4-1-2004

Redirection, Renewal and Redemption

Truman G. Madsen

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp

Recommended Citation

This Article or Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
The last time I was at the podium at an AMCAP Convention (Bergin, et al., 1978), I shared it with Dr. Carlfred Broderick. He is gone now. We talked briefly on that occasion about our overlapping days at Emerson Hall in Cambridge while we were attending Harvard University; we didn’t know then what the rest of our story would be. Shortly after that, Carlfred was invited to write an article for the Encyclopedia of Mormonism titled “Suffering in the World” (Broderick, 1992). He was chosen because he had earlier given a talk titled “The Uses of Adversity” (see Broderick, 1996, p. 121). Shortly after that I became one of the editors of this Encyclopedia chapter, and we spoke long distance about it. When we finished, he and I were both in tears.

One of the lines in Carlfred’s article states:

Suffering can wound and embitter and darken a soul as surely as it can purify and refine and illumine. Everything depends on how one responds. (Broderick, 1992, p. 1422)

Carlfred became the icon on that point. He was diagnosed with cancer. The first time around it was curable; the second time it was not (Lytle, 1999). We spoke intimately several times, and I remember three sentences from those conversations. One was: “You’ll never hear me say, ‘Why me?’” The second was: “I have learned some things about Carlfred Broderick that I need to change.” The third time, the last conversation we had, his voice was weak. But in his characteristic way of bringing together the solemnities of eternity with his sparkling humor, he said, “Truman the next time I see you, it will be in the Celestial Kingdom.”

I said, “Carlfred, I know where you’re headed, but there are some questions about me.”

He replied, “Oh no, Truman – there’s nothing higher than the Celestial Kingdom.”

Even during the course of his final illness he was still thinking in terms of “things about Carlfred Broderick that I need to change.” At the very end he acknowledged, at least facetiously, that redemption was soon to be realized. These processes of redirection, renewal, and redemption are my topic today.

Redirection: Experiences in Conversion

Redirection is often striking in the lives of converts to the Church. I’d like to describe three conversions, more or less recent, of persons who were professional caregivers before they found their way into our midst. I have benefited by the association of all three of these individuals.

I want to talk about what they brought to the experience and then point to some of the redirection that came into their lives.

Truman G. Madsen PhD, a graduate of The University of Utah (BS, MS) and Harvard University (MA, PhD), is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Brigham Young University. He is the author of numerous books and articles, including The Highest In Us. Address for correspondence: <trumanmadsen@hotmail.com>
First Convert: Benjamin Crue, MD

A man named Dr. Benjamin Crue, now in our midst, was years ago head of the chronic pain team (on which subject he has written several books) at the City of Hope hospital in Los Angeles, California. His most recent book is an 800-page book titled *The Myth of Chronic Pain* (2004). Before he found his way into the LDS church, he had come to certain conclusions. He had dealt with people who, despite every effort from pharmacology to psychology, still had terrible pain and came to this hospital as a last resort to seek relief. It became clear to Dr. Crue that sometimes such pain is not the result of obvious physical conditions: he concluded there are times when people, consciously or not, respond to unresolved emotions of anger, fear, guilt – and most of all grief – by actually holding on to pain as a way of getting attention, concern or love.

When he would confront patients with that insight, of course the predictable response was “You think I want to be suffering like this?”

The answer, at least sometimes, was “Yes, you do want something more than you want relief from pain; you want attention, if only from the nurse who takes your blood pressure.” That, and related recognitions, led many patients at least to improvement and sometimes to cure (a little word play shows the name “Crue,” if the letters are transposed, becomes “cure”).

Dr. Crue investigated the LDS tradition and applied the kind of experiment described in Alma chapter 32. He really joined the church as an experiment; then while he was riding on an airplane, the answer came as clear as it could be – not just that a particular doctrine was true, but that the whole restoration was true, including the *Book of Mormon*.

