

Uprooting and Rerooting: An Immigrant's Escapades in Mormon Utah

Neila C. Seshachari

NO IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES are given a crash course to ease them into the wonders of the New World. Wave after wave of dreamers are drawn to the shores of "America" and deposited into the throbbing heart of this cuckoo land which they have visited over and over again in their imaginations. But the land and its people defy dreams. There are surprises and embarrassments lurking everywhere—and, oh yes, traumas and tears too. All immigrants know that they need resourcefulness; the ones who cultivate humor and fortitude and perhaps patience and perseverance become the true inheritors of the American Dream.

I have come to believe that settling down in the New World is like having your first baby in the old country. Nobody has ever hinted how difficult or life-threatening labor can be. In fact, you have no real idea of birthing at all. There are no Lamaze classes to aid nature's processes and no epidurals to mitigate the physical trauma of reincarnating part of yourself in a new little body. You have only your dreams of motherhood, as you have visions of the land of milk and honey on your onward march into a new continent.

In retrospect, I am surprised we made our big move into this continent so casually. "How would you like to spend a year or two in the United States?" asked my husband Sesh in a lighthearted post-prandial banter as we sat in the veranda of our home in Hyderabad, India. "It would be a good learning experience for the children," he added.

A number of our friends were trying to immigrate to the United States of America. Somehow, the thought of giving up my own culture and moving into an alien one had not appealed to me, but one or two years seemed attractive. Of such casual and unwary moments are human destinies made and American Dreams born.

Mormons talk of personal or prophetic "revelations." Hindus often believe in karma and fate. As I ruminate on those inspired decisions and special circumstances which brought us to Utah, all those concepts of karma, revelation, and fate begin to weave into an intricate design, shaping my destiny in the New World. In no other way can I explain how or why Sesh was offered a Weber State College job that he had not applied for, and our family was given the much coveted immigration visas that we had not sought. For better or worse, we were headed for the land of the Mormons.

There was an exclusive group in Hyderabad composed of Americans and "America-returned" Indians. I don't recall its name. Perhaps it had none. It was a group of friends who shared, among other things, the common experience of having been educated or trained in the United States. At a gathering of that august group, Sesh announced with mock pompous seriousness: "Friends, Neila and I invite you to a party at our home in the United States next Christmas."

The announcement had the predictable response of a contemporary T.V. sitcom. Raising their many heads as one, they asked in a chant, "Where, O where, in the USA?"

"Utah," said Sesh with a flourish and a big smile.

"Ooooh!" they sighed, as their heads started falling on their chests.

There was general despondency for a few moments and then, suddenly, commotion. Everyone asked questions or made comments at the same time. Everyone was agitated. My friend on my right, the wife of a high American Consular official, looked at me in consternation and said, "Isn't that the place where there are Mormons with . . . ?" Her voice trailed off involuntarily and her hands went up from her forehead in circular sweeps tracing the shape of horns, and her eyes went round and wild. I was flabbergasted. When I shook myself out of my momentary consternation, I found Sesh gallantly fielding questions hurled at him from all around. More strangely he, a citizen of India, was defending Americans from other Americans.

"The Mormons are a very nice people, actually," he was saying. He was telling them too about this Mormon family—Walter and Phyllis Whitchurch and their children—he got close to during his Fulbright years in Salt Lake City. Accepting him as one of several paying dinner guests one year when Phyllis started a "small boarding business," they had retained him—perhaps I should say "sustained" him—for the next three years as a member of their own family even after Phyllis shut down her boarding house when she got hired as a teacher in the school district. Sesh and the family had kept in touch during all these years and exchanged gifts and cards. After we were married, even I had been a recipient of their warmth and affection. They were our "family" in Utah, and

they were Mormon. On the way home, Sesh must have told me more about Mormons, but I don't remember. Subsequently I read some brochures about Mormons and their prophet Joseph Smith before I came to Utah in December 1969, three months after Sesh did. I am certain Weber State College did not send them to me. It must have been Sesh. Upon arrival in September 1969, he must have visited his favorite haunts of old, which included the LDS temple grounds. It turned out to be the first in a new series of interminable tours, for every time we have guests from India, we schedule one visit to the Salt Lake Temple Square.

Once a guest of mine responded, "I am not interested in any church or temple. We have plenty in India. I want to see the canyons."

I looked at her sternly and said, "You wouldn't visit Rome and refuse to see the Vatican; would you?"

