, as I drew away for eight years, as I stopped wearing garments because they were an identifying mark of the culture, I discovered the paradox—that I, too, had become narrow and restrictive and self-limiting. My change is happening now from a desire to be spiritually open. I no longer need to react through the dis-ease of ego, but choose now to act in love.

I wonder if we want to spin our energy in frustration, as in the past? Did we

perceive a need for permission and approval to utilize spiritual gifts and fulfill divine potential. Might we now discover that the power to act for God upon this earth already lies within us, if only we are willing to take notice?

Raeann ten Hoeve Peck, Kearns, UT

We welcome news clips and short articles on issues relating to women. You can be a great support system to our effort in promoting the advanced position of women.

SPEAKING OUT

The following is a copy of a letter sent to us by an anonymous woman, who had sent the original to Elder Russell Nelson in response to his October 1989 conference address, entitled *Woman—Of Infinite Worth*.

Dear Elder Nelson:

Your recent conference talk, *Woman—Of Infinite Worth*, moved me to write this letter to you. I'm a mother of five children and I have never worked outside the home, though I received a degree from Brigham Young University. I have been active in the Church all my life, and have served faithfully in the auxiliaries of the Church.

As I listened to your talk, I said to myself, "This brother lays roses at our feet but has no understanding of women. He is skirting the problem, and does not understand women's issues, nor has he studied women's history." Let me propose to you that were you to wake up tomorrow morning as a woman, you would see how infinite your worth really is.

You would no longer be an apostle, nor even an elder; possibly you would not even be a physician. You could no longer interpret doctrine or make policy. If you tried, you would lack credibility because you weren't a priesthood holder. You would sit voiceless outside most Church councils and blessing circles. If you stayed inside the home to nurture and raise your children, you would always be dependent (like your little girl who had to ask for money for ice cream) on your husband's earning powers, as well as his priesthood power. If you worked outside the home you would find your wages cut to 60 cents to the dollar, and would have the added guilt that you are Satan's tool because your children are in daycare. How quickly you would find your infinite worth in a man's world and a man's religion!

Women are in pain, physician. It shows in the statistics of depression, drug abuse, broken families, and a hundred other ways. I know you love and are concerned for women in the Church, or you would not have undertaken to speak to us. I give you points on that account. I had hopes

that when you younger men were called to the leadership of the Church, the system would become more sensitive to the realities of womanhood. But I heard in your talk all the traditional condescension. You put us on a pedestal because you don't know what else to do with us. When women are allowed to stand as equals in the holy circles (outside the temple) to bless and heal their husbands, children and one another, when you encourage sons and daughters to emulate feminine divinity as well as male, when feminine subordination is erased from the temple endowment, then we will know that we have infinite worth. Forget the platitudes. I challenge you to re-educate yourself and give a more insightful talk in the future.

I wish I had the courage to sign my name, but my friend said, "They'll think you're Sonja Johnson and will give your name to the Stake President." What kind of church is this where women fear to sign their names? Where women become unwilling victims of depression rather than express their frustration and anger to unhearing husbands, family and leaders?

I am aware this letter may never reach you. Yet, if it does, all I ask is that the Elders of Israel give women a fair and patient hearing. You will have no cause for regret by doing so. I wept for joy the day the blacks received the priesthood. I wept for joy last week when the Berlin Wall came down. I know Zion will never come until women and men can link arms together in priesthood blessing and healing circles. "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." (Isaiah 52:8)

It will take the courage of Joshua, but the ages-old wall of gender bias must come down. Seize the day, brethren! My prayers are with you.

A sister waiting for Zion

SISTERS IN HISTORY

A Woman in the Pulpit.

This article was taken from *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. XVI, No. 792, March 2, 1872.

The good Presbytery of Brooklyn have been greatly scandalized of late by the appearance of Miss Sarah F. Smiley, a Quakeress preacher, in the pulpit of the Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church. Miss Smiley, as we learn from the daily papers, preached a most excellent and acceptable sermon, and none of the congregation took the least offense at the unusual spectacle of a woman in the pulpit. Not so, however, the Presbytery. Alarmed and apparently horrified at the innovation, they took immediate steps to call Dr. Cuyler to account, and a meeting of that body was held to consider what action, if any, should be taken in reference to his conduct.

