

An Anatomy of Troubles



Belgium 1917
Photo: Canadian War Museum

Samuel Johnson, of dictionary fame, said of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* that it was the only book that got him out of bed earlier than he wanted to. It is a book that stimulated my interest in mental health many years ago, but it also is a very eclectic book—almost a stream-of-consciousness writing—with many parenthetical excursions into many subjects with only a seemingly tenuous connection to melancholy and with no restrictive system. I have leaned a bit on that example in this little presentation.

One of Job's so-called friends Eliphaz the Tenamite told Job, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Just as sparks go up in the air over a bonfire, if we live here on earth; we will have troubles—that's the sense of the scripture. And it's true.

There are two sorts of trouble that we all encounter both in our own lives and in the lives of those who come to us for help and support. Both of these sorts of troubles are covered by the atonement of Jesus Christ. I would like to define and explore briefly these two types of trouble in the context of the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I will also discuss the role of priesthood ordinances in their remedy, and then give two scriptural examples illustrating how the atonement of Christ can act in our lives to help overcome trouble. This approach is obviously most relevant to those with an LDS frame of reference and belief system.

I'm a medical doctor, and I've been trained to take a history, do an examination, and then formulate a tentative diagnosis before I prescribe treatment. After listening to the story the next task in a history and examination of troubles is to sort them. (In a Jungian context one might reflect on the many myths, fairy tales, and old stories that have tasks set for the hero or heroine—many of those tasks involved sorting.) There are many ways to sort or divide up a story. I'd like to suggest a particular method in which trouble is divided into two major subdivisions: sin and adversity. Adversity is also sometimes referred to as trials or tribulations.

This is an analytical approach—a sort of medical model. It does require dissecting the story, but it concludes in a synthesis—a sort of psychosocial denouement. But let's approach trouble in this way and see if the model is useful in understanding how we might deal with it.

Early in my married life, my wife taught me to sort laundry—to separate the whites and the coloureds. On one occasion, moved by the best of intentions, thinking to save money; I put in a batch of laundry with coloureds and whites mixed together. My thinking, or what passed for it at the time, was that there was not enough of either sort of clothes to justify the use of two washing machines and the coins and detergent that would have to go in them. So I washed them together, and the coloureds were clean enough; but the whites, although clean, no longer looked so white. They had taken on something from the coloureds.

If we try to help people heal sin and adversity with the same methods, in the same machine as it were, they may get results that disappoint them. Principles that work so well for sin; can, if used to deal with adversity, leave an unwarranted feeling or taint of guilt. We may unwittingly create a troubled conscience and a clouded mind concerning the adversities of life. Those with adversity may feel a little stained by the experience and not look so white and fresh in their own eyes. The blameless white of adversity can be clouded with the tint

of sin. And the inverse problem can also occur. We can attempt to treat sin as adversity and thereby never achieve a sense of resolution to what happened. But I shall focus on the former rather than the latter.

So, in the matter of life's troubles, I believe that the first step is to learn to sort our laundry. Which part of our troubles might be sin? And which part might be adversity? Are they a compound of both, or are they mostly all one or the other? These are useful questions to explore before we move on to prescribe a remedy.

The first sort of trouble I will consider is sin. Now we are sin specialists in our Church—not that we sin so much in comparison with others—but we do talk fairly often about how to resolve sin. We have a set of treatment guidelines that we learn at a very early age, and so we understand the prescribed treatment very well. We're not always keen to take the medicine, but for the most part, we know what to do when and if we choose to do so. Especially with others—we hand out the prescriptions for resolving others' sins fairly liberally, and sometimes we do it in cases where the perceived fault and its resultant remedy may not be completely justified.

It would be useful here to define more closely these two concepts: sin and adversity.

There are several things that must be present in order for a sin to have occurred. These are all necessary criteria: if they are not all present, then our theology teaches us that God does not consider our action to be a sin. I shall state these criteria without scriptural support, but you will find the references in the notes.

1. There must be a law of God. (...for where no law is, [there is] no transgression. Romans 4:15 Where there is no law given there is no punishment; and where there is no punishment there is no condemnation. 2 Ne. 9:25.)
2. We must know the law by having been taught it by others, by the Light of Christ, or by the Holy Ghost. (Yea, and I know that good and evil have come before all men; he that knoweth not good from evil is blameless... Alma 29:5. God that made the world and all things therein...And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth...That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being...For we are also his offspring...And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent... Acts 17: 24-30)
3. We must have the ability to keep the law. We must be free of constraint, having arrived at the age of accountability, and having the mental capacity to understand the meaning of our actions. (Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children. And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism Moroni 8:10-11If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth. John 9:41)

4. And then, knowingly, we must do the forbidden act or fail to perform the action enjoined on us by the Lord. (Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. 1 John 3:4 To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. James 4:17)

Such a knowing commission of a forbidden practice or the purposeful omission of a bidden one constitutes sin. If any of the preceding four elements are not present, then the action is not sin. For example, if I am forced at gunpoint to rob a bank; I know there's a law against it, I robbed the bank, but I had no agency in the matter. I may consider this to be trouble indeed, but I have experienced adversity—not sin. The person who holds the gun and forces my actions commits a sin. I have belaboured these rather obvious points because they are vital to a proper history and diagnosis. They are questions that we must ask of ourselves; or of others if we have any role in the formation of their conscience.

If we have sinned, the treatment guidelines for that disease are well known.

We must:

- Exercise faith in Christ,
- Repent of our sins [with all that repentance entails],
- Come to the waters of baptism with full purpose of heart accepting to be baptized by one with authority,
- Receive the visitation of the Holy Ghost; which member of the Godhead, acting as the Holy Spirit of Promise, justifies us with God through the grace inherent the atonement of Christ. (By the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified. Moses 6:60)

If we are already members of Christ's Church then we must come to the sacrament table and take the sacrament to renew our covenant of baptism with the same promise of His Spirit to always be with us to justify us or make us right with God. This process remits our sins, changes our hearts, and moves us along the way to sanctification. This is the treatment pathway for sin.