We visited the temple on our way to the Kennecott Copper Mines!

Immigrants come to the USA with outlandish ideas and expectations about the country—even the educated ones. I am a classic example. I was an assistant professor of English at Osmania University, but I had little real knowledge about the country we were immigrating to. My idea of the USA, Utah included, was that it was a very "advanced," and therefore a totally democratic country where everyone—women, minorities, every citizen—had equal rights. Little did I know that I had landed among the Mormons, one of the most patriarchal of religious communities.

Within a week after I arrived in Ogden, Dr. LaVon Carroll, a colleague at Weber State, told me that she made at least \$2,000 less in salary than her male colleagues of equal training and experience. I had hoped that Sesh, in private, would refute her charges, but he had not. He had confirmed that American women did not have equal rights legally or professionally. "That is one of the reasons salaries are confidential," he had said.

I was despondent about my fallen state as a woman. That was my first "culture shock" as we tried to settle down in the first few weeks after my arrival. Most women I met seemed to be either unaware of their "secondary status" or did not mind it. So when friends asked me solicitously, "What were your first 'culture shocks'?" I would respond politely, "Not any. I already knew a lot about America through my study of American literature." I would cite the comparative "affluence" of even the poorest people in the USA as a "pleasant culture shock," which pleased my friends. But this major shock about my deprived status as a woman I kept hidden from others.

My second major culture shock has to do with my recognition of the hegemony of Mormon beliefs in Utah's public life. That one came to me slowly and in spurts; it sometimes drove me to the edge of despair.

In December 1969, when I boarded the Boeing 747 bound for New York on my way to Utah, I had not the faintest idea that religious bickering of any kind would engage my attention more than fleetingly. Joseph Campbell in an essay titled "The Confrontation of East and West in Religion" written in 1970 says that in the early 1920s of his youth, "We were all perfectly sure . . . that the world was through with religion. Science and reason were now in command. The [First] World War had been won . . . and the earth made safe for the rational reign of democracy."¹ What I understood from Campbell's statement was that the world was through with public display and assertion of religion, which is essentially a private pursuit of individuals seeking spiritual guidance and salvation. There would be no more public skirmishes or wars about religion. No Crusades, no jihads, no holy wars of any kind. How wrong I was.

Take the case of proselyting by Mormons. Coming as I did from India, I had thought that missionaries had gone the way of dinosaurs. When one of my students told me in early 1970 that he had just come back from an LDS mission, I thought to myself, "Oh no, the poor kid was banished to Latin America as convicts were banished in the nineteenth century from England to Australia. What a barbarous custom!" Very slowly did it dawn on me that serving a mission was supposed to be an honor. Even more slowly did I realize that all missionaries are expected to extol their own religion by putting down others' ways of worship. I am still intrigued at the evangelical zeal of institutionalized religions, and I am sometimes sad that in the very act of enforcing righteousness our way, we negate the spirituality and truth of all religions including our own—spirituality that is everywhere around us if only we cared to see.

That the enthusiastic practicing Mormon does not miss a single opportunity to proselyte can be seen from my experience on my very first day in the USA, even before I reached my home in Ogden. On the United Airlines flight from New York to Salt Lake City on a very snowy and cold day in December 1969, I happened to sit next to a dignified gentleman from southern Utah. Exhausted from my continuous intercontinental flight, I had fallen soundly asleep even as the domestic flight began, to be woken up for dinner. This gentleman and I fell to talking after dinner was served. At the earliest opportunity he asked me whether I was a Hindu. I was wearing a gorgeous Kanchipuram silk sari of navy blue and gold color, and a dot or bindi on my forehead. I must have looked like a spectacle in my foreign clothes, a goodly target to spread the true word. My travel companion began tracting right away. He wanted to know what the dot on my forehead meant. He told me he was a Mormon; he was ac-

1. Joseph Campbell, "The Confrontation of East and West in Religion," in *Myths to Live By* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 83.

tually a bishop, he said with some pride. Did I know about Mormons? Yes, indeed, I said. I had heard about prophets Joseph Smith and Brigham Young and how the latter had helped turn a desert into a lush green bounteous valley in Utah.

"LDS is the fastest growing religion in the world," he said pointedly. "You might want to read more about it and visit the Temple Square in Salt Lake City."

