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Carlfred B. Broderick

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BOOK REVIEW
By Carlfred B. Broderick,* Ph.D.
of
HUMAN INTIMACY: ILLUSION AND REALITY
By Brown, Victor L., Jr.
Parliament Publishers, SLC, 1981

The author makes it plain that this book is aimed at a general audience. To this end Mormon bishops are code-referenced as "religious lay leaders," and a moving tribute to President Kimball identifies him only as "one well known man." On the other hand, the Church has sent every bishop and stake president in Canada and the United States a copy of this book with an accompanying letter suggesting that they will find it a helpful aid in their counseling with members. Willy-nilly it thus takes on the character of an approved and even authoritative text.

Brown's confessed objective is to persuade the reader that the world's version of exciting, impulsive, sensual, sexual intimacy is based on illusion. The real treasures of intimacy are reserved for those who are willing to invest their whole selves in a comprehensive, committed, exclusive, benevolent relationship with a lifetime mate. The author's style is literate, compassionate and persuasive. He enriches the rhetoric with clinical case material, and quotes from the biographies and essays of famous persons. He manages to avoid nearly all of the clichés that numb.

Chapter 1 (The Illusions and Realities of Human Intimacy) establishes the author's premise crisply and effectively. In a real sense the remainder of the book is only an elaboration of this first statement. Illusions "deal with fragments of human beings, not with whole human beings," "deny the consequences of human behavior" and "deal in indulgence, not discipline." By contrast, the reality of intimacy deals with "risk and commitment" (emphasis in original). The "increasingly subtle and sophisticated pleasures of a secure long-term relationship" are contrasted with "the monotonously similar beginnings of repeated promiscuity."

Chapter 2 (The Reality of Identity) seems less well focused and less thoroughly worked out. The basic premise seems to be that intimacy is only possible for those who have achieved a sense of identity and identity in turn is founded upon reliable, invested parenting. This is, essentially, Erik Erikson's model with its pyramid of developmental tasks leading step by step from the establishment of basic trust in infancy through the adult stages of intimacy, generativity and integrity. In my opinion, Brown could have strengthened the chapter a great deal by explicitly tying his discussion to

this congenial and well recognized developmental model.

In Chapter 3 (The Illusion of Stereotypes, The Reality of Roles) Brown attempts to negotiate a difficult path. On the one hand he wishes to make it perfectly clear that he is free from irrational sexist stereotypes. On the other hand he wants to leave no doubt that he stands foursquare on the issue that God intended for men and women to have distinct assignments in life. This is treacherous terrain these days and few of us are in a position to criticize a bit of creative waffeling as he attempts to keep his balance in the transit.

Chapter 4 (The Illusion of Sexual Exploitation, The Reality of Relationship Skills) seems to be the least coherent and substantial in the book. Having made his general point in Chapter 1 and his specific point in the title of this chapter, he seems to have a hard time finding enough on-target new material to flesh out the chapter. Because of my own interest in this area I was particularly disappointed in an opportunity lost. For example, at one point in this chapter he addresses the issue of sexual development in childhood and youth. His choice to set up Freud as a Straw Man and compare the "illusion of childhood sexuality" to the "reality" of an innocently asexual childhood was, in my view, unfortunate. The real reality is more complex and one can only hope that at a future time he will treat the subject more helpfully.

Chapters 5 (Beginning Marriage: The Illusion of Cohabitation, The Reality of Homebuilding) and 6 (Enduring Marriage: The Illusion of Eroticism, the Reality of Complete Intimacy) plus the Afterword round out the argument with further illustration and cases.

In our view, despite minor flaws, both the general reader and the local Church leadership will find this thoughtful book helpful. It sets forth the Christian view on the place of sex in life as well as any source we know.

A partly annotated bibliography is helpful in leading the reader to other writers in the field of Christian marriage and related topics.

*Brother Broderick is Executive Director, Human Relations Center, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.