

Mormon Women's Forum

VOLUME 7, NUMBERS 3 & 4

✠ AN LDS FEMINIST QUARTERLY ✠

FALL & WINTER 1996

ECCLESIASTICAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Editor's Note: The following papers were presented in panel presentations at the 1995 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City and the 1996 Sunstone West Symposium in Orange County, California.

IT IS ONLY IN THE LAST ten years or so that sexual harassment in the workplace has been discussed, defined, and confronted. Armed with the legal and secular vocabulary that has emerged from this discussion, some in the LDS community have begun to confront the problem of sexual harassment in a church or ecclesiastical setting. In a article on "Unequal Power and the Sexual Domination of Women" published in *Exponent II* (17:2, 1993), psychologist Ellen Toronto wrote:

. . . women within the Church, as elsewhere, are being sexually assaulted in a variety of ways of which men may not be aware. . . . In the worst possible situations, the abuse takes the form of acquaintance rape or even incest. In many cases, this abuse is never discussed with anyone, and silent victims struggle with the notion of "respect" that is due male authority figures. . . . again under the guise of male authority, I believe women may experience sexual assault in the form of verbal harassment. I have heard reports of this kind of harassment from several women during bishop's interviews. These experiences may be infrequent. I do not know. But if they are occurring at all, it is something that should be addressed in light of the disastrous effects on the women involved. . . . What a man may perceive as inspired use of authority, a woman may experience as sexual harassment. For example, a woman reported to me that in an interview that included a discussion of her sexuality, the bishop appeared to her to be "turned on." He seemed to find the conversation sexually stimulating. . . . In circumstances of this kind, there is, in reality, little opportunity for a woman to confront a male authority figure on this issue. It's a private situation so . . . it would be "her word" against "his." The power relationship is vastly unequal at the outset, and as women, we have been taught that we must be obedient and submissive to Church authority, vested exclusively in males. It is difficult to imagine how, under these circumstances, a woman, particularly a teenage girl, could find the courage to put an end to something that she perceived to be sexual harassment. Thus, men persist in the belief that they are conscientiously fulfilling the duties of their calling while women continue to view the same situations with dread and anxiety and avoid them whenever possible.

At the 1994 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, Kim

McCall echoed Toronto's concerns in his presentation "Four Arguments for the Elimination of the Bishop's Interview." He suggested that the bishop's interview had some worthy goals and good consequences; however, many of the people he asked about their experiences responded with stories that were less than positive. While there are no statistics available to indicate how widespread ecclesiastical sexual harassment is in the Church, McCall was surprised that so many people, particularly women, reported feelings of violation and humiliation in the interview process. He, himself, recalled the following experience and commented on it:

My own earliest memories of a bishop's interview came when I was 14 or 15. No one had warned me that the bishop would ask me whether or not I masturbated. I was trapped without ever having been given a real choice of whether to submit myself to such a question. In the office of a man I hardly knew I was suddenly expected to reveal something I felt was terribly private and about which I was very embarrassed. I felt taken by surprise, horribly exposed and helpless. It is not unreasonable to draw the analogy between being asked such a question and being involuntarily disrobed. . . . No one should endure such violation. But we are told by this setting and by the authority structure we adore that this probing is right and proper and that to resist it is being unhumble and unrepentant. Again the bishop need not be a bad man before his probing and his judgements can cause damage. . . . In the hands of overly zealous or perverted bishops, the emotional analogy moves from being involuntarily disrobed to being fondled or raped. The insistence on confession becomes a pressing for increasing levels of detail. . . . Several of my sources complained of institutional voyeurism, . . . verbal sex, or ecclesiastical phone sex.

What McCall found particularly troubling was that many were learning through their experiences in interview situations at church to see allowing and cooperating in unwanted intimacy as a "moral obligation." The following story, posted to a private electronic list, is illustrative:

One time I went in for a temple recommend interview and the bishop asked me if I had a problem with masturbation. Based on previous conversations with this bishop, I knew that he was obsessed with masturbation and that he

used to ask the youth about it in interviews he had with them. . . . A few months later, I was telling a Lutheran pastor about this and he was genuinely appalled. . . . His reason for being appalled was that it was a boundary thing, and that the bishop had stepped over the boundary. . . . Several months ago, I spent an evening with an on-again, off-again boyfriend of mine. Well, the inevitable happened and I spent the night with him. And I felt guilty afterwards. And even though it had been a year and a half since I'd gone to an LDS church, I had my LDS hyperconscience kick in and I found myself in the office of one of the Lutheran pastors I knew—to confess. Well, frankly, he wouldn't let me abase myself the way I wanted to! I think he could see that I already was feeling guilty enough for what I'd done and his basic thing was, "OK, you've confessed it, now get on with your life." . . . It was such a different experience than going to the bishop and confessing, and I came out of it feeling forgiven, rather than op-

pressed, and OK because my boundaries had been respected rather than violated by a nosy bishop.

This question of boundaries is central to a discussion of sexual harassment, particularly in an ecclesiastical setting. In a religious organization with a significant lay leadership such as the LDS Church, boundaries can be jeopardized through insufficient training, ignorance, inexperience, zealotry, the desire to control or dominate, or perhaps even sexual perversion on the part of individual church leaders. Also central to this discussion is the difference in power between men and women in the Church. Only men hold priesthood and ecclesiastical position. In a community where women are socialized to defer to male authority, the possibility for abuse is clear. The following articles explore these and other issues related to the problem of ecclesiastical sexual harassment within the LDS community.

WHAT IS ECCLESIASTICAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND HOW CAN IT BE COMBATED?

NADINE HANSEN

WHEN ANITA HILL'S CLAIMS about Clarence Thomas made sexual harassment headline news, those who disbelieved her asked one question over and over: Why did she wait so long to tell? What most people didn't know, and many still haven't grasped, is that in the early 1970s there was no legal cause of action for sexual harassment.

As I listened to Orrin Hatch's grilling of Anita Hill, and his claims that only a very sick individual would do the things Hill alleged, I recalled twenty-year-old memories of sexual advances by my Mormon employer. One evening this upstanding elder told me how much his new live-in nanny liked being in his home because each night they had family prayer. He also talked that evening about his regular temple attendance. A few nights later, when he and I were alone in the office, he asked me to stand up. He complimented my figure. He told me how much he liked my necklace and moved toward me to get a closer look. When he began asking about my marriage and my sex life, I became uncomfortable, but at age 22, my naivete and my belief that he was a good, faithful, married Mormon blinded me to the fact that he was making a pass at me. Unexpectedly, he put his arm around my shoulder, pulled me toward him and tried to kiss me. I pushed him away, and he left the office. Later, he called and apologized, asking me not to tell anyone. Who, I thought, did he think I was going to tell?

My job was scheduled to end two weeks later. I needed the two weeks' income. After the job ended, I told my husband.

It never occurred to me that my employer's actions might be illegal because, at the time, they were not.

In the early 1970s, several courts ruled that sexual harassment was not a form of sex discrimination. Women dismissed from their jobs for refusing their employers' advances were told by trial courts that the supervisor was merely attempting to satisfy his personal urges, that the employer could not be held liable for unauthorized sexual misconduct on the job, or that the incident was not job related, even though the conduct occurred at work.

The appellate courts gradually reversed the trial court opinions and began to articulate the elements that constitute sexual harassment. Initially, they said that sexual harassment occurs when three conditions are present:

1. A demand for sexual favors is imposed on a subordinate employee as a term or condition of employment;
2. The demand has been imposed either directly or vicariously by the employer;
3. The demand would not have been imposed but for the employee's gender.

As the cases worked their way through the courts, the definition began to be modified. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines sexual harassment as follows:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such

conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

The first two parts of this definition constitute what has come to be known as "quid pro quo" sexual harassment—you do this for me, I'll do that for you. Under this kind of harassment, an employer might say, "sleep with me and I'll give you a promotion," or "go out on a date with me, if you want to keep your job."

The third part of the definition defines what is known as "hostile work environment" sexual harassment. This kind typically occurs when an employer makes unwelcome suggestive remarks, tells offensive sexual jokes, touches the employee in inappropriate ways, or engages in other behavior of a harassing sexual nature. In one case my former law firm worked on, male fire fighters harassed women recruits by putting used condoms in their beds and stringing bras across the ladders on the fire trucks.

How might these definitions apply in ecclesiastical situations? My initial reaction was that quid pro quo sexual harassment was unlikely to occur in any church setting.

Upon close reflection, I thought of some ways this kind of sexual harassment could occur. It is probably a reasonably good description of some nineteenth-century plural marriage propositions: become my plural wife and I'll take you the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. Deborah Laake is not the only Mormon woman whose suitor told her he'd had a revelation that God wanted her to marry him, with the implicit message that she will be blessed if she "obeys," or be out of God's favor if she does not. The following story was posted to a private electronic list:

When I decided to join the Church, I had just graduated from high school and was 17 years old. I soon had my first bad LDS experience. During my freshman year of college, I attended the local college ward. I was one of the few new faces and for this reason was soon attracting a number of what I now term "DRMs"—desperate returned missionaries. One such DRM was the bishop's son. Although I did not realize it at the time, he claimed to have had a vision about me soon after my arrival. He was determined that I was the one he was to marry. After a couple of months of talking to me in church, he started to come over to my sorority unannounced to visit. Although this annoyed me, I wanted to be friends with members of my new ward and did not say much about these visits. It soon became clear to me, however, that he wanted to be more than friends. He told me about his "vision" and how it was important for him to get married. He was done with school and had been back from his mission for over a year—it was time for

him to get married. I did not know what to do. I told him that I was flattered that he liked me but I was only 17 years old and I still had a number of years left of school, etc. He was angry and went and told his father what I had said. Within days, I was in the bishop's office being told that it was my responsibility to be a wife and a mother to a righteous man. My education was a secondary concern to this divine role. His son had exercised his priesthood and had strong feelings about me and as such I should seriously reconsider my actions towards him. I did not know what to do. I left his office and the church and was determined to never return again.

Quid pro quo sexual harassment could also arise in the situation where a bishop or other ecclesiastical leader is imposing church discipline upon someone who has committed a sexual sin if, as a condition of repentance, the individual is required to explicitly relate all the intimate details of her or his sexual encounters. An acquaintance of mine related the following:

In 1971 I joined the Church in Provo, Utah. Soon thereafter I met Bob, another new member, and we began to date. After dating for awhile, Bob began to feel guilty about our physical relationship even though we had not done much more than kiss. He talked to his bishop and wanted me to see mine, which I did even though I did not feel particularly guilty. My bishop asked me to tell him in detail exactly where Bob had touched me. He specifically asked if Bob had touched my breasts. He then asked me if I had an orgasm. I had been sexually abused as a child, and as I left that session I felt violated, much like I had felt as a child.

"Hostile environment" sexual harassment in the work place involves things like unwanted sexual innuendos or jokes, the display of sexual posters, or unwanted physical contact. Usually, the intent of the words or actions is to harass, but malicious intent is not necessary for an individual to state a cause of action. I once had a client whose boss kissed her on the cheek and patted her behind. When she quit, he opposed her attempt to receive unemployment compensation. At the hearing to determine her eligibility for unemployment benefits, the employer, who was from another country with different mores than our own, freely admitted kissing the women who worked for him and patting their behinds. He seemed genuinely oblivious to the fact that such behavior constituted sexual harassment or that women would find it offensive. He said, "I do that to all my girls."

The following story contains elements of both quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment. It appeared in *Exponent II* (17:2, 1993) in an article entitled "Abuse of Authority in the Ecclesiastical Interview":

It all started when the first counselor kissed me . . . At sixteen, I was mentally and physically mature for my age. I

knew better than to “makeout” with a married man, especially one who had been to the temple. . . . I told myself I would not see him again, but it was very hard to stop. . . . We were together daily because of responsibilities I had at the school where he worked. . . . He followed me everywhere: as I walked to and from school; in the school halls and on field trips; at church where, of course, I couldn’t avoid seeing him.

Eventually, he was disfellowshipped, and he moved his family to another state. My parents were incensed when they learned that this wasn’t the first time he had had “moral problems.” At the very least, they requested the following comment be put on his permanent church record: “Should not work with young people.” It’s my understanding that no action was taken. I, on the other hand, was sentenced to months of counseling with a member of the stake presidency.

