New Wine In New Bottles

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The title of my talk, "New Wine in New Bottles," I thought was provocative. It is also scriptural, and indicates a point of view that I would like to present to you today. When these valleys were settled, Brigham Young told the Saints that they should beware of medical doctors, quacks, who when you needed nourishment, would bleed you. He urged the Saints to rely on the Priesthood, mild herbs, and bedrest. If you stop to think about it, I'm sure there were many members of the medical profession, including some of the Twelve, who were offended because Brigham Young was always saying things that would offend somebody. I've always thought somebody should have been kinder than to take down every word he said and put it in 26 volumes. However, I often have been tempted to go to the library and raid a lot of the articles I've written and throw them away. It is my lot in life always to publish something just as new data comes in to prove that it's not true anymore. It is no sooner at press than something is dropped; but, if you look back on it, that wasn't such bad advice in those days. The main thing they knew how to do was to put a leech on you and bleed you because of a misconstrued notion of how the body operated. You're probably better off with mild herbs and bedrest. You'd save money besides.

Only 20 years ago, Joseph Fielding Smith wrote that psychotherapy was of the devil. That statement also found its way into the first edition of Mormon Doctrine by Bruce R. McConkie. I'm not so sure that 20 years ago, and even today in many instances, there is not some truth to that statement, that people get as much pain from going to psychotherapists as they get rid of by going to psychotherapists. I think those of us who are counselors in the Church need to examine whether our art is more trustworthy, I think we'll be more trusted. First of all, I think counseling, and indeed the social sciences in general, started out as a substitute for religion, and religion was often one of the things it attacked. The object was to replace religion with rational explanations for behavior which didn't involve will the superstition and metaphysics of religion. Religion was viewed as, and indeed it functioned as, a negative influence in people's lives as often as a positive influence. I'm sure in the history of the world, as recently as Masters and Johnson, it has been found that one of the chief causes of sexual disfunction was fundamental religion. The religion can be Catholic or Protestant; and although they didn't name the Mormons--I know Masters and Johnson quite well, and they've had a fair number of Mormon patients--it's very common among the Mormons for their Mormonism to have contributed to their sexual disfunction.

So we know that religion can be used, Mormonism or any other religion or philosophy, to hurt people. Therapists have observed this effect, and today one of the most prominent therapies is what I'd call hard existentialism, as in hard rock, versus soft existentialism and soft rock.

Hard existentialism reduces religion. I operate downstairs from a department which is run as a very tight religious group. There are only three kinds of students in that department. There are real disciples who you can immediately recognize because they take on the narrowisms, the accent, the euphenisms, the idioms, and the philosophy and lifestyle of their mentors. You know if ever you walk up to one of them, they're going to grab you by the forearms and tell you what a beautiful person you are. Then there is the group who are closet rebels. Outside, when they go home, they spill to their spouse or whoever they are living with that they made it through another day, and just can't see how they did it, but they've got to get their degree. Then there are the active rebels, and they're just destroyed. They become the subject of the group, and they're assigned to senior students who train them in the faith. They're confined times I've had to give permission to someone to get out of a group, where it took them two days in bed to recover from being attacked by hostile people in the name of unleashed honesty. How many times I've had to restore people to sanity--I mean that both literally and figuratively--from the strange things that they have been told and the strange ways in which they have been treated. So I think, in the Church, the long-standing hostility between the ecclesiastical authorities and the counseling profession is not without cause.

Now let's discuss to what extent that profession is changing, and also the response to that change by the Church. As we become more trustworthy, I think we'll be more trusted.
with group sessions where they're attacked for their hangups and their holdouts. So, among counselors there are religions. There are counselors whose faith is their counseling philosophy, whether it be existentialism or whatever.

It's still true that in and out of the Church there are counselors who have philosophies of life that are fundamentally contrary to the Gospel principles—fundamentally contrary. They feel torn to pieces as they try to function as counselors and as members of the Church. They have to shift from forward to reverse every time they shift pads. Their ecclesiastical authorities would be shocked if they heard what they did in therapy, and their clients and colleagues would be shocked if they heard what they said in Sacrament Meeting. They must live in some degree of terror of cross-discovery that the one world will discover the other because they're both religious faiths and they really belong to two religions. However, I think that one reason the Church is more open to counseling today is because there is a whole new wave of counseling style and techniques that are eminently consistent with Gospel principles. I don't mean that they're derived from Gospel principles, but they do not put an individual under strain in operating in those style techniques. I would like to name some of them. Obviously I can't develop that many, but in any case, as counselors, you probably know about these.