This is such a simple, straightforward and reliable path that if we have acted "*with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of [our] sins, witnessing unto the Father that [w]e are willing to take upon [us] the name of Christ, by baptism...then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost*". (2 Nephi 31:13) If this process seems not to work, one should re-examine his or her laundry piles. One may be trying to treat adversity with a prescription for sin. There may be some whites in with the coloureds.

Elder Orson F. Whitney made this useful observation about sin: *Sin is the transgression of divine law, as made known through the conscience or by revelation. A man sins when he violates his conscience, going contrary to light and knowledge...He sins when he does the opposite of what he knows to be right. Up to that point he only blunders. One may suffer painful consequences for only blundering, but he cannot commit sin unless he knows better*

than to do the thing in which the sin consists. One must have a conscience before he can violate it. (Saturday Night Thoughts, p. 239.)

Now, we should define adversity. The simplest definition is that it consists of all troubles in our life that are not sin. To clarify it a little more we might note that there are four sources of adversity.

1. We live in a telestial world that has been described as *lone and dreary*, and this is not mere metaphor. In this world there are sudden, catastrophic, and slow chronic illnesses; cancer; congenital deformities; accidents of all kinds; earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, famines, droughts, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes; and all the vagaries of nature. All of these are part of our mortal experience. They were part of the deal in our agreement to come to a telestial fallen world. They have their role in forming our character and giving us experience that can help us to progress. So the first source of adversity comes from the very nature of the fallen world in which we live. (And not only [so], but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience,¹ hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; (doesn't disappoint us or let us down) because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us Romans 5:3-5.)
2. We also live in a world where we, and others, are allowed moral agency. As an outcome of that principle all mankind may and do exercise that agency and sin. From that agency comes all the evil that mankind does to one another, from the smallest insult, to the genocide of the Holocaust. Such sin has the capacity and scope to affect us and bring adversity into our lives. A well-taught child may make choices and go astray, bringing adversity and grief to her parents. Parents too may sin, fracture a home and bring great adversity to their children. Someone may choose to injure us, abuse us or even take our life. It is sin to him, but adversity to us. Sometimes the nature of the sin of another that affects us is so terrible that it can lead us to feel unclean, as though we had participated to some extent in the sin itself, just by our presence, or even our knowledge of it.² There is a diagnostic trap in this situation that we must be aware of for ourselves and others. The sins of

¹ President Brigham Young said: "...The people cannot comprehend the deep mystery of the design of the Almighty in bringing so many people into this human world, shall I say? This is a world of pain, of darkness, sorrow, affliction, and death. The Almighty has his objects and plans all laid, and we are to pass through all these afflictions and to endure all that he calls us to endure, to give us knowledge, wisdom, and experience; for we cannot receive them upon any other principle. His design is to exalt the human family, and to bring them back to the presence of the Father and the Son...The Father and the Son are now doing all they can to save his children, and all the heavenly hosts are exerting their powers to accomplish the same great end. But, says the Father, 'do not infringe on the agency of mankind; for my children, to be brought into my presence to enjoy with me the fulness of my glory, must pass through the same ordeals I have passed through. They cannot inherit eternal life upon any other principle.'" *Journal of Discourses*, Vol.8, Pg.30 - Pg.31, Brigham Young, March 25, 1860

² D&C 123: 7-10 It is an imperative duty that we owe to God, to angels, with whom we shall be brought to stand, and also to ourselves, to our wives and children, who have been made to bow down with grief, sorrow, and care, under the most damning hand of murder, tyranny, and oppression, supported and urged on and upheld by the influence of that spirit which hath so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children, and filled the world with confusion, and has been growing stronger and stronger, and is now the very mainspring of all corruption, and the whole earth groans under the weight of its iniquity. It is an iron yoke, it is a strong band; they are the very handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell. Therefore it is an imperative duty that we owe, not only to our own wives and children, but to the widows and fatherless, whose husbands and fathers have been murdered under its iron hand; Which dark and blackening deeds are enough to make hell itself shudder, and to stand aghast and pale, and the hands of the very devil to tremble and palsy.

others who are close to us, or truly terrible sins which touch us closely, can give us feelings that are almost indistinguishable from guilt. This feeling is often called shame and much has been written about shame vs. guilt. The point I wish to make here is that a feeling that seems to be guilt does not necessarily imply sin. Guilt, when it has its proper function, is a negative feeling about our actions whereas shame is a negative feeling about ourselves. Sin is best diagnosed by the objective criteria given previously rather than by our subjective feelings alone. If others committed a sin and thus brought adversity to our lives, and if that action is consistently in our minds accompanied by feelings of guilt; it does not necessarily follow that we have sinned. We cannot always trust our feelings in these matters. When Adam and Eve sinned, Satan did not seek to make them feel guilty by emphasizing their action; rather he attempted to make them feel shame by emphasizing that they were no longer the sort of people with whom God would wish to associate—and he suggested that they hide. The lie is still believed; the suggestion is still made, and is still widely effective.

3. The third source of adversity comes from ourselves. Sometimes we are just not very bright, and by that dimmer light we make decisions wherein we act in an unwise way, or we fail to do some things we ought to have done; and those actions have consequences. We have not purposefully thumbed our nose at heaven and sinned. No law of God has been broken, but we have not acted wisely, and so we bring adversity and trouble upon ourselves by our own agent actions. We run too fast to catch the bus on an icy sidewalk, and we fall and break an ankle. No sin has been committed, but we have experienced adversity. The prophets have counselled us to be wise, as well as good, so that we might not experience adversity in ways that might have been avoided.
4. According to scripture God can send adversity to try His people or to turn them to Him. *And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.* (Ether 12: 27) [my emphasis – see also 2 Cor 12] In many occasions in the scriptures the trouble that comes to people can often be attributed to the natural consequences of their sin. Wickedness never was happiness, and therefore such trouble is not truly adversity, but rather the consequences of sin. In my personal experience God has had enough material from my own foolishness, from the sins of those around me, and from the nature of the world in which I live that He has not seemed to need to send me much adversity beyond the three first sources already noted. But I cannot exclude divinely sent adversity, however I believe it to be a rare and sparingly used tool picked by a loving Father who has a diverse palette of providential means to call my attention to Him and to the work that He has called me to do.