I’m not sure . . . why, if counseling was necessary, I wasn’t sent to a professional instead of Brother H—, whom I distrusted. At any rate, I was delivered to his office once a month, where he would sit and stare, first at me, and then, tiring of that, out the dusty window of his office waiting for who knows what? I didn’t want to talk about it, especially not to him. He seemed to regard me as an Interesting Case. His questions—What did I do when he . . . ? What attracted me to . . . ? How did I feel about my . . . ?—struck me as unnaturally voyeuristic. He had already been briefed, as far as I could tell, on the extent of my degradations. What did he want me to say? What was he waiting to hear? Was he going to grant absolution in exchange for all the dirty details?

I wanted to feel clean, but no matter what the Church taught about confession being good for the soul, I could not confide in that man. I felt stripped of my dignity. His probing questions penetrated my privacy and left me with no protective reserve . . .

In my four years at BYU, I was interviewed by several bishops—all of them hard-working, well-meaning, and kind. Nevertheless, I felt at a disadvantage from the moment we shook hands. I was female; I was young; I lacked authority. How I was judged depended on my ability to communicate my situation honestly and clearly; yet, there were many times when I could hardly get the words out of my mouth. It was mortifying to share intimate details of my life—things I wouldn’t even tell a girlfriend or my mother—with a man I hardly knew.

The early cases involving sexual harassment recognized that part of the behavior that makes the actions harassing is that they are generally imposed by a superior on a subordinate. Those who saw the movie “Disclosure” heard Michael Douglas and his attorney say, “Sexual harassment is not about sex. It’s about power.”

Although I believe that most men in the Church do not engage in sexually harassing behavior, the relative powerfulness of men and powerlessness of women in the Church creates an environment in which harassment can occur. Most men I’ve

met in the Church do not abuse their positions of power, but there may be little recourse for a woman who finds herself in an intimidating or harassing situation. The following story, posted on a private electronic list, is illustrative:

Around the time [I was] working on my comprehensive exams at BYU problems with one of my roommates’ boy-friends came to a head. I knew he had been treating her horribly, but when he began banging on our windows at 2 and 3 am when he couldn’t sleep and wanted to talk to her (translation: emotionally and verbally abuse her because she was not living up to his expectations), I decided it was time to set some boundaries.

One night he came over after they had been fighting on the phone. She had told him she didn’t want to see him anymore and to stop contacting her. He banged on our door till I opened it. . . . I told him that she was not available and that he should go home. He began yelling at her, ignoring me and what I said. I went to shut the door and he stuck his foot in it and held it open.

He just kept yelling at her. I said to him, if you do not get out of our house I will call the police. He just kept screaming at her. . . . I backed my way to the phone and dialed 911. . . . the police were there within minutes. He was still screaming at her. They sent him home and told him he was not to come near our apartment building that evening, nor to call or contact my roommate in anyway. . . .

He was back within 10 minutes of them leaving. I called 911 again. He went to jail for the night. The next day he began stalking each of us at different times of the day on campus, jumping out of bushes, etc. It was really scary. It was impossible to get a restraining order against this behavior. I got a phone call from my stake president saying what a good guy this man was, that he was just in love, and that we had overreacted. What really burned me up was that he was charged by the law and still my ecclesiastical leaders were trying to protect him.

In the workplace, employers generally establish mechanisms for an employee who feels harassed to explain the harassment to someone who can do something about it. In addition, employers are required to provide information to employees about their rights to be free from sexual harassment and to inform employees of what to do if they feel they are being harassed. This approach points out the two essential mechanisms for stopping sexual harassment—knowledge and recourse.

Knowledge

I would hope that greater societal awareness of sexual harassment will empower women to recognize harassing speech and behavior for what it is. Unfortunately, for some people, the boundaries of acceptable behavior are not all that clear. If sexual harassment occurs at church, it may not be obvious to the harassee whether she or he should report the harassment. This story also appeared in *Exponent II* (17:2, 1993) in an article entitled “Foreigner Among the Saints of God”:

I was called to a foreign mission, and when I first arrived at the Language Training Mission (LTM) in Provo, there was only one other sister attending that language section. She, however, left two days after I arrived. For about three weeks, I had two elders in my district as companions.

This was not a problem for me. The missionaries in my district were young and delightful. They reminded me very much of the boys whom I had coached on a community swim team . . . I felt that only a few were as intense in their commitment as I was. Nevertheless, I respected them, and they accepted me. . . .

There was, however, a dark side: Evidently my sincerity was not apparent to the mission leaders of my language section. Several times when I was seen talking with an elder—in the halls, a few words during study hours in the evening—I would be called in the next day and interrogated about whether I had any feelings for that particular brother. I was astounded each time that it happened. The mission infrastructure fostered teamwork and a strong sense of group identity, and I had absolutely no inclinations nor intentions to distract the elders or myself from the mission experience. They were great “kids,” but I felt very much like their older sister.

Eventually the sisters in our language zone began to compare experiences with lady missionaries from another zone who lived in the same building as we did. These sisters were also being questioned about perceived relationships with specific elders. . . .

With only a few more weeks to go, the zone leader of our language section saw me talking to my district leader. The classes were just breaking for lunch, and we were walking along with other district members. The zone leader called me into his office. I had a “fly-paper” effect, he said, and it would be his recommendation that I not be allowed to go on a mission.

I was stunned. At first, I didn’t grasp what he was saying. He illustrated my “inappropriate behavior” with the example that elders would speak to me as they waited for their turn at the drinking fountain—brazen words such as “Hi,” or “How’s it going?”—as I studied alone, at a nearby table, so that I could concentrate better. There was, of course, no admission that the elders themselves could have been responsible. I was blamed as a distraction although I never initiated contact; the elders were blameless in spite of the fact that they started the conversation and made it difficult for me to concentrate. The zone leader was hostile and intense in his conviction that I did not belong with the other missionaries. He said that he could no longer allow “his” missionaries’ minds to be pre-occupied. Obviously, I was an outsider and did not merit the same protection that he provided for the rest of “his” zone.

As I sat in his office, feelings of humiliation and anguish swept over me. What had I done wrong? What had I said? I couldn’t quite believe his resentment or understand what he was saying. . . .

I felt inexplicably ashamed and degraded. Although I was not aware of the ramifications of my thoughts, I sensed I had somehow been betrayed by my femaleness.

The zone leader was incapable of seeing past his perception of my gender to the missionary whom I was committed to be. Apparently, in his mind, I was the prototypical female antagonist, conspiring to corrupt young, innocent, male missionaries.

Individuals, especially if they are young, do not always know whether questioning by a bishop about the intimate details of their sexual behavior is invasive, voyeuristic prying or necessary inquiry about worthiness or repentance. When I was a young college student, I had a bishop who asked me some very explicit questions in a temple recommend interview which I now consider almost voyeuristic. I answered them in ways that did not open the door to further probing, but I think the interview could have turned into a “hostile environment” situation if I had not been so innocent. Although I told friends what he asked me about, it did not occur to me that the questions were not on the list of approved questions, nor did it enter into my mind to tell the stake president.

Within the last decade or so, bishops have been instructed not to inquire into the intimate details of a couple’s sex life. This instruction is a tacit acknowledgement that sometimes interviews have gone too far. Unfortunately, it is likely that many, if not most, “ordinary” church members are unaware of this kind of instruction, which is contained in the General Handbook of Instructions or letters to local church leaders. These kinds of publications are not generally available to church members and are sometimes completely unknown to them. Maybe what we need is more open discussion of the interview process—whether worthiness or penitential interviews—so that the scope of such interviews could be more clearly defined. Better yet, maybe what we need is a “member handbook” that educates members about what *should* occur in interview settings so that people will know what to expect and be able to identify when the lines of propriety have been crossed.

Recourse

In general, the lines of authority in the Church are pretty clear. So if someone encounters sexually offensive behavior by someone in a church position, it’s not too difficult to figure out *who* to report it to. What is less clear, and less certain, however, is whether anything will be done about it. Because there are no clear, articulated standards of propriety, particularly in the area of “hostile environment” harassment, there is no guarantee, and in some cases no reasonable likelihood, that the complaint will be taken seriously or that any corrective action will be taken.

The approach I would like to see would involve a consistent policy of taking sexual harassment reports seriously, investigating them by hearing both sides, and mediating an understanding between the individuals involved.

I do not have any information about how widespread sexual harassment might be in the Church. Judging from my

own experience of being an adult Mormon woman for 30 years, I think it is not a common occurrence, but I also think that, in the absence of an institutional solution, members should be aware that harassment is wrong and that they do not have to put up with it. If it occurs, they should immediately tell the harasser to stop the offensive behavior and should explain why it is offensive. Sometimes harassment occurs more out of ignorance than out of malice. In such a case, the harasser needs to be told what is wrong and why.

If the harassment is malicious, the harassee should not

hesitate to tell someone with higher authority than the harasser and should insist that the higher authority take the complaint seriously and seek to remedy it. Any man with church authority who continues to harass after being told to stop should be removed from the position that enables him to do the harassing.

Until there is an institutional response, women need to be aware that they do not have to tolerate sexual harassment, and they need to take the steps they can to protect themselves and to empower others to resist harassment if it occurs.

DEALING WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE AND AT CHURCH

JOHN TARJAN

THE TERM "SEXUAL HARASSMENT" itself emphasizes the seriousness of inappropriate gender-based behavior. The anecdotes cited by Nadine illustrate the tragic impact such inappropriate behavior has on individuals upon whom it is inflicted. It is a less-than-precise term, however, and its use is sometimes problematic. In the minds of many, flirtations, jokes, and gender-stereotyping, while inappropriate behaviors, are not in the same category as groping, solicitation, or the trading of job favors for sexual conduct. I think our ongoing discussion within the Church and society as a whole should deal with all types of inappropriate gender-based behavior, not just the ones which can clearly be labeled as sexual harassment under the legal definitions which Nadine has outlined.

One thing that has struck me as I teach organizational behavior classes is how recently it is that systematic institutional responses to sexual harassment have been initiated. The notion that workers might have recourse, in Nadine's words, to this type of behavior is a relatively new phenomenon. But it is clear that this type of behavior has caused heartache, discrimination, and stress for as long as the workplace (and I would submit, the place of worship) has been gender integrated. Stress related to sexual harassment is an increasingly important topic in organizational behavior, and awareness and institutional responses are increasing dramatically in the business world.

Some individuals believe that attempts to address this problem amount to an attempt to neuter the workplace. That would be an effort doomed to failure. Most young adults meet spouses in the workplace, and most young Mormons meet spouses at church. I don't think the workplace or the place of worship can be gender neutral. Yet there still can be lines drawn between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and attitudes. This dialogue is about where those boundaries should be and how they can be firmly set in peo-

ple's minds so that they are less likely to be crossed. While behaviors are appropriately the main focus of our discussion, behaviors originate in attitudes.

There is no generally accepted body of research dealing with institutional responses to sexual harassment. However, there are several steps which organizations can take to insure that their members will emulate appropriate standards of conduct.

The first is selection. The most consistently effective organizations pay a lot of attention to selecting members who will adopt and conform to their values and norms. Just think of organizations as disparate as the Marines, IBM, and The Rolling Stones. You can spot their members by listening to them, observing their behavior, or even by observing their appearance. While the process is slow, I believe I have seen an increasing awareness in organizations that gender-based attitudes and behaviors need to be considered in the selection process.

The next is training. The term training most often conjures up the image of a formal classroom. Perhaps socialization is a better term, because socialization usually occurs informally. Most of us learn appropriate behaviors and attitudes through observing the examples of others. This is why inappropriate jokes, posters, gestures, and so forth have such a profound impact even when official policy statements contradict the messages being sent informally. Modeling is probably the single biggest influence on behavior. That is why business organizations are spending so much time and energy socializing managers and administrators to understand the issues surrounding gender in the workplace.