I think that the whole short-term, action-oriented approach tends to be problem solving. It tends to try to find and diagnose a problem in terms of what you're doing that you ought to change doing to get different results—even how you ought to view yourself differently if that's a new way. So we have assertiveness training with different versions. There is no one of these that can't be used for ill or for good, but it is possible to teach persons to value themselves, to speak clearly for what they want, and to deal with people forthrightly. Learning assertiveness would make them really good Relief Society presidents, Bishops, and Stake Presidents, if we could just get them to do that.

Some behavioral therapies are very consistent with being doers of the word, not hearers only, as you get people to make systematic changes in their lives. I like the philosophies of the behaviorists who say, for example, "There is a cycle in behaviors and attitudes and reactions that go like this: A person's attitude determines his behavior. His behavior determines other people's reactions toward him. The other person's reactions determine his attitude. That is the cycle." I'm a skeptic myself. I feel that since our profession is not revealed, one can afford to keep an open mind and not quickly sign up for that particular heaven; because unlike the Gospel, heavens change. I don't want to end up in the wrong one.

The behaviorists point out that while it's possible to change an attitude, and then to change a behavior and then a reaction to that behavior so you get different reactions, it's also equally possible and much more accessible to just decide to change a behavior. It's hard to decide to change an attitude. For example, you don't think about a white elephant and you would never have thought of a white elephant if hadn't mentioned it, but now you can't think of anything but a white elephant. The harder you try to not think of one the more you do. You've run into people who are trying to change an attitude, and the harder they try, the harder it is, and the more they doubt the change that they just tried to make. Behaviorists say, "Change the behavior and then you get different reactions from people and then your attitude will change." That approach is much more accessible. The nice thing about this method is that you can decide to change a behavior.

A couple of years ago my oldest daughter came home, sat down on the arm of the chair, and said, "Daddy, I'm not charitable to boys." I said, "Oh?" (I didn't know whether to congratulate her at this point or to commiserate with her.) She just had a talk that morning in seminary on charity, and she decided that she wasn't charitable. She was 15 at the time and a very serious-minded girl. I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, I don't say hi back to boys."

"Why is that, Honey?" "I don't want to encourage them." "I see. Well, what else?" "When they want to talk to me I only insult them." "Right to their faces?" "Yea." "Well, you've got a point there. You might improve a little on that." She was afraid that if she even encouraged them, who knows what deliciously terrible things boys would do. If you give them an inch, etc. So I said, "How would a charitable girl be toward boys—how would she behave toward boys?" "Well, if they wave to her she would wave back." "Okay, like how many times a day would you wave to a boy that waved to you first?" "Five." "What else would she do?" "Well, I would talk to boys, but I don't know how to talk to boys. I don't know what to talk to them about." So I quoted from Dick Stewart, one of my very favorite behaviorists, the author of Trick or Treatment and Slim Chance in a Fat World. He has a two-question system: Whenever you're in conversation with someone you ask them a question, and whatever their answer is, don't then take off on something that it reminds you of. You probe. You ask another question. Now all counselors know how, that's all that we do practically is follow-up on questions. That's what makes us counselors.

And so you ask two questions in a row to the same person, and I've had good luck with that. People in conversations say, "You really care about that?" And so I guaranteed my daughter that if she would do that she would have a conversation going because no one can resist explaining when you show real interest in something they're doing. So I gave her that
rule and I suggested that maybe she had better not criticize them right to their faces. She said, "I can still do it behind their backs, can't I?" I said, "Yes." So we assigned her two of those a day and five "Hi's" a day for a week. And if she made that five times out of seven days she would get dinner out with Daddy.

