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When I graduated from Brigham Young University in 1957, Mormonism was and had been for many years primarily a religion of the Wasatch Front and surrounding areas. Today Latter-day Saints go into the world, and the Church they represent has expanded well beyond the United States and Europe and is reaching into Asia, Latin America, and Africa for its membership.

During the last twenty years, as this demographic shift from the West to the rest of the globe occurred, Latter-day Saints applauded and took pride in the growth revealed by annual statistical reports. Generally speaking, however, we have not fully comprehended the manifold implications and responsibility that such success brings to the Church and to us as individuals. As we increasingly rub shoulders with people of cultures unlike our own, we have a unique opportunity to become intimately aware not only of obvious differences but of significant similarities as well. Some of us discover with surprise the strength of the bond our common humanity creates between us. We recognize in new acquaintances a brother, a sister, one to whom we belong.

As fellow members of God's family, what should be our relationship with his mortal children with whom we share this planet? I have puzzled over this question repeatedly during the last few years and am embarrassed by my own shortcomings in becoming the quality citizen, brother, and friend I came here to be.

The importance of our successfully confronting this reality was suggested at the time of man's beginnings when Deity proclaimed, "We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith [that is, with being mortal] to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abr. 3:24). God created our bodies and the earth to test us with everything that being mortal implies, to have us go on from there to do all else that he commands. Whether we do well, whether we are prepared to fulfill every requirement,

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will, in large measure, be determined by our success in coping with our mortality. Are we prepared to come to grips with this, our humanness? For many of us, this merely implies a positive confrontation with such basic opposites as jealousy and understanding, greed and giving, caring and unkindness, hatred and love, temper and patience. It concerns how we handle the way we look, feel, and act; how we develop our physical, mental, social, and spiritual selves.

For some, to be human means being short, medium, or tall; heavy, slight, or of average build. It concerns the straightness of one's teeth, the clarity of one's complexion, and the color of one's eyes, skin, or hair. It also involves how we manage these things in our own lives and how we view them in the lives of others. Yet even as important as these aspects of the mortal experience are, they do not penetrate to the heart of this vital issue. Of much greater significance in grappling with the meaning of our human existence is the need for each individual to understand and define his or her role as a thoughtful and self-conscious member of the family of man. In this sense we are always human beings first and Latter-day Saints second. Simply stated, being a decent human being is a prerequisite to being a decent Latter-day Saint.

OVERCOMING PREJUDICE

It is with these thoughts in mind that I recall the late summer of 1962, when, as a young graduate student with a newly awarded master's diploma buoying up my courage and determination, I left Utah in search of a Ph.D. in history and anthropology at a respected state university. I had served nearly three years as a missionary in Switzerland and Austria, had been a seminary instructor and principal for five years, was married with two children, and yet I was as thoroughly prejudiced as anyone raised in the closed environment of a small western community could be. I had never shaken the hand of nor conversed with a black person. I called the Indian my brother but had made no effort to understand or appreciate him. I viewed non-Mormons with suspicion and regarded all science that conflicted with my views of orthodox religion as mere fiction, its proponents either deluded, dishonest, or both. With all of this armor in place, I entered the world of gentile academia, determined to conquer and convert. Four years later, my head was both bloodied and bowed, and from time to time, as needed, the lessons of those years have been repeated.

In the midst of that painful growing experience, I acquired much needed wisdom that helped place some things in perspective.

I came to understand that there is more to the spectrum of life than an uncompromising black or white; there are indeed shades of gray meriting honest consideration, if not always acceptance. I did not have all the questions, let alone all the answers. This view was brought sharply into focus by a five-year-old Indian boy who lived two houses down the street and was the adopted son of a Baptist minister. He was a regular visitor in our home, and in that totally white environment he would often begin singing, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight. . . . " This oft-repeated rendition penetrated my mind and touched my heart. I was impressed not only by the words the boy sang but also by the tone of his voice and the look on his face as he expressed them. What he was really saying was that he hoped they were true.