Most organizational scholars would agree, however, that selection and training are insufficient devices if they are not reinforced by rewards and sanctions. If inappropriate behaviors or attitudes are "winked at" or even associated with feelings of inclusion into networks, then those behaviors and

attitudes are more likely to be repeated, even in the face of conflicting examples.

Finally, large organizations are coming to the realization that to effectively ensure that behaviors change, some type of institutional structure needs to be in place. This is what Nadine refers to as recourse. Such a structure is necessary because of the power dynamics in organizations. It is a fact of life that inappropriate gender-based behaviors generally occur when there is a power disparity. And power relationships, both formal and informal, define most organizations. Whole careers, whole lives can be affected with few words spoken and no paper trail to follow. There are several organizational structures which can help to overcome power disparities between the involved parties in order to allow recourse. One of these is confidential hierarchical referral, which involves “going over the boss’s head” to a level where a sympathetic powerful organizational member can help to resolve the situation while protecting the complaining party. In organizations that are serious about addressing this problem, just the existence of such a structure can have a profound impact. Unfortunately, the majority of business organizations do not have an effective, formal referral structure in place.

Another effective option is an office of ombudsman (or ombudsperson). This is an individual or department that is usually filled by competent, well-respected individuals who are accountable only to the highest officers of the organization. It is a “safe place” where incidents can be reported and investigated discreetly, where careers can be safeguarded and sanctions levied. In progressive organizations, managers soon learn that cooperation and change are the best courses of action if the ombudsman determines there is a problem.

Finally, the option of counseling may be preferred if the power differentials seem insurmountable or other structures are viewed as ineffective. Increasingly, organizations are designating individuals who serve as confidants and mentors to help organization members cope with these situations and develop action plans to address them.

I have just a few thoughts about how these same actions could be taken within the LDS Church. Selection speaks for itself. Continued screening can be undertaken in selecting bishoprics, stake presidencies, and youth leaders who are sensitive to these issues. Increased diligence can be taken to make sure that those who hold positions of authority do not engage in inappropriate gender-based behaviors and that they are removed if they do.

Training and socialization can be implemented through the use of appropriate stories and non-sexist language from the pulpit. Lesson materials can be scrutinized to make sure they do not communicate sexist or demeaning messages. I

feel strongly that we need to be more careful in our selection of metaphors and stories. They often encourage improper attitudes towards women and girls.

I have tried to imagine what institutional structures could be implemented in the Church. Because of the complicating factor of an all-male priesthood, power disparities can play an even bigger role within the context of the Church, making these structures even more critical. Hierarchical referral is a potential answer given the hierarchical bias in church administration. However, stories abound about the inadequacy of hierarchical referral as a method of recourse for a whole series of issues. Attitudinal changes will have to take place before widespread confidence can be engendered that this is an effective avenue of recourse.

The creation of an ombudsman is an interesting alternative. If inappropriate behaviors are deemed to be a serious problem in the Church by the leadership, perhaps the office of the patriarch could be reinvigorated with a new set of responsibilities. Alternatively, a regional calling such as currently exists for public relations specialists could be created. The Church presently calls on professional women and gives them training to function in this calling. Perhaps women could be tapped to fill a similar position dealing with internal, rather than external, issues.

The most obvious source of recourse would be counseling. Every stake Relief Society president or her designated counselor could be trained to handle these matters. What is important is that women and men have an individual whom they can trust and with whom they feel comfortable speaking about these problems. In my place of employment, the roles of counselor and ombudsman are combined in two individuals, both of whom exude empathy and engender a sense of trust.

Finally, members, particularly teenagers, should be informed as to what questions or topics are proper in worthiness interviews and other church settings. I believe it is appropriate for parents to indicate to church leaders which topics may or may not be discussed. As a parent, I have the primary responsibility for rearing and training my children. I do not want church leaders delving into sexual topics with them. A simple declaration of worthiness or unworthiness should be sufficient unless the individual feels a need to be more explicit.

In this same vein, I have a problem with closed-door interviews, especially when power differentials exist. It is my hope that in the future, all bishop’s and stake president’s offices would contain clear-glass, sound-proof wall panels. This simple convention would help to eliminate a lot of the relatively rare but tragic behavior that takes place in those settings in an organization as large as the LDS Church.

TO HAVE ONE'S PART MATTER

KARIN ANDERSON ENGLAND

I HAVE BEEN WAVERING OVER distinctions between sexual “harassment” and sexual “discrimination.” I believe the distinctions may finally be important, but at this point I use them almost interchangeably. My concerns focus on the recognition of an abusive environment, on social paradigms that invite unquestioned or unrecognized individual occurrences of harassment or discrimination.

My preoccupation with language and its peculiar powers draws me toward a look at rhetorical paradigms within the LDS community. I hesitate to state the obvious as I observe that the patriarchal ecclesiastical system of the Church excludes women from power within the church organization and within the LDS family. I use the word “power” here in its most positive sense. Because it is so often abused, “power” is a commodity that few orthodox LDS women—few women in general—claim to want. Carolyn Heilbrun (*Writing a Woman's Life*, 1988) discusses this phenomenon as it occurs in her classroom:

Unfortunately, power is something that women abjure once they perceive the great difference between the lives possible to men and to women, and the violence necessary to men to maintain their position of authority. I have had students walk out of class when I declared that power is a reasonable subject for discussion. But however unhappy the concept of power and control may make idealistic women, they delude themselves if they believe that the world and the condition of the oppressed can be changed without acknowledging it.

Heilbrun follows up with a remarkable definition of power: “Power is the ability to take one’s place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one’s part matter.” I am most concerned about the second part of this definition as it relates to ecclesiastical abuse or harassment. “The ability to take one’s place in whatever discourse is essential to action,” however marvelous, means nothing without “the right to have one’s part matter.” By reserving policy and decision-making roles for men, the LDS ecclesiastical structure violently curtails LDS women’s right to have their part matter.

Martin Luther King addressed the same issue in his widely circulated “Letter from Birmingham Jail” as it affected a racial minority. Part of his definition of an unjust law is one that is “inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote [or the right to take one’s part in a discourse essential to action], had no part in enacting or devising the law.” In broader terms, public action or policy devised without granting equal opportunity for discussion among affected parties is fundamentally abusive.

The two parts of Heilbrun’s definition closely affect each other. Ignoring or discounting women’s input in substantive decision-making processes within LDS ecclesiastical structures curtails their ability to think through and articulate relevant, discursive perspectives in the first place. Compounding this are the conservative attitudes that glorify traditional female virtues. Probably the clearest indication of popular Mormon delineations of “ideal” womanhood is the stock justification for the doctrinal obscurity of the “Mother in Heaven”: “God knows that She’s so tender, so sensitive to the evils of the world, He just wants to protect her.” In other words, she is frail, weak, incapable of responding constructively to the antics of her own children. She is, apparently, unable to take her place in whatever discourse is essential to action. Or, even if she has the ability to take her place, she is too tender to suffer the abuses of publicity. Our deference to her tenderness denies her the right to have her part matter. Anger, clearly, is out of the question.

As Susan Faludi (*Backlash*, 1991) observes,

Whenever the “specialness” of women is saluted (or any population group’s, for that matter), the recognition is bound to be double-edged. . . . Marking women as “special” slips easily into demarcating limits on them. “Special” may sound like superior, but it is also a euphemism for the handicapped.

How does this translate into actual incidents of sexual abuse or harassment? I believe such incidents occur whenever full, responsible discourse is denied an LDS woman, consciously or unconsciously, because of her gender.

I was interviewed by my bishop at BYU shortly after returning from my mission. He asked me what my plans were. I told him I had entered the English master’s program. He answered, “Do you realize what a graduate degree will do to your prospects for marriage?” I did, and I told him so, but I still wish I had asked him what he saw as a better alternative. Did he think I should stay home and attract men with the scent of home-baked bread? Whatever he thought, it entailed a clearer demonstration of feminine silence and intellectual inferiority.

I have to give my bishop credit for some accuracy, however. I dated a man I liked very much that year. He was witty, slightly eccentric, working on an MBA. We both had a taste for the quirky, the unusual, the out-of-the-way. On dates we drove to unusual sites in the valley. I had been to most of them, simply because I was in home territory. I took enormous pleasure in our mutual admiration of them. He cooked one Sunday, and I cooked another. Once he called late at night to read me a poem by John Donne, one of my favorites.

I recited it with him, savoring the words. He hung up quietly. My roommate rebuked me with, "Don't you see how you're hurting his feelings?" I did. I just thought he was different. He broke off the relationship with, "This just isn't going to work. I can't show you things. But, you know, you're really a great person."

Five years ago, my husband Mark and I moved our two very small children to Rexburg, Idaho, because Mark had been hired to teach art on a semester-long, full-time leave replacement in the art department of Ricks College. We had both been working frantically to build resumes and experience that would allow us to break into the competitive academic job market, and this opportunity, inconvenient as it was, was not one we could afford to pass up.

I coached my confrontational and sometimes abrasive husband during the entire journey to Idaho in emergency restraint tactics. Even I, a practiced doomsayer, however, failed to anticipate the nature of key personalities in his department and the institution. Mark and his supervisors together all did their part to make one another miserable over the semester. Mark's department chair rebuked him for everything from keeping his bike in an already cluttered office and wearing his hair half an inch too long to taping Sunstone cartoons to his door. Mark challenged his young Ricks students with too much controversy, artistic and doctrinal. Worst of all, Mark and I both wrote a letter protesting the Gulf War after the college paper praised Ricks for its 99.7% support for the U.S. military action.

It was clear after the first week that Mark would never be employed by Ricks College or any other LDS institution of learning again. I hoped, however, that my adjunct teaching position in the English department might yet yield opportunity, and I stayed quiet. Other than an encounter with the Humanities Division Chair over teaching nonsexist grammar in my composition classes, I thought I had managed to keep a low profile. When a one-year position came up, I approached the department chair.

I told him I was interested in applying. I told him I was aware of the administrative—at that school nearly indistinguishable from ecclesiastical—tension over my husband's employment, but I could keep quiet, and I hoped to extend my employment at Ricks. I reminded him that I was not my husband.

The chair was an honest man, one of the few people above me at Ricks College who took the risk of communicating forthrightly. "I know you aren't your husband," he answered. "But no one in the administration sees it that way."

I articulated a form of sexual harassment or discrimination that day that I had been rather blindly kicking against from the beginning of my marriage. Once married, a woman in the LDS Church becomes her husband. His voice and opinions are hers as well. I yet fight the urge to silence Mark in ecclesiastical settings, even though I deeply respect his

knowledge, passion, and perspective, because each time he speaks he represents me as well in the minds of other members. The principle of dissent is precious and essential to us in our marriage. The strengths of our marriage are rooted in our differences as well as our similarities. I am coming to believe that this is the single most unorthodox element in our marriage, the one to which the two of us receive most social resistance in LDS culture. As parents, we are encouraged by the institution to conceal our differences from our children, to present "a united front" in family decisions. Adding this to the injunction to respect the priesthood holder as the head of the home eliminates vital female dissent, particularly in public but finally in private as well.

Ellen Toronto (*Exponent II* [17:2, 1993]) makes a clear observation on the dramatic restrictions on female discursiveness in LDS society:

Yet as adult women, the full exercise of free agency is not available to us. We are totally excluded from the highest governing organizations of the Church. We may have input in local organizations, but final decisions are made by men, often in private. As women, we must *always* monitor whether we are being too assertive or too outspoken . . . We may receive benefits from the power to govern, to administer, to heal. It is not, however, ours to use or to control. Our limited access to power represents, at the most basic level, a loss of our agency.

After years of struggle with these and other issues regarding the faith I inherited, I realized last year that it was time to stop calling myself Mormon. Although it made little change in my lifestyle or even my occasional church-going habits, the break was significant for me—at once positive and yet extremely painful. I discussed it with my visiting teachers. I spoke at length with the Relief Society president, a woman I love and admire, when she contacted me in compassion and concern. Even among these sisters, though, I felt I could not discuss my reasons at length. I expected the bishop to call at some point. He did, and asked for my husband. He made an appointment with Mark. Mark and I joked that he was probably coming for a priesthood-to-priesthood talk about Mark's wavering wife.

