

THE THIRD WAY

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I FEEL CONFIDENT IN ASSUMING that every person in this room desires to help preserve the natural family from the forces that have conspired against it in the halls of power. One trick that such forces use is to polarize any debate and in the process make of their opponents' position a simplistic and archaic one. Many of you have no doubt been accused of being reactionary forces opposed to every good thing. It is hard to stand so accused, when we know how false and devious such allegations are. We must be wise in our articulation of what we stand for so that we may avoid the trap of polarization. When the debate is polarized, we lose. What can we do to prevent this from occurring?

One thought that comes to mind is to articulate the *third* way. What I mean by this is to articulate a position antithetical to the anti-family position, but also allowing us to be seen as the progressive and humane position that we know we represent. If we can carve out this third position, ours will be seen as the voice of reason and moderation. Our opponents will be hard-pressed to label us as extremists.

Allow me to outline a vision of the third way: a way that hopefully transcends cultural differences, and which you could adapt to your own circumstances as a spokesperson for your people. First, I would assert that there is a universal deep structure to all viable ways of life in human society. Though each society will differ as to its precise manifestations, every viable society contains at least three common elements: one, viable society values life and consequently has a concept of human beings and how their lives should be lived. Two, viable societies acknowledge that human life has a twofold nature. Life, being valuable, is to be both realized in its value, and it is also to be perpetuated. Three, viable societies recognize that perpetuation of human life is an integral and inseparable part of realizing and enjoying life. Such a society understands that any attempt to separate the realization of life's value from the perpetuation of life undermines the viability of the society.

Let us call these three elements the natural law of life. To break any of these laws is to pursue the forbidden possibilities of death and darkness. Because of the universal nature of this law of life, judgment of diverse ways of living is possible. No culture fully lives the law of life, as all earthly societies contain both good and evil. In every society a war is taking place: a war between the love of light and the love of darkness. Since every person is given the choice to cultivate a love of light or a love of darkness, society will reflect the

choices of its citizens in this regard. If a society follows the law of life to any degree, realization and perpetuation of life can occur. However, if this universal deep structure of human life is rejected by a society, this rejection carries with it a simultaneous embrace of death.

The unraveling of a previously viable society always begins with the unraveling of the law of life with regard to the perpetuation of life. This is so because it is easier to attack the value of persons who do not yet exist, as versus the value of persons who already exist. However, as we all know, as a society unravels the law of life, even the value of persons who already exist will eventually come under attack. But let us start at the starting point: the perpetuation of life. Now the perpetuation of life in a human society is a complex thing. It involves the perpetuation of language, customs, literature, religion, skills, and other concepts of culture. Perpetuation is thus more than giving birth to new members of the society. And yet the core of perpetuating life is bringing forth new life and nurturing it toward full personhood. All other sorts of perpetuation (of skills, language, and so forth) are but secondary to the perpetuation of new life that can also learn the skills, enjoy them, and pass them on.

Thus we may say that the core part of all ways of living that are viable is the relationship and the division of labor between men and women, for they are the only ones that together can perpetuate life. In a very strong way, this relationship between men and women determines the viability of any human society. How does the law of life say they should relate? Here we must ask for a training manual, if you will, on the perpetuation of the species. Some say that training manual is to be found in the kingdoms of the animals. But others, and I understand that this includes all in this room, believe the training manual was given by God. For those of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian faiths, we call this manual "The Story of Adam and Eve." I am sure there are equivalent training manuals in all religions. Let us see what the story of Adam and Eve says about the perpetuation of life.

One of the first lessons about the universal deep structure of life and gender relations that we learn from the story of Adam and Eve is that gender relations are at the heart of life. God created only two beings at the dawn of human history: a man named Adam and a woman named Eve. No male-male or female-female relationship can substitute for the critical importance of male-female relations. Hence, in examining

any particular culture, we must train our powers of observation on the male-female relations in that society. We must not be distracted by histories or journalistic accounts that typically focus on male-male relations. The real action taking place within a culture is taking place between men and women.