Now you have to believe--it may be incredible to you--but that's rewarding at my house. With eight children, to have dinner out with Daddy by yourself is a "biggie." Ordinarily you have to have a birthday to rate that or go away to college, so she said, "I can't do it, I could never do it." I said to her, "What can't you do? Is it that you have trouble raising your arm?" "Oh, Daddy!" "Is it the waving part that gets you down? You could practice waving. Is it the vocalizing? You could practice vocalizing." "No, I know how to do it." "Fine. All you have to do is to decide to do it."

That's the nice thing about behavioral therapy. You really can decide to do it. You know you can do it or not do it. You don't have to change an attitude, you don't have to revamp yourself. You can just decide to do it or not to do it. Brigham Young was a behavioral therapist along with his other qualities. He was the one who said, "If you don't feel like praying, pray until you do." He didn't say read the scriptures until you change your attitude, he didn't say get a blessing, he didn't say get down on your knees in a prayerlike behavior until you feel like praying. My daughter not only had dinner with me, but within that week she had two invitations to boys' birthday parties, and I've never been able to get anything but a busy signal from her since. That turned out to be irreversible growth that occurred on that occasion.

I'm not saying that I'm a zealous behaviorist, but I find that short term techniques such as behaviorism really work. They're consistent with the Gospel. What you do is find that law, "Irrevocably decreed before the foundations of the world," which applies to this principle. So they get blessings that are attached to that principle. That's good Mormon doctrine. Let's get out and diagnose it, find out what it is, and change it. I like that. That feels good in counseling, and so do the new short short forms of therapy that can be action-oriented, change-oriented, goal-oriented, limited-contract oriented, where you don't get into therapy as a way of life, but where the therapist gets in and out of the person's life, in and out of the marriage, in and out of the family. The object is to train the family to take care of themselves. That's like the Welfare Program. We don't want to have people on psychological dole. When a client says to me, "You know, I think I'm getting better and I'm ready to quit." I don't say to him, "In every way? I'm thrilled if he's feeling like he can quit. If he comes back three weeks later that's fine. My most successful counseling cases are people that I see for maybe six or eight weeks, send them forth to practice the things that they've developed, and then they're free to come back. Maybe three months later they give me a call and come in for a retreat for a couple of weeks and go back out. Maybe I'll see them another time in a year or two. I keep in contact. It could be like that for years, but the total time I spend with them might be 12 or 14 visits over a two-year period of time. They have the satisfaction of achieving and incorporating it, learning the true principle so they can govern themselves. I'm not very sympathetic to the kind of counseling that creates dependencies.

In college I had a roommate whose wife has been in therapy seven years, four days a week. She lives in Boston and the therapist lives in New York. My roommate finally got a divorce, but in his settlement he had to pay for her continued therapy. (Fortunately his family is financially well off.) But that's not therapy--it's something, but it's not therapy. It's a second marriage of some kind. She was spending about 17 hours a week in therapy. I'm seeing a couple now that have been in individual therapy; he for 10 years, she for 8. They came with a sexual problem. I said, "First of all, what have you learned in therapy about this problem?" He said, "We never talked about it." For eight years they never mentioned the fact that he doesn't make love to his wife as often as once a year. I said, "Well, what do you talk about?" He said, "Oh, dreams, how I grew up, my relationship with my mother." I said, "She's been dead for ten years. How about your wife?" "We never got to that." If you just hold on for a couple more months you might not have a wife, and it saves a lot of problems. So I think that there's a new line, a new form of therapy that fits the Gospel, that has a basic philosophy similar to the Gospel. It's problem solving. It's growth-oriented. But it's also dangerous because there's the question, "growth towards what?" The existentialists, the hard existentialists, are growth oriented too, but their idea of growth is not up, it's out.

The more things you can do and not be afraid to do, the better you are. I see tragic cases, and I know you do too. For example, people who have bought "the religion" and find it destroying them. They bought an open marriage, they're living with all different people, and they try not to find out who the other person is living with. Finally they find somebody who really needs them, they leave their spouse, and the fellow says, "Hey, what's the matter? I thought we had an agreement." "Yes, but he really needs me." They don't understand their need for stability, and they don't understand their needs for needing, as the Lord understands them.

The Church is using these kinds of techniques in training Bishops and quorum presidents, and it pleases me to see that there is some coming together of these two important streams in my life. For the most part, I would not feel uncomfortable to have somebody of the Church overhear these techniques. Increasingly, the way I use the scriptures and the things that I
do in the Church are concerned with the same
growth and the same principles of human unity.