At this meeting Dr. Cuyler made a full statement of the circumstances under which Miss Smiley was invited to preach in the church of which he is pastor; and, without entering into the merits of the question at all, we do not hesitate to say that his statement was exceedingly creditable both to himself and Miss Smiley. Dr. Cuyler's relations with the Society of Friends are of the most intimate and cordial character. A short time hence he received a courteous and fraternal invitation from the Friends to address one of their revival meetings in Brooklyn. He had accepted this invitation, had been welcomed to their preacher's bench, or pulpit, and at the close of his discourse one of their most eminent ministers rose and said, with feeling: "We are in full accord with all that has fallen from our esteemed and beloved brother, Theodore Cuyler. 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.'"

In response to this invitation Dr. Cuyler invited Miss Smiley, to whose discourses he had listened with deep interest, to address his own congregation on a Sunday evening. He announced the fact to his people in advance, and not a single member of the church expressed the slightest objection. "On the following Sunday evening," says Dr. Cuyler, "Miss Smiley was conducted to the Lafayette Avenue pulpit by the pastor. She came there in the decorous Quaker garb, and clothed upon with humility 'as becometh the saints.' Unlike some the the more extravagant ladies of our own congregations, she obeyed the Pauline precept, 'I will that the

women be not adorned with gold, or pearls, or costly array.' After the usual opening services I introduced my friend to the very large, intelligent, and deeply solemn and attentive auditory. I said: 'My esteemed friend and co-worker in the service of Christ, Sarah F. Smiley, will now give to us such a Gospel message as she may have to offer.' As such I introduced the good Quakeress, who having edified me with her pen, I was quite certain would edify my congregation from her lips. She used no text, but took the vision of Jacob at Bethel as her theme, and illustrated from it the upward steps of the soul from sin toward holiness and heaven; the steps being repentance of sin, faith in the atoning Savior, and so forth. Her address, or discourse, was weighty solemn, Scriptural, orthodox, tender, and melted some men to tears whom I have never seen so much moved before. She offered a devout and reverent prayer, a hymn was sung, and I concluded with the apostolic benediction."

On the conclusion of Dr. Cuyler's address an animated debate took place upon the subject of the meeting. It was not quite certain that the Presbytery knew exactly what they had come together for, or what was the real nature of Dr. Cuyler's offense. The Rev. Dr. Spear and the Rev. Dr. Talmage and the Rev. Alfred Taylor contended that the Presbytery had no occasion to act in the matter; but the Rev. Dr. Van Dike, the Rev. Mr. Patton, and others took the opposite view, and spoke strongly in condemnation of women as preachers. What they had to say on the subject was most plainly and succinctly stated by the Rev. Rd. McClelland, a blind Scotch clergyman. He contended that preaching by women was not sanctioned by the church law nor by the Scriptures. Not from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Malachi could a single instance be found where a woman was installed into ordinary ministerial functions. That record covered 3500 years, and during all that time only three prophetesses were mentioned, and these clearly had qualified powers. Thus you have an average of one in 1200 years. The exceptional cases, he argued, established the rule against the women. In the New Testament he contended that the authority was all against

the women. The Christian church, he remarked, was founded on the synagogue, not on the temple, and who does not know that no woman was ever permitted to teach in the synagogue? Both history and presumption were against women preaching, and he concluded by contending that direct prohibition was against it also.

At length, after a long and desultory debate, the following expression of opinion was adopted:

The Presbytery having been informed that a woman has preached in one of our churches on Sabbath, at a regular service, at the request of the pastor, with the consent of the session; therefore,

Resolved, The the Presbytery feel constrained to enjoin upon our churches strict regard to the following deliverance of the General Assembly:

Meetings of pious women by themselves for conversation and prayer we entirely approve. But let not the inspired prohibitions of the great Apostle as found in his epistles to the Corinthians and to Timothy be violated. To teach and to exhort, or to lead in prayer in public and promiscuous assemblies, is clearly forbidden to women in the Holy Oracles.

The Presbytery then adjourned, without having brought Dr. Cuyler or his church to a sense of the enormity of their offense in listening to a sermon by a Christian woman.