Second, we learn that the appropriate relationship between men and women is called marriage. God married Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This marriage symbolizes that God intended that men and women be joined as one in his sight, that they love and commit to one another (Doctrine and Covenants 42:22), and that their commitment to each other should exceed their commitment to any others, including parents (Moses 1:23–25). Just as male-female relations are the centerpiece of any culture, so is marriage integral to the universal deep structure of human life. Loving, cooperative, committed relationships between men and women, approved by God through the marriage ordinance, are a hallmark of every viable way of living.

Third, we understand from the story of Adam and Eve that there is a division of labor in regard to the perpetuation of life. Though the exact division of labor between men and women varies greatly across cultures, in every culture women give birth to new life, and in an overwhelming proportion of cases, these mothers love and bond with their babies. Women nurture the law of life as well as the life in their babies by loving them. In loving their babies, mothers point them towards the law of life. Women are alive for good—the good of their babies and their welfare. Thus, in the very first human relationship experienced on earth, new souls are prepared to see, recognize, and move toward the natural law of life. Mothers prepare their babies in such a way that these new souls will have “the work of the law written in their hearts” (Romans 2:15). New souls will recognize and move toward the law of life because these acts are familiar. They are based upon countless acts in early childhood of recognizing and moving towards the woman who provided life, love, and nurture of their own lives.

A mother is not a perfect vehicle of the light. Because she is a product of her culture, and as we have seen that all earthly cultures have within them both good and evil, each mother imparts to her child some darkness as well. Women are often a conservative element in their society and may teach their children to love the traditions of their fathers which are out of harmony with the ways of life. Certain women may in fact be evil and may also love darkness and seek to awaken in their children a love of darkness. But in general, a mother wants good for her child, and there is a variety of good among mothers because they live in a variety of cultures. Each mother in every culture introduces new souls to agency and to the moral law. Women, in general, have not lost sight of the original woman, Eve, and what she stood for.

We have spoken of Eve’s role in bringing spirits across the veil to be clothed in flesh and her role in nurturing the light within them and introducing them to agency and to the moral law. Yet there is an additional role played by Eve that is often overlooked when we speak of the division of labor regarding the perpetuation of life. Nevertheless, the daughters of Eve in general still perform this role faithfully. This accomplishment of Eve often goes unnoticed or is viewed in a negative light. This great accomplishment of which we speak is that of getting Adam to partake. In this act, Eve persuades Adam that the realization of the fullness of life for himself is inseparable from the perpetuation of the fullness of life through future generations (in LDS scripture, Adam frames it thus: “I will partake that man may be,” and acts upon his desire not to be a lone man, even if he would be in the wonderful Garden of Eden). To his credit, Adam humbles himself, and by partaking of the fruit commits to life, love, and the perpetuation of life and love. It is as if Eve, holding her baby, brings Adam close and has him gaze into the child’s eyes so that he, too, will come to share in and commit to the happiness and safety of the child. The woman’s love for her partner and the man’s love for his partner unite them in a sacred cause: the perpetuation of love and life in their posterity. Her love for Adam, his love for her, and the fruit of that love—the love they share for their posterity—represents movement towards the law of life. It is the catalyst from which recognition of and desire for the law of life is built in every civilization. And Eve is the root of this movement, she turns towards the law of life and persuades Adam to turn towards it as well.

And what of the role of man? The story of Adam and Eve provides a healthy role model for men as well. Just as Eve righteously persuaded Adam to partake, we understand that an important component of manhood is to hearken unto Eve and partake (i.e., to commit to a woman in love and to commit to the children who will be produced by that love). By so doing, a man commits to the cause of life and becomes an agent of the law of life himself.