His anxiety was shared by many of the students we came to know and love at Haskell Indian Institute, where I worked part-time for the next three years. The identity crisis they often faced was explained by one young man who recalled watching a western on television as a little boy. He was totally immersed in the story and was shouting with irrepressible joy as the cavalry charged and successfully destroyed a band of Indians, when his older brother burst into the room, switched off the television, and shouted at him, "Don't you know we are the bad guys?" He realized then, for the first time, that he was not just Tom, but Tom, an Indian. Even though the Indian wars are long ended, there are still many tragic moments in the lives of these earliest of Americans as they search for their place in a country where, as de Tocqueville noted more than a hundred and fifty years ago, their race constitutes "a little colony of troublesome strangers in the midst of a numerous and dominant people."[1]

The impressions of those years spent teaching, serving, sharing with, and, above all, learning from these young descendants of Lehi, whose origins were nearly as varied as there are numbers of tribes in North America, are focused in a single image. I can still see the young man who, after years of struggling to comprehend and accept the Anglo culture he was about to enter following college graduation, held his head in his hands and, rocking back and forth, sobbed, "The white man does not understand the Indian; he just does not understand!"

I am not sure that I understand, even yet. But I do know that as the experiences of those years unfolded and I learned to go beyond racial and denominational labels, I discovered that the world is full of thoroughly authentic, dedicated, intelligent people

who are as genuine in their capacity to give and receive as we are in ours.

Between 1962 and 1966 a good deal of racial turmoil erupted in some areas of the country. In the university community of Lawrence, Kansas, the topic provoked heated debate, while throughout the South the issue exploded in force and violence. In Lawrence, a border town in a border state, I often heard the condescending remark, "Our blacks are good; they know their place." In areas where black Americans were unrelentingly insisting on their right to exist as human beings, the militant counter-demand was "put them in their place."

In the midst of this turmoil, one of our fellow students, a bright, attractive young Latter-day Saint from Idaho, became so disgusted with what he saw as the brutalizing of the human spirit in such places as Selma, Jackson, and Tuscaloosa that he left school, a scholarship, and, as we thought, a future of great promise to join with those who were marching, protesting, and sometimes dying. Our reaction in the safe little Mormon community at the university was one of abhorrence and disbelief. In our sorrow for the one "lost," we cast about for an explanation and rationalized that we had not really known him, that the pressures of school had rendered him irresponsible. Whatever his reasons, we agreed that he was wasting his life in a vain effort.

As I think about it today, I wonder, as I have done for years: Where was I? Why did I not join him? Where were we all when humanity demanded that we oppose a thing so wicked that to read about it today or to see it depicted on the screen causes deep anguish and revulsion at the inhumanity of man toward his brother? I would like to think I just lacked courage in not joining Rick on his journey into the South. I could even accept my decision had it been nourished by a commitment to family and education. But it wasn't. What I have to accept and live with is that, at the time, I, like many others, simply did not care.

THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

During these and subsequent years spent in the southern United States and Europe, I also became increasingly conscious of an additional area of concern posing a critical challenge to Latter-day Saints: our capacity to respect and appreciate the spiritual authenticity of other Christian and non-Christian worship characterized by an earnest search for truth. When we were living in Florida, a Jewish family lived across the road from us, Episcopalians next door, and a nondenominational minister who preached

a saved religion three houses down the street. What great people! Their sheer goodness, their commitment, their love of God and truth in some ways exceeded our own. None of them joined the Church; none was interested. But they came to love us and we to love them, and we grew in our awareness that Christ truly loves us all. When they did not submit to baptism, he did not cease caring for them. Surely the genuineness of their lives pleased him. And if that were so for these three families, then certainly for the thousands and ten times ten thousand like them.

Given the general prejudice many of us have against non-Mormon religions, is it possible we may have misread the intent and content of the Lord's statement to the boy Joseph Smith? Rather than saying or implying that *no* truth could be found among all the churches, was he not declaring that not *all* truth and, perhaps even more importantly, that no priesthood authority was available, hence the abominable nature of their creeds and the human foundation of their dogmas? Believing that all are wrong in a total and irreconcilable sense has led some to a general condemnation of other professors of religion and hindered the development of a genuine Christian brotherhood with them. They claim our attention only if they are willing to listen, and our continued interest in them is often too exclusively conditioned upon their acceptance of our message.

True, ours is a celestial doctrine, and our time, talents, and resources are committed to declaring, living, and defending it. Our goal is to build a kingdom to house those of celestial intent and to see them through mortality back into the presence of God. But what of that vast sea of faces representing the good, the noble, the honorable men and women of the earth whose spiritual interests have been diverted from celestial goals but who have loved and worshipped Christ? What of those who have found not Christ, but truth, and, abbreviated though it may be, have pursued it to the limits of their opportunities and their capacities?