Miss Smiley is a woman of maturity, of sweet Christian character, and gifted with extraordinary powers as a preacher. She has passed her life in doing good with the talents God has given her. Two years ago she made a "religious visit" to Great Britain, and was not only honored by the British Yearly Meeting of Orthodox Friends with fullest fellowship, but was cordially welcomed by eminent persons of all denominations. The most brilliant man of letters in Scotland (himself a Presbyterian) sought her friendship, and opened up to her some of his spiritual difficulties; and as Priscilla of old expounded to the eloquent Apollos "the way of God more perfectly," so this gifted woman brought her wise counsels to the man of genius. After the war was over she left her cultured home and went as a voluntary missionary to the emancipated slaves of the South. She taught and addressed both males and females. Those liberated bondsmen "heard her gladly." And, says Dr. Cuyler, I do not believe that if the Apostle Paul had stood by her side he would have said, 'Woman, it a shame for you to preach Jesus Christ to these poor negroes.' Miss Smiley is a native of Vassalborough, Maine, and is now resident in Baltimore, Maryland.



I HAVE AN ANSWER

This column will present answers submitted by our readers and will respond with challenging or illuminating questions—in effect, a “questions to gospel answers” column. Submissions to “I Have an Answer” should be sent to: Mormon Women’s Forum, I Have an Answer, P.O. Box 1614, Salt Lake City, UT, 84110. Answers submitted must be signed, and may be edited for clarity and length.

Answer: (From a Midvale, UT woman)
As Mormons, we believe in a Heavenly Mother. We know She exists, but I and most members have a very close relationship with our earthly mothers. There is not really a great need for a Heavenly Mother in our lives.



Questions: Andrea Moore Emmett, mother of three, wife of one, Forum committee member.

This ambivalent attitude fills me with a sense of tragedy for all those self-imposed orphans of our Mother God. On Her behalf I feel sadness, for what She experiences must be similar to what I feel when my independently proud eight-year-old son turns away from my kiss. If one is close to her earthly father, does she then have no need of her Heavenly Father? If you feel a close relationship to your earthly mother in this brief mortal life, how can you then question the importance of a close relationship with your eternal Mother Goddess? By denying her feminine influence beside the Father’s masculine, aren’t we denying ourselves a wholeness and balance that our world, our religion and our families desperately need? In a religion teaching that “as God is, man may become,” wouldn’t it be natural for a woman to look to the female Goddess as Her role model, rather than yield to the constant drumming of male pronouns? Hugh B. Brown, then a member of the First Presidency, stated in 1961 that, “no heaven would be complete without a Mother there.” Perhaps by intentionally rejecting and excluding her here, we are not only depriving ourselves of an essential relationship, but also preparing for ourselves a bittersweet homecoming.

Answer: You women (and men!) who are dissatisfied with your place in the Church are out of line. Obedience is the first law of heaven, the cornerstone upon which all righteousness and progression rest. When

our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. When they give direction, it should mark the end of the controversy. God works in no other way. It is not the place of members to suggest or speculate on what ought to be done in the Kingdom.



Questions: Mark Emmett, father of three, husband of one, attorney, Forum committee member

Wasn’t the sentiment expressed in this answer once considered to be the last word with regard to the “doctrinal” denial of the priesthood to black males, only to be superseded by the First Presidency’s 1969 invitation to “pray that all of the blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ may in the due time of the Lord become available to men of faith everywhere”? Is the prophet, or any leader, infallible? Have not General Authorities of the Church expressed, even in official pronouncements and settings, positions regarding doctrine which have

later been changed or altogether abandoned? Do we still believe in the process of continuing revelation? In retrospect, can we say that at any time in Church history the restoration was complete, and that later developments were not a blessing to the Church? Isn’t God yet to reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God? Do we not have the sacred responsibility as members of the Church to magnify our gifts—to contribute to the process of continuing revelation? May we not pray that Nephi’s testimony (2 Nephi 26:33)—“he denieth none that come unto him, both black and white, bond and free, male and female”—might include the opportunity for female members of the Church to serve in ways currently unavailable to them, and thereby to bless the Church and their families in ways beyond our fondest hopes? May not the candor and humility of Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s admission, when black men received that priesthood in 1978, that he “never imagined or supposed that [Nephi’s testimony] had the extensive and broad meaning that [it does have]” be an example to us?

