

I Married a Mormon and Lived to Tell This Tale

Introductory Remarks

Karen Marguerite Moloney

MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS, or persons with no religious affiliation, take on special challenges when they marry Latter-day Saints. In addition to the same problems any inter-faith marriage might encounter—conflicts over church attendance, child-rearing, value and belief systems—non-Mormon spouses also have to deal with the strong community and missionary character of Mormonism. They may feel themselves welcomed with open arms by the Mormon community—only to learn later that the primary motivation for that welcome was a strong desire for their conversion. Conversely, they may find themselves ignored, passed over—or the unintended victims of our in-group humor at, say, a ward dinner. Latter-day Saints, unfortunately, can sometimes appear incredibly insensitive to those among us who do not share our faith, our certainties easily translated into arrogance. Even our best efforts to make non-Mormon spouses feel welcome and accepted may leave them feeling, in so tightly knit a community as our own, the loneliness of an outsider. Within their own Christian religious communities, they may additionally have to deal with the view that the Latter-day Saints they have married are not mainstream Christians, if not actual heretics. Within non-Christian religious communities, reactions may be even more diverse.

The following essays describe the experiences of three of these brave people—people who too often remain fairly mysterious within the context of our everyday ward settings. Their willingness to share their insights with us, though, dispels some of that mystery—and gives

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us a rare opportunity to learn what such necessarily sensitive observers can teach us about ourselves.

“To Celebrate the Marriage Feast Which Has No End”

Wendy S. Lee

FRIENDS OFTEN ASK ME what it is like to be an active Lutheran layperson married to an active Latter-day Saint. I think I can best describe my marriage experience by addressing my comments to my husband.

Dick, sometimes I think that the best times and the worst times of our marriage have nothing to do with our two religions and our two faith systems. But I can't say that, because upon further reflection I don't believe that it's true. The best times *have* had a great deal to do with our two religions, and so have the worst times.

Let me talk first about the best times. When we met, I had just begun the process of becoming a Lutheran minister. I had recently completed the application to enter seminary, and I was agonizing over having to endure four more years of school beyond college and moving to a different city in a different state where I didn't know anyone. Most of the time, I worried that I would never learn Koine Greek, that I would never be able to translate the New Testament, and that I would be sent down from seminary.

That was when you became my friend, and I was glad to have that friendship. A number of my college friends had stopped talking to me because I had suddenly become too religious for them. Some even ridiculed me for devoting my life to service in the church. But you went out to dinner with me and talked about being a Latter-day Saint in Chicago and how it was different from being a Mormon in Montana or in Utah. You told me, perhaps in not so many words, that the

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