Perhaps these forums are part of the answer to closing the "gulf" of mistrust between LDS feminists and traditionalists that opened up in the wake of IWY and the ERA. Recently, an Exponent II Blog discussion touched on the history captured by Bradley's book. One respondent reflected on the differences between the feminists of her generation and the younger "blogging feminists," commenting: "Most of the women on feministmormonhousewives and other blogs don't remember Sonia Johnson, or the September Six, or the International Women's Year debacle. . . . [T]he younger feminists don't have the sense of worry about what they say that those of us who remember those times have."

One of the co-founders of the *Exponent* blog responded: "While I remember the September Six and have studied Utah's IWY and the ERA, I didn't actually have to live through those events. While I keep those events in mind when I write a blog, I think I do feel more free to write what I like because I haven't had to watch my contemporaries be censored."

There is danger both in being bound by history and in being ignorant of it. If Mormon feminism wants to have a seat at the table, we need people like Martha Sonntag Bradley who will offer a rich perspective of our own recent history as we seek to build bridges and create a vision for the future.

Balancing Faith and Honesty

Segullah: Writings by Latter-day Saint Women. Online journal, http://Segullah.org.

Reviewed by Darlene Young, secretary of the Association for Mormon Letters and member of Segullah's *editorial board*

I have long bemoaned what I felt was an empty niche in LDS publishing—that is, a publication that is absolutely committed to upholding the doctrines and leadership of the Church but is also equally committed to exploring all aspects of living a life of faith, including its difficulties, without any sugar-coating. I wanted something that avoided both shallowness and cynicism. I'm excited about the possibilities of a new LDS women's literary journal, *Segullah,* which I believe is filling that niche. With its casual, intimate tone, *Segullah* appeals to women of all levels of education,

but its articles and poetry are thoughtful and well written without sentimentality and pat answers.

Segullah began in the spring of 2005 as an outgrowth of a women's writers' group. The name, Hebrew for "peculiar treasure," comes from the Old Testament where the Lord uses it to designate his covenant people (Ex. 19:5; Ps. 135:4). The journal's mission is "to encourage literary talent, provoke thought, and promote greater understanding and faith among Latter-day Saint women." I asked Kathryn Soper, editor of the journal, what makes an essay good for *Segullah*. "Honesty," she answered. "We want to hear from women who lift the veil on their Church face and show what goes on inside as they try to live the gospel—the struggles and the triumphs, the challenges and the joys. Because we have testimonies, we believe that the simple 'Sunday school' answers are true, yet living them can be complex. We are all, after all, just works in progress." Essays in *Segullah* address difficult topics such as learning to accept a child's homosexuality, living with a chronic illness, or simply learning to have faith in the face of ambiguity.

An example of the bold, truthful writing that Soper describes is found in the essay that won the journal's first annual essay contest. "When Life Begins," by Kerry Spencer, describes one woman's experience with in-vitro fertilization, and her agony when she gets a message from the nurse too late:

> "Your embryos," they say when we finally get a hold of them. "We thought two of them were dead, but they weren't. They started dividing again. But now it's too late."
>
> Too late?
>
> "Too late. They're too big to be frozen now; they won't survive."
>
> Two blastocysts in my gut.
>
> Two blastocysts dying in the lab.
>
> 4 blastocysts = 1 human being.
>
> But now it's too late.
>
> I am crying before I am off the phone with the clinic. The nurse is upset too. "Why didn't you take your phone with you?" she is asking. "Why didn't you?"
>
> I was doing genealogy. I was doing the right thing.
>
> I curse the ghosts of my ancestors.[1]

Spencer does not minimize the pain of her unanswered questions by providing an unrealistic happy ending. "Neither of us knows when life begins," she says at the end. "All we know is that *something* has been lost." But

Spencer's loss is our gain: we have taken the journey with her; we have felt her pain, and our souls have grown.

Not all of the essays are about difficulty. Some are just for fun, such as Heather Harris Bergevin's "An Hour in the Life,"[2] detailing her family's effort to get to bed one night, or Courtney Kendrick's "Downtown Sister Brown and the Department of Defense,"[3] about a phone call from the government regarding one of her mission companions. The poetry and artwork are celebratory of all aspects of a woman's life. The editors clearly believe that the gospel is, indeed, good news.

Other than an occasional column dedicated to men ("He Speaks"), male voices are missing from *Segullah.* Originally, this was natural, since it was a women's writers' group that began the journal, but now there is an official policy of not publishing poetry or artwork by men (or essays outside of the "He Speaks" column). "Women speak differently when they know they are speaking to other women," Soper explains. "We want to preserve that intimacy in the discussion. We want to tell stories for each other."

The first four issues are themed on topics that the editors feel speak to women: "Our Potential and Progression as Daughters of God," "Exploring Times of Transition and Upheaval," "Women Proclaiming the Gospel" and "Cleave Unto Charity." A rough survey of the articles in each issue illuminates an overriding theme of trying to increase in charity for others and oneself despite weaknesses. Other common topics include dealing with affliction or ambiguity in the gospel, dealing with differences, and rejoicing. These are the kinds of things women want to know about each other and share with each other but for which we lack time and opportunity in our official meetings.

Reading *Segullah* is like joining in a gathering—one in which women come as they are, stretch out on sofas, and let their hair down. This sense of informal and accepting community is something the editors have deliberately created. When the editors receive an essay that they believe is powerful but not well written, they will put in extraordinary work with the writers to prepare the piece for publication, sometimes through four or five drafts. Serious about upholding high standards from the very beginning, the editors established an editorial board that included such names as Cherry B. Silver (past president of the Association for Mormon Letters), Boyd J. Petersen (UVSC and BYU professor) and Beverly Campbell (noted LDS author and speaker and sponsor of the journal's annual essay

contest). An educated reader will recognize the high quality of editorial work, yet a less-experienced reader will not find the language difficult or exclusive.

In an effort to broaden its community, the editors have created a website and blog that function both as publicity for the journal and as an additional forum for women to share stories with each other. Often the blog entries are direct responses to specific pieces in the journal, inviting discussion at the same time as increasing readership.

In 2007, production has increased to three issues per year. All back issues are archived and available for reading online at the *Segullah* website. Although Soper feels strongly about continuing to make the entire text of each issue available free through the website, the high quality of the artwork and the way women love to share the issues create a continued demand for printed issues.

From what I can tell, many LDS women will enjoy *Segullah*. I'm convinced that its audience is large and thirsty for it, and that the journal's popularity will grow as fast as it is passed around. Sample articles and information about submissions and guidelines for the essay contest are available at http://www.Segullah.org.

Notes

1. Kerry Spencer, "When Life Begins," *Segullah* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 18–19.

2. Heather Harris Bergevin, "An Hour in the Life," *Segullah* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 26–27.

3. Courtney Kendrick, "Downtown Sister Brown and the Department of Defense," *Segullah* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 13–15.

A Novel with a Lot of Way-Out-There Ideas

D. Michael Martindale. *Brother Brigham.* Provo, Utah: Zarahemla Books, 2007. 258 pp., $15.95.

Reviewed by Matt A.Thurston, CPA, MBA, Sunstone board of directors; elders' quorum instructor; avid cinephile, bibliophile, and musicphile; husband and father of three

Joseph Smith received golden plates, magical translating devices, and