Consider the 1945 response of President Heber J. Grant to the highlighted portions of the answer: “I am pleased to assure you that you are right in your attitude that the passage quoted *does not express* the true position of the Church. Even to imply that members of the Church are not to do their own thinking is grossly to misrepresent the true ideal of the Church”(emphasis in original).

To Jesus on His Birthday

Edna St. Vincent Millay (b. 1842)
For this your mother sweated in the cold,
For this you bled upon the bitter tree:
A yard of tinsel ribbon bought and sold;
A paper wreath; a day at home for me.
The merry bells ring out, the people kneel;
Up goes the man of God before the crowd;
With voice of honey and with eyes of steel
He drones your humble gospel to the proud.
Nobody listens. Less than the wind that blows
Are all your words to us you did to save.
O Prince of Peace! O Sharon’s dewy Rose!
How mute you lie within your vaulted grave.
The stone the angel rolled away with tears
Is back upon your mouth these thousand years.

BOOK REVIEW

by Mary Lou Reitz

STONES FOR IBARRA by Harriet Doerr

Only 214 pages, *Stones for Ibarra*, has the depths of the Malaguena mine which draws Richard and Sara Everton to the small Mexican village of Ibarra, "a declining village of one thousand souls." Richard and Sara, "just over and just under forty", leave home, family and friends to live in Ibarra and reopen the Malaguena mine abandoned by Richard's grandfather during the revolution of 1910. They have come to "find out if there is still copper underground and how much of the rest is true, the width of the sky, the depth of the stars, the air like new wine, the harsh noons and long slow dusks. To weave change and hope into a fabric that would clothe them as long as they lived." Taking the recollections of a great aunt as their own, the Evertons have not considered that "memories are like corks left out of bottles. They swell. They no longer fit."

Despite disappointments, the Evertons will stay in Ibarra and will live in the white adobe house of Richard's grandfather, "a house built half of nostalgia and half of clay." The foreigners and the villagers will learn of one another's ways. Remedios Acosta and her daughter, Paz, will come quietly up the driveway after dusk and put their faces against the kitchen window, causing Sara a start of fear until she learns to nod and smile as the two shawled heads appear abruptly out of the night. Remedios will report back to the village, "The senora cooks food from cans over a gasoline fire. It must be very expensive. While she stirs the pot, the senor is in the kitchen. A man in the kitchen and not to eat...We saw it ourselves, the senora wearing her shirt inside her rancho pants instead of loose outside, decently covering that part of her. And drinking alcohol as she cooks, while the senor, whose father was born in that house, sits on the table and lets his long legs swing." The villagers find a word to apply to the North Americans, "mediodes-orientado," meaning half-disoriented—like the child who is blind-folded and spun to swing at the pinata. ~

The Evertons, learning of a malignancy in Richard's blood and that six good years is his life sentence, will begin to understand the Mexican sense of fate, of

life and death, and the continuance of it all. "Believing as they did in a relentless providence, the people of Ibarra, daily and without surprise, met their individual dooms. They accepted as inevitable the hail on the corn, the vultures at the heart of the starved cow, the stillborn child."

Doerr's spare prose progressively acquaints the reader with Sara's imaginative and whimsical perspective on life. Gradually, one comes to know Sara and appreciate her penetrating, sometimes humorous, insights. Sara must go down the mountain to Loreto in order to place a phone call to the blood specialist in California. At one moment it becomes clear to Sara that each of the four people gathered at the public switchboard wants one thing in the world and that thing only. Then she watches a woman and man enter the church opposite and knows they have come to pray for salvation and a place in heaven. Leaving a few minutes later, Sara stops and looks up, "the supplications from the switchboard and from the church rose, thinner than wood smoke in two separate columns," until they collide, mingle and, caught by a sudden gust, are scattered to the outskirts of Loreto and the fields beyond.

Richard, a realist, becomes irritated at times with his wife's fantasy life. He stoically faces the end of his life while Sara prefers to put her faith in the supernatural power of the doctors. Richard tells her that she must stop counting on miracles, "Stop making each day up. See it."