The prescription for adversity is different to that for sin. It is principally for this reason that it helps if we sort our troubles. The first step is the same—Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. His atonement can take away or transform the damaging effects, the pain, and eventually all of the consequences of adversity in our lives. His atonement can convert the pain of adversity into growth, development, and even sanctification.

Alma taught this principle to the saints in Gideon. Let's ponder three verses from his teachings (Alma 7:11-13) and sort the stated effects of the atonement with regards to the two piles of trouble: sin and adversity, both of which the atonement will remedy.

And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind...

This is a description of the Saviour's pile of trouble. He had *pain, affliction and temptation*. None of this was sin. He was the only person who ever lived on earth who had only one pile of laundry—adversity. He had no sin pile.

...and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people...

So *pain and sickness*...which pile? Adversity.

...And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people...

Death...which pile? Adversity for all of us, except for Adam and Eve whose transgression brought death into the world.

...and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities...

An *infirmity* is a weakness. Which pile? Adversity. God is merciful to our weaknesses when they are not purposeful sins. *But now I tell it unto you, and ye are blessed, not because of your iniquity, neither your hearts of unbelief; for verily some of you are guilty before me, but I will be merciful unto your weakness. Therefore, be ye strong from henceforth; fear not, for the kingdom is yours.* (D&C 38:14-15)[emphasis mine]

...Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh...

My own opinion is that this phrase means that the Holy Ghost, knowing all things, could have communicated to Jesus what He needed to know about mortality, but Jesus chose to suffer all things so that He could have an experience with this life that we could never doubt, so that He could understand in the most intimate way what we have all been through. Thereby no one could ever say to Him, "You don't know what it was like."³

...that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.

³ Incidentally, this is the Book of Mormon antidote to the Docetist heresy of the 1st century AD which was present even during the tenure of the early apostles. The Docetists said that Christ only *appeared* to suffer and wasn't really truly present in the man, Jesus, while on the cross and in the garden and that He got His knowledge of earth life by his omniscience rather than by a mortal experience. (This is the particular false doctrine that Alma contradicts) John wrote warning against this heresy: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. I John 4:1-3 see also Hebrews 4:14-16.

Finally we get to the sin pile—*sins and transgressions*. Notice that these are mentioned last—almost as an addendum to the principal purpose of the atonement. Isaiah in speaking of the atoning Messiah, produced the same order of priority.

Isaiah 53: 4-5 Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...

First adversity.

...But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Finally sin.

Why is adversity always mentioned first? —because it's the biggest pile—for all of us.

Why do we tend to think of the atonement primarily in terms of fixing our sins rather than healing our adversity? Why don't we have the same priority order as the prophets have had? Well, I don't completely understand that myself. It's a complex question about human nature, but it's probably for the same reason that we called the most beautiful and optimistic of Jesus' parables, *The Prodigal Son*; rather than calling it, *The Forgiving Father*. We're more than a little fixated on our faults down here, and also very reluctant to accept our acceptance.

But, back to the treatment—the first step in the prescription for adversity is faith in Jesus Christ and in His atoning blood—faith that “*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*”⁴ You'll note that every objective reality mentioned in this millennial scripture is part of adversity: tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain.

Now, with adversity the second step is not the same as that for sin. It is not repentance. You can't repent of adversity.

As a young bishop and a medical doctor I had an even younger couple with one child sent to me by their bishop for medical advice and counseling.⁵ They were on the verge of divorce after several years of married life. They had conceived their only child a few days before their temple marriage and had not had the courage to tell their families, their little branch, their invited guests, even themselves; that the wedding as planned had to be postponed because they weren't worthy to go to the temple. They rationalized. So much preparation had gone forward, so much money spent, so many congratulations already given. They were the first young people from their branch to ever marry in the temple and the whole branch was attending—buses had been booked and auditoriums adorned. They took counsel from their fears, their guilt; and consciously, deliberately decided to go ahead

⁴ Revelation 22: 3-6 ...and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

⁵ The essential elements of this story and another following it are factual, but I've changed enough of the stories' details so that the couple's story or the later story of a young man could not be recognized by others who knew them at the time. I have their permission to use their stories, but I am from a small town and am sensitive to others' potential perceptions of them even when they are willing to share their experiences.

with the marriage and work out the Church issue of their worthiness status later.

They were not insensitive, stupid, or calloused. They knew they had committed a sin and that they had aggravated it with others in covering it up, lying, and attending the temple unworthily. They felt tremendous guilt and were unable to have a normal intimate life together. When the wife found, a few weeks later, that she was pregnant; they knew that the baby could only have been conceived on that one occasion prior to their marriage. And when the child was born, he had a severe congenital handicap that would shorten his life and require much from them. They concluded that their child was a judgment of God—a specific punishment sent on account of their sin. They went to their branch president and to the mission president. There was Church discipline, repentance, a later return to full fellowship and to the temple. They did everything the Church asked of them, and they seemingly did it with real intent and with what faith they had; and yet, there they were in my office brimming with guilt, loaded with mutual recriminations, and discouraged—with divorce papers in their back pockets.

Well that's their story, let's sort their laundry. Had they sinned? Of course. And yet they had done all that was asked of them—at least on what I could see and hear from them. But they felt no peace, little comfort, and no real lifting of the burden that they had borne for years. Well, the problem could have been that their repentance was not broad or deep enough, but that had not been the conclusion of their bishops and stake president who had repeatedly and carefully interviewed them over several years.

Was there anything in their adversity pile too? I thought so. They were young, immature, and unprepared to cope with such major turmoil in their married life before they had hardly started out. They had a handicapped child. They had financial problems that weren't really their fault. They had a serious sexual dysfunction in their marriage that hadn't been properly addressed by anyone, and that had deprived them of what could have been a source of unity and love between them. Both sets of in-laws were not always a positive factor in their marriage, each blaming the spouse not from their family for the majority of the problem. And there were other things...but at the base of it all, it seemed to me that they were trying to repent of their child. They saw him as personifying their sin.