He was. I was home at the time, but didn't answer the door because I assumed the bishop actually wanted to speak to Mark about a calling of some sort, probably one that would happen to include me in ward activities. When I heard the bishop open the formal conversation with, "What can we do to help your wife?" I panicked. I should have walked into the room and greeted the bishop, a man I love and admire from my limited experiences with him, a man caught in a patriarchal mindset like I am. But I didn't. I hid. I stayed silently in the library with a single door between us while Mark and the bishop discussed my testimony for an hour and fifteen minutes. When it was over, Mark came in to report, as surprised and confused as I was.

I expected at some point that the bishop would call me in for a follow-up interview, but it didn't happen. When I managed the courage to assert myself, I called and made an appointment with him. His love and concern were apparent; he listened closely and accurately rephrased my theses. I am grateful he made no apparent judgment and gave no hint of ecclesiastical imperative. I respect his decency and sensitivity in avoiding them. But in the absence of paternalism there was nothing to take its place. So finally he said nothing at all.

Elouise Bell, in an address a few years ago at Utah Valley State College, pointed out that because we live in a sexist society, all of us, male and female, unconsciously promote and perpetuate it. Discussing sexual harassment in the context of a sexist and patriarchal institution like the Mormon Church becomes difficult because the underlying assumptions run so deep. Some consternation and self-reproach accompanies my discussion of personal incidents because they occur in interactions with men I tend to respect, men who carry no malice beyond that which might latently defend their most fundamental constructions of reality and truth. But the phenomenon exists, does damage, and should be addressed.

Adrienne Rich (*Of Woman Born*, 1986) says:

The power of the fathers has been difficult to grasp because it permeates everything, even the language in which we try to describe it. It is diffuse and concrete, symbolic and literal, universal and expressed with local variations which obscure its universality. Under patriarchy, I may live under purdah or drive a truck; I may raise my children

on a kibbutz or be the sole breadwinner for a fatherless family or participate in a demonstration against abortion legislation with my baby on my back; I may work as a "barefoot doctor" in a village commune in the People's Republic of China, or make my life on a lesbian commune in New England; I may become a hereditary or elected head of state or wash the underwear of a millionaire's wife; I may serve my husband coffee within the clay walls of a Berber village or march in an academic procession; whatever my status or situation, my derived economic class, or my sexual preference, I live under the power of the fathers, and I have access only to so much of the privilege or influence as the patriarch is willing to accede to me, and only for so long as I will pay the price for male approval.

In such an environment, harassment, discrimination, and abuse will occur. None of my experiences in a sexist society has been life shattering. None, finally, denies me access to self-actualization. But such experiences make the access more difficult. I am less shocked at this point that such impediments exist, than I am that we continue to deny their existence. The stock response to feminist complaints I hear from Mormon men is, "You think that's bad? You should be a woman in . . . [wherever he went on his mission]. Those women have something to complain about." Yes, they do. And so do I, but I don't like the word "complain." I like to believe it is the ability to take my place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have my part matter. I prefer to call it empowerment.

BISHOP'S WIFE: THE NON-CALLING

Editor's Note: The following presentations were part of panels on the experience of being the wife of a bishop at Counterpoint Conferences in May and November, 1996.

CONFRONTING MY WORST FEAR

GAIL ANDERSEN NEWBOLD

YOU KNOW HOW SOME PEOPLE worry about getting cancer? Well, for most of our marriage, my worst fear was that my husband would be called to be a bishop. So when my husband Dave was called to be bishop of a singles ward in Bountiful, Utah, I wasn't a good sport. In our 20 years of marriage, my husband had already served in three bishoprics and one stake presidency. I thought our family deserved a break. I'm in graduate school, we still have young children, and Dave started the most demanding job of his career a couple of years ago. It wasn't a good time, and in my opinion it wasn't fair. It was especially disconcerting to be told by the stake president that Dave's church records would be in the

singles ward while mine and our children's would stay in our home ward. Resentment washed over me, as it had so many times before, that our church which holds families paramount was splitting up ours.

For the first time in my life, I expressed my unhappy emotions in that initial stake presidency interview. After so many years of staying silent, I thought it was time I said what I really thought. I asked the stake president why he didn't call an older man with grown children and fewer demands on his time. In the end, I think I embarrassed Dave, and I'm not sure it was all that productive. Dave still accepted the calling, as always, and I still felt resentful, as always. I also felt

ashamed that I didn't feel thrilled, happy, proud, and 100 percent supportive as we women are supposed to feel.

I should say at the outset that like all worst fears, things are rarely as bad as you imagine them to be, and now I can even say some positive things about the experience. However, I'll begin by talking about the things I find to be most challenging about having my husband be a bishop.

I think when your husband is a Primary teacher, like mine was for a number of happy and peaceful years, it's easier to keep at bay painful feelings about what I perceive to be the unequal treatment of women in the Church. But having him serve as bishop tends to reinforce for me on a weekly basis that in our church, Dave is more important than me, in spite of the church's assertions that we have separate but equal roles.

There are many subtle and not so subtle messages transmitted to me about women's unequal status. For example, Dave sits on the stand in a position of importance. I'm not invited to join him. On the occasions when I have sat with him on the stand, I was dismayed when the sacrament was served first to him and his counselors and then to me. I'd always sat in the congregation where the sacrament was served from the end of one row to the end of another. This is a token of respect reserved for bishops and higher ranking male authorities—never women, regardless of the position they held.

People in our church consciously or subconsciously viewed Dave's new calling as one possessing higher status. They congratulated him on landing this "higher calling," this "advancement," and used other words which demonstrate the hierarchical way we think. Because of his position as bishop, Dave recently was asked to sit in one of the cushy chairs at the front of the Salt Lake Tabernacle along with other "high ranking" church officials during our regional conference. I wasn't invited, nor was the Relief Society president, Young Women's president, or Primary president in our ward. The only women in those seats were either speakers or wives of the highest church officials. The church says all callings are equally important. I believe this is true in the sight of God, but we are mortals in a human church, and we tend to think in terms of one calling being more significant than another. And since the highest callings aren't given to women, women will never receive the tokens of respect that attend these positions. Clearly, we're not supposed to notice or care. If we do, we're given negative labels and made to feel unworthy or like troublemakers for having such thoughts.

My feelings of unimportance were particularly strong the Sunday the new bishopric was introduced to the singles ward and the old bishopric released. All of the members of the old bishopric were thanked and asked to speak. Their wives weren't mentioned. I felt bad in particular for the outgoing bishop's wife who I knew had contributed a great deal of time and love to the ward. Then the new bishopric was intro-

duced and asked to come to the stand. They received praise and recognition for their service and their worthiness. Again, the wives weren't mentioned. We sat essentially invisible in the congregation. When Dave was asked to speak, I was grateful that my sweet husband said some nice things about me and talked about his love and appreciation for me.

Even so, as with every other one of these callings, I wanted to hide somewhere and cry. But as always, there were people who wanted to talk—people who never seem to say the right things and to whom I never seem to say the right things back. In such situations most often people congratulate me, which for many reasons seems inappropriate. Others say they feel sorry for me, which I don't really need to hear either. Many wax eloquent about how wonderful Dave is. Dave is wonderful, and I've always felt very blessed and happy to be married to him. But it's hard for me to hear over and over how wonderful he is during those challenging first few weeks when I'm adjusting to his new calling and feeling threatened and inadequate.

Sometimes I think that if I'd held more leadership positions in my life, I might have a different perspective on all of this. But for whatever reason—perhaps God doesn't find me worthy or because Dave already has "the" demanding calling in our family—I haven't. So I also have to battle feelings that Dave is the "good" or "better" one of the two of us. I wish I felt so great about myself that these things didn't bother me, but they do.

There are other things I've had to battle of which I am not proud. Jealousy is one of them. I've been guilty of wishing that I were the spiritual leader of the ward. I love young people. I have good listening and counseling skills and would love to help them. I'm a good organizer and leader. I would appreciate the growth and testimony-building which comes through such intense service. I would love to feel I had more than just a superficial relationship with the ward members and the other counselors. And I wouldn't mind the tokens of respect which come with the office.

In the initial interview, I appreciated that the stake president said he felt Dave's calling would be twice as hard on me as on Dave. But then he proceeded to stress how important it was for me to be supportive of Dave. He never once told Dave he needed to be supportive of me. I think a lot of women are tired of being "support staff" all the time. Mutual support is essential in a marriage, but it tends to be stressed more as the woman's role than the man's.

We have the image in our church that a good wife is one who is always supportive of her husband, no matter what, and who is happy and proud when he is extended these callings. I think this is a very heavy burden to bear. For too long, we have all tried to put on a false front. This has nearly killed many a bishop's wife. I don't mean we should wallow in self-pity and resentment, but I think we need to be honest about the challenges and our conflicting emotions. Then

maybe we wouldn't feel so ashamed when we have less than noble thoughts or think that we are alone in feeling negative about a church calling.

There are a number of other things I worried about initially. Most haven't proven to be a problem; I learned to live with others.

Naturally, I was afraid Dave would never be home. Thank heavens for an organized husband who tries to keep his priorities in order. Dave has tried mightily to keep his meetings and interviews to a minimum and primarily has succeeded. I'm appreciative of him for that since this kind of calling can eat up every waking hour.

I'm sad we don't attend church as a family. Our youngest child, who is four, has only sat with his father during church on rare Sundays, such as when we're on vacation or on an occasional Mother's Day. And even though Dave tries to keep his Sunday hours to a minimum, I'm sad he's not home all day with us. My happiest Sundays were the years when he was a Primary teacher. Sunday was my favorite day. We played board games with the kids, went on walks, took naps, and made Sunday dinner together. Sundays haven't been like that in years.

In the beginning I was extremely uncomfortable and unhappy about the idea of my husband having intimate and emotional conferences with attractive young women confessing sexual sins. This didn't and still doesn't seem like a very good idea. I think it would be a good idea if husbands and wives were asked to do this as a joint calling. The wife could interview the girls, the husband the boys. We could share the burdens. Instead, the bishop's calling in many ways divides a couple because the husband isn't supposed to confide in the wife. So not only is he gone, but the wife feels

pretty left out as well. In any case, I've learned to deal with this and trust Dave.

I'd like to conclude on an upbeat note. Things are changing—never fast enough for me, I always say, but I do acknowledge the positive changes which are transpiring. Men are no longer expected to spend their every waking hour in church service, as was the case in my parent's generation. Men are told to put their families first. Granted, this is a challenge when you have this type of calling, but I've talked to many men, including my husband, who are trying to do just that. They simply do not and cannot conduct every interview the manual lists, or attend every meeting and fireside they are asked to. They set office hours and try to keep them, as opposed to running out the door at the whim of every upset parishioner.

When Dave was set apart, the stake president said in his blessing that our marriage would be even better and closer. I've taken that to heart and believe it's true.

My wonderful parents helped me to put things in perspective during those first few weeks when I ran to them in anguish about the new calling. They helped me realize that this could be a time of frustration and anger or a time I could look back on with joy. Naturally, I wanted it to be the latter and have tried to make it so. I've tried to learn names and get to know as many of the young adults as I can. I enjoy being with them. I volunteered to teach a Sunday School class with other bishopric wives. I attend and enjoy all the social functions and have tried to foster feelings of comradere among the six members of the bishopric and their wives. The young adults pay lots of attention to our children, who love going to all the bowling parties, bar-b-ques, and other activities. So, Dave and I and our children have had a number of happy times through our involvement.

I'M NOT MRS. BISHOP

PATRICE NELSON

UNLIKE GAIL, I NEVER HAD A moment's fear that my husband would ever be a bishop. It didn't enter my mind for two reasons. First, I know him so well, and second, when we moved to Utah from California I was immediately put into the Primary presidency while my husband had no calling. After about eight months the bishop called me in and said, "I need to ask you a question. Is there ANYTHING your husband could do in the ward—anything at all? Could he . . . could he be in the choir?"

I said, "You know, that's the one thing he cannot do. First of all, his wheelchair would never fit among the choir seats, and most of all, the only song he sings is 'My Sweetheart's a Mule in the Mine,' and you don't want the choir singing that!" So they found him another position, putting

him in charge of all these records. He was a real square peg in a round hole, since not only didn't he keep records, he couldn't find them once he tried to keep them.