Even as I was talking to him, there sprang from the depths of my memory a talk I had had six or seven years earlier in India with Professor William Mulder, himself a Mormon, who had just become the first Director of the American Studies Research Center in Hyderabad and who had previously been at Osmania University in Hyderabad as a Fulbright Visiting Professor from Utah. At a dinner hosted by the American Cultural Center, he was telling me about Mormon polygamy and how, in spite of its being banned legally, it was still practiced in some places.

"What about women?" I asked innocently. "How many women practice polyandry?"

He was nonplussed. "Women were not allowed to marry more than one man at a time," he said.

"Women did not have the same choices?" I exclaimed perplexed.

I had touched a raw nerve in him; he had been taken aback by my simple assumption that women in Utah had the same rights as men. We both laughed nervously and started talking about other things.

Now on my flight bound for Utah, that conversation suddenly fell in place. Disparate and stray bits of conversation about Mormons, outlandish comments about them made by our American friends in Hyderabad, and a couple of Salt Lake temple brochures about prophets Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, read in haste as I was in the throes of packing and vanishing away an entire household, began to take interesting tones.

Sometimes I wonder how other non-white immigrants like us have fared in Utah. Did they suffer any pressures because they were people of color? How did they respond to the Book of Mormon (1981 edition) dictum: "And he had caused the cursing to come upon them [Lamanites], yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity; . . . wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them." I often realize how naive I was when I immigrated, and how many of my traumas and surprises, some of which are not relevant in this essay, would have been mitigated had I taken the trouble to be better informed. But my topic here is my "escapades" with the Mormons. My escapades are not physical; they are emotional, they are spiritual, they are at a level where they hurt and linger the longest.

As a liberal, practicing Hindu, I have no difficulty accepting the di-

vinity of Jesus, Mohammed, the Buddha, or Zoroaster. A verse in one of the Upanishads, loosely translated, says: Call your God by any name you want; Worship your God in any manner you want. As long as your worship is sincere, all worship flows unto Me. And this "Me" is nameless. A total belief in the wisdom of this verse has helped me to be genuinely ecumenical. A concept that I do find difficult to accept is that Jesus is the ONLY son of God. Even harder is the Mormon practice of offering prayers only in the name of Jesus—not even God. I am not sure even Jesus would have approved of the practice even though he did say "I and My Father are one."

As the controversy on public prayer has increased in recent years, and it seems that the Utah legislature is close to allowing school prayers, I find myself asking many questions. In all my twenty-four years in Utah, I have heard public prayers offered generically "to God" or "the Great Spirit" only three times—the first was by Robert Arway, then the Director of the Honors Program at Weber State, followed by Levi Peterson, my colleague and now chair of the English Department at WSU, and finally myself. Every other prayer, frequent in the days before prayers became suspect, was offered in the name of Jesus Christ. Sitting in my black academic robes at commencement time at Weber State, with over 2,000 students of all religions—Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Native Americans, Taoists, and others—I would wince at the insensitivity of offering prayers always "in the name of Jesus Christ."

In grade schools, prayers offered only from the point of one denomination or religion can be truly damaging to the spiritual growth of children of other religions. We have stopped referring to physicians and lawyers as "he"—even the generic he—and nurses and secretaries as "she" because we have now recognized beyond doubt that such language restricts the social and professional horizons of little girls (and little boys) and truly devastates their self-esteem. Similarly, hearing prayers offered only in the name of Jesus Christ over and over again daily is bound to devalue other religions in the minds of those who hear them. What responsibility does the state have not to marginalize other religions under the guise of promoting freedom of religion? The practice of offering Christian prayers in classrooms is not fair to children of other religions. The psychological damage of such actions cannot be measured accurately. I doubt an average Mormon school teacher would willingly offer a prayer directed simply to "God"—a term many religious people could relate to. Then again, proselyting is too deeply ingrained in Mormon culture. As an educator I worry about the prayer issue a great deal.

Every new immigrant needs a mentor who helps the novice ease into the "alien society" in which one has chosen to make one's home. These mentors are not available in a supermarket, unfortunately; perhaps they

can be found in a church. But I had no church or temple of my own. In fact, I have the dubious distinction of being the first Hindu woman in a sari to make Ogden her home. But I had the good fortune to be assigned a Welcome Wagon Hostess named Mary Rowse who soon took the place of mentor and surrogate mother. She eased me into all the rituals one has to observe to be accepted into a new society.