We have our prophets and apostles, our bishops and presidents. But who is tending and teaching that great flock? Are there not those, unknown to us and perhaps even to themselves, who have been called, inspired, or chosen to touch and direct lives and in some cases to influence the courses of nations? Who are they? We don't know. In all likelihood, they themselves are not aware except as they believe they are in the service of truth. Their existence historically is attested to by a First Presidency statement issued in February 1978. Titled "God's Love for All Mankind," it affirms the brotherhood of all men both in the flesh and in the spirit and goes on to declare:

The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals.

The Hebrew prophets prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who should provide salvation for all mankind who believed in the gospel. Consistent with these truths, we believe that God has given and will give to all peoples sufficient knowledge to help them on their way to eternal salvation, either in this life or in the life to come.[2]

Brigham Young also recognized the singular contribution of the reformers, among them Wesley, Whitfield, Luther, Knox, and Zwingli. He noted that though they did not have a fullness of the gospel, "they were not deprived of a portion of the Spirit of the Living God on that account. It is a very great error for us to suppose that men throughout the world have not been under an influence of that kind more or less."[3]

Whoever they are today, they merit, if not our support, then surely our understanding and tolerance. We struggle at times with the reluctance, even the refusal, of some spiritual leaders to listen to our message. We bristle at their attacks and are angered by their seemingly unjust criticism. We fault their message both as delivered and as received, and decry the absence of priesthood authority, temple ordinances, and an understanding of eternal progression. In our minds, such phrases as "I am saved," "born-again Christian," and "There is no God but Allah" are an affront to God and true religion.

But have we, perhaps, misunderstood their terminology and teachings, as they most certainly have misunderstood ours? Perhaps their language is terrestrial while ours is celestial; hence our inability to communicate. They see no need for baptism by authority, living prophets, continuous revelation, or a plan of salvation. Whereas theirs is a doctrine characteristic of the terrestrial kingdom, not requiring the saving ordinances, ours is of the celestial kingdom, which does. Fortunately, the terrestrial religious experiences of many lead them to a level of thought and desire fostering susceptibility to the higher, more perfect doctrines of the Restoration. Some of our number and the ancestors of all the rest of us made this transition; with the harvest still before us, countless others will yet do the same.

Obviously, today's world is telestial, as it will be for many years in the future. There is, however, considerable good out there that is non-Mormon, and much of it non-Christian. Our willingness to acknowledge and appreciate this good may well determine our

success in influencing others toward a destiny befitting a receptive son or daughter of God.

A PARABLE OF THE POOR

Several months ago I stood in line at the checkout counter of a local grocery store. Ahead of me, a man and his two children were paying for a few basic articles but did not have enough money. What should they return? The items were all essentials. There could hardly be a doubt that every cent the man possessed was laid out on the counter. A final, painful decision was made; an article was handed back to the clerk, and the man pocketed a few pennies of change. Then, in his ill-matched and ill-fitting clothes, with his ragged temple garments showing through the thin fabric of his shirt, he made his way to a battered old car in obvious need of major repair. There he joined the mother and three or four other children. Momentarily stunned and embarrassed by the experience, I did nothing. By the time I had paid for my purchases and hurried out, hoping to see which way they went, the family was gone. I frantically drove around my neighborhood looking for them until it dawned on me that they weren't there. They didn't belong there. They couldn't possibly afford it.

On the way home that afternoon and all the next day—and even today, whenever I think about it—I was and am angry, sad, and ashamed. How could such a situation exist in Provo, Utah? Where were their bishop, their home teachers, their neighbors? But more importantly, where was I? Why had I not stepped forward immediately in the store? Why was I paralyzed at a time when time was of the essence if they were to be helped? Why had I not followed them to find out who they were so I could arrange for their needs?

On another occasion in the same store, I fidgeted impatiently behind some people who had a large cart filled with groceries. When finally tallied, the bill was high and was paid with food stamps. I watched with unconcealed resentment as the heavily-laden cart was pushed to a reasonably nice car and unloaded by a well-dressed lady and her daughter who then drove away.

