

"He spoke slowly, carefully, choosing his words. He struck Jake as an intelligent, learned man who had long ago resigned himself to spending most of his life in the company of fools."

-THE MINOTAUR  
(Coonts 1989:50)

"It was a mouse tiptoeing toward the sink. David watched as it sat up and wrinkled its nose, then scurried forward; then paused again. He smiled. What a perfect symbol it was. He was a man not a mouse. Or a man not a boy. But as he thought this, something about the image -the self-deprecation?- seemed not quite right; in fact, it was exactly the sort of comment he once might have made about himself...But this thought, in its turn, filled him with impatience. The mouse disappeared behind the countertop."

-CHINA LAKE  
(Hyde 1992:178)

CHAPTER CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . . 491  
PROPHETS ARE LAST . . . . . 491  
FIRST CAN'T BE FIRST LAST - CAN IT? . . . . . 492

## INTRODUCTION:

The first shall be last and the last shall be first. What sort of confused, Alice-in-Wonderland universe is this? We really don't know. And, probably fortunately, we never wonder about it, else we would be perplexed most of the time. This, however, is the example par excellence of the Paradox Postulate that interacts with all aspect of this testing process.

Why should it be that the person who is most important here is going to be the least important over there? Is that a fair paraphrase of the principle? I do believe that his principle is typically assumed in SMD to refer to people, to human beings who are going to show up over there in some capacity. And this principle predicts that we will somehow be in situations that are the converse of the situation we had during mortality.

Let's start testing the edges of this principle with people. Here I am, a humdrum sort of person with a miscellaneous collection of things and a family. I'm not "important" in the scheme of things, either at work, in the neighborhood or at church, and probably not even in my family.<sup>{1}</sup> There is nothing that marks me as important. This little doctrine suggests, then, that due to the fact that I am not important here, that somehow I WILL be important over there.

So, one muses, why should that be? Ot how can it happen? At the first level of investigation, we have to be somewhat skeptical and ask whether this doctrine isn't some sort of a sop thrown to us insignificants to make us feel better. Could that be? I suppose it could, and it would probably be a merciful deception for many of us. In fact, I imagine that many of us actually do apply this little doctrine as a salve to our tender souls in times of pain to make it easier to bear so it does serve that purpose of an amnesiac or pain-reliever. But, if the principle is a real one, that purpose is a rather shabby one for it to fulfill.

Let's look further at purposes by trying this principle on 'important' people. Take the prophet. He seems important does he not? Big responsibilities and duties weigh heavily on him, and his leadership places him in first place for us of the faith. No mortal stands taller, or is more important than he is in this structure. So he is in first place down here. Granting that, let's do something not done by good LDS. Let's try and apply this doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup>"Important" is a slippery term. What it means depends on one's age, social status, education, personal beliefs, politics, etc. And an additional dimension is age. As we age, which isn't necessarily the same thing as 'mature', our frame of reference changes, partially because of possible maturation, but sometimes out of expediency. We develop a need to rationalize some behaviors perhaps. Behaviors and symbols sought after as a teenager appear embarrassingly trivial when we are 30, but as we enter our 40's and 50's some of those same behaviors, perhaps, may take on a rosy cast. Why these changes? It doesn't make sense in some absolute frame of reference that specific acts we committed should receive differing evaluations at different times in our lives. But that's the way it is.

So things that are 'important' at one time become less important at another, and conversely, things that were not important at one time may assume greater importance at another. Sociologists are fond of pointing this out in Sociology 101, often with great impact on impressionable freshmen.

Is this variable nature of 'importance' comparable to the variableness of the importance of being 'first'?

## PROPHETS ARE LAST

If we apply the principle simply and uniformly, we are inclined to conclude that since he is first down here, that he will be last up there. Now what does mean, that he be last? And: doesn't that seem like a poor reward for what he went through down here to fulfill his responsibilities? Take Joseph Smith. Christ is reported somewhere to have said that he has done more for the salvation of man than just about anyone except Christ himself. Does not that suggest that Brother Joe is going to get a fat reward up there? But if that is so, doesn't that sound like a contradiction of the First/Last Flip-Flop?