Since both the man and the woman are creators of new life, both have an obligation to nurture that life. Adam helps in the nurturing and loving of new life, just as Eve does. Both share the responsibility of socializing their children in the degree of light present in their culture. But Adam has certain responsibilities in addition to these just mentioned. These responsibilities accrue to a man as an agent of life’s law. Holy men have spoken of the responsibility of fathers and husbands to provide for, protect, strengthen, and shield their families.¹ Thus in most cultures, men have the responsibility of physical and economic defense—the temporal security—of the family. The physical defense of one’s wife and children is often considered a sacred duty (Alma 44:5). And in many religions, we learn that economic support of one’s wife and children is also considered a sacred duty, abrogation of which renders one “less

than an infidel," implying that even in the cultures of the "infidels" this economic responsibility is in general honored (Doctrine and Covenants 83:2).

Thus, even though different cultures may hold to different training manuals about the desired relationship between men and women, the manuals exist. And, as the story of Adam and Eve, they in general point to that relationship as being the foundation of any viable society and further point to heterosexual marriage and childrearing within heterosexual marriage as the appropriate method of perpetuating life.

Cultural Manifestations of Darkness

We have noted that there is a war taking place within every human culture, a war between the light and the darkness. Thus it behooves us to examine the law of life in order to identify what is forbidden because it would lead to death. Given the universality of the law of life, then all social systems have choices that are forbidden to them. An analysis of these forbidden possibilities allows us to classify them by type according to which part of the law of life would be broken by their adoption within a human society. Types of societal deviations from the moral law, reflecting as the law does the universal deep structure of human existence, would be historical signs that a human society is descending into darkness and ultimately death. A theory of the degeneration of human cultures can be built upon this basis.

It may take a long time or it may take a short time for a society to move from one that in general pursues life to one that in general pursues death. Remembering that we must focus in male-female relations to see the real spiritual action taking place in a society, several types of societal deviation from the moral law can be identified.

Type I Violations: Societal deviations from the moral law of marriage given to all cultures, or the delinking of the realization of life from marriage.

Every society has a concept of human life, how it is precious, and how it should be lived. This is the concept of the "realization of life" in a society. We have noted that the story of Adam and Eve makes plain that God intended the realization of life in every human society to involve marriage between a man and a woman. Marriage is a symbol of the type of relationship that should exist between the two essential creators of life, men and women. The relationship, as we have seen, is to embody love and commitment and is to be understood as a relationship between two equals. Though there are many ways of loving and marriage in the world, encompassing differences in courtship, marriage ceremonies, and so forth, the centrality of marriage to the realization of life in society cannot be downplayed. It is central to the universal moral law given to all. Even in the context of such diversity in loving, in every culture love between a man and a woman brings forth obligations from the light's law: an

obligation to forsake all others and commit to the marriage partner, and an obligation to treat each other in the marriage as equal beings of light. These particular aspects of marriage, then, are also part of the moral law given to all. Thus we may identify the first type of societal deviation from the moral law, symbolic of culture's descent into darkness, as a delinking of that society's conceptualization of the realization of life from marriage. Two subtypes of deviation can be identified in this regard.

Subtype I: The creation of a hierarchy in male-female relations.

The first step is to create a hierarchy in male-female relations and thus pervert the concept of marriage as a loving, committed relationship between a man and a woman who stand before each other as equals. In this stage, a society begins to conceive of a woman as fundamentally different from a man. Because she is not like them, men can begin to treat a woman differently from how they would treat another man. Without exception, in fallen societies women are treated as the inferiors of men. They are not only treated as the physical inferiors of men, they are treated as the intellectual and spiritual inferiors of men. Because women have been conceptualized as alien, they also become the means to men's ends rather than ends in themselves. Men begin to see women as instruments whereby their own wants, needs, desires, and lusts can be satisfied. Women no longer hold full human value in such societies, and thus empathy of men for women becomes very difficult. Women in such carnal cultures may be denied certain fundamental human rights, their agency may be constrained, and they may be the subjects of behavior that would never be applied to men (e.g., sex-selective infanticide, wife beating). Their labor and their contribution to society will almost always be rendered invisible, and thus comparatively valueless. Economic dependence of the woman on the man in such cultures thus becomes a way to ensure the subservience of women to men. Marriage between men and women is still the societal goal, but it would be impossible to envision marriage in such carnal cultures as a partnership between equals. Indeed, in cultures where the woman is viewed as less than fully human, it eventually becomes impossible to envision love as the core of marriage. The sons of Adam do not follow the righteous example of their noble forefather, and, in a sense, they refuse to partake of that which Eve offers. Typically, then, in such fallen cultures, commitment and fidelity in marriage for the woman is obligatory, and deviation therefrom is met with the sternest punishment; whereas commitment and fidelity in marriage for the man becomes optional, and deviation therefrom may not only not be punished but may actually be celebrated in male society. Obvious gender inequality and a double standard of fidelity, then, are the two primary hallmarks of this first subclass of societal deviation from the law of life concerning marriage.