There was another reason that I never worried about his being called. Forgive me, but this is true. We had made this vow (at the temple, I think) that if either one of us was ever called to be a bishop or Relief Society president, the other spouse had to go to church naked the next Sunday. Now I knew the Lord would never let me do that in His chapel! And so what happens? We're having this wonderful life—a really wonderful life—when . . .

I am a convert, and when I joined the Church my parents disowned me. But my very wise mother said the reason she objected to my becoming a Mormon was that they would

make me work too hard. "It's not like being a Methodist. You can't just go to church on Easter and Christmas. Those Mormons work themselves to death!" So, when IT happened, I couldn't go to my parents. I couldn't call them and say, "My bishop husband's working himself to death, and I'm going CRAZY." Instead, I had to say, "This is such a wonderful experience," and I was lying—lying because I had very few positive experiences while my husband was off bishoping. Forgive me, but it's true, and this is why.

First, I didn't really think my husband should have been made a bishop. He had enough burdens as it was. The interesting thing is that the stake president didn't plan on my husband being the bishop either. (On the positive side, his being called has been one of the strongest testimony-building experiences in my life. I know beyond all doubt that he was called by the Lord). When the stake president announced this, he actually told the congregation, "I want you to know this is a calling from God. I would never have thought of Brother Nelson as a bishop on my own."

When that stake president called us in, he said to me, and I took this to heart, "This is your husband's calling. It has nothing to do with you." I said, "Amen!" And I made it my husband's calling. THERE IS NO SUCH CALLING IN THE CHURCH AS BISHOP'S WIFE. I have never been, nor will I ever be, the Mother of a Ward. I was criticized for this while my husband was bishop. Many people came to me as the wife of the bishop and wanted to tell me the intimate details of their lives. I told them, "Don't tell me. I'm not the bishop. He'll give you a call." I kept asserting, "Bishop's wife is not a calling. I never got any guidelines. I never received any manual. I support my husband, but I will never be the mother of this ward or any other." And I never was. In fact, once someone came up to me and said, "I heard you went to a concert with your daughter. I heard it was a rock concert. I can't believe the mother of the ward would do that." I answered, "The mother of the ward didn't. The mother of Laska Nelson did because I wanted to be there so I could jerk her out if anything Satanic or devilish or dirty came up." (It was the best concert I'd ever been to.)

So I didn't get involved, and I'm glad I didn't. I think that took a lot of pressure off me. I have seen some wives of bishops have a great deal of trouble because of knowing (and often telling) too much. I am proud to say that for seven years, I never knew one thing that was going on in the ward! My husband was so tight-lipped—he's just naturally that way. He never told me anything, the bad or the good, and I never asked. But sometimes I could see the bad in his eyes.

There were other things that were difficult about being married to a bishop. My husband did not like to discuss or even think about our problems after spending three or more hours dealing with problems in the ward. Although I certainly could see his point of view, it was one of the hardest struggles for me because I felt so alone; there seemed to be no

room for my problems or advice left to give me about our family. My husband came home one night and said, "I feel so sorry for these single women, these poor single mothers." I replied, "You know, there's only one thing harder than being a single mother. It's being a single mother with a husband." And I meant it. I raised my teenage daughters without a husband; and I raised a seven-year-old boy until he was thirteen saying, "See that man that just wheeled out the door? That's your father, and one day you're going to meet him." I was hardly exaggerating.

My husband was working full time, as most bishops do, and he put an equal amount of time into this calling. He was a great delegator and should have been home more. (He used to say, "Be grateful I'm not one of my counselors. They really have to work hard!") However, we lived in a ward with exceptionally difficult problems—problems only known to the bishop and the individuals involved. They were not things that could be delegated. During his first week as a new bishop, a house caught on fire, a man threatened suicide, and another held a knife to his wife's throat.

So it was a struggle for me simply because my husband didn't have time for our family. By the time he came home, he was so tired of problems that he didn't want to talk or even know about ours. He would say, "We have the greatest marriage. We have the greatest kids. If you knew what was going on out there . . ." One time I replied, "If you knew what was going on in here . . . We don't have a great marriage. You lost me two years ago and don't even know it. We have children that are suffering, feeling and doing things you wouldn't believe." He just looked at me and said, "Oh, Patrice, you don't know what real problems are." But I knew what the problems were because I was living with them daily. So the real negative here was that my husband was unable to work on our problems since he was so overwhelmed by the problems of the ward. He cared so much, and I loved his caring, but he had to care for the ward first. And what was good for the ward, hurt us.

I discovered that if you only have Family Home Evening and that's the only time you are together, Family Home Evening isn't enough. It turns into Family Home Screaming. During a Relief Society lesson, I once heard a bishop's wife respond to a teacher who had asked her to tell about their Family Home Evenings. An honest woman, she stood up and announced, "I'll tell you about them. We don't have them. Everybody hated them. My daughters fought during them. My husband left to answer the phone several times during the middle of them. We did nothing but argue about it, so we don't have them anymore." When she sat down, that poor teacher didn't know how to go on with the lesson because that was not the answer she expected. This same wife went to the stake president and said, "You know, if my husband spent this much time with another woman, you'd excommunicate him. I think his church calling is his mistress."

In retrospect, the most negative thing is that his calling hurt our children. They and I still resent it. My children feel that they didn't have a father during critical growing up years. Over a period of seven years when they were young and becoming teenagers, my good, upstanding, morally strong children became the stereotypical bishop's kids. They felt that they were watched and criticized constantly by everyone but their father. To this day, my twenty-two-year old says, "Dad, why couldn't they have waited and made you a bishop now?" To which my husband replies, "Because at this age, I don't have the strength!"

And then there's the problem of going to bed with your bishop . . . but I won't go into that.

Let me end with the positives. I learned about miracles because I saw miracles happen. I tend to be a bit of a skeptic about voices coming down, and so forth. But miracles happened when my husband was bishop. One of the greatest concerned my husband's health. He has always been prone to health problems; since he's a paraplegic, lengthy hospitalizations were part of the package. But while he was bishop, he never even suffered a cold. He remained strong, and his health was a strength to all of us. I know we did nothing different in our lifestyle, and I know the Lord was with him.

I also know that my husband was called of God because our ward needed him. There were many people who came to their new bishop to ask for help. After meeting this man in his wheelchair, they learned how to be self-reliant. He would enthusiastically welcome them and their talents by

inviting them to join in at the cannery, or the welfare farm, or the storehouse. No one was a better recruiter than Bishop Nelson!

Another positive was my husband's own personal growth. He became a financial expert overnight and learned to relate well to people in all kinds of circumstances. Before this calling, he tended to live in his own little Walter Mitty world. He knew nothing of sexual abuse until he, as a bishop, had to deal with perpetrators and victims. He also learned to understand women's issues.

A small benefit, but one for which I was grateful, was that while he was bishop, I was protected from "hard callings." He was able to make sure that the Lord called me only to jobs that I wanted and felt I could do well! It may not have been pure inspiration, but I had wonderful church callings during that time.

Looking back, living with a serving bishop was an experience that I still cannot completely judge. I am very proud of my husband. Though in a wheelchair, he has always been a man who could do anything he wanted to, be it hunting, fishing, camping, or sloshing through muddy Mexican streets as the first missionary ever to serve his full-time mission in a wheelchair. His character, personality, and spirit are a blessing to everyone, including his family. But I'm happier now that he is no longer a bishop. I've had to pick up a lot of pieces within our family, and I think that is an issue the Church has to resolve. The family must come first, and that must include the families of bishops and other church leaders.

ON THE SIDELINES

MARILYN THIBAUT

MY HUSBAND WAS CALLED TO BE bishop of our ward over three years ago, and he is still the bishop. As I was thinking about my experience of being the bishop's wife, I asked myself, "How did I feel about the bishop and his wife when I was growing up?" I grew up in a time when traditional roles were not questioned very much. In fact, there was not a lot of questioning about anything. As a young child, I was in awe of my bishop, and especially of his wife. I remember them as being older and very mature and able to handle everything. There was a lot of myth about being the bishop's wife. I think there still is. Until you experience it I don't think you can know what it is like to be a bishop's wife or to be in a bishop's family.

At the time my husband was called as bishop we had been in our ward approximately three years. I was the Relief Society president. We also had a new baby only three months old, and I had continued my job as a kindergarten teacher. When we were called to meet with the stake president, I was totally

unprepared. "You want my husband to be bishop?" I thought.

Afterward we talked seriously about how our family life would be affected by the calling, how things would change, and what we could do to keep our family life good. I didn't like the idea of being "Mrs. Bishop." Also, something that I didn't vocalize at the time but since have realized, is how hard it was being released as Relief Society president. I loved my counselors and the sisters in the ward, and I liked being involved in their lives through my Relief Society service. I went from being very involved in the ward to not knowing anything. I no longer felt that I was part of what was happening in the ward, and it was very hard to think that I could never be in charge of things again while my husband was bishop. Although I have since found out that there are a lot of ways I can be involved, it is still extremely hard for me not to feel excluded. It is particularly hard knowing that my husband hurts deeply or that he feels for somebody in the ward,

and I don't know why and there's not much I can do to help him other than just listen to his feelings.

Before my husband was called as bishop we had some problems in our ward where confidences were not kept. I remember the first few times that people called me. They would say, "I suppose you know about these things," or maybe they would say, "Do you know this about my friend?" And I would say, "Don't say anything further. I don't know those things." When I was Relief Society president I knew a lot more than I do now. And in a way, I am grateful for that because it helps me to be able to fulfill my own calling and concentrate on keeping our family going. I think it really surprised people when they realized that my husband would keep confidences. Many problems have been solved in our ward because people know that he will not talk about confidential matters. And I am grateful for that.

I am disturbed, however, that people do not respect the bishop's time. When this happens I get upset. I tell my husband how I feel, and sometimes I tell others, too. I get very upset with people who call my husband when they should call the person directly over them. For example, the nursery leader might call about a problem in the nursery when she should be calling the Primary president. Others call my husband when they ought to call the Elder's quorum president or their home teacher. They need to realize that the bishop is not responsible for taking care of every problem. I wish we could put up a sign that says, "The bishop is busy. Please call the person you are supposed to call, and then that person will get hold of the bishop if necessary." This is something that my husband is constantly telling people in leadership meetings, "Please go to the leader of your organization. Don't come to me. If your leaders need to come to me, they will."

It also concerns me that some people believe the bishop should solve all of their personal problems. Whether it be neighborhood disputes or marriage problems or other things, they often lay all of these problems on the bishop's shoulders. They assume he is going to solve everything for them. My husband is very good at counseling these people. He expects them to take responsibility for dealing with most their problems. Some of them are able to accept and learn from this kind of counseling. Many are not, and they take offense and blame the bishop.

Most people understand that a bishop's family members sacrifice much of their time with their husband and father. My husband also has a very demanding schedule at work, and I work too. What has really helped our family is knowing that, while my husband gives a lot of time to his work and his calling, he really does put us first. Still, it has been a struggle to find family time and time alone for just the two of us. We have to schedule things, and we have to plan carefully. Even then we often have to change our plans, and some things get neglected. Sometimes we stay awake until two or three in the morning just to spend time with each other. Fortunately, my

husband and I communicate very well. I would even say that we communicate better now than we did before because of all the hard work that we have put forth and the struggles that we have been through.

I have also found that people tend to believe that the bishop's family doesn't have any problems. I had a visiting teacher who called me up and said, "Well, we're not going to come and visit you this month, but you're the bishop's wife so everything's okay, right?" At that time I didn't say anything, but I have since been able to be a little bit more assertive in such situations. I really appreciate those who treat me like a regular member and don't put me on a pedestal. I also realize that the bishop's wife needs visiting teachers; the bishop's family needs home teachers.

I remember a woman who came up to me and said, "I'm jealous of you." I thought, "Why are you jealous of me?" She said, "You just sit there in church, and your kids don't do anything bad. Your life is perfect." I said, "Many of us bear our burdens without talking about them because we have been taught to keep things inside. And so I am not one to wear my problems on my sleeve." I had a conversation with this same woman later. It was after she had learned about what I had grown up with and some problems that my extended family had been going through. She told me she was sorry. I said, "We've got to be careful when we judge people, not only negatively but positively." We all have problems, and we all need to help each other.