I want to talk to you, however, about some
of the messy areas that I create. Maybe you've
got these all worked out, or maybe you have
other messy areas. Some areas still put me in
distress, and I'd like to talk about two of
these areas in the last fifteen minutes that I
have today. First there is the Mormonist
counselor. Then there is the counselor
Mormon. What I'm talking about now is finding
yourself in a counseling situation and saying
to yourself, "Can I be the best kind of counselor
I know without violating some commitments that I
have?" Let me give you an example. I do
sexual counseling that I have no difficulty with
because I don't have people do things. There are
sexual counselors, including the Mormons, who
do things like use circuits, have people take off
their clothes in front of the counselors, and in
some cases even pleasure each other in front of
the counselors. I'm not in favor with this. I
value the privacy of the marital relationship,
and they do all that at home. I'm quite com-
fortable in talking about sex with them so long
as I don't have to do anything with them. I
give them behavioral assignments and have them
report back, and that doesn't bother me--in or
out of the Church. I find that people in the
Church have the same sexual problems exactly as
Mormon. What I'm talking about now is finding
value the privacy of the marital relationship,
the same sexual apparatus and attitudes, generally
speaking, as others do. The same therapies work,
the same sexual apparatus and attitudes, generally
speaking, as others do. The same therapies work,
the success rate is the same, and I don't have
any difficulty with that. But take the example
of a young man who comes in with erectile
difficulties. He's not married. He wants to
get married, but he doesn't dare get married
until he licks his problem. He doesn't know
any way to lick this problem because he doesn't
dare date any nice girls because he might have
sex with a nice girl--or try to--and she would
find out he couldn't and then he would lose a
possible marital partner. So he only dares
try to have sex with bad girls, but he can't get
an erection with bad girls. So he comes to a
marriage counselor who he doesn't know is Mormon,
and he wants help with a problem that's causing
great pain, stopping his development, causing him
constant anxiety, and is not helping his behavior
either because he is constantly trying to find
good girls who might be able to help him solve his
problem. But what do I do? Do I recommend him
to go to somebody who has fewer scruples about
sex in or out of marriage? I didn't do that. I
thought a lot, I rationalized a lot. I thought,
there are two ways of helping people with that
problem, but one of them, the most effective,
takes a partner. I said, "I don't know how to
help you get a partner." He said, "I'll bring
one." "Well, if you bring one of your own, I
guess that will be all right." I'm not ready
altogether comfortable with that, which is why I
mentioned it. But it worked. With impotency,
because they are under pressure, they don't have
to pay unless they win. He paid, and he got
married to a really nice girl. What I say to
myself is, I help a person who was in pain, like
a physician does. My model is a physician, and
I helped him with the skill that I had to live
a fuller life. He has now settled down in a
marriage that's much closer to what Mormons would
have him be than he was before, and I consider
that due to the help which I gave him.

On the other hand, I spent several weeks
sending him and this girl he wasn't married to
(she just happened to be living across the hall
and was "game") to work on Masters and Johnson
type exercises. Now, should I have or shouldn't
I? If I took a vote, most of you wouldn't vote
because you wouldn't want people to think that
you were on the other side. But I had to decide.
I had to decide if the real live person sitting
there in front of me was in pain. So I made my
decision. You might have made a different one.

I won't refer someone to an abortionist. I
draw the line on that other side. I see the
pain, but I tell them I realize that that's one
option that is available to them, and they should
be aware that the majority of places that they
might seek help would make that option
available to them. But I would not, I cannot,
and do not refer people for abortions. Well,
what's the logic of that? That's where I
drew the line.