You can repent of sexual sin that produces a child, but you can't repent of the child. You can't repent of a baby. You can't repent of adversity. What you can do is serve. Faith is the first principle and service is the second in resolving adversity. When we have adversity in our lives, we must exercise our faith, and then we need to find a place in the world where we can serve.

Ironically for them, but potentially providential too, the very consequence of their sin provided part of their path to salvation from their adversities. They could have served each other in this trouble. They could have served their child; but guilt, resentments, and misunderstandings pushed them further and further apart, and made them resent and resist partaking of the very spiritual medicine that could have cured them. No one would wish such a problem on a child or on a family, but many who have been through it would be loath to give the experience away once they had had it. Many families blessed with such handicapped children can attest to the immeasurable joy that they bring to a family who is privileged to serve them.

Lehi understood this principle of service being the way out of adversity and expressed it as

he blessed his fifth son, Jacob. He said:

2 Nephi 2: 1-3 And now, Jacob, I speak unto you: Thou art my first-born in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness. And behold, in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren...

Lehi acknowledged that Jacob had had a difficult childhood with much adversity. His older brothers had brought abuse into his life. So the sins of others had brought adversity to Jacob.

...Nevertheless, Jacob, my first-born in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain...

Lehi next taught Jacob that God is all-powerful, and therefore His grace acting through the atonement is capable of bringing gain and progress to one who has been abused.

...Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi...

He blessed his son and assured him that both his body and spirit would be well, and he provided a place of safety for him throughout his life.

...and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer....

And finally he prescribed a life of service and told him that because (wherefore) of that service, he would be redeemed, saved from his troubles due to the merits, mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. The rest of the chapter elaborates upon these basic principles and will repay a careful reading for anyone burdened by adversity; and, in particular, abuse from another person.

Elder Russell M. Nelson recently spoke of service in the mission field given by couples and noted the results of their service. One couple said:

"As we have served the Lord, our souls have been healed and our family has become more united." Another couple [told] of blessings that come from missionary service. They wrote: "Good people replaced our parenting functions better than we...If a family problem has not yielded to prayer and fasting, a mission might be considered."⁶

When we sin we need to turn from the sin towards a new way of treating ourselves—an inward mighty change of heart. In adversity we need to reach outward to serve others and turn away from the tendency to constantly look inward in a negative way at our own life and its troubles with the predictable cycle of self-criticism, guilt, anxiety, and loss of self.

We are souls consisting of body and spirit. Faith, repentance, and a willingness to serve are primarily achieved in the realm of the spirit. Ordinances are a divinely ordained order of ordinary things which involved the body in the growth process. The ordinances that one might prescribe for adversity are the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood, just as the

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ordinances of the Aaronic priesthood were the remedy that we discussed for sin. Let's ponder that idea for a minute.

It must be said that the priesthood is indivisible. There is much overlap in the responsibilities and effects of the two priesthoods, the lesser being an appendage to the greater, and how they affect us in our lives is complex and intertwined. But with that caveat in mind, for the sake of making our sorting clearer, let's consider them separately for a moment.

When John the Baptist came restoring the keys and authority of the Aaronic Priesthood to Joseph and Oliver in 1829, he said to them in part: *Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys...of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins...* (D&C 13)

Therefore one of the chief functions of the keys of the Aaronic priesthood is to help us to repent and have our sins remitted. The bishop holds the keys of that authority in our Church life. He is the president of the quorum of priests in our ward who administer the sacrament to us, thereby putting us under covenant to renew our baptismal promises. He and his counsellors supervise the Teachers and Deacons quorums, which prepare and pass those emblems to us. If we have a major sin in our lives, which requires confession to the Church, it is to the bishop that we must go. He is the first to sign our temple recommend witnessing that we are free from debilitating sin in our life. Thus freed from the effects of sin we are capable of being taught by the Holy Spirit so that we can profitably attend a temple and participate in the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood. The bishop is the one to whom we first go with problems of sin. He holds the keys of repentance and of the ordinances that bring us a remission of our sins by making the atonement effective in our lives. *The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments.* (D&C 107:20)

The Melchizedek priesthood holds the keys for all the spiritual blessings of the Church. *The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church...* (D&C 107:18) These are the keys that help us deal with adversity. The first Melchizedek priesthood ordinance that we receive as a matter of course is confirmation. We are confirmed members of the Church, and we are exhorted to receive the Holy Ghost. This member of the Godhead acts in many ways, but He is most often called the Comforter. To comfort us from what? To comfort us in our sins? No, He usually makes us most uncomfortable in that situation. Rather he comforts us in our adversities.

The other ordinances or actions by the Melchizedek priesthood include priesthood blessings which are usually given in the context of a need coming from some adversity: we may feel inadequate, unprepared for something in life. We may feel perplexed; needing to know what to do next in our lives. We may be ill; physically, mentally, or spiritually. We may have lost someone to death, lost a job, lost a role in life, or just felt lost. All of these are in the adversity pile, and all of them are reasons to ask for and receive a blessing under the authority of the Melchizedek priesthood.

Patriarchal blessings are also given under the authority of this priesthood. They often speak of our experiences with adversity and how we might best meet those challenges.

When we are set apart to a calling in the Church by one holding the Melchizedek priesthood it is not unusual for the blessing to address present or future issues of adversity in our lives.

But the pre-eminent ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood are those performed in the temples. Before we enter into those ordinances we obtain a recommend from our bishop and our stake president. The keys which they both hold pertain to the Aaronic and to the Melchizedek priesthoods. They each sign the recommend attesting that we have resolved the problems with sin in our lives to the extent that the Spirit can teach us what we are to learn in the temple. This is the role of the Aaronic priesthood ordinances. They also sign our recommends opening the doors so that we can participate in the ordinances and receive the attendant blessings of the Melchizedek priesthood found in the temple.