Stones are a recurrent symbol throughout the book. The stones represent the ongoing nature of existence—the permanence of the earth and its processes, of which which human suffering is never a part. And yet the stones of Ibarra, in age-old custom, will come to signify the remembrance of Richard's passing, remaining long after those who held and placed them.

"What is that cross on the road beyond the mine?" Sara had once asked Poco.

"The cross marks the place where a fatal accident occurred," he told her.

"Why are those stones piled around it?"

"When people pass and remember, they bring stones."

Later, after Richard's death and before leaving Ibarra for the last time, Sara will consider the heap of stones opposite her gate and silently beseech the passersby to "Stop for a minute. Look through these gates and see the lighted house. An accident has happened here. Remember the place. Bring stones."

Doerr's bare bones writing style suits the desert background and simple truths found in her book. *Stones for Ibarra* began as a series of stories, some of which were published separately in the *Ark River Review*, *The Southern Review* and *Quarterly West*. Viking Press suggested that the 74-year-old Doerr develop the short stories into her first novel. Like Sara Everton, Doerr had experienced the death of a husband, and they, like Sara and Richard, had lived in a small Mexican village similar to Ibarra.

NEXT MONTH

Waltz With the Lady, Betina Lindsey

Reviewed by Bethany Chaffin, writer and teacher. Ms. Chaffin conducts workshops for writers, and has published *Write at Home and Sell*

SPRING

Edna St. Vincent Millay (b. 1842)

To what purpose, April,
do you return again?
Beauty is not enough.
You can no longer quiet me
with the redness
Of little leaves opening stickily.
I know what I know.
The sun is hot on my neck
as I observe
The spikes of the crocus.
The smell of the earth is good.
It is apparent that there is no death.
But what does that signify?
Not only underground
are the brains of men
Eaten by maggots.
Life in itself
Is nothing,
An empty cup,
a flight of uncarpeted stairs.
It is not enough that yearly,
down this hill,
April
Comes like an idiot, babbling and
strewn flowers.

IN MY OPINION

by Marti Dickey Esplin

What's happening? The pundits have declared the women's movement dead. It's obsolete, they say. According to *Time* (Cover, Dec. 4, 1989), young women shun being identified as a "feminist," a term they view connoting such unfeminine things as hairy legs, lesbianism, and bra-burning. A public television news show discusses the demise of *Ms.* magazine. We can expect this deluge of bad press bemoaning the failure of the feminist movement will continue, since the media has always sensationalized the negative aspects of the women's movement.

Harvard University Professor Carol Gilligan insists that the movement isn't dead. "It's over. It's won," she says. While some women complain that what we've "won" is the right to pursue a full time career *and* full time homemaking chores, most agree that the feminists of the sixties and seventies did a valiant job. But is it really over? Have we won?

I don't think so. On the surface, things are better than twenty years ago. Yet women who work full time still earn only 66 cents to the man's dollar. After divorce, women experience a 73 percent drop in their standard of living while the men's income jumps 42 percent. We have come a long way but still have a long way to go.

What about in the Church? Are things better or worse? In the past I've felt that things were getting better. I had a false sense of security because so many men were awakened to the inequities women face. This awakening does not seem to have made much difference in the Church.

Things still bother me: the failure to recognize our Mother in Heaven (the Church's editing guidebook, for example, capitalizes "General Authority" but leaves "mother in heaven" lowercase); the expla-

nation given for not recognizing our Mother in Heaven ("Heavenly Father doesn't want her name to be desecrated the way his has been."); the imbalance in the recognition for the young women and young men; the equating of priesthood and motherhood; the exclusion of mothers from participating in the naming and blessing of their children.

Sometimes when these injustices occur I want out—out of a male-dominated corporate-style organization that sacrifices spirituality for efficiency, free agency for obedience. I wonder who in their right mind would want to remain in (much less join) such an organization.

Then why do I stay? In spite of my anger, I want to remain. Of course I still want things to change. But since I have seen myself and others change, I have great hope that the Church will change. I told a friend that the day I stop caring about these issues would be the day I would leave.