My husband grew up in a family situation that was almost ideal. He didn't know about the abuse that sometimes occurs in families. I grew up in an abusive home, and for the last ten years my extended family has been dealing with problems of abuse. As a bishop my husband learned how to deal with issues of abuse. In order to educate himself, he called therapists and LDS Social Services. He bought books, and we sat together and read them. My husband has shared what he's learned about abuse with other bishops and our stake president. He's taught them how to help the women and children who come to their offices with stories of abuse, suggesting that they take the reports seriously and help the victims to know that they are not at fault and that something will be done.

One problem I haven't experienced is being identified through my husband. I don't feel that I am only known as the bishop's wife. Maybe it's because I was the Relief Society president in our ward so long, and people already knew me. On the other hand, they didn't know my husband. He was on the high council before being the bishop, so at the time it was much easier for people in the ward to know him as my husband. Too, when we were first married, we lived in my husband's parent's ward, so he was identified as his parent's boy. They still treated him like he was a child, and so for many years of our marriage I was the one who had the callings, and he had to support me. It was good for him because now we

have a more empathetic relationship. We know what it is like to be on both sides.

I appreciate the fact that my husband protects my time. He has not called me to a demanding position, even though I would like to be called to one. I miss having a calling like Young Women's president, Primary president, Relief Society president, or a teacher in Sunday School. However, I see the wisdom in not giving me such callings while my husband is the bishop. It helps our children.

We have two children who are in Young Men's and Young Women's. My husband goes to all their activities. This has given him more time with them. Consequently, there is a very good feeling between my husband and our children right now. Sometimes bishop's children resent all the time their fathers give to the church. As a child I saw friends who had fathers who were bishops. Often it just didn't work very well, particularly if the fathers gave all their time to their bishopric calling and not enough to their families. But my husband has been able to spend time with our

children. They have a good relationship, and I am grateful for this.

I think having a career woman as the former Relief Society president and now the wife of the bishop has been good for our ward. When we moved to the west side of Provo, we met a lot of very traditional families with very traditional thinking. I really had a hard time listening to men who would constantly say that a woman's place was at home and that they didn't want their daughters to hear anything about careers. When I was the Relief Society president we talked about careers quite often. I know some people really questioned my husband's call as bishop because I had a career and was a little bit more outspoken than bishop's wives had been before. But others experienced a change, a softening of heart. They saw that I kept teaching all these years of married life, even when I had children, and they learned that I am not horrible and neither are my children.

While there are many days that I can't wait until my husband is released, on the whole I am grateful that we have this opportunity to be the bishop's family.

I Have An Answer

Questions to Gospel Answers

ANSWER: "Either you represent the teachers and students and champion their causes or you represent the Brethren who appointed you. You need to decide now which way you face."

—HAROLD B. LEE to BOYD K. PACKER when the latter was first called to a position of significant responsibility in the Church Educational System.

QUESTIONS: Just as God listens to us, shouldn't we turn our ears to God and to one another to hear? And just as God speaks to us, shouldn't we face one another to speak? Prayer is two-way, not one-way. Why shouldn't the Church be patterned after this divine two-way flow of information and communication?

Likewise, Jesus Christ is both our source of revelation and our advocate with the Father. Why can't our leaders represent both the Brethren and those over whom they have stewardship? Why is such two-way representation seen as contrary to correct principles of "gospel management"? American political leaders ostensibly represent both "the government" as well as the interests of the people governed, and we claim that this system is "inspired": why cannot this same inspired model be implemented in the Church?

Current procedures prevent the rank and file from speaking directly to leaders on the general level. If my local leader will not speak for me because he has been told not to, who

will speak for me? If my local leader will not ask my questions for me because of their "feminist" or "intellectual" or possibly even "homosexual" nature, who will?

D&C 121 specifically enjoins those in authority to meekness ("teachableness"). As soon as any leader believes that he knows it all—that he is an "authority generally" by virtue of being a "general authority" (or leader at any level)—he will "exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of [people], in [varying] degree[s] of unrighteousness" (37). Why? Because one of the chiefmost components of unrighteous dominion is failing to listen and to truly hear (with the mind and heart).

Without the qualities of humility, meekness, empathy, and awareness, leaders are not capable of understanding the people they are to serve, nor of interpreting God's will for those people in the most correct or beneficial manner. Further, when leaders dismiss real people's real concerns as mere "hyperventilation," they may be closing themselves off to significant information which can help shape the kinds of questions and concerns they should take to God for answers.

Good shepherds have to face their sheep as well as the Overshepherd. Our "file leaders"—those to whom we are expected to go for counsel—are being taught to categorize and pigeonhole both the problems members bring to them and the members themselves, rather than to listen with their hearts and minds and to seek for the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Elder Lee's charge to stiff-neckedness, still championed at the highest levels in the Church, is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ and has been the source of much mischief and misery among us.

—Lynn "Are you talking to me?" Matthews Anderson

LDS Feminist Chronology - 1996

COMPILED BY LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON

28 JANUARY 1996. A letter from the California Area Presidency, Loren C. Dunn, C. Max Caldwell, and Cree-L Kofford, was read in all sacrament meetings. Assembly Bill 1982, which would prohibit California from recognizing same-sex marriages legalized in other states, was due for a vote that week. "Any effort that members, acting as individual citizens, can make to contact their own legislators in support of this measure would be in harmony with the Church's proclamation on the family," the letter read. The bill passed the assembly. As it approached the house, priesthood quorums received instructions that encouraged members to write to their senators. Sample letters were provided, along with the senators' addresses. Members were instructed to have husbands and wives write separate letters. The instructions further stated: "Hand written letters are the most effective. . . . We are requested to write, as individuals. The Church should not be mentioned." (Photocopies in possession of Lavina Fielding Anderson.)

March 1996. Noel B. Reynolds, president of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), wrote: "The negative spirit of anti-Mormonism lives on, surviving its retired or expired standard-bearers. Each generation recruits new champions, mostly from a relatively small number of dissidents on the fringes of Mormon society. . . . Many in the news media who are drawn mindlessly to controversy have given the detractors new status and power, christening them 'Mormon intellectuals' and presenting them to the world as the thinking Mormons who know the inside story about the Church. In their rush to produce controversial news, many journalists have overlooked the

obvious truth—the LDS intellectual and academic communities are composed of strong believers in Joseph Smith's revelations and solid supporters of the Church leadership. Only at the fringes is there noticeable dissent. The overwhelming majority of LDS academics and intellectuals are active, faithful Latter-day Saints who find these detractors to be driven by a secret hate for a goodness they cannot understand or enjoy on their own terms." (Noel B. Reynolds, "Preface," *Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company/Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1996], ix-x.)

2 March 1996. Utah Senator Craig Taylor (R-Kaysville) described high school students in favor of controversial proposed gay-straight alliance clubs as pawns of the ACLU and other adult groups. Taylor summed up the gay "agenda" as follows: "Since they can't reproduce, they have basically said, 'We will seduce and sodomize your children.'" The Salt Lake School Board has banned all non-curricular clubs, including Bible study groups, to avoid permitting the proposed alliances. (Samuel A. Autman, "Young Protesters Are Pawns, Critics Claim," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 2 March 1996, B-1.) Both the school board and the legislature held illegal closed-door meetings, thereby earning the press's "Black Hole" award for violating public access laws.

April 1996. *Academic Questions* published papers from a symposium, "God in the Academy," organized by George M. Marsden of the University of Notre Dame, who was a forum speaker at BYU on 27 February 1996. Other participants were Stephen Macedo of Syracuse University, Glenn C. Alt-

schuler of Cornell University, James Nuechterlein, editor of *First Things*, David G. Roskies of Jewish Theological Seminary, and Jacob Neusner, Distinguished Research Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Florida and visiting professor of religion at Bard College. Neusner, while approvingly quoting Joseph Smith as saying, "The glory of God is intelligence," also observed, "Perhaps the strongest argument against religion in the academy derives from religious academics, Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, standing for the lot of them. There, month by month, dress codes shade over into thought codes, neat haircuts serving for right-thinking brains underneath, so that the entire viability of a Christian (Latter Day Saints) university as a center of free inquiry is called into question by shameless firings and intimidation of wrong opinion." (Jacob Neusner, "An Infusion of the Whole," *Academic Questions*, Spring 1996, 17-21.)

10 April 1996. BYU Universe staff writer Jon Mano proposed that men and women be evaluated separately for shorts compliance, since there are "tons" more women out of compliance than men. "Now I agree that many are still dressed modestly even if the shorts don't hit the knees, but that's not the point. What's important is if BYU views it as inappropriate—and it has stated clearly that shorts must hit the knees." His suggestion would reduce "the number of innocent victims. . . . I realize that our country does not make laws based on gender, but since when has BYU been considered a democratic institution?" (Jon Mano, "Shorts Violations Differ According to Gender," *Universe*, 10 April 1996, 4.)

17 April 1996. In a special late-night session, Utah legislators voted to "give school boards authority to regulate all clubs," but required them "to ban groups devoted to bigotry, criminal activity or those that 'involve human sexuality.'" The legislation also allows

boards “to require parental permission for club involvement, and prevents teachers from promoting illegal behavior.” The bill passed 21-7 in the Senate. Senator Joseph Hull explained, “Let’s give the power to the local school boards to set limits and deny certain behaviors we should be denying anyway. If it takes a lawsuit, then let’s have a lawsuit.” Senate Minority Whip George Mantes (D-Tooele) compared the debate over this issue to the abortion battle and called it “another moral witch hunt in our state” that constituted “an open invitation for expensive lawsuits.” In the House of Representatives, Rep. David Bresnahan (R-West Jordan) “urged restrictions on gay groups by evoking the memory of his brother Donald,” who he said died of AIDS five years ago—after being “recruited into the gay lifestyle by members of his Boy Scout troop. ‘They’re out there and they’re after our children,’” he said. Bresnahan also said “his younger brother at first believed his homosexuality was genetically based. But later, after his illness progressed, he told Bresnahan that he had been molested by Scout leaders as a youngster and that that molestation, suffered by other Scout troop members as well, precipitated his subsequent homosexuality. Others molested in the Scout troop, contacted by his brother, also became homosexuals, said Bresnahan, who warned that adult homosexuals are recruiting youngsters into the gay lifestyle.” (Bob Bernick, Jr., “Provoan Issues Challenge to Lawmaker’s Anecdote,” *Deseret News*, 26 April 1996, B-7.)

Senator Craig Taylor (R-Kaysville, sponsor of the bill) gave a lengthy speech criticizing gay lifestyles and suggesting that “the ones who really care and have compassion” are those who keep “confused” youth from experimenting with homosexuality. He “said that while he disagreed with the gay lifestyle, he had a lot of respect for homosexuals. As an example, he said, ‘I’m a big supporter of the arts . . .’ The re-

mark brought snorts from the Senate gallery. Taylor quickly added, ‘and I know they’ve made a lot of contributions in the arts.’” Taylor cited a letter of support from Charles W. Socarides, president of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality and author of *Homosexuality: A Freedom Too Far*, which attributes homosexuality “to ‘smothering mothers and abdicating fathers.’” For the last twenty years, Socarides has unsuccessfully lobbied the American Psychiatric Association to have homosexuality declared an illness; his son Richard is “an outspoken gay man” who advises the Clinton administration “on gay and lesbian issues.” (Samuel A. Autman, “Senator Offers ‘Proof’ Gay Clubs Are Bad,” *Deseret News*, 18 April 1996, A-12; Tony Semerad, “Goodbye, Clubs—Hello, Lawsuits,” *Deseret News*, 19 April 1996, A-11.)

Senator Orrin Hatch, who had led the charge in Congress to pass the 1984 Equal Access Law, with the primary motivation that Bible clubs could meet on school campuses, claims that it is “‘crazy’ to say the law accommodates gay and lesbian associations” and claims that “the issue was unforeseen a decade ago.” The senator’s memory is faulty. The fact that gay and lesbian clubs would be permitted by the bill was debated in both the House and the Senate. (Samuel A. Autman, “U.S. Club Law Passed with Bible, Gays in Mind,” *ibid.*, A-1, A-12.)