And this greater priesthood [Melchizedek priesthood] administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. (D&C 84:20-22)

One of the ways in which we might understand the temple and its ordinances is as a prescription for adversity. President Hinckley has taught:

These temple blessings include our washings and anointings that we may be clean before the Lord. They include the instruction service in which we are given an endowment of obligations and blessings that motivate us to behaviour compatible with the principles of the gospel. They include the sealing ordinances by which that which is bound on earth is bound in heaven, providing for the continuity of the family. (Gordon B. Hinckley, Liahona, 1982 October, First Presidency Message — Temples and Temple Work)

We cannot set limits or be definitive on the meaning of the ordinances of the temple. We are asked to speak of them with great caution because we are to be taught about them in the temple by the Lord's Spirit. One of the great dangers in teaching about the meaning of temple ordinances is that one might come to believe, after an explanation was given, that that was all that there was to it. The temple ordinances are capable of teaching all of us specific things about our varied circumstances throughout our lifetime, and so their meaning can never be circumscribed by any person's teachings about them on a particular occasion. John A. Widstoe said that "*only a fool would attempt to describe*",⁷ the endowment, so even though I may have the qualifications noted by Elder Widstoe, I will show restraint and only comment on the scriptures associated with the endowment or on what the senior brethren have taught and published on the subject.

⁷ The endowment is so richly symbolic that only a fool would attempt to describe it; it is so packed full of revelations to those who exercise their strength to seek and see, that no human words can explain or make clear the possibilities that reside in temple service. The endowment which was given by revelation can best be understood by revelation... (Widstoe, John A., *Symbolism in the Temples* chapter 36 in *Saviors On Mount Zion* compiled by Archibald F. Bennett)

Several scriptures speak of washings and their implications. The washings spoken of by President Hinckley are not just a repetition of our baptism when we were cleansed symbolically from our own sins, but rather it appears to have to do with our connections, our common experience, and our responsibility for others. For example, Jacob tried to teach his people with all diligence so that he would not figuratively find their blood or guiltiness on his garments at the last day.⁸ And in D&C 88:75 the Saviour expresses the wish that He “may testify unto your Father, and your God, and my God, that you are clean from the blood of this wicked generation; that I may fulfil this promise, this great and last promise which I have made unto you, when I will.” If adversity has come in our lives from the sins of others, where do we find healing and relief? Where are we washed from the splatter of the sins of others that can make us feel unclean by association? Can this be a small part of what the temple ordinances of washing are about?

If we are anointed to be or become something, can this give us a lens through which the adversity in our lives is placed in a different light? It is well to remember that the word *anoint* is cognate with the word *Christ* in Greek and *Messiah* in Hebrew. In both languages those terms mean *the anointed one*. If we are asked, as was Adam: “Why do you offer sacrifice?” Why do you pay your tithing in your poverty? Why do you drag all those little kids to church? Why do you get the teenager out of bed at 6 AM to go to Seminary? Why do you do all the difficult and often unpleasant things in life? We might well answer with Adam: “I know not, save the Lord commanded me.” Adam proceeded first by obedience, knowing that obedience always requires sacrifice. The angel then said to Adam: “This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.” (Moses 5:6-8)

All of Adam’s obedience and sacrifice, all of the adversity that he would meet in the lone and dreary world would combine to fashion him more and more in the pattern of Christ. He would do what Christ did in some degree, think what He thought, be what He is. Christ was the one with the single pile of laundry you’ll recall—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is vain to suppose that we can become like Him without walking some of His path. We are being schooled to be like the *Anointed One*—to become *anointed ones*. In the Saviour’s instructions to his Nephite disciples he touched on these matters in 3 Nephi 27. Note how often He speaks of His name and what that might imply for them—and there’s a reference to washing along with the name theme.

6 And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day. 7 Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name...therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name; therefore if ye call upon the Father, for the church, if it be in my name the Father will hear you...16 And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world...19 And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the

⁸ Jacob 1: 18-19 For I, Jacob, and my brother Joseph had been consecrated priests and teachers of this people, by the hand of Nephi. And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day.

repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end. 20 Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. 21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do...27 And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am. (3 Nephi 27)

The instructional part of the endowment teaches us the path and the way through this world back to our Father in Heaven. Let's look at one experience in Adam and Eve's life which is treated in the endowment and which has many echoes in our own lives. When the first couple partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they fell, and their perceptions of themselves changed. We too came to this world in a state of innocence, willing to keep all of the commandments of our Father. But we fell; and, like Adam, found ourselves naked—feeling that we had become unacceptable to God.

Moses 4: 13-17 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they had been naked.

We all feel naked in some sense and know that we are unacceptable: too fat, too thin, too short, not good at math, not good at sports, not a speaker, not pretty, too much acne, born in the wrong neighbourhood or town or country, a failure at school, a mediocrity at work, couldn't serve a mission or came home early...all of us, in some way, haven't measured up.

And they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons. 14 And they heard the voice of the Lord God, as they were walking in the garden, in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife went to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

And so we take fig-leaves, the things of this world and we try to cover up. We hide out. Fig leaves can be drugs, alcohol, power, money, position, occupation, sexuality, isolation, constant chatter, obesity, whatever.... But we don't let anyone see us for who we are. The problem with fig-leaves is that they're not too big and they wilt—so you have to have a lot of them and you have to go back for another and another, and a bigger one is preferable if possible; and if your fig-leaf of preference is alcohol, for example, you'll need two drinks instead of one and then three, and so this constant search for the things of the world to hide behind is at the root of all addictions and many compulsions in our lives. But God is a Good Shepherd and He calls us again and again and again—until we come out:

15 And I, the Lord God, called unto Adam, and said unto him: Where goest thou?
16 And he said: I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I beheld that I was naked, and I hid myself. 17 And I, the Lord God, said unto Adam: Who told thee thou wast naked?

And finally we come out, and God says in effect, "What's wrong? Why are you hiding?" and we say, "I was afraid because I was dumb, or fat, or addicted, or something; and I

thought you wouldn't accept me." And He says, "Who told you you were naked or fat or dumb, and what makes you think that that bothers me so much. I made you naked." Now, that's more than God says in the scripture, a bit of a personal *midrash*, but I think it's a reasonable extrapolation.