Applying his new perspective, he probed deeply into the issues of chronic pain, redirecting some of his earlier ideas. Among other things, he raised the crucial point of the importance in the lives of troubled and pained patients of at least one significant other whom they care about and who cares about them. Without such an individual relationship, patients face continuing sagas of hopelessness, but with the presence of that significant other, the prognosis changes. What Dr. Crue came to know and teach is that the most significant other is Jesus Christ. With this perspective came significant changes in his personal and professional life.

Second Convert: Anonymous

Now I move to a second conversion. This man’s name I must not give publicly, as his whole family has rejected his acceptance of the Gospel. This man was teaching seminars and workshops trying to convey to people his theory of human potential. He had a Christian background, which he used as a starting point to develop this philosophy. He was strongly influenced by the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), who could be called the grandfather of *Process Philosophy*.

Whitehead (1929) undercut the great classical tradition that God is to be identified with static being and instead identified God as becoming. There is, then, process in God: Unless there is in this sense a progressing God, there cannot be a feeling God — and if there is not a feeling God, for Process Theologians (Mesle, 1993; Farmer, 1997, 2003) there would be no healing God.

So the man of whom I speak was telling people not only that he believed that Christ and Christ’s atonement can influence healing, but that he believed there is power to influence healing within each of us. He taught that at birth there is divinely implanted in each of us a brain factor so powerful that if and when we turn away from the hurts and hurtfulness of our past toward the future, in repentance and in faith, this mechanism actually revises the brain — practically rewires it. In contrast to Freud’s strategy of unlocking the past layer by layer, one should turn only to the future and not look back. The result, he explained, would be a brain change that would affect everything — including, of course, mental and emotional functions.

What did this philosopher-psychologist find when he came into the LDS Church? Like Dr. Crue, he found many things compatible with his earlier thinking, but also a higher, more inclusive perspective. He found, first of all, that the prophet Joseph Smith talked about total change. The prophet Joseph Smith taught about a process whereby one becomes a new person through the influence of the Holy Ghost, transforming physical as well as spiritual realities: a condition described as a new birth. Many in the religious world talk about being “reborn” or “newly born” or “born again,” but they concentrate on only the first principle of the transition — faith. Redirecting his thinking and his life, he learned that there must be genuine repentance, and then there must be the nurture of ordinances.

This brother wanted to accept, not just the initiatory ordinances, but all which God has revealed for this
dispensation. Now in his teaching he quotes a sentence that the prophet Joseph Smith gave to the twelve before he sent them on missions to Britain: “Being born again comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances” (Smith, 1938, p. 162). The highest ordinances are the temple ordinances. They are channels of power, not simply as in the Protestant tradition, “outward signs of inward grace” (Staples, 1991). When I was a Stake President trying to prepare young people for the temple or to re-establish temple recommends, I gave them this quotation on a 3 by 5 card and asked them to put it on their refrigerator. What I really wanted them to do was to put it in their hearts. Being born again brings the ultimate redirection into our lives; it is something we all need to experience.

Third Convert: Milo Baughman

This leads us to the third convert, Milo Baughman. He just passed away this year. He was a world famous furniture designer, with roots in New England. He had mastered interior design for a time and was very successful. But he felt that he had been called to do something more, something higher, and so he began studies for the Presbyterian Ministry. He was almost ready to be ordained, but he was married to an LDS wife who at that point said, “I don’t think I can continue to be your wife if you do this. But if you will consider my religion, that’s something else.” He did not want to consider becoming a Latter-day Saint. But eventually he did. He found his way into the church – and then went back to furniture design.

How did the process of redirection function in his life? He had already had a history of depression and had tried all the things one can try, from medications to shock treatment. But in the LDS church he felt new and powerful spiritual influences. He felt what he called koinonia, a Greek word that means “fellowship, participation, community feeling” – but in its deepest root it means “a special relationship with God.” He recently told me that now when he spoke, he no longer felt the Presbyterian speaking.