Linguist Paul James Gee points out that practices involving immigrant literacy involve special ways of interacting, thinking, valuing, and believing; these ways have to be integrated with, interwoven into, and constituted as part of the very texture of a nation's receptiveness and beliefs. Gee calls these social practices "Discourses" with capital "Ds." The Primary Discourse is one that a person is born to. Every individual family, native or immigrant, for instance, has its very own special Primary Discourse. There are two Secondary Discourses—a Dominant Discourse which the native or immigrant needs to master for professional advancement, and a Non-Dominant Discourse which helps the immigrant (as well as native) socialize and earn social acceptance in his or her process of acculturation.²

Mary Rowse was my link to understanding both the non-Mormon and Mormon communities. Mary was the daughter of an Englishman who converted to Mormonism and emigrated to Utah in the 1890s. Disenchanted with the LDS faith within two or three years, he had asked to be excommunicated. Thereafter, said Mary, he was threatened with life and mistreated by his once-fellow Mormons, who resorted to the meanest tricks to scare him out of Utah or make him join their fold again. But he had succeeded in eluding them, she said.

I said to her half-jokingly (but half-seriously too), "It appears nobody can really elude them. Your late dad and you and I are all likely to be posthumously baptized."

"Not my dad," she said. "He gave them all a piece of his mind."

But Mary was wrong. In the LDS church genealogical library in Salt Lake City with her daughter-in-law one summer, she discovered to her horror that her dad had indeed been posthumously rebaptized. She flew into a rage; I think she even wrote to the church authorities about this violation of a person's wishes.

I must confess I have been bothered by this possibility. With all respect for the LDS people, I do not condone their zeal for baptism of the dead. Having declined opportunities to convert to Mormonism in my full consciousness in this life, I would feel truly violated if baptized posthumously. "Are you going to let someone else's futile actions dislodge your

2. Paul James Gee, "Literacies, Discourses, and Identities," a paper prepared for the Pre-conference Seminar on "Multi-cultural Perspectives on Literacy and Practice" of the National Reading Conference, 28 Nov.-2 Dec. 1989, copy in my possession.

spiritual equilibrium?" asked Sesh once. For me, it is not just a question of spiritual equilibrium; it is a question of the church's civic integrity and my civil rights accruing from the Bill of Rights to the Constitution. I shall not be converted against the wishes of my living body.

Civil and legal rights aside, I also believe that all humans will be treated fairly and similarly by a just God. You might say I believe implicitly in equal rights of all people in the spiritual realm and in the eyes of God. Insisting that a specific subgroup has a franchise on something special in the hereafter is like insisting that the blood of some humans is differently constituted than that of others, especially minorities.

About twenty years ago, one of my students enrolled in a college writing course followed me out of class one day and said, "Mrs. Seschari, you believe in reincarnation; don't you?"

I was momentarily nonplussed, since her question had nothing to do with anything we had discussed in class.

Seeing my confusion, she asked, "Aren't you a Hindu?"

I said yes, but I didn't have to believe in reincarnation to be one. Now it was her turn to be confused. Didn't Hindus believe in reincarnation? So I explained how Hinduism had no articles of faith like the Thirty-nine Articles in Anglicanism or the Thirteen Articles in Mormonism. Even though most Hindus did believe in reincarnation, every Hindu was free to choose one's own specific beliefs including agnosticism or even atheism as one's own path to salvation or combine various paths as one felt inclined.

She asked, "Wouldn't you like to be with your family when you go up there [meaning after death]?"

She explained how she was born a Catholic, but had converted to Mormonism just before she married a Mormon. Her first son had died in childbirth. She said she was mighty glad she was Mormon because now she would be able to see him in the hereafter. Had she remained a Catholic, her son would have been in Purgatory for time and all eternity, she said with conviction, and she would have had to pray for him eternally. I told her I didn't think God would make an innocent baby suffer in Purgatory for an eternity just because his parents belonged to this or that religion. I was sure God had the same treatment for all virtuous mortals in the hereafter. If there was only one path leading to salvation, I said, God in infinite goodness would have revealed that path to every one of us. Since God had not done so, I chose to spend my daily life morally, spiritually, and intellectually as best I could and leave the questions of the afterlife to God's goodness and justness.

"I'll take care of my pennies," I said, "and God will take care of my dollars in the hereafter."

She was spellbound. "What you say makes sense," she said, "but if I

tell my husband what you said, he will not let me come to college."

"Everyone's religion is true for each one," I added hastily. "Your faith gives you courage to face life's vicissitudes and that's what one's religion should do. Be a good Mormon," I said as we parted.