Unto Adam, and also unto his wife, did I, the Lord God, make coats of skins, and clothed them. (Moses 4:27)

So God addressed Adam and Eve's concern about their nakedness or shame at being in the presence of God by clothing them with skins. This covering is in sharp distinction to their previous choice of leaves. Skins are more permanent, they cover better, and they're certainly warmer and more comfortable; but there's an issue with skins that isn't there with leaves. To obtain the skins something must die—blood must be shed. Not so with leaves. One thinks of Cain's unaccepted sacrifice of the fruits of the ground in contrast with Abel's acceptable sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock.⁹ There is a type here. The covering offered to Adam and Eve is certainly a symbol of the atonement.

The part of the atonement that covers up our adversity is so broad, as we've discussed earlier, because these things bother us much more than that they bother God. God is not disgusted with our weaknesses, or our sickness, or our sorrow. He sees in them the seeds of our sanctification, the way in which we can become like His Son. Weaknesses are a key in the pattern as to how the Lord works with us. He tells us often that He purposefully picks the weak things of the world to accomplish His work.¹⁰

When Jesus came to the Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, why did He have them touch his wounds? The usual answer given is that He was proving to them that He was the Christ, that He was who the voice said He was. But I've never been very comfortable with that as an answer. Really...who didn't believe it already? I think He calls us all to touch the woundedness in Him and in ourselves so that we can be one with Him. Real intimacy comes through shared weaknesses, not strengths; otherwise He'd have us feel His biceps not His wounds.

Let me give you an example from Relief Society socials. When the sisters in the ward get together and have a talent night and display all that they do that is their best, many come away feeling diminished and alienated, feeling that they don't measure up to their other sisters in the ward. So the activity of sharing strengths often produces feelings of personal insecurity and separation from others, if not outright competitiveness. (We could talk about the brethren and Church basketball here too.)

⁹ Moses 5:19-21 And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect....

¹⁰ D&C 1:17-19 Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets—The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh...., 1 Cor 1: 26-29 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called]: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, [yea], and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence....

On the other hand two or three of the same sisters can go out visiting teaching and meet together and have some tender moments when they talk about a wayward child, a failed marriage, a fractured testimony; and they can weep a bit and talk about it and come away, after feeling the wounds, bound together like Sisters. They can meet even ten years later and feel an immediate connection and warmth and uplift just from one brief encounter centred on weaknesses. I think there was something about touching Jesus' woundedness that built a Zion culture in ways that touching His strengths would not have done.

It's significant to me that the Saviour asked us to always remember Him in the context of an ordinance where we are to recall Him at His most human moment when He asked for another way through the suffering, when He asked why He had been forsaken, when He thirsted and was in anguish of body and spirit. During the sacrament we are led to contemplate His being broken up like the bread and poured out like the water.

One of the crowning Melchizedek priesthood ordinances of the temple is the sealing of families. The sealing of marriages in the temple and the sealing of children to parents is proof against one of life's greatest adversities: death. Temple marriage and having our children sealed in covenant bonds to us does not make us immune to sorrow, but when death comes—what a contrast between the hope and comfort of those who have such assurances and those who do not. A major part of the impetus to finish the Nauvoo Temple in President Young's early administration, when so many other things seemed of such vital importance, was to provide the saints with the endowment and their sealings; so that they could face the adversities of hardship, weather, exposure, hunger, and death with the equanimity that only comes to those blessed by the keys of the Melchizedek priesthood.

To return to our everyday life for a moment, let me give you one more example of the use of the keys of both priesthoods. When I served as a bishop I held the keys of the Aaronic priesthood in my ward by virtue of being ordained a bishop and then being set apart to preside over that ward for a time. I was also given Melchizedek priesthood keys being set apart as the Presiding High Priest in the ward. A young mother with two children moved into our ward. She had left her husband for good cause as he was involved in criminal activities and had been abusive to her and their children. She had no marketable skills and had to return to school to have a way to earn a living. In the meantime her family and the ward helped her financially and in other ways. But even with this help their life was greatly changed from what it had been. They left a large city, a relatively prosperous life-style with many activities and recreations and moved to a small town with restricted finances, few friends, and limited resources for the fun things that they had done before. The oldest child in this little family was a boy in the latter years of middle school. He was a bit of a loner after all this. His marks at school suffered, and he had the look of a rather depressed and forlorn little boy. After one year in town he was quite suddenly befriended by a group of boys who, from their perspective at least, were the "in-crowd". He played sports with them, went on family outings with some of them, had associations with their fathers; and his life changed and blossomed. His marks rose. His demeanour changed completely. He seemed to even grow faster. It was a wonderful thing to observe. One day he and his friends were walking down to the lone convenience store in Raymond and they informed him that they didn't buy candy; they shoplifted it, and it was his turn to do so. He expressed reluctance to do that and they said, "If you don't do it, you can't be our friend anymore." Now I don't think that they knew that they were threatening a part of the foundation of his

new life, but under that sort of duress he tried stealing the candy, did it in a ham-fisted way and got caught. The shop owner phoned his mother and after gathering him up, she phoned me—the father of the ward.

She was full of anger at her son and his friends, full of embarrassment that he would do such a thing, and overwhelmed with fear that he was turning into his father—and likely many other emotions. She said, “My son is a thief. I want you to talk to him—right now!” So I invited them to come and see me.

Now let’s sort his laundry before we offer any prescriptive advice.

Has he sinned? Yes. There was a law, he knew the law, he was accountable—over eight and of sound mind, and he had moral agency. He had a choice. He had great pressure on him, but he could have walked away and not done it.

Has he got adversity? Surely! His so-called friends had put him in a terrible dilemma (their sin was actually greater than his in many respects). They had awakened all of his old insecurities and had threatened the return of his privations. He had no good father in his life, and the one he did have had many problems of which he was aware. He was poor. He was still a bit out of his element—he didn’t feel secure in being able to fit in. And his mother had given him an atomic bomb reaction when a hand-grenade would have done. He had some adversity.

So what should I do with the keys? And which keys?