When I joined the Church in 1970 I was oblivious to the women's movement. In 1972 I married a wonderful man who, along with me, began a reckoning with women's issues. Though gradual, my awakening came more quickly than my husband's. When I read some of my poetry from the early years of our marriage, I'm ashamed of the subservient attitude I expressed. One day I almost burned those writings but decided that smacked of revisionist history. People change.

The things that drew me to the Church are not the things that keep me in it. I joined because it threw me a life line; I literally credit the Church with saving my life. Everything was so simple and comfortable then: "just do as we say and you'll live happily ever after." I needed

that simplicity. The people were kind, accepting, and helpful. They loved me into a gospel of love.

I stay in the Church because love is still at its heart. I stay because I enjoy a community of friends in my ward who love me in spite of my views and a community of friends throughout the Salt Lake Valley and elsewhere who love me and share my views. I don't think I could stay in the Church if either of these communities failed me.

The Church has given me much. It taught me of the Savior. Programs may change, history may be altered, prophets may dispute prophets, but Jesus remains steady and constant in his love. The Church has given me a sense of peace regarding life after death.

It was through the Church I learned of my Heavenly Mother. Though not given proper recognition, she is there. I now have a responsibility to recognize her, to pray to her and my Father, and to acknowledge their divinity. I have felt their presence, but it is up to me to know them better.

I'll continue to pray for changes in the Church, and yet retain my new found sense of serenity, this gift of grace. I'll continue to get angry at times and probably start for the door, but I hope I will never exit.

So, what's happening? A lot is happening. The women's movement has come too far and has too far to go to be over. Within the Church, people who want changes are asking questions, raising consciousness, and causing discomfort in the Church leadership. I believe they *will* elicit change. The Church needs such members: people who will ask "why," who will balk at injustices, who will speak up in the face of hypocrisy, and who will not accept authority as the final answer to every question. These are among the duties of a faithful Saint.

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OVARY ACTIONS

The news of our progress and our concerns, our accomplishments and our disappointments, of our sisters in the effort and our challenges in a man's world.

The Mormon Women's Forum is pleased to announce the formation of two new sister groups in California.

The Southern California chapter of the Mormon Women's Forum has officially been organized. Lorie Winder Stromberg, the local organizer, indicated that the group is compiling a mailing list, and plans to hold quarterly meetings. They sponsored two papers at Sunstone West, held March 2 - 4 in Pasadena, CA.

For information, to volunteer, or to be added to the mailing list, call or write:

MormonWomen'sForum
Southern California Chapter
1685 West Haven Road
San Marino, California 91108

Lorie Winder Stromberg
9028 Hargis Street
Los Angeles, CA 90034
(213) 559-6649

For information, to volunteer, or to be added to the mailing list of our other new California chapter, write:

MormonWomen'sForum
East Bay Chapter
604 Jean St.
Oakland, California 94610

As the Forum continues to grow,

chapters will continue to open in other cities throughout the country. Steps are already being taken to organize in Seattle, northern California, Las Vegas, Boston and Philadelphia. For information on groups in these or other areas, write to this newsletter.

Betina Lindsey, author and feminist, will be holding an autograph party at **A Woman's Place Bookstore** on March 29 at 7:30 p.m. Ms. Lindsey will be signing copies of her newest novel, *Waltz with the Lady*. She will explain how writing this book turned her into a feminist.

Lindsey describes her book as "a feminist historical romance novel." Set in Wyoming in the last century, the book chronicles the suffragette movement which ultimately won women the vote in Wyoming in 1869. Ms. Lindsey lives in Centerville with her five children, two cats, dog, husband, goat, and geese.

A one million word, multi-volume Encyclopedia of Mormonism is being prepared by BYU for McMillian Publishing Company. When completed, it will contain approximately 1,500 articles on the history, people, institutions, culture, scriptures, and doctrines of the Church, and will be marketed in university, high

school, municipal, church and personal libraries throughout the world.

The regrettable and total exclusion of women from the board of editors of this monumental effort causes considerable concern that women will once again be written out of history, out written in a typically trivialized and patronizing manner.

—Lorie Winder Stromberg
and Carlan Yorkstetter

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