This former Protestant had found the redirection that comes with the full Gospel. He found there was “sufficient Christology” in the LDS Church, in its teachings, and especially in the temple. By Christology, he meant the application of the atonement of Christ to every aspect of the human self. But for him this process was more painful and laborious than it is for many. He was not spared additional bouts with depression and mania. When he was manic he made bad decisions, and when he was depressed he made even worse ones.

Three different blessings were given him, and in each the essential message was the same: “This [bipolar disorder] is going to be a trial for the rest of your life. But there will be some relief and some release, and your faith must stay firm in Christ.” His summary to me was “I’m going to be the most depressed happy man or the happiest depressed man in the Church.” Aspects of his redirection are evident in his own self-therapy; whenever he saw the beginnings of depression in others, he would quickly begin to reach out in various ways: he wrote letters, and he made phone calls, and visits. He gave his best and made it through.

At Milo’s funeral one of the speakers pointed out that in the Doctrine & Covenants (Section 46) there is a particular set of statements about how one has to have faith to be healed, and it names different kinds of maladies from which one can be healed. But the scripture goes on to say that there are those who do not have these specific gifts of faith. What of them? The answer is that the crucial goal of life is to keep the laws of God, believe in Christ, and in faith and practice to become his sons or daughters – not necessarily that they be delivered from the afflictions of life (D&C 42:52). His family, friends, and associates were reminded of the revelation to “bear with” their infirmities (Alma 1:25, 36:40). Milo’s life and experience shows that some things can be overcome through redirection, and some things must simply be endured. Christ is essential to both, and in him eventual renewal and redemption shall come.

Renewal: Light, Love, and Power

Years ago Dr. Allen Bergin called together a team: As I recall there was a physicist, a biologist, an astronomer, three psychologists, and a fellow philosopher. The group was to explore all the passages in modern revelation about light. Allen wanted to know if there is something about light that we could somehow apply to both diagnosis and therapy. After lengthy discussion, the group concluded that the use of the word light in the scriptures is often as a metaphor. “Light” is not something one can isolate and examine, like titrations in a chemistry lab.
Transforming Light

But neither Allen nor I was fully satisfied, so we went to work with all of the scriptures plus the teachings of the prophets. We read those passages of scripture as if we were reading poetry. I eventually wrote an article called "Man Illumined" (Madsen, 1994, chapt. 3; also in Madsen & Tate, 1972, 119-133). It didn't go where I wanted it to: I left out the part that I wanted to reach but didn't dare mention: I can show from sacred sources that light is often equated with something that is very real – cosmological. According to the prophet Joseph Smith, this applies to our creation, to the building blocks of our own spirits, which are somehow made of light. He taught that these "pure principles of element" are co-eternal with God, and in them "dwells all glory":

Hence we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos – chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; the may be organized and reorganized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning and can have no end. (Smith, 1977, p. 344)

So light and truth are eternal, the beautiful and the good. But what I was looking for was love. I suggest that light – the divine light that the Doctrine and Covenants describes – carries, or is synonymous with, love. And I suggest that it is impossible to feel the Holy Ghost without feeling love – first for its personal source, and eventually as you respond to it, love for those whom God loves. This transforming light, which we so often experience as love, may become the source of renewal in our lives once we are committed to seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost in all that we do.

To even begin to comprehend the power of this light, we must remember that the ultimate source of all light in this universe is Christ himself, and he is unwavering in his declaration: he is the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars (D&C 88:7-9). There was an article in Scientific American recently (Hajian & Armstrong, 2001) that says the Hubble telescope has now been able to identify stars that are one trillion times brighter than our sun! In the Book of Abraham, originally written in the Egyptian alphabet, the prophet says that if this earth had not been properly curtained, or veiled, it would be consumed by such light.

There is, then, a connection between light and fire: as Isaiah (Isaiah 33:14) tells us, God dwells in "everlasting burnings." We Latter-day Saints are the only people I know of who have taken the classical doctrine of burning in hell and turned it into burning in heaven!