3 May 1996. Fifteen men, meeting privately on Beaver Mountain near Manti, received a revelation authorizing them to organize the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days (TLC). Jim Harmston, though publicly denying it for a time, was called as president and prophet. During the summer, a Women’s Society, Presiding Bishop, Quorum of the Twelve, First Presidency, and First Quorum of the Seventy were ordained. The group believes in a literal gathering, polygamy, the law of consecration, the Adam-God doctrine, no priesthood

for blacks, unrevised temple endowments, personal revelation, no abortion, anti-government, and preparation for the last days. Members claim visitations from angels, Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith, and departed spirits. (Becky Johns, “The Manti Mormons: The Rise of the Latest Mormon Church,” *Sunstone*, Vol. 19, No. 2 [June 1996], 30-36.)

4 May 1996. The “Messages of Inspiration from President Hinckley” column in the *Church News* (p. 2) contained the following excerpt from a speech given to the “Priesthood Leadership,” Veracruz Mexico Regional Conference, 27 January 1996: “Your wives are indispensable to your eternal progress. I hope you will never forget that. There are a few men in this Church, I’m glad there are not very many, but there are a few, who think they are superior to their wives. They better realize that they will not be able to achieve the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom without their wives standing at their side equally beside them. Brethren, they are daughters of God, treat them as such.” It also featured an excerpt from the BYU Married Students Regional Conference, 11 February 1996: “My brethren, you will never have in all of your lives a greater asset than the woman into whose eyes you looked as you joined hands over the altar . . . She will be your most precious possession in time or eternity.”

26 May 1996. The announcement that Boyd K. Packer would receive an honorary degree from Utah State University prompted a letter to the editor from a faculty member, Trevor Hughes, expressing surprise that “a major public research university such as USU has chosen to reward” Packer for his efforts “to identify and punish any BYU scholars who have had the courage to express their world views or . . . research results which do not coincide precisely with official Mormon doctrine no[r] the church’s desired public image.” In response, the paper published a letter

from another faculty member, Jay A. Monson, which was critical of Hughes' position. "Packer has a distinguished career which clearly qualifies him for such an award. . . . Several colleagues at Brigham Young University . . . have an entirely different perspective" about events there. Another even more pointed letter from a third faculty member, Ronald Lanner, suggested that Hughes had the "mistaken view that the administration of USU feels some degree of loyalty to the principle of academic freedom." The faculty member further explained that honorary degrees are at least partly "a political opportunity and a fund-raising prospect." Calling Packer the LDS Church's "hatchet man in the punishment of Mormon intellectuals," Lanner expressed umbrage at the "embarrassingly long list of Mormon Church 'general authorities'" so honored, and critiqued their graduation addresses as reminders to the Mormon graduates "that the worldly education they have just struggled to attain cuts little ice with the black-suited men in Salt Lake's white tower and that orthodoxy is the greater goal." (All letters published in the *Herald Journal*, Logan, Utah: Trevor Hughes, "Boyd Packer Honor Inappropriate at USU," 26 May 1996, 10; Jay A. Monson, "Boyd Packer Indeed Deserving of USU Honor," 29 May 1996, 6; Ronald Lanner, "Money the Motivation for Honorary Degrees," 2 June 1996, 10.)

1 June 1996. Utah's outgoing Episcopalian bishop George E. Bates said that "too much debate over sexual issues is 'nonsense' when a large percentage of the world's children go to bed hungry every night. 'If we as Christians do not deal with the facts of poverty, terrorism, and the more than 100 armed conflicts around the world, we are wasting our time.'" (Peggy Fletcher Stack, "New Episcopal Leader Encouraged Open Discussion," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 June 1996, A-4.)

18 June 1996. An article in the *Albu-*

querque Tribune quoted Robert Fleming, "interim leader of the University of New Mexico's English Department," as saying that Gail Turley Houston, fired from BYU for her feminist views, "is the intellectual role model UNM wanted. 'We were interested in looking for a person who took difficult cultural outlooks. . . . We applaud someone who looks for both sides of a situation. . . . Gail fills holes we needed to fill in our program.'" Houston was one of 233 applicants for the position and will teach nineteenth-century fiction. Houston said, "I'm looking forward to the diversity and the multicultural atmosphere in Albuquerque." ("New Boss Welcomes Fired BYU Prof," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 June 1996, A-3.)

3 July 1996. Utah Republican Jim Hansen, at a fundraising event, commented on another event that he had helped organize earlier in Davis County: "We invited all the people and their wives." (Paul Rolly and JoAnn Jacobson-Wells, "Those Other People," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 July 1996, B-1.)

12 July 1996. Lisa M. Talbot, the first woman doctoral candidate in BYU's Electrical Engineering Department, filed a civil-rights action against BYU, the LDS Church, and twenty "John Does" for "blocking her progress toward a doctorate. . . . [She] said her dissertation proposals were 'repeatedly rejected' even though some were eventually approved for development by male doctoral students. She graduated cum laude from BYU in 1987, was awarded an M.S. in 1988, and completed all requirements for a doctorate but the dissertation by 1990. She alleges that "she was told early in the doctorate program that she didn't need to move through the program quickly because her husband lagged behind her in the same program." She also alleges that "her academic advisers 'exploited her work for personal and/or financial gain without regard for her academic progress' and broke verbal promises re-

garding her dissertation." She filed a formal grievance with the dean of the graduate school in January 1995, alleging "sex-based discrimination." BYU conducted an investigation and concluded that the allegations "could not be substantiated." She filed a complaint in June 1995 with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights; its investigation has not yet been completed. Her husband, Bryan G. Talbot, also a doctoral candidate in the department, "joined her in the suit, saying he, too, was subjected to discrimination after he got involved in his wife's grievance process." BYU's attorney, David Thomas, said the "school has been working to resolve the dispute and had scheduled a dissertation defense . . . before the suit was filed." However, filing the suit preserves "the Talbots' legal standing beyond the statute of limitations should the dispute-resolution process break down." (Joe Constanzo, "Student Accuses Her BYU Advisers of Bias," *Deseret News*, 13 July 1996, A-11.)

20 July 1996. Elder Neal A. Maxwell, 70, interviewed by Hugh Hewitt on matters of faith, said that "adulation can be our [apostles'] ruin. We have to be very careful with it and, in a sense, not to inhale. . . . The fact that [church members] love us and listen to us is wonderful, but I am under no illusions about how much of my developmental journey is left." The transcript of the two-hour interview will appear in Hewitt's *Searching for God in America*. Maxwell explained Mormonism's distinctive doctrines and described an important moment in his own faith journey as an insecure teen when he saw his young sister healed by a priesthood blessing. (Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Apostle Speaks of Faith," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 20 July 1996, C-1, C-3.)

30 August 1996. Two years ago, the National Organization for Women's Salt Lake City chapter advertised its annual conference with an ad in BYU's *Daily Universe*. After it appeared, an

editor telephoned the chapter president, said the paper would not have accepted the advertisement if it had known that NOW supports abortion rights, and said that NOW would not be billed because the ad ran by mistake. Now the chapter has received a letter from BYU trying to collect. (Paul Rolly and JoAnn Jacobson-Wells, "Change of Heart," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 Aug. 1996, B-1.)

7 September 1996. People for the American Way, a nonpartisan civil rights organization that issues a yearly report on the number of national attacks on education, listed the Salt Lake City School District's ban on all non-curricular clubs and the legislature's bill denying access to any student group that involved human sexuality as part of a national attack by the religious right on the freedom to learn. The report numbered such attacks at 175 last year, up from 120 the year before, although book censorship fell from 338 to 330. President Carole Shields said, "I have four grandchildren. I want them to learn not what to think but how to think. . . . Will our gift to them be ever-narrowing horizons of thought and speech?" (Lee Davidson, "Group Views Utah Gay-Club Tiff as an Attack by Religious Right," *Deseret News*, 7 Sept. 1996, B-3.)

17 September 1996. BYU announced the gradual phasing out over the next two years of its Department of Clothing and Textiles, a thirty-year-old program with 150 students that offers one of only two programs in the state on fashion merchandising and fashion design. Academic Vice President Alan Wilkins announced that the university "desires to focus more specifically now on home management, women's advisement, and minors for women." (Hilary Groutage, "Department of Clothing Out of Fashion at BYU," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 Sept. 1996, B-1, B-3.)

29 September 1996. The front page of *The Salt Lake Tribune's* art section was devoted to two Mormon women

artists: ninety-two-year-old Alice Morrey Bailey, a poet and sculptor, and twenty-one-year-old Jenny Oaks, a violinist and daughter of Dallin H. and June Oaks. Bailey taught herself to sculpt and then took courses from art professor J. T. Harwood for a quarter. When she returned engaged for the second quarter, "Harwood, who evidently saw great promise in his eager student, literally tore his hair [and said,] 'I could have made you internationally famous as a sculptor, but now you are finished. Done!'" Bailey acknowledged, "[Harwood] proved to be correct. I am somewhat noted in my state by this time, but not nationally, and far from internationally." One of her sculptures is in the BYU Museum of Art permanent collection; "Sappho" and "The Lorelei," for which her teenage daughters posed nude on the dining room table, are owned by the Springville Museum of Art. Bailey's main artistic achievements, however, were in poetry. In contrast, a display quote from Oaks read, "I adore the violin, and want to play it—always. I've dated guys who'd expect me to give up music, and it's 'goodbye' right there." The speaker is identified as "Jenny Oaks who also foresees marriage and a family." (Lance S. Gudmundsen, "Utah's Jenny Oaks Returns as Soloist with Symphony," and Frank McEntire, "A Busy Life of Creativity: Alice Morrey Bailey: Sculptor, Writer, Musician," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 Sept. 1996, D-1, D-4, D-7.)

5 October 1996. Alton Wade, BYU Vice President for Student Life, said that "wearing shorts on campus at all still is a privilege" which may be revoked by administrators. According to Wade, "BYU students don't hesitate to report" violators as "out of standard" and refuse them service at cafeterias and the library. However, a referral card system for reporting violators "backfired," according to Wade, by making volunteer enforcers "look like 'SWAT people. . . . They haven't used them for months.'" Violators, brought

before the Student Honor Council, said Wade, "usually decide they don't want to throw away their educational experience for something as trivial as the shorts they wear." (Hilary Groutage, "BYU Goes to Great Lengths to Make Long Shorts Available to the Faithful," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 5 Oct. 1996, B-1, B-3.)

7 October 1996. An Associated Press story that ran in the *Boston Globe* and *Washington Times*, among other publications, summarized President Hinckley's messages to mothers to stay at home and raise their children, if possible. It also reported his answer to "accusatory" reporters asking about the place of women in the Church: Hinckley said he knows "of no other organization in all the world which affords women so many opportunities" for leadership through their Relief Society. He said that Mormon women did not have priesthood "because it was the Lord who designated that men in his church should hold the priesthood." The story also quoted Lavina Fielding Anderson who said that "no revelation specifically excluding women from the priesthood has ever been published or announced. 'I think what we have here is a case of interpretive drift. Doctrine is being invented to bolster a tradition.'" (Vern Anderson, Associated Press, "Women Advised to Stay Home: Rear Children, Mormon Leader Urges Mothers," *Boston Globe*, 7 Oct. 1996, A-5; "Mormon Leader Urges Moms to Stick with Family," *Washington Times*, 8 Oct. 1996, A-9.)

13 October 1996. Quoting President Hinckley's encouragement to Mormon women to stay home, a *Salt Lake Tribune* article also reported recent statistics that measure modern financial demands on a family. First, 76 percent of Utah mothers with children between ages six and seventeen are employed, according to the Utah Department of Employment Security. This figure is close to the national average. Second, a

week-old survey released by the U.S. Department of Labor showed that the average annual pay per Utah worker in 1995 was \$23,626. Third, a "modest dwelling, nothing fancy or luxurious," costs \$140,000 to \$150,000 along the Wasatch Front. Fourth, the employed wife of a married couple contributes roughly 40 percent of the family's earnings, according to the Utah Job Service. Fifth, according to the 1994 survey of Families and Work Institute in Washington, D.C., "if money was not a consideration in household finances, 15 percent of women would still choose to work full time. Another 33 percent

would opt for part-time work with another 20 percent electing to do volunteer work. The remaining 31 percent said they would work at home caring for their families."