Subtype II: The elimination of marriage as the societal goal.

The second subtype of societal deviation from the moral law concerning marriage, which deviation is symbolic of a cultural descent into darkness, is to reconceptualize what is meant by the realization of life so that it excludes fundamental characteristics of what God meant by marriage. In addition to stripping male-female relations of loving commitment and equality, as in the first subtype of violation of the law of life, the second subtype of violation goes further and may involve claims that marriage is unnecessary or harmful, that fidelity in marriage and chastity outside of marriage are unrealistic, and that same-sex sexual relations can be an appropriate part of the society's concept of realization of life. Partly in a natural reaction to the first subtype of societal violation of the moral law of marriage, women themselves may begin to see marriage as an oppressive institution, because they have never experienced it as otherwise. Indeed, cultures engaging in this second subtype of violation typically have less obvious gender inequality than those engaging in the first subtype of violation. Nevertheless, the devaluation of marriage signals a more subtle and insidious form of gender inequality: it signals that men and women cannot be equal in the context of a relationship together; they can only realize equality separately.

Oppressive marriage of the first subtype of violation and cultural descent is replaced by abandonment of marriage in a quest for equality. When women are freed in significant measure from the oppression of the first subtype of violation of the moral law of marriage, and become able to support themselves as economic actors in their own right, they will eschew what they understand to be marriage—carnalized marriage between unequals as conceptualized in cultures engaged in the first subtype of deviation. This is perfectly understandable and natural. However rather than reconceptualizing marriage according to the divine model, which would be a societal ascent, what results instead is a relinquishing of marriage as a societal goal, which is a spiritual descent. In second-stage cultures, departure from marriage, whether in the form of cohabitation without marriage or divorce from marriage, becomes socially normal. Promiscuity becomes celebrated for both men and women and is viewed as normal and even healthy human behavior. The meaning and significance of marriage is almost completely lost in cultures engaged in the second subtype of deviation from the moral law of marriage, and marriage may even be viewed as an anachronism. The home in which the father has eventually left may be the symbol for second subtype descent.

Type II Violations: Societal deviations from the moral law concerning children given to all cultures, or the delinking of the realization of life from the perpetuation of life.

The loss of marriage as the central element of societal exist-

ence is a tremendous blow to any society. A loving partnership between men and women who stand before each other as equals can hardly be conceived of in such cultures. Yet the true profundity of this loss has yet to be realized. In the next type of societal descent, the loss of marriage brings further devastating loss: the loss of societal capacity for the perpetuation of life. As integral to the universal deep structure of human life as the law of marriage is the law concerning the bringing forth of posterity. Indeed, these two elements of the law of life are so intertwined that the violation of one inevitably leads to the violation of the other. This second type of societal violation of the law will lead in an even more direct fashion to the society's descent into darkness and death. As we shall see, the value of the perpetuation of life begins to wane for the members of these societies. Next, the value of what life is still perpetuated—that is, the value of the children of the society themselves—is diminished. Finally, the bonds of love that tie parent to child are undone. When that occurs, an ultimate devaluation of all life within the society is possible. As with the first type of violations discussed above, the initial delinking of the realization of life from the perpetuation of life typically begins with men.

Subtype I: The separation of sex from the perpetuation of life for men.