When I'm working with a client, I speak to
him in the language that he uses, not the
language that I use or the language I'm going
to use at home. But if somebody uses an
idiot that's vivid for him, perhaps an
excremental idiom, and it says to them where
they're at in their relationship, I don't
blanch and talk about excrement. How may I
should. Maybe I should talk about it and use
it with punch. I don't know, I could just
translate it into good clean English. That
would be, I'm sure, the thing I should do.
And I've sometimes had a view of myself: What
if somebody heard me saying back to this person
what he said to me earlier, summarizing in
other words? And I think about the scriptures
that say, "It's not what comes into a man's
mouth but what comes out of it." I never use
that in my own personal conversation, but as
somebody once said to me, "Who would want to
kiss somebody who said that word?" Since I've
heard that I've never felt it necessary to tell
my wife that I do that. So I find there are
places where I am uneasy because I'm working
with someone whose values are different than
mine. But mostly I find that is not the case.
I find about 98 percent of the people that come
to me want to change in ways that I can enthu-
siastically applaud. They want to be more
loving to each other. They want to be more
successful in their personal relations, they
want to be a better parent. Yesterday I saw a
family with a Latter-day Saint mother, a
Catholic father, and a 14-year-old girl who
is smoking and climbing out the window when her
mother locks the front door. Her mother is so
upset about this girl she double quizzes her
every minute of the day, every time she goes.
She times how long the girl goes to the
bathroom, because she might be smoking in there.
She sniffs her breath every time she comes in
the door. The woman is driving her daughter
right out of the house. Her daughter is about to run away. The father is her idol, and the father does all the things the daughter is doing. But the father supports the mother. The girl can't do these things because she is a Mormon. One of the alternatives we're considering negotiating is to enlarge the circle of the things that the girl can do. There's a line that she can't go beyond and a line that her mother won't hassle her within. But that but it involves not going to Church sometimes. It involves going to a friend's house, where she might in fact be smoking without her mother's knowledge or doing things that she's not supposed to be doing at her age by Church standards. It would be a straight but not necessarily Mormon kid in a gentile world. That might not be the choice they take, but in the three alternatives that looks like it might work. The mother looks at me sometimes like I'm a traitor to the Church. Actually, I think I'm saving her daughter from worse stuff, not free, and she's about to do that. We've thought of sending her off to another school where we can shut our eyes; a boarding school, for example, where her parents can afford. She won't be under her mother's tutelage, and she can have a kind of freedom. I don't know how we can work with that girl but I'm not comfortable with it. Yet it seems to me as a physician--I'm not a medical doctor, but a healer of souls--that the girl needs to be given some space so she can make some good decisions, so she can come to Church. She has a testimony; it's just that she's mad at her mother. I think when her mother gives her a little space, she'll test the limits and she'll exercise her free agency and one of the choices that will be open to her will be to come back. Right now that choice is not open to her, there is no way she can come back. But, here I am in the process of saying, "Well, let her do things that a Latter-day Saint shouldn't do." That doesn't rest easy. I'm not comfortable with that, but I do it. Each one of us draws that line somewhere, so that's mine. Maybe I've overreacted to this, but I get upset at existentialist counselors who feel they have to convert people to their philosophy of life before they can help them. I really feel that is immoral and unethical, and in my profession we have a pledge that the counselor will not impose his values upon his client. So when my Bishop or my Stake President calls for us to fellowship families, business associates, clients, and students, I don't feel that I can use the power that I have in their lives, or that anybody should--even though I happen to know I'm right.

I've trained my students to respect the values of the people that they're working with and to work for their best values. Ordinarily the best values of my clients are also good values in my point of view. For example they want goodness, love, fidelity, growth, efficiency, effectiveness--all the things that I would want on their behalf, things that are consistent with the Gospel. But they don't want the whole Gospel. They just want the things that are in the Gospel, and with a client where that's clearly not so. I won't work with him. Somebody who wants to deceive his spouse or become illusive with him about adultery, I just won't work with. But I don't feel I can proselytise my clients.

Now if I know they're Christians, they're really into the faith if they're always quoting from the scriptures. I'll quote scriptures from the New Testament, the Old Testament, and some that they haven't thought of in that batch, I'll sometimes say, "Too bad you're not a Mormon, because we've got a good scripture right on that, you know." The 130th section is great, for example. "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated; and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated." (D & C 130: 20, 21) Now I can say that fast because I say it a lot--and I didn't just get that in MIA. It's a real and true principle. People are always protesting, "But I do all these good things." You know, these are Church members who say, "I pay my tithing and keep the Word of Wisdom. I go to Church regularly." How can I tell them their sex life is lousy? If you want a better sex life, you're going to have to do some different things. There's a different law that applies there. I sometimes say to somebody, "Too bad you're not a Mormon, because we have a great scripture on that." But I do not slip little Joe Smith tracts to them and say, "Read this, you'll like it." I don't say to them, "The problems that you have would all be solved if you were a Latter-day Saint. Let me arrange for two lovely young men to come over and talk to you." I don't do that, and I've considered that if anybody else did it for their religion to some client that I'd sent as a referral, I would never send them another referral. I don't see why they should feel differently if I did it.