17 October 1996. An article in *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported on the work of Vicky Proctor, a police officer who runs the Victims Assistance Program in Provo, Utah. Proctor teaches battered women small steps of empowerment until they're ready to leave. The article also contained these statistics: A victim usually leaves and returns 8-12 times before leaving "for

good." Women who leave their abusers are at 75 percent greater risk of being killed by the abuser than those who stay, according to the Utah Division of Child and Family Services. In 1993, more than a third of all Utah homicides were related to domestic violence. "Much of Provo's domestic-violence problem is hidden because of community influences," she says, referring to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which rebukes abusers of women and children." (Taylor Syphus, "Cop's Job: Domestic Violence," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 Oct. 1996, B-1.)

Creating Meaning

Almanac of the Dead

by

LESLIE MARMON SILKOFFS

New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991

Reviewed By

DEBORAH ROSSITER

THE NOVEL IS A literary genre that continually is recreating and redefining itself, as are the various social structures and languages from which it emerges. One of the most complex and interesting genres in the novel today is that of post-colonial or stateless literature. Such literature does not lull us into complacency, but does what a novel should do, and that is bring its reader to crisis. One such novel is Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* which deals with the European domination of native Americans in both the United States and Mexico. This is not the sort of novel you curl up with in an armchair or bring along to the beach for a light read. This is a book that demands attention.

The form of Silko's novel is uncon-

ventional. It contains numerous fragments from the lives of the various characters. There is Seese, who is looking for her kidnapped baby, and Sterling, a native American who is banished from his reservation. There are revolutionaries and gun runners, as well as corrupt judges and police chiefs. There are the old stories in Lechaff's notebooks. There is Lechaff's story of her childhood with her sister and her career as a psychic. There is Menardo, owner of "Universal Insurance," and Max Blue, a mafia hit man. In fact, there are over two dozen major characters, each generating several stories.

Like an almanac, this novel may be read in various ways. You may read randomly, or by character, or story, or you can choose to follow the geographical

arrangement of the novel. Whatever method, you will most likely find yourself reading with a certain urgency as you attempt to make meaning in a vicious wasteland of nihilism and violence.

This urgency is increased by the events seething beneath the surface. The stories and structures which have previously given meaning to people's lives are collapsing. Often they collapse into nihilism through the numbing effects of drugs and meaningless sex. Characters such as Beaufrey and Serlo embody this tendency in its most chilling form. Beaufrey realizes the power of not feeling or caring, and to get through life, he entertains himself with destructive games whose victims are real people. Serlo watches Beaufrey with detached interest, but he ultimately finds his games tiresome, as he has more important things on his mind. Serlo dreams of creating a genetically superior race, one untainted by female or lower-class genes. Other characters are ruthless as they acquire wealth and power. Betrayal means nothing to corrupt politicians like Judge Arne. Human life has no inherent value. The wheelchair-bound Trigg bleeds homeless men to death, and the capitalist Menardo agrees that refugees running across the Mexican-American border

should be gunned down like “coyotes and wolves.” It is modernity without any moral grounding and Christianity without love.

However, even as these old values and stories are collapsing, new ones are replacing them. The voices of the stateless people, the native Americans, rise up and claim their birthright. They condemn the white-man for desecrating Mother Earth and for robbing them of their spirits. Angelita La Escapia gathers these indigenous people under the singular goal of getting back their stolen lands. She envisions a Utopia where Marxist and native American communal values exist side by side. Angelita’s lover, El Feo, and his brother, Tacho, are also gathering forces among the native American people. They are called by spiritual ele-

ments to restore the land to its rightful inhabitants and establish a new order of things.

Ultimately, it is the reader who has to decide what all this means. There are clues in Lechaffs’ old almanacs of ancient stories and prophecies. Is the answer revolution? Is the answer to establish a new era of ecological, indigenous, and spiritual values? How do you live in the world once the old values and structures fall apart, after they no longer hold any meaning? Do you hang onto them? Do you replace them with something superior? How do you decide what that is?

On many levels, this is a difficult novel to read. It contains graphic descriptions of perversity and violence, including torture and bestiality. However, because I read the newspapers

and watch the television news, I know this kind of darkness lurks in the human heart. I found that as I read this novel, my desperation to find meaning in the midst of all its cruelty grew more and more urgent. For me, that was the brilliance of this book, because isn’t this the situation we face in the world every day? We are bombarded with stories of corruption and human cruelty, and we have a difficult time finding any meaning in the midst of it.

Silkoffs’ novel contains the voices of the dead. Any redemption in it must be created as the reader weaves the stories of these dead voices together. Are they prophecy, warning, or both? The hope in this novel is not in the text. It lies in the interaction between the text and the reader.

Search the Scriptures

Does God Curse Church Critics?

JANICE ALLRED

SOMETIMES A SCRIPTURAL passage is troubling because it traditionally has been interpreted in a way that we find morally offensive. The curse given in Doctrine and Covenants 121:16-25 has often been interpreted by Mormon church leaders to apply to anyone who disagrees with, criticizes, or opposes high church leaders in any way. In the October 1996 general conference, Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve used these verses to invoke a curse against those in the Church who criticize their leaders. He said:

Some few within the Church, openly or perhaps far worse, in the darkness of anonymity, reproach their leaders in the wards and stakes and in the Church, seeking to make them “an offender for a word,” as Isaiah said (Isa. 29:21). To them the Lord said, “Cursed are all those

that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned . . . but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

“But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves . . .

“ . . . because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house.

“Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them.

“They shall not have right to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them from generation to generation” (D&C 121:16-17, 19-21).

That terrible penalty will not apply to

those who try as best they can to live the gospel and sustain their leaders.

Nor need it apply to those who in the past have been guilty of indifference or even opposition, if they will repent, confess their transgressions, and forsake them.

Packer thus asserts that the curse given in Section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants is against those who criticize, fail to sustain, or oppose church leaders in any way. Does the scriptural text support this interpretation?

To answer this question we must first look at the context in which this curse was given. Section 121 was taken from a letter written by Joseph Smith to the Church while he was imprisoned in Liberty Jail in Liberty, Missouri, in 1839. In this letter he recalls the wrongs committed against the people of the Church by the people of Missouri. These wrongs, which were unlawful as well as evil, included murder, rape, robbery, destruction of property, and expulsion of people from their homes. Section 121 begins with Joseph’s prayer asking God to have compassion on his people, remember

“wrongs and unlawful oppressions” perpetrated against them. The curses contained in verses 11-25 must be understood in this context. They are against those who commit such crimes and oppressions, but not against all such offenders. The revelation gives three separate curses directed against three different groups of people. The context of the revelation and verse 23 define the largest group of offenders. Verse 23 states, “Woe unto all those that discomfort my people, and drive, and murder, and testify against them.” The Lord assures Joseph Smith that he will judge such people, “For there is a time appointed for every man, according as his works shall be,” but he gives no specific curse against people in this group. The curse in verses 16-22 is directed against a smaller group within this group and the curse in verses 11-15 is against a subset within the smaller group.

God begins with the smallest group. His answer to Joseph Smith first addresses him as an individual. In verse 11 the Lord says, “And they who do charge thee with transgression, their hope shall be blasted.” This curse continues through verses 12-15. “And not many years hence . . . they and their posterity shall be swept from under heaven” (15). This should not be read as a general principle directed against all those who accuse a prophet of transgression, but as a specific prophecy of what would befall those who had conspired, partly through false allegations of wrongdoing, to have Joseph Smith jailed and killed.

Verse 16 broadens the curse. It begins a general prophecy directed not against specific individuals but against those who perpetrate the deeds the prophecy describes. “Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me.” This statement makes it clear that the curse is limited to those who make false allegations of wrongdoing. Verse 18 reinforces this limitation by referring to “those who

swear falsely against my servants.” It also declares the motivation of those who are cursed. Their purpose is “to bring them into bondage and death.” These motives reflect their characters. “They are the servants of sin.” Verse 13, which refers specifically to those who conspired against Joseph Smith, also characterizes them as those whose “hearts are corrupted,” who “love to have others suffer [persecutions].”

It is not simply making false allegations of wrongdoing that this revelation condemns. Not only must there be an intent to subjugate and destroy, but something must actually be done to bring about these purposes before the curse is incurred. According to most interpretations, the expression “lift up the heel against” means to injure by tricking or duplicity. The metaphor refers either to kicking with the heel (when one’s back is turned) or to a wrestler tripping up his opponent. This expression suggests that the offender injures someone else with little risk to himself. The revelation emphasizes the accusation of transgression because this is the key element in the type of oppression it condemns, which is religious persecution. The rationale (but not the motivation) behind religious persecution is that the persecuted are transgressors, sinners, and enemies of God and God’s people. The persecutors put themselves in the place of God. They will judge, punish, and avenge. As servants of God we may do God’s work of love, but never the work of judgment and punishment.

I believe Packer is mistaken in his assertion that the Lord is condemning any kind of dissension or opposition to church leaders. Disagreement with the ideas of church leaders expressed for the purpose of pursuing truth, opposition to policies and practices that are perceived as injurious to the spiritual welfare of individuals or harmful to the mission of the church, or even the exposure of a transgression of a church leader is certainly not what the Lord is condemning.

Mormon Women’s Forum: An LDS Feminist Quarterly is published by The Mormon Women’s Forum, a non-profit corporation. The views expressed reflect the perspectives of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the editors, The Mormon Women’s Forum or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Founded in 1988, The Mormon Women’s Forum invites all people to examine women’s issues, particularly within the context of Mormonism. It makes no formal demands on any organization or system of belief. It does, however, examine and question traditional interpretations of women’s roles, their history and their relationship to deity.

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leader is certainly not what the Lord is condemning.

I think Packer also errs in his designation of the victims of the oppressors. He discusses only the curse contained in verses 16-21 which condemns "all those who lift up the heel against mine anointed." Who is "mine anointed?" Packer says that it is any church leader, but this interpretation is not supported by an examination of the text. The expression "lift up the heel against" is only used in two other places in the scriptures. The first is in Psalms 41:9 which reads, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." The second is found in John 13:18 and is an allusion to the verse in Psalms. Jesus is prophesying his betrayal by Judas and says that it will fulfill the scripture "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up the heel against me." The expression "lift up the heel against mine anointed" alludes to Jesus' proph-

esy. "Mine anointed," then, is Jesus Christ. "Messiah" means literally "the anointed one," and this is one of the names of the Savior. The curse, then, is directed towards all those who knowingly betray Jesus Christ.

In the incarnation Christ made himself equal to every human being, and Jesus taught that what we do to any person we do to him. "I tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers, however humble, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40 NEB). Although Jesus here was referring to loving ministrations to people in need, the principle also extends to evil deeds. In D&C 132:27 the Lord declares that if someone who has entered into the new and everlasting covenant commits murder by shedding innocent blood he "assents unto my death." This identification of Jesus with his people is implicit in the language of the curse. "Mine anointed" becomes "they" and then "my servants," "my little ones," and finally "my

people." According to this curse, the ones the Lord will avenge are the powerless and those who have identified themselves with him: his servants (those who do his work of loving ministry) and the "little ones" (literally children or the innocent and powerless, and metaphorically all those who believe in Jesus Christ and are made innocent through his Atonement.)

Judas betrayed Jesus to the powers of this world, which rule by force, compelling others by their power over life and property. Jesus was judged, condemned, and crucified by these powers. Religious persecutors put themselves in the place of God, but Jesus put himself in the place of the judged and persecuted. Whenever we use the powers that Jesus refused, the powers that dominate by compulsion, we betray him. Significantly, section 121 ends with a revelation defining the abuse of priesthood power.

This issue of the *MWF Quarterly* is the second of four double issues planned for publication in 1997 to get us back on schedule. Each of these counts as only one issue on your subscription.

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