I have been asked what I learned from living five years in the Holy Land. One of many things I learned was that we cannot receive the fullness of the glory of Christ, his all, without giving our all. When he came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, he said, according to the prophet Joseph Smith (1938; see Ehat & Cook, 1980, p. 246; see also Matthew 28:18), "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." This staggering statement could never be said by puny, finite mortal man – unless he had fulfilled the Doctrine and Covenants passage (D&C 50:26) that says that one who has been ordained and set apart is appointed to be the greatest, although he may be the "least and the servant of all." He is "possessor of all things," as all things are "subject unto him: the life and the light, the spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ his son" (D&C 50:27).

There is a but clause: "But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin" (D&C 50:28). If I read it correctly, this means that that Spirit we go on seeking – and are promised – can be enlivening, illuminating, empowering – and even inspiring. This action and effect of the Spirit is renewal.

Becoming Christ-like

In our [LDS] tradition we often use the phrase "to become Christlike." I suggest we mean three different things by it, on three different levels – increasingly inclusive. On the most literal level, we may mean that we should imitate the behavior of Jesus, as advised by Thomas a' Kempis (1998); we should find out what Christ did in certain circumstances and try to do likewise. Literal behavior is certainly part of the challenge, but even this has its higher component, as we need the Spirit to help us know how to apply conduct that originated in Christ's life in the context of our own situation.

A second level of becoming Christ-like is more subjective: to seek to emulate his inner virtues. We are commanded to seek these virtues, such as compassion, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, charity, humility,
diligence. All of these virtues are Christ-like, but as with the outward behavior, developing them in the context of our lives requires help from on high.

Third and the most crucial, we have been counseled to become like Christ in nature. How can this be remotely possible? Christ is unique. Unique in that he was the first born, the only begotten in the flesh, unique in other attributes that were inherent in his nature from the pre-existence. How can we possibly aspire to be in nature like him?

Let's look at the attribute that seems most unique: in D&C 93:21, he revealed "I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn." But in the next sentence he continued, "and all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the Church of the Firstborn. Ye also were in the beginning with the Father." He shares not just the blessings, he shares his very nature. As he affirms in D&C 93, verse 19:

I give unto you these things that ye may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fullness ... You shall receive grace for grace. (D&C 93:19)

That is what I took seriously when I wrote about the Highest In Us (Madsen, 1978). I don't think he gave us these teachings to taunt us, to torment us, to place something so far beyond us that it would discourage us. I believe he wants us to understand our potential. Dr. Allen Bergin has written about the mortal overlay (2002). We recognize as almost no one else does, even in the Christian world, that we began as individual spirits full of light and that the mortal body is a covering which conceals that tremendous brightness. The prophet Joseph Smith even taught that when that spirit is disembodied, we could not endure the glory of it (Ehat & Cook, 1980, p. 254). That spirit is still in there, even in those of us who have been darkened by our acts – or un-acts. It is there even in those who have faltered and failed in honoring the patterns of righteousness.

I like to consider this in relation to the Savior's statement that he is "a light that shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (D&C 45:7, John 1:5). We can read this in the sense that we are in a measure blinded and cannot comprehend – that is, recognize the light. But it also means: no matter how far we sink into darkness, that darkness will not totally extinguish the light within us – whether or not we recognize that light. The ultimate promise is that if we continue in light we will receive more light "and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24). Renewal comes into our lives as we grow and become more and more perfect in this light.

Experiencing Renewal

Let me turn for a moment to a few cases. I have one advantage over you – my longevity: I've been around long enough to see the long-term effects of various attempts at therapy and healing and overcoming. I have seen some seemingly hopeless cases of problems and addictions that have been healed and overcome through Christ. The role of the therapists in those cases has been to start the process: to introduce the person to Christ and to remove the blindfolds that have prevented the sufferer either from being in full touch with his latent spirit or from recognizing his love. I'll describe two examples.