In this subtype of violation of the moral law, many men within the society are no longer actively engaged in the perpetuation of life in that society. To be sure, children are still born into the society, but for many men those children are the unintended consequence of their sexual relations with women. The siring of a child may no longer produce any obligation to commit to or temporally support the child's mother so that the mother can adequately care for her child. Likewise, unless compelled to do so, the siring of a child may not produce in the father any feeling of obligation for the nurture or temporal support of the child created. Indeed, many men may be enraged when they discover their sexual partner has become pregnant, and the woman may be abandoned by the man upon such a discovery. The woman, they may reason, should provide a man recreational sex with no commitments attached. If commitment-producing situations develop, in their perspective, the woman has failed them. Thus sex becomes a commodity wholly detached from the perpetuation of life for many men. This commodity may be increasingly obtained by force in such societies, since that mode of acquisition minimizes the possibility of commitment. In addition, when women are viewed as commodity-providers for men, and children are viewed as burdens; this lamentable objectification may lead to an increase in domestic violence. Consequently, family units composed of women and children to whom no man has made a commitment become numerous.

Since men usually hold power over women and children

in the fallen world, when the perpetuation of life holds little value for men, resource allocation to women and children in society is low. Children and their mothers will be economically vulnerable. Women and children may be the poorest members of society. Services such as teaching and caretaking will be undervalued in these societies. The work of motherhood will not be considered work at all, and abandoned mothers will not be given the temporal security to attend to their mothering work first. These attitudes culminate in a "crisis of caretaking," for it becomes economically irrational and harmful to elect to become a caretaker. As a result, the society is hard pressed to meet its caretaking needs at all. More valued in this type of society is productive economic activity that produces wealth. Children, mothers, and other caretakers do not fare very well according to this benchmark of value.

Men, on the other hand, have a great advantage in the production of wealth in fallen societies. Though this confers great temporal benefits to men, it also constrains men who still desire to commit to a woman and the children of their marriage. The need to create wealth often impairs a man's ability to nurture and bond with his wife and children. His conception of what family life means to him may become impoverished, and his capacity to nurture his family will follow suit. Thus the father-child bond, even among men who desire commitment and children, may become attenuated. The home in which there never was a father to begin with may be the symbol of this subtype of societal violation of the moral law concerning children given to all cultures.

Subtype II: The separation of sex from the perpetuation of life for women.

The final subtype of societal descent comes about when women's attitudes towards the perpetuation of life begin to mimic the attitudes of men. Given the context of societal violations of the moral law concerning marriage and children in which women of the final stage come to maturity, it is probably inevitable that women come to regard children as unnecessary burdens as well. If the first three subtypes of descent have come about, then it may be possible to move to the coup de grace: the undoing of the human bond upon which all human bonds are based, the love of a mother for her children, born and unborn. When the sons of Adam refuse in general to partake, the context in which a woman conceives and brings forth new life is polluted. Now, instead of rendering her and their child committed and loving support and protection, he may leave them to fend for themselves. Worse, he may demand that as the price for maintaining the male-female relationship, the woman must spurn the child. What woe and sorrow is visited upon society through such selfish fatherlessness! When showing Enoch the saga of human history, the Lord breaks down and weeps because men "hate their own blood" (Moses 7:33). Generally, this has been inter-

preted as male-male hostility. But given Adam's declaration that Eve is "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23), is not a more poignant understanding of the Lord's lament that men hate their own lovers and children? And that in such a context, women may begin to hate themselves, their womanhood, their motherhood, and their children?

Consider the situation of the woman in a time when "Adam" has been persuaded not to partake—more correctly, when Adam's sons do not live up to the righteous example of their forefather, Adam. The men in this woman's society may expect sexual relations from her, but without any corresponding commitment. To fulfill her natural tendencies as part of the work of womanhood to form a bond with a man, she may desperately agree to such a Faustian bargain, which may lead her to the psychological state where she may desire to prevent conception. Means symbolic of her desire to avoid bringing forth a new life are devised. She may then realize as a result the pale counterfeit of the desirable life that her civilization permits: she has one or more relationships with men and can cope with their lack of commitment by providing for herself.