Now I didn’t dissect this all out for him and his mother, I only analyse it now for our edification and understanding. With the keys of the Aaronic priesthood I asked him about his process of repentance. Did he feel sorrow for his choice? Had he made amends? Well, he had apologized to the store owner, paid for the candy that he never actually even kept, let alone ate. He had apologized to his mother and was confessing to me. That struck me as sufficient. I then talked to him about the sacrament and how he might want to pray about what he intended in the future before he took the sacrament the following Sunday. Then I told him that if he did that with real intent and faith that what he had done was completely erased—that his sin was remitted. My assessment was that his sin pile was a relatively small bundle and could be washed on a quick cycle.

His larger pile was the adversity pile. So with the keys of the Melchizedek priesthood I gave him a blessing. That’s what he mostly needed—Comfort and to be touched—held. And I talked to him about the Comforter and the Holy Ghost.

I’m happy to say that his friends didn’t exclude him from their suspect company. They all survived and turned out to be good boys, and now, quite nice people. We all need to be careful about how we judge what appears, by all outwards signs, to be purposeful sin. Do we have young women in our midst who have evidently broken the law of chastity? Have they perhaps had an experience somewhat like this young man? Have they had someone who seemed to change their life, offered them love, made them the centre of someone else’s world for the first time in their life? And then did that person say, “You can’t be my friend anymore unless we steal the candy?” Most sin is accompanied by some adversity. We need the whole of the atonement to be whole.

So to summarize troubles:

If one has sin in his life then he must have faith in Christ's ability to wash him clean, resolve to change, confess his sin to his Heavenly Father and to his bishop, if it's of a serious nature, make amends, apologize, come to the sacrament table and renew his baptismal covenant and then be free of the matter.

I've talked to many who have done this process and yet still persist in agonizing over the past and let it drag them down. It strikes me that in a sense they are breaking a temple covenant when they do that. We promise not to take God's name in vain. Certainly that's swearing and using God's name inappropriately in our conversation, but it can be more than that too. Can we come weekly to the sacrament table and take Christ's name upon us and then walk out feeling unhelped, unlifted, impure, unworthy of His help—and not be damaged anew by that attitude? Have we not taken His name upon us in vain?

If the problem in one's life is adversity, then she must have faith in Christ's ability to turn this into a spiritual gain for her. Note what He's done for others in the scriptures and elsewhere. She must get out of herself and serve someone. Go to the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood. Get a blessing. Reread her patriarchal blessing or obtain one if she doesn't have one. Then believe what it says about her. Go to the temple. Listen to what they say when she's washed and anointed. Be alert and attentive to the Spirit while she's there. See where she's at on the roadmap of life presented to her there. Keep the covenants that she makes. If she was sealed in the temple then she might go back and participate in proxy sealings and listen to what's said. Remember that it was said to her too. If she's not been to the temple or if she is not sealed then she could prepare to attend, go to do proxy baptisms, get a patriarchal blessing and ask for priesthood blessings as she needs them.

Mark tells us of a dramatic story in a woman's life involving the Saviour and the atonement as it applies to adversity.

"And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him and much people followed him, and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." [Mark 5:22-34]

This is a beautiful and significant story. It illuminates the faith of a woman in the midst of the adversity of sickness, who having done her all, made a gesture of belief and hope in God's ability to reach out to her as she reached out to One she believed to be His Anointed. It also shows the humanity of Jesus who felt power leave Him and appeared not to know who took it from Him. It shows the frustration of the apostles in dealing with a Jesus who just didn't seem to look at the world in a normal way at all. Mark is the best teller of the tale. Matthew merely summarizes Mark, and Luke has a few little details to add, but both of the latter accounts seem derivative on Mark or another common source. All three of the synoptic evangelists have preserved this story. I would suggest that is partially because of its importance and relevance to us. We can, in fact, read it as a parable and liken it to us. If Jesus had told the story as a teaching aid. How would we see it then?

Let me insert here a little of the relevant Mosaic law about women with flows of blood. The Mosaic law was ambivalent about blood. In one context it was a purifying justifying agent symbolic of the atonement, and in another sense it was representative of sin, as when Jacob spoke of sin saying:

"...answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day."

But in the Mosaic law the blood from a woman who had born a child made her ritually unclean:

"And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled...she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law...and if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtle[dove]s or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her and she shall be clean."

In the midst of the crowd, which is the world, there is a woman who is all of us. She has an issue of blood. A problem that we'd now call adversity, which might be being regarded as sin by her. A woman with a bloody flow in Jesus' day was ritually unclean. She could not go to the temple, as she would defile it and all within. She could not attend synagogue. She could not go where people were preparing food. She could not prepare food for anyone, not even herself and have it be *kosher*. She couldn't have marital relations with her husband, nor could she touch or embrace her children without making them all ritually impure.

She has had this problem for twelve years. Twelve is often a number that represents spiritual fullness or completion. Perhaps she has spent the necessary time for her benefit on this mountain of adversity. The woman had tried many physicians, people of worldly knowledge and judgment, but was made no better for their ministrations. Indeed, she worsened from day to day. And she had spent her all in seeking their help. This is the person at the bottom, it is the wounded person bleeding and naked in the ditch just off Jericho Drive. It is the Prodigal eating pig feed. All have passed her by on the other side.

She had nowhere to go but home. She was destitute. She had no help but the Good Samaritan.

She had heard concerning Jesus. She had not done great works in His name, bathed His feet with her tears, or served in His Church from what we are told. But she had done all she could do on her own about her adversity. She heard of Him and conceived within herself the idea that if she could but touch the hem or border of His garment as He walked by; she would be healed. So she reached out and touched it, and immediately the fountain of her blood was stopped. This was going to the root of the problem. It was not just that the blood ceased to trouble her, or to appear, or to become noticeable to others etc. No. The problem was stopped at the fountain—at the source. This was no superficial fix, no temporary job. She knew within herself straightway that she was healed. This was an apparent and evident miracle to her. The grace was palpable.

A legitimate translation of her thought from the languages current in Jesus' day (Greek or Aramaic) might be: "If I can but embrace the edge of His atonement, (*kapphar, himation*) I can be holy/healthy/whole. So she does it, and she is healed from the scourge or the plague. (*mastix*) The Greek word used here has the sense of a whip or a scourge. It represents a sin or trouble that we have been beaten with, or more likely, with which we have beaten ourselves.