Dr. Allen Bergin and I both know a young man who not only was homosexual but was immersed in the homosexual life. He was what stake presidents would call a "predator." With the intervention of Elder Spencer W. Kimball, he slowly began to turn his life around. As time went on, he was blessed with a fine and flourishing family and asked to accept callings of high ecclesiastical importance. The most recent time I saw him was in a solemn assembly where he was serving as a temple worker. Despite the darkness, light can be restored.

And I have known cases of addiction. My wife, Ann, and I answered the door one evening to see a refugee from the streets of San Francisco, a boy who had become addicted to drugs and had fallen in with a kind of Jesus commune. He was at our door because Ann's teaching had led to the baptism of his mother, and he had a dim memory of that. He said, "I'm here; I need help." I think he had damage to the brain, in part from being burned out by drugs. But as he learned to know the Savior, he experienced light, and new strength. He eventually served a mission. He has reconciled with his alienated family and is now planning his wedding. Another soul struggling in darkness was able to overcome, to heal, and to grow in the light.
Redemption: The Ultimate Gift of Christ

We all know the feelings of hopelessness that sometimes get in the way as we are attempting to serve – to reach out to people who are struggling in various forms of darkness. But we somehow have to hold on. Carl Fred Broderick taught me that the physician who would heal by bringing others to Jesus must first heal himself (Broderick, 1992). This has profound implications for all of us.

Some Who Became Christ-like

Let me share about two others.

I had a student once who had multiple sclerosis; she was a very open individual and talked in class as we sometimes do in therapy. She told me later, “You did some good things for me, but the best thing you did was to introduce me to Ralph Ryetting.” Ralph Ryetting was a hemophiliac who had during his short life 3200 blood transfusions. He often told me that when he left the hospital after a transfusion, he felt like he had been purified, like he was able to begin his life again – clean. He told me over and over that he would not have asked for his condition – particularly because there was a 50% chance that he would transmit it to his children. But he found that the experiences incident to it had opened dimensions of his soul and his relationship with Christ that he felt never could have developed otherwise. My student, who also suffered with a disabling physical infirmity, said “Ralph Ryetting is the one who really taught me about Christ.”

Another who came to know Christ through hardship and suffering was Dr. B. West Belnap, who used to teach a class at BYU called Your Religious Problem. West would encourage his students to be completely open in describing their problems with religion by telling them his own. He told them that he felt that he did not really know the scriptural meaning of “charity,” the pure love of Christ. He felt he knew it as a conception, but not as a warm reality. Then Dr. B. Belnap developed a brain tumor. After two operations, the doctors told him they had done all that they could do, and he had only a few months to live. He was young, and asked for a blessing, with the one request that he could finish his life again – clean. He told me over and over that he felt like he had been purified, like he was able to begin his life again – clean.

Time passed, and the children said to each other, “We want to belong to someone.” So they went to the Father, and they said, “Please forgive our parents and let them come where we are.”

And God replied, “How can I do this thing? Your parents were your worst enemies.”

So the legend says the children went and talked to Elijah [whose name, by the way, is a combination of the words for “father” and “son”: El-i-jah, El-father, jah-son]. Everyone knows Elijah is supposed to have something to do with the hearts of children and parents (Malachi 4:6). “How can we prevail with God?” the children asked Elijah.
Elijah replied, "Go back and say to God, 'Yes, our parents abused, our parents abandoned us; for that very reason we have a right to ask that they be healed and forgiven.'"

And God will say, "how can I forebear?"

The parents will ultimately say, "how can we be redeemed?" Thus, the hearts of the children may reach out to the hearts of abusive parents, and visa versa.

Now the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which in many ways differs from the retaliation standards of this world, says that the victim may ultimately become the redeemer of the victimizers. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is redirection or repentance, there is renewal, and ultimately because of the atonement of Jesus Christ, there is redemption.

**Conclusion**

I was once face to face with a man who had been in a Russian prison camp (see Solzhenitsyn, 1973). He described the guard who almost daily beat the prisoners viciously with a steel whip. One day he started the usual beating and then threw the whip down and cried out, "I cannot do this any longer." He then joined the prisoners in their torment.