Only two times in my twenty-four years in Utah have I been visited by missionaries. The first time, it was a pastor who stopped his car abruptly on seeing me, dressed in a sari, standing in the large bay window of our duplex apartment on 22nd Street and Harrison Boulevard and walked to our doorstep. Once he was seated in our living room, he waved his Bible at us and said, "Do you know what this book is?" I assured him I did. "I don't know anything about your religion, but this here Bible says it is the only true word of God." I told him politely that if he had cared to read about other religions, he might have heard similar claims. In fact many people in the world—religious leaders, kings, and some others—claim to be direct sons of God. We were about to go out when he invaded our privacy, and he seemed reluctant to leave until he had lassoed us into the faith. I had to tell him finally that if he gave me equal time to hear about my religion, he might find himself giving up his own, but that was not my intent nor the teaching of my religion. He is the only one in my memory I wished good-bye before he got up from the sofa. And no, he was not Mormon.

A Mormon pair rang our doorbell in the late 1980s. I was genuinely pleased to see them. You must be LDS missionaries, I said, when I saw them so well-groomed and polite. I asked them where they were from. One was from Arizona and the other from right here in southern Utah.

"Too bad" I said, "you didn't get to visit an exotic country in Europe or Latin America."

When asked, I assured them I owned not one but two copies of the Book of Mormon—one was at home and the other in my office. I assured them too that we had genuine respect for Mormons and their prophets. On his earlier visit to Utah, Sesh had been especially impressed with President McKay, who exerted and continues to exert a moral and spiritual influence on him. And we had many Mormon friends. Did we have any questions about the Book of Mormon? one of them ventured.

"No," I said, "none whatsoever." They left graciously, asking me to contact them if I had any questions.

Only last week, I saw a couple of young missionaries walking past our home when Sesh was out working in the yard. Did you talk to those two missionaries? I asked.

"Yes," he said. "They were about to ring our doorbell and I saw them and talked to them for about ten or fifteen minutes. They are good kids, just a couple of years out of MIA."

When we moved into our present neighborhood, one of the reasons

we were attracted to the area was an abundance of children of school-going age and the excellent reputation of the schools. We moved into the neighborhood in late summer just before school began. And indeed our nine-year-old daughter Ruthi did make a number of friends. Within months after our move, however, she asked if she could go with her friends to the Primary. "My friends are all coaxing me to go with them," she added.

We were naturally alarmed. I remembered my friend Jeannie telling me how she had been baptized against the wishes of her parents when she was very young. She had hurt her parents grievously and had been traumatized by that experience in her adult years. It had all started with a simple invitation to her to attend the Primary.

It took us two days of arduous self-questioning and reflection to come to the conclusion that if we prevented our child from going, she would probably be attracted to it all the more. We argued with ourselves in karmic fashion that if she were destined to become a Mormon, we probably would not be able to prevent her baptism. In any case, she needed some spiritual instruction and plenty of discipline. Reluctantly, we told her she could go, and she did for five or six weeks. Then one Wednesday, she came home at a time which was late from school but not late enough from Primary. She told me she had dodged her friends because she didn't feel like going to the Primary. The following week, she asked me to tell her friends that she was not home.

"I won't tell a lie," I said. "If you don't want to go, you should tell them so. Why don't you want to go anyway?" I added.

"Mummy," said my nine-year-old, "they tell me there is only one way to worship God. Even I know there are many ways. Even my Primary teacher doesn't know as much as I do!"

So she stayed home Wednesdays and her friends increasingly stayed away from her. Not until church authorities admonished mothers in a semi-annual LDS conference did I know that indeed Mormon children were discouraged from playing with non-Mormon friends. Perhaps they still are; how is one to know? My child made other friends—curiously, the girls were all non-Mormon, while the boys were both Mormon and gentle.

We had been afraid that our child might be drawn into the LDS faith before she was old enough to choose. She had declined to go to Primary, but ideas about baptism must have fascinated her. There is something in rituals that a Hindu is naturally attracted to. One Wednesday, around 4 p.m., I called home anxiously to find out what my nine-year-old girl was doing; I had been delayed on campus because of a meeting.

"O Mummy," she said, "I baptized Peppi!"

Peppi was our black and white AKC Springer spaniel. I had visions

of the bathtub overflowing, and water dripping all over in our carpeted bathroom, with Peppi running around everywhere in the house vigorously frisking away water dripping from his body.

"You baptized Peppi?" I asked, my voice rising as in a crescendo.