The Lord does occasionally provide a ram in a thicket for me. We are committed to bring a family into the Church this year, and my kids are all out proselytising. My 13-year-old boy placed 6 Books of Mormon already. He tells them that it's the history of the Indians from 600 B.C. to 400 A.D. and they'll enjoy it, saying that if they'll read it he'll talk to them next week. I don't know what they think of it, but I'll find out. I did have two people that I've worked with a long time off and on--my pattern is working with them awhile, and not seeing them for awhile--who were quite damaged and had much pain in their relationship. They couldn't somehow rise above their background, but they've been making progress. Usually they come in surly and angry, and during the course of the hour I would cheer them up. My style was to send them out smiling and holding hands, but this day they came in smiling. It was so unusual, I said, "What's going on here?" They said, "We're doing our tithing?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Do you pay fast offerings every first Sunday?" "Yes." "Do you have Family Home Evening on Monday
night?" "Yes." "Do you do your home teaching, do you go visit your families every month?"
"Yes." She gave me a Temple Recommend interview. I said, "Why are you asking me all these ques­
tions?" She said, "We were just down to the Temple Admission Center. It hit me that I only
know two men in my life who have good family lives, and they are both Mormons. Maybe you've
got something." They went down to the Temple Information Center, got every pamphlet they had, 
read them, and came back and examined me on whether I did everything they said. I was glad
I did them all, and when they started asking me questions about the Church I got really quite
excited. Apparently I stood up, pacing and quoting scriptures. The husband said, "You know, I didn't know you had legs. You've been
sitting in that chair for three years. I've never seen you so excited before." "See, they
blew my cover. I baptized them, but I just
did it out of direct intervention by the Lord
so that I got my family without breaking my
vows.

So I think sometimes it's hard to be a Mormon in the field. I believe for me, at
least, the most important thing is to be good at
what you do, so that when people think of Mormons, they don't think of us as just a fringe group.
They think of you first as a good therapist, and
incidentally, you're a Mormon. That's my goal.
My goal is to have people referred to me
because I'm a good therapist. Then they know, by
linkage, that you can be a good Mormon and a
good therapist. People sometimes say, "How do
you do it?" I'm glad to explain. But it seems
to me that the greatest contribution I can make
to the field and to the Church in that connection
is to be a good Mormon and a good therapist and
have both known--have people aware of both. But
weekly and sometimes daily I'm painfully aware
that these are areas of redefinition, like your
health--it's never solved. Every day you have
to wake up and say, "Am I healthy today?" Every
day you have to wake up and say, "Have I got it
together?"

The most integrating experience I've ever
had in my life was to be on the Johnny Carson
Show. I'll tell you why. Ordinarily I pick my
audiences. When I'm in Sacrament Meeting I have
a Church audience. When I'm in school I have a
secular audience. When I have a sexual meeting,
I have a sexual audience. But you never know
who's watching on Johnny Carson. Your mother,
your children, your colleagues, your clients,
your students, and members of the ward choir
are watching. The sister in the next stake
who believes you're a bit too interested in sex
to be a good Latter-day Saint is watching. They're
all out there together, every time you open your
mouth, and it was and is good for me. It still
scares me. That part gives me palms that sweat
before I go on. I don't mind speaking before
the people if I can choose the people, but when
you can't choose the people, it forces you to be
integrated. I'd say that we'll grow together
through that process, trying to make the Gospel
effective in our therapy and not inappropriately
effective in our therapy, trying to make our therapy
effective in our Church service and not
inappropriately effective. I say that to myself
first and for always in the Name of Jesus Christ
whom I serve with you. Amen.

Alma 37:37 — Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest
down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may
watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in
the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God;