That is what Jesus covenanted to do before the foundation of the world. But more, he brought healing balm to soothe the wounds of the prisoners. But more, he brought keys to unlock the shackles that bound them and unlocked the door of the prison from inside. But more, he has given us the covenant of the sacrament, by which we acknowledge what he has done for us and make commitments by which we are changed and sanctified. But more, he has required of us a sacrifice unparalleled in history: to build temples where if we come with broken hearts and contrite spirits he will make known what we most need - knowledge and the power to be transformed in anticipation of the day when we will have a renewed mortal body in what is called the resurrection.

I pray that we will be effective as mediators in assisting those who come to us in activating the processes of redirection, renewal, and redemption in their lives. For those like Dr. Benjamin Crue, the philosopher-psychologist conducting human potential workshops, and Milo Baughman - all of whom were walking in partial light - may we help them to redirect toward a brighter, more complete perspective.

For those like the young homosexual and the youthful drug addict who are in darkness, may we help them find the eternal light within themselves that cannot be completely extinguished. May we help them in activating that light to the renewal of their spirits and ultimately of the circumstances of their lives.

For those who are suffering pain, grief, or discouragement, may we introduce them to individuals like Ralph Rytting and Dr. B. West Belnap who, consciously or subconsciously, give us examples to follow in becoming Christ-like, preparing to be worthy of Christ's sacrifice and offer of redemption to us. This I pray in his sacred name.

**References**


Endnotes

1 Carlfred B. Broderick PhD (1932-1999), AMCAP president 1982-83, was a distinguished professor at the University of Southern California. The author of several texts and popular books on marriage and the family, he served as editor of the Journal of Marriage & the Family, as president of the National Council on Family Relations, and as president of the Ceritos California Stake. He is remembered not only for his significant academic contributions, but especially for his delightful sense of humor (Lytle, 1999).

2 Benjamin L. Crue MD is an internationally-known Neurosurgeon; he is Past President of the American Pain Society and also of the American Academy of Pain Medicine. Trained at the University of Chicago and Yale University, he was a professor at the University of Southern California School of Medicine and Director of Neurosurgery at the City of Hope Medical Center for several decades. Dr. Crue is particularly well known for his classification of pain based on the temporal factor of pain duration (Crue, 1975, 1983).

3 Milo Baughman (1925-2003) was one of the most significant designers of contemporary 20th Century furniture. He studied architectural and product design at the Art Center School of Los Angeles and at Chouinards (now known as the California School of the Arts), and theology at Bangor Theological Seminary. His furniture has been exhibited in museums throughout the United States, including the Whitney Museum of Art in New York City. He established the Department of Environment Design at Brigham Young University and taught there for over 15 years. He also lectured at Rhode Island School of Design, University of Tennessee, University of Wisconsin, North Carolina State, and other schools (see <http://www.bibleman.net/Milo.htm>).

4 Allen E. Bergin PhD, AMCAP President 1980-81, is considered by many to be the “grandfather of modern LDS psychology” (Swedin, 2003, p. 41). He is the 1989 recipient of the prestigious American Psychological Association Distinguished Professional Contributions to Knowledge award. Among his many publications, he co-authored with P. Scott Richards PhD (AMCAP Vice-President, 2001-2003) several significant books (1997, 2000, 2004). Dr. Bergin retired...

5 Bryan West Belnap PhD (1921-1967) was a popular professor and Dean of Religion at Brigham Young University. President Harold B. Lee "respected and embraced such bright 'schoolmen of spiritual stature' as West Belnap" (Hafen, 2002; see also President Lee’s Forward in Madsen & Tate, 1972). Dr. Belnap is the author of, among other publications, *Faith Amid Skepticism* (1963). Madsen & Tate (1972, p. x) characterized B. West Belnap as "a man who was full of truth and responsible feelings for the encounter of what is deepest in man with what is deepest in man's world." The BYU Religious Studies Center has established in his honor the B. West Belnap Award for religious research (Waterstradt, 1988).