"O Mummy," she giggled, "I baptized him a Hindu. That's okay, isn't it?"

"But how did you baptize him?" I said weakly.

"I put him in the broom closet and sprinkled water on him with my fingers as you do in your puja," she beamed. "He loved it. He was wagging his tail and jumping all over and barking away, and his eyes were big and shining."

I relaxed, and mother and daughter both laughed in merriment.

Mary and her husband Lowell were most amused at Peppi's baptism into the Hindu faith. They were both devout Presbyterians, but as Mary told me, she was increasingly beginning to realize that there was more to religion than what was being taught in churches. She was beginning to see for herself that the Bible contained contradictions and that churches exploited one or another dictum for their own advancement. She was fond of telling me that Brigham Young loved wine and that the LDS church owned shares in the Coca Cola Company, even though its leaders did not want the faithful to drink Coke. "Do you find that ethical or moral?" she would ask.

Mary and Lowell loved to come to our home occasionally when I had a puja, the formal Hindu worship ritual. And they were there not just to observe our Hindu ways as anthropologists study objects, but because they felt that they were part of our family as well and wanted to partake of our holy sacraments. I went with Mary to the Presbyterian Church on 28th Street on special occasions and our daughter Roopa got married in their church, with the Rev. Richard Henry of the Unitarian Church officiating and the Rev. Steiner of the Presbyterian Church offering the final benediction. Roopa and her groom Eddie had written their own wedding vows.

With them we felt a sense of community—which I define as a special psychological haven where everyone is cared for and accepted "as is." Truly spiritual people, irrespective of their religious affiliations, should be able to get along without impinging on or devaluing one another's beliefs. We have a number of Mormon friends too with whom we feel this sense of community; they too have attended pujas at our home. Many of them, though not all, are the *Sunstone-Dialogue-Exponent II* variety of Mormons, if I may use such a term.

Do we feel a sense of community with all Mormons? Probably not. But I feel safe in Mormon surroundings. Mormons are the most helpful and gracious people.

I remember one summer in the early 1980s when the water mains close to a new construction area near our home broke and the gushing waters cascaded into the basement of our neighbor's home on the other side of the street. Within minutes, there were about fifty or sixty people from the ward helping drain the water and pull furniture out of the flooded areas. Women were asked to volunteer to bring lunch for the workers. I volunteered to take a couple of dozen sandwiches.

"This is the real social benefit of belonging to a ward," I told Sesh. "They are like a big family."

Every little thing from the basement of that large house had to be brought out and set on the grass in the front yard to dry. Soon bottles of scotch whiskey, rum, gin, and beer began to appear. I was embarrassed for the family. How awful that their bishop was right there to see! My sympathies went out to the family, and I felt sorry for them doubly all day long.

Later that evening, Sesh said, "I want to give you some good news. The Carlisles, it turns out, are NOT Mormon. Stop worrying for them."

One winter, a few years later, snow fell in Utah in such abundance that a couple of roofs in Ogden collapsed and television and radio messages urged people to have their roofs shoveled. Sesh was away in New York and was not due home for four days, but I didn't panic. I knew what to do. I contacted our ward and within hours, our roof was shoveled. The family who came to help said the snow had given them an opportunity to help their daughter who had been called to serve a mission in Peru. I added \$25 to the check I was writing for the work and told them it was for their daughter's mission.

Living with Mormons hasn't always been easy, but it has often been fun. The first decade was the hardest for me in terms of personal and professional adjustments, but now my community knows me and I know it. Two and a half decades of community involvement have encouraged a healthy intimacy between me and my friends, who can even share a joke or banter about our different gods! I am not sure I can say that I am always comfortable with the Mormon cultural milieu—that changing, shifting, intangible reality often dictated by authorities above and enforced first at Brigham Young University. In some years I have felt upbeat about the Mormon church beginning to open up to the needs of women, other minorities, and cultural pluralism, while in other years I have dreaded its conservative trends. Just this past year, I have become uneasy again. When I hear of Pulitzer Prize-winning scholar Laurel Thatcher Ulrich not being allowed to speak on BYU campus, or of faculty who are most up-to-date on contemporary scholarship somehow seen as not scholarly enough to merit tenure, I become pensive. Did we do right in sinking roots here? But, I tell myself, in which other state would we find

such clean-living, gracious, and loving people with whom we genuinely share so many values? I look forward to seeing a more tolerant, more pluralistic/multicultural/ecumenical Utah with as much faith as the Latter-day Saints look forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ.