

access to understand them. But even if he couldn't fully comprehend (and who can?) his neighbors' marriages—their promises, sharing, and sexual dynamics—there were still numbers to be adduced: How many young “widows” did he know? Who supplied their milk and coal? How many children did they have? What were their residential arrangements?

The reader suspects the author knows more than he will say. His hagiography of Anthony W. Ivins may even be a case of active obscuration. While Ivins, the first Juarez Stake president, was an exemplary man, it is also true that the Church used his monogamy to quell rumors of ongoing polygamy in Mexico, of which Romney cannot have been wholly unaware. Ivins, when he was later in the First Presidency, claimed to have performed more polygamous marriages after the Manifesto than anyone else in the Church.²

The practice of polygamy after the Manifesto in the Mexican colonies, until 1912, was partly responsible for the convulsions threatening Mormonism after the turn of the century. When the author's cousin Junius Romney told a congressional inquiry that the Saints had settled in Mexico mainly for the cheap land and warm weather, few believed him. Skepticism in Washington nearly cost Utah's senator Reed Smoot his seat and President Joseph F. Smith his reputation when his truthfulness under oath was challenged. In Utah, ungovernable factions arose and split from the leadership and many believed that Apostle John W. Taylor, who had wives in Mexico, and Apostle Matthias Cowley had been unfairly sacrificed. The Mexican colonies' importance in the larger Mormon history is, unfortunately, absent from this account. Nonetheless, the account offers a valuable documentation of many other aspects of daily life in the Mormon colonies of Mexico.

Notes

1. Orson Pratt, quoted in James Z. Stewart, *Journal, Archives, Family and Church History Department*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

2. Quoted in B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 172.

Heartfelt Theater

Thom Duncan. *Matters of the Heart*. A staged reading sponsored by The

Nauvoo Theatrical Society, Bronson residence, Orem, Utah, Friday, September 8, 2006. Script available from Encore Performance Publishing, South Jordan, Utah, <http://www.encoreplay.com>.

Reviewed by Nan McCulloch, Draper, Utah, an avid theatergoer who studied dance at Brigham Young University and theater at Weber State University

You might say that Thom Duncan is the founding grandfather of The Nauvoo Theatrical Society. In 1983 Duncan owned Theatre-in-the-Square in Provo, Utah, the first theater dedicated to the production of LDS-themed dramatic works. This was where, in 1985, Duncan first produced his play *Matters of the Heart*. When this theater closed, he, Scott Bronson, and several other persons founded a writers' group. The group wanted to form a society to showcase and promote Mormon theater. A number of years passed before they succeeded in organizing a non-profit foundation, which they eventually agreed to name The Nauvoo Theatrical Society.

In 2002 The Nauvoo Theatrical Society opened its Center Street Theatre in Orem, Utah, the first theater company devoted solely to the production of Mormon theater. For a season Mo-theater caught fire and was proclaimed a success by audiences and critics. The high-quality productions that ensued proved excellent, from the well-written scripts to the acting and directing. Sadly, the playhouse closed after the first season due to city building codes and insufficient financial support. But in spite of this symbolic death of Mormon theater, its purpose—to preserve, enrich, and expand the Mormon cultural landscape—remained a small spark smoldering.

Fast-forward four years and the phoenix rises from the ashes. In the shadows of the Provo Temple and Brigham Young University in conservative “Happy Valley,” Mormon playwrights are springing forth and staged readings are happening at the BYU Talmage Building Auditorium and UVSC Black Box Theatre. *Matters of the Heart*, just as relevant as it was in 1985, was staged Friday, September 8, 2006, as a fund-raiser on a make-shift stage in Scott Bronson's backyard. Plans are currently in the making to house The Nauvoo Theatrical Society at a new location.

Thom Duncan is the first author, to my knowledge, who has developed the concepts put forth in Richard D. Poll's essay “What the Church Means to People Like Me” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 4 [Winter 1967]: 107–17). Poll's Liahona/Iron Rod dichotomy, taken from

the Book of Mormon, has since become standard in the body of Mormon thought. This essay began an intellectual awakening in me which was further fueled by the writings of Eugene England and Lowell Bennion. I can imagine Duncan's questioning young character, Paul Baines, following a similar path.

Matters of the Heart is a story about Robert and Alice Baines and their son Paul who is coming home from his mission in France a year early. Obviously Paul's parents are worried and haven't a clue about why he's coming home. The mission president assured them that Paul was an effective missionary and said that Paul would explain his reasons when he arrives home.

Robert Baines is a respected stake president—kind but inflexible. Alice Baines is a loving mother and a devoted helpmeet to her husband; she accepts her role as “the example” in the stake over which her husband presides. Awaiting Paul's return, Robert and Alice try to go about life as usual, but agonize over this turn of events. When Paul finally arrives, the audience encounters a sensitive, intelligent young man who loves his parents and wants to please them but seems conflicted in his feelings about the Church. Alice and Paul have no problem relating to each other and resuming their former comfortable relationship, but Robert and Paul are ill at ease and self-conscious. A return to normal for them seems unlikely.

When Paul finally tells his parents why he left France early, it is clear that Robert cannot accept Paul's decision. Were Paul's reasons for coming home related to incompetence or indiscretion, Robert could have understood, but they are far more complicated. During his mission, Paul's youthful idealism and borrowed testimony have been challenged, leaving him questioning and insecure. Paul asked for divine inspiration before making this critical decision to return home early, and he feels that his decision was confirmed by the Spirit. Robert infers that Paul's inspiration may have come from another source.

When Robert and Paul voice their feelings about the Church, neither understands the other. Both are “good Mormons” but differ in their approach. Robert believes that obedience is primary, that there is an answer to every gospel question, and that the prophets are infallible. Paul values his agency, questions all aspects of the gospel, and thinks all humans are flawed—even the prophets. He still has faith that the gospel is true, but isn't so sure about the Church. Robert tries to force Paul to pray with him, but Paul is angered by what he considers intimidation. After this uncom-

fortable attempt by Robert to manipulate Paul, Paul leaves in anger and Robert takes a phone call saying, "It's OK, I wasn't doing anything important."

After Robert leaves the stage, Paul and Alice are able to discuss what has just transpired. He feels that his relationship with his father is unsalvageable. Paul says that his father is an Iron Rod Mormon and that he considers himself to be a Liahona Mormon. Alice admits to having doubts herself but is definitely a closet doubter with no intention of coming out. She understands both Paul and Robert and loves them fully in spite of their flaws, but is not sure she will still be loved if her weakness is revealed. Nevertheless, Alice comes down as the "voice of reason" in the play. She reminds Paul that God made both of these persons and that the Church needs Liahonas and Iron Rods to accomplish God's work.

Duncan uses an azalea bush as an analogy throughout the play. Robert planted the bush when Paul went on his mission, hoping it would thrive and bring forth blooms. For the past year Robert has watered, pruned, and fussed over his now-sickly bush, trying to make it beautiful. The nurseryman told him that he watered the shrub too much. At the end of the play, Robert comes home from the nursery with a new azalea bush. The replanting seems to symbolize a new beginning for them.

While he and Paul dig up the ailing bush and plant the healthy one, Alice, at Robert's request, reads aloud from Jacob 5 in the Book of Mormon. This chapter is a parable recounting how the master of a "vineyard" sees his olive tree start to decay and responds with redoubled care. He prunes it, digs about it, and nourishes it, but finds the top beginning to perish. The master is grieved because he doesn't want to lose his vine. He asks his servant what he could have done differently. He wants to know who has corrupted his vineyard. The servant answers that it could be the loftiness and the pride of the vineyard. But he says that the roots are still good; but the branches have grown faster than the strength of the roots. The lord of the vineyard asks again what he could have done more, and the servant says to spare the bush a little longer.

I have trouble with this ending. The clear message I get from the parable is that the lord of the vineyard overwatered the olive but that the roots were still good and he must "spare it a little longer" or be patient. Since Paul was also impatient and prideful, his branches grew faster than his roots could support. He has some maturing to do. It therefore seems