## FIRST CAN'T BE FIRST LAST - CAN IT?

So one then begins to suspect that being "last" up there may not mean at all what mortals think it means. It may mean 'last' in a sense that these leaders will serve up there, but that's what they do here, too, so this doesn't really help, so perhaps there is another sense of 'last' up there.

Let's take the Christ and apply the flip-flop to him. He was First in the Church down here, since he actually created it. So if that makes him first here, he will be last up there by this little permutation principle. But: We KNOW that isn't true, so we begin to suspect that the meaning of this tidy sounding little doctrine is not at all obvious after all.

What being first and last means here or there really depends on where we are along a chain of variables.<sup>{2}</sup> Christ was the first in his primitive church, but he was hardly first among Jews or Romans. So along the axis of mortal fame or stature, He probably ought be viewed as being 'last' down here, in order to get this doctrine to work. Or in terms of wealth or mortal education, etc. He qualifies as being 'last' or at least far down the list. But, one must ask, is this how the principle is to be interpreted?

This first/last doctrine can be viewed from another vantage point. In this case, take the doctrine that "we find ourselves by losing ourselves." Does this relate to the first/last business? I believe it does at a high level of generalization because the Paradox Postulate characterizes both doctrines. A reversal of position occurs in both cases. If we wish to pursue celestial glory down here, we cannot succeed by simply focussing on that goal. We must instead forget that goal and devote ourselves to being of service to people around us, and being obedient to the principles. We find happiness not by seeking it, rather it derives from satisfaction derived from making others happy, etc.

A nice example of this is butterfly catching. If we vigorously and purposefully chase butterflies, they will be frightened and will fly away. But if we ignore them, and focus on other quiet behaviors, the butterfly will not be spooked so will

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<sup>2</sup>Remember that this reference to the afterlife is to posts-resurrection, not post-mortality. In post-mortality we are still being tested and retain characteristics of this world.

not fly out of reach. Better, s/he might just flutter over and quietly rest on our shoulder when we least expect it. Is that how it works?

So one then tries to generalize from this 'first/last' and 'finding/losing' business so that it will fit into this model. First, one way to determine what its meaning is by deciding what these doctrines require of our spirits. And I believe that the requirement is that we must exert self discipline and self denial in the interest of serving others. We must not place our needs or our position above the requirements of the POS. We must rein in our wishes which derive from longing for those things that we see around us but which we don't have, and exercise forbearance.

So what are the consequences of this type of self denial? They are the same as the consequences of any correct behavior. The nature of our spirit matter is altered in some manner that is advantageous to our eventual status. Our spirits begin to become more celestial-like than they were before we held ourselves in compliance with these principles. And the longer we succeed in holding ourselves in that mold, perhaps not wishing really to be that way, the more likely it is that spirit matter will eventually be modified in positive ways.

This latter point is a crucial one that ought to be repeated in every one of these articles. One the preconditions of these changes in our spirit matter is the state of our "heart". Our intentions must always be focused outward. We cannot ever focus on and address our own needs. The motivation for our behaviors must not be to undergo these positive changes of spirit matter, rather must be to assist those around us, to fulfill the requirements of the law. If we exhibit outward behaviors that appear 'correct', but do not have an internal attitude that is in harmony with that behavior, there will be no change of our spirits. I suspect that there will be some sort of minimal reward granted for the correct behavior, but this reward will likely not be transformation of our spirit matter, which is what the entire plan is about.

This latter precondition or requirement is actually the fundamental filter through which ALL of our actions must be passed and screened. The name of this requirement is a familiar one, "honesty". But the difference in emphasis here is on internal intrinsic integrity. When we are acting in any way, or for that matter just thinking, there is ALWAYS a marker of some kind inside of us which is associated with that act or thought. And this is an inescapable measurement. This marker should not be viewed as something added to or placed on the act, rather it is an intrinsic part of it, in the same manner that the color of this ink is black and the color of this paper is white. Color is intrinsic to the substance, and any ink or paper will always be describable in terms of this dimension. Every ink and paper. In this same manner, actions and thoughts have an intrinsic quality of honesty or integrity which anyone trained and possessed of the correct "eye", can describe.