Now consider her situation if the devices of avoiding pregnancy fail and she becomes pregnant. Rather than an occasion for rejoicing, fear enters her heart: if the man is not committed to her, he will probably not commit to the child. Furthermore, he may consider her pregnancy as grounds for him to leave the relationship. She may be faced with a terrible choice: she must either return the relationship to the *status quo ante* or be prepared to commit to the child alone. An examination of the latter alternative reveals the pitfalls of that path: if she chooses to commit to the child, she will forfeit her civilization's pale version of the desirable life. She will lose the male-female relationship, and she may have to provide for and protect both herself and her child without any help from the father. What a horrible context in which to be a woman! The only security in such a civilization may be sterility, appropriately enough. She lives in a culture of death, where she may be forced to choose between a relationship with Adam or a relationship with her baby, but she may not be able to have both.

When a civilization creates such a vicious dilemma for women, it creates a context for choice in which one rational response by a woman to the dilemma is to spurn commitment to her child. Abortion and infanticide have been all too frequent phenomena in the civilizations of human history. When children become inconvenient or unwanted, no matter how primitive or advanced the society is, there will always be means for such children to be washed away. When the scale upon which Adam spurns Eve is vast enough, such methods will gain the explicit approval and sanction of society, and will no longer be practiced in secret and with shame. Indeed, in our own civilization we find society lauding

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young men who accompany their lovers to the abortion clinic to support them as these women tangibly spurn commitment to the offspring of their “love.” No wonder God weeps!

In the end, children become inconvenient and unwanted only when we view the realization of the desirable life for ourselves as imperiled by the perpetuation of the desirable life through our posterity. As we have seen, when realization overshadows perpetuation, the result is civilizational suicide. The light of the civilization has been snuffed out, and it will die. Interestingly, such a society will usually die by the hands of its children, for these children generally have no respect for life or love, as a result of their upbringing. Children past feeling, who bring death and destruction to themselves as well as their society, are the emblem of this final subtype of societal violation of the moral law which brings descent into darkness.

The Third Way

The third way presents a stark contrast to the societies engaged in the various types of societal deviation and decline that we have previewed above. When realization and perpetuation of the desirable life are integrally connected in a society, as in what my LDS community calls Zion—the home of the righteous and the happy—the laws of life concerning marriage and the bringing forth of posterity are honored, not violated. As a result, in Zion, marriage is at the heart of social relations, and there are no inconvenient or unwanted children. There is no extramarital promiscuity and all children are born through marriage. All children are welcomed and loved and supported by both their father and their mother, who in turn love and support and are faithful to each other. Women and children are not in a position of vulnerability—physical, economic, or legal—in such societies. All family relationships are committed, caring, and based on equal respect and appreciation for gender differences. I would go so far as to say that there would be no need for contraceptive devices in the third way, no divorce, no domestic violence, no rape, no incest, no prostitution. Adam has committed to Eve, Eve to Adam, and both Adam and Eve to the child who is the fruit of their love.

When the great civilizations have fallen, they have fallen because they actively condoned the extinguishing of their own light.² And what is this extinguishing? It is the societal violation of the moral law given to all civilizations concerning marriage and the bringing forth of posterity.

Note that the root of the difference between a culture of death and a culture of flourishing life such as Zion is the difference in Adam’s reaction to Eve. When men move away from the light and the word, women and children become vulnerable. The degree of their vulnerability becomes a barometer of how extreme the societal departure has been. When Adam spurns Eve, Eve may find it rational to spurn their children, and the society dies. And in turn, the root of

Adam’s spurning of Eve is inequality. To reject commitment to one who loves you means that somehow you have rationalized that they are not worthy of equal love and commitment, or that it is not incumbent upon you to return in equal measure their loving commitment to you.