At about the same time, the media were devoting considerable time and space to the plight of distant peoples ravaged by drought, crop failure, and the loss of their homes. We all witnessed the sickening condition of countless people as they edged toward death by starvation and disease on a planet where farmers are paid to limit productivity by not planting their crops.

I often review these three experiences and the question of our accountability for the poor of the world. Does it really matter whether they pay with food stamps, or with their own scanty funds, or have neither purchasing power nor food? Does it matter whether they are Christian or non-Christian, Mormon or non-Mormon, people we can see and know or people a world away that we will never meet? Does our responsibility end with a fast offering and other institutional giving? Is our caring limited by the ordinance of baptism? Is a person's belly any less empty or his body any less ravaged by disease or afflicted with pain if he is not a member of the Church? Are we guilty of blindly supposing that *our* poor are the unfortunate few who experience reversals creating temporary needs quickly resolved by an efficient Church program, while *their* poor are the masses of hopeless, helpless souls an undefined somebody else will take care of?

Of the three examples I cited, I am sure your heart, like mine, went out to the brother and his children in the grocery store. His poverty was lamentable but reconcilable. He was probably a student, and, though destitute, not without hope. His future is still ahead of him. Perhaps one day he will look back and remember and talk of the old days and the hard times. Fortunately, since we like our needy to be discreet, his clothing and car were befitting one who is appropriately and humbly poor, and he had the good taste not to betray our sympathies by using food stamps to obtain his purchases.

The second instance is more likely to generate hostility toward the undeserving poor as we observe the mythical heavily-laden grocery cart, the clothes and car better than our own, and the dreaded food stamps. How dare people pass themselves off as poor and not wear the rags and pay the price of humility? Yet who would wish to be in their situation? What courage it must take to be unacceptably or inconveniently poor.

Of the final example, those hungry, hopeless faces, those distended stomachs and thin lifeless arms and legs: how easy it is to be both horrified and strangely consoled by their very numbers and their remoteness. Surely, we think, with a tragedy of this magnitude, someone will take care of it—the government, or the U.N., or the Red Cross. If it is vital for us to be involved, the Church will make the necessary arrangements and invite us, perhaps, to make some small sacrifice such as an extra fast day. It is easy to cast all our burden of caring for our neighbor onto the Church, forgetting that it was not the Church but individuals—you and I—who were crowned with mortality in order to prove ourselves. Obviously, the Church cannot do everything, and where it does not act because it should not, you and I, as private individuals, can still

be involved as concerned, compassionate Christians. God help us not to be so concerned with being right that we have no time or inclination for being good. The world is full of sickness that cannot be healed until we begin to care about others, not just "our own" but all people; until we realize that they are all our own.

To the person who wishes to look, the scriptures are replete with clear admonitions defining our responsibilities to the poor. They make plain why some are blessed with abundance and also define the stewardship that is an inherent adjunct to the accumulation of material wealth. In January 1831, the Lord unfolded to Joseph Smith a mystery that was to prevent his destruction and enable his people to "escape the power of the enemy" and "be gathered unto me a righteous people without spot or blemish" (D&C 38:13, 31).

Acknowledging the corruption of all flesh and the prevailing nature of the powers of darkness, a condition "which causeth silence to reign and all eternity is pained," the Lord revealed to the young prophet, in a most profound statement, the hidden knowledge that, if properly understood and acted upon, would dispell the corruption and dissipate the darkness. He declared, "The rich I have made, and all flesh is mine, and I am no respecter of persons" (D&C 38:11–12, 16). The Lord then elucidates this remarkable declaration in the following parable: "For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there—and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just?" (D&C 38:26). This question asked by the parable is rendered even more astounding by the subsequent declaration: "Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am" (D&C 38:27). Naturally, a question arises as to how God can be just and no respecter of persons when he allows, even determines, the rags of one and the riches of another. But the admonitions preceding and following the parable dissolve this apparent inconsistency: "Let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practice virtue and holiness before me. And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself" (D&C 38:24). "I say unto you, be one; and if you are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27).

The mystery Joseph Smith and his followers were now privy to was the understanding that their own and the Kingdom's welfare rested in part on the ability of all Latter-day Saints who were granted an abundance to develop a Christlike nature that would lead them to reach out to those of God's children clothed in rags, not only

blessing the lives of everyone they helped but also being greatly enriched themselves. If divine justice permits economic inequality among men, then it must be that neither rich nor poor can reach their full potential without one another.