As soon as the women knew she was healed, Jesus knew that virtue, the Greek says *dynamis*—power, had gone out of Him. Jesus turned to the crowd and asked who had touched Him. The disciples seemed to find the question somewhat trying. They, Peter in particular Luke tells us, protested somewhat irritably that hundreds of people were touching him, he's in a CROWD for goodness sake, and is it their fault if someone touched him? Is this a moment to get touchy about such things? wondered Peter. After all, we're on our way to an important person's [Jairus'] home, and his daughter is dying! We're on a mission here. But Peter was not a Saviour of mankind and perhaps did not fully appreciate that salvation has a cost, and there are all kinds of death and a proportionate salvation. Souls are not saved by no effort, no trouble, no power or no time being taken. The world was not brought into being *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, and neither is an atoning sacrifice an *ex nihilo* creation of God. It costs someone something. To heal a problem requires an output of energy—of power.

Jesus had felt that power leave him and he wished to know who approached with such faith as to draw it out of Him. The woman was frightened and trembled. All of us are frightened and do tremble at the moment of healing. But she came and confessed what had been done to her. She accepted what had happened and gave a true version of what went on within her. She alone could witness this miracle, and impart it to/for others. And Jesus told her to go on with her life in a new-found unity or peace. He recommended courage to her. Courage is most of what constitutes faith, I think. Faith is belief enlivened by action sustained by courage. And this is what she had exhibited. He remarked that her faith had made her whole, holy, and healthy. (*sozo*) They are all the same word, and the same process really. All of us must apply for healing from adversity in the same way. We must all reach out and clutch, hold on to, touch, and embrace the covenant edge of Jesus' garment/covering—the Atonement, which is full of grace and truth as the angel told Adam.

John recounted a story of a woman who was taken in an act of sin (John 8:2-11) but with adversity too, so here we have a person with laundry to wash in both piles. How does the atonement work in a mixed case?

And early in the morning he [Jesus] came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst...

It is worth noting that we have a temple setting here for this story. Jesus is in the role of a teacher. It is the Feast of the Tabernacles: a kind of harvest Thanksgiving-like festival of the Jews. The Jews were to sleep out of doors in booths (Tabernacles or *Succoth*) made of branches to remind them of their ancestors' sojourn in the wilderness on the way to their land of milk and honey. By Jesus' day it had degenerated into a wine festival. It was also the time of the new wine (nouveau Beaujolais etc.) and with the sleeping out of doors and the ready availability of a lot of wine, it was no great trick to go out and find a couple in the act of adultery. We should be sorting the laundry already. Sin? Apparently yes. Adversity? I think so. For example, where was the man in this story? There must have been two of them according to the charge, but only the woman was brought into the court. And to bring a woman of that time and culture into a group of men, before a prominent rabbi (teacher), in the precincts of the temple...there was certainly adversity there.

...They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him...

The whole thing was a set-up. They had, in a cold and calculating manner, used this woman as a pawn to trap Jesus. More adversity for her—she was being callously used to injure someone else. This had nothing to do with making her a better person. Their trap for Jesus was this. If He said “stone her” they could accuse him of treason before the Romans who reserved the sentence of capital punishment to Roman magistrates alone. Jewish courts could not pronounce a death penalty. If He said, “let her go, or give her a lesser punishment” they could accuse Him before the people as a false teacher not supporting the law of Moses—even though this Levitical ordinance had not been enforced in Israel for at least six hundred years. They thought they had wherewith to accuse Him and pull Him down using the Romans' jealous guarding of their magisterial power, or using the public disapproval of His own people—whatever He said He would be diminished.

...But Jesus stooped down, and with [his] finger wrote on the ground, [as though he heard them not]. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard [it], being convicted by [their own] conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, [even] unto the last...

Now...perfect justice has its say. He was the only one capable of judging her perfectly—a Man without sin, and He gave them the opportunity to act on their Law, if they were themselves consonant with that Law. I understand why they left. I have enough sin in my life to know how I'd feel if caught in such a hypocritical situation. I too would leave if

challenged to stand or act in pure justice on the basis of my own imperfection. But here's the truly important question...why did she stay?

...and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord...

They left because of the phrase, *He that is without sin among you*, but I'd wager that what struck her ears first was, *Let him first cast a stone at her!* He had said that they could stone her! Surely she heard that. Yet she stayed. She could have left while they left, while His back was turned and He wrote again in the dust. Yet she stayed. Even though He is perfect justice, He is also perfect mercy; and she must have sensed that. She must have known that she was safe with Him.

...And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

So is Jesus soft on sin? I don't think so, but I think He knows us individually and knows our hearts. This woman gives me great hope. I have done things that are wrong and I could be condemned for them, but I know that she, in His presence, condemned by the world, stayed—despite her evident sin. So I know that I too will be safe with Him.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

He is our Saviour who will heal every wound, wipe away every tear of adversity and redeem us of every sin if we will only come to Him in faith and give Him our all.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

Presenter's note: Given at AMCAP on October 3, 2008 at Salt Lake City, Utah. The opinions and interpretations given here have their origins in many sources that I've read over the years and, in many cases, from insights of my patients in my own counselling practice. They are not all "mine". It must be said that the rarest thing in the world is an original idea. But of course, this presentation represents only my views and opinions about the subject matter. I was not assigned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to make this presentation, and I do not represent that Church in this forum. I claim no better view than anyone's and am grateful for feedback or correction at any time. My reasons for study and doing this sort of thing are well expressed by Erik Erikson in his book *Insight and Responsibility*: *"The challenge of the middle years of life is to choose between generativity and stagnation, between continuing to have an impact or sitting around waiting to die. The inability to generate can cause a person to become excessively involved with himself: his health, his popularity, his memories, his disappointments. Man is so constituted that he needs to be needed, lest he suffer the mental deformation of self-absorption. Generativity is expressed in parenthood, but also in work and creative thought. And above all, man needs to teach."* I suppose that's why we all do it to some degree.