As we have seen, sexual or gender difference is a common basis for treating another as unequal. And so we find in the cultures of death, including our own, many and longstanding traditions and philosophies of men—often “mingled with scripture”—that women are different and lower creatures than men. These traditions serve as rationalizations for those men to spurn Eve and refuse to partake. And this act of spurning eventually and inexorably creates a culture of death, where cold, hard hearts are capable of treating life cheaply, instead of as the infinitely precious thing it is. For if a man is capable of treating his lover as an inferior, who cannot be treated as an inferior? Thus all types of hostility and violence become permissible within the society, for one feels justified in treating even the “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” with inequality and violence. We are even moved so far as to say that the roots of all inequality and all violence are to be found in inequality in the male-female relationship. The forces that seek to sever the link between women and their children—the final stage in the battle against the light—could never have acquired the power they now have without men having treated women as inferiors and not as equals for so long.

This is why the issue of gender equality is the final and ultimate question of any society. If it is a lesser thing to be a woman, then the light dims and darkness will begin to cover the land. The debate over the equality of women is no fringe issue, but rather the issue at the very heart of our future possibilities. It is a debate over the very meaning of life. There may be elements of any culture that represent barriers to happiness regarding male-female relations. In my LDS community, we are counseled to let our benchmark be the gospel of Jesus Christ. For those who are not Christians, there is an equivalent benchmark in their own heritage. President Howard W. Hunter of our church commented, “Measure whatever anyone else asks you to do, whether it be from your family, loved ones, your cultural heritage, or traditions you have inherited—measure everything against the teachings of the Savior. Where you find a variance from those teachings, set that matter aside and do not pursue it. It will not bring you happiness.”³ Elder Richard G. Scott, of our church, elaborated,

“[Y]our lineage can provide a rich heritage and great reasons to rejoice. Yet you have the responsibility to determine if there is any part of that heritage that must be discarded because it works against the Lord’s plan of happiness. . . . Is yours a culture where the husband exerts a domineering, authoritarian role, making all of the important decisions for the family? That pattern needs to be tempered so that both

husband and wife act as equal partners, making decisions in unity for themselves and their family.”⁴

Elder Alexander B. Morrison, also of our church, summed up the situation in one sentence, “The Church cannot bow down before any traditions that demean or devalue the daughters of God.”⁵

In essence, the “woman question” is the most revolutionary of all questions. Who is Eve, who is she to Adam, and how should Adam respond to her? To answer those questions correctly is not only of great importance to women; it is of great importance to men. Achieving gender equality is only possible if we understand truly what life is and why it is infinitely precious. Such an understanding can only be had through the Spirit of truth and the grace of God. Gender equality is not a maraschino cherry, placed last atop a Zion sundae; it is, rather, integral to Zion’s existence, because male-female relations are the very heart of Zion. Gender relations are a central part of the divine plan of happiness and eternal life, so central that the building of Zion cannot be culminated where gender relations are out of sync with God’s desires. The woman question, properly answered, transforms a culture of death into a culture of abounding life. It transforms mortality into eternity, and earth into heaven. The woman question, in the end, is the question of who Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother are and of what their work is. It is the question of who we are to them and how they feel about us. It is the question of eternal life itself.

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Daughters of God,” *Ensign*, p. 99, November 1991.

2. An example of the destruction of a civilization due to the extinguishing of the light is found in the Book of Mormon. The Nephites, having the Word but having lost the light, were destroyed by the Lamanites, who, having lost the Word, retained the light and, therefore, life. In chapter 3 of Jacob, Jacob writes that because the Nephites practiced whoredoms and spurned their wives and children, they were less righteous than the Lamanites, who did not commit whoredoms and showed love to their wives and children. Indeed, Jacob implies that because of Nephite whoredoms, God will destroy the Nephites by the hands of the Lamanites while preserving the Lamanites (Jacob 3:3).

3. President Howard W. Hunter, “Counsel to Students and Faculty,” Church College of New Zealand, 12 November 1990.

4. Richard G. Scott, “Removing Barriers to Happiness,” general conference address, April 1998.

5. Comment made at the annual meeting of the International Society, Provo, Utah, August 1994 (question and answer session).