An expert on the poor, Mother Teresa, noted: "The poor are hope. By their courage they truly represent the hope of the world. They have taught us a different way of loving God by making us do our utmost to help them."[4] What she seems to be telling us is that there is a genuine, essential, and perhaps even necessary level on which we can approach and serve God through active concern with the needs of the world's poor.

The need for man to learn both to give and to receive appropriately is highlighted in ancient as well as modern scripture. The prophet Jacob, when told to "get thou up into the temple on the morrow, and declare the word which I shall give thee unto this people" (Jacob 2:11), accused the wealthy of being "lifted up in the pride of your hearts," of wearing "stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel," and of persecuting "your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they" (Jacob 2:13). Such things, he declared, God would not countenance. He pled with them to repent, lest "this pride of your hearts destroy your souls" (Jacob 2:16). In a plea reminiscent of that preceding and following the parable of the man with twelve sons, Jacob admonished his people to "think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance" (Jacob 2:17). He encouraged them to seek first the Kingdom of God, and then, if riches followed, they were to "seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted" (Jacob 2:19).

That such an ideal is achievable is illustrated by an account the Book of Mormon prophet Alma gave of his own people:

> And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely.
>
> And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again, notwithstanding all their persecutions.
>
> And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need—an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth.

> And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked or that were hungry or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old an young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need. (Alma 1:27–30)

These and many other references teach us that one of mankind's most serious transgressions is not the coveting of another's possessions, but the coveting of one's own abundance. Such was the plight of the rich young man who came to Jesus for guidance. When the Savior instructed him to "sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me" (Luke 18:22), he was grieved because he loved his many possessions. Those of us who are the object of the Lord's admonition in Doctrine and Covenants 55:16 and of King Benjamin's plea in Mosiah 4:21–23 share the rich young man's plight.

In Mosiah, we read of the serious error so often committed by those whose judgments lash the backs of the poor who petition them in their need. In this they are doubly guilty: first, because they do not quietly seek the needy out instead of forcing them to risk humiliation by public supplication; and second, because they are looking down, passing judgment on a situation for which they possess a poverty of empathy. If they only understood, they would look up and be flooded with compassion in recognizing that, as King Benjamin declared, in our relationship with Christ we are the worst of beggars but are never treated as such.

THE CHALLENGE OF HUMANNESS

As part of the challenge inherent in our humanness, may we see ourselves as numbered with those who are the shepherds of this planet. In directing us to be our brothers' keepers, to do "unto one of the least of these" (Matt. 25:40), to "remember the poor" (D&C 42:30), and to "think of your brethren like unto yourselves" (Jacob 2:17), the Savior assigns us stewardships—as much because we are members of the human family as because of our membership in his Church. As followers of him who loved and loves us all, we must avoid being part of the world's problems. As we strive for this, however, we cannot forget that we alone provide those problems' ultimate solution. For this reason, we should go eagerly and joyously into the world, recognizing that we cannot be the leaven if we are not part of the loaf.

To more fully accomplish this, we must all succumb to the awareness that brotherhood is not defined by color, creed, or secular commitment. Nor is it superficially lyrical or romantic, but is an expression of actual fact. All of mankind, the non-Mormon Christian or non-Christian, the one-billionth Chinese, and the disease-ravaged beggar on a filthy street corner in India are our brothers and sisters, and each has claim on our love, our substance, and the reassuring grasp of our hand. If we fail to recognize and yield to this principle, our approach to true and meaningful worship is diminished, being exclusive rather than inclusive, and we falter in our attempt to do well all else that God commands.

The main gateway to Brigham Young University bears a motto that declares, "The World Is Our Campus." May I add that even more than that, for all of us as Latter-day Saints the world is our home and its people are our people. Their needs are our needs; their pain our pain. May our view of life be as broad and deep as his who wept and suffered and died for all mankind. This is the gospel of Christ: to become as he admonished us to be, even as he is.

NOTES

[1]Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeves, 2 vols. (New York: Colonial Press, 1900), 1:448.

[2]"God's Love for All Mankind," Statement of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 15 February 1978.

[3]Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 25:263.

[4]Georges Gorrée and Jean Barbier, *The Love of Christ: Spiritual Counsels—Mother Teresa of Calcutta* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 23.