

# DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT





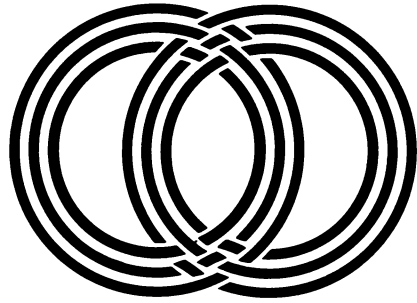
EDITORS: *Martha Sonntag Bradley and Allen Dale Roberts*  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: *Gary James Bergera*  
OFFICE MANAGER: *Jason Bradley*  
SCRIPTURAL STUDIES: *Mark D. Thomas*  
FICTION: *William Mulder*  
POETRY: *Susan Elizabeth Howe*  
BOOK REVIEWS: *Delmont R. Oswald*  
BUSINESS MANAGER: *Alan L. Smith*  
LEGAL COUNSEL: *Michael W. Homer*  
DESIGNER: *Warren Archer II*  
ART EDITOR: *Graphic Studio*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*Paul M. Edwards, Independence, Missouri*  
*B. J. Fogg, Stanford, California*  
*Michael W. Homer, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*David C. Knowlton, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Armand L. Mauss, Pullman, Washington*  
*Steven Peterson, Ephraim, Utah*  
*Lorie Winder Stromberg, Los Angeles, California*

EDITORIAL BOARD

*J. Michael Allen, Orem, Utah*  
*David Anderson, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Curt A. Bench, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Melodie Moench Charles, San Antonio, Texas*  
*Todd Compton, Santa Monica, California*  
*Gloria Cronin, Provo, Utah*  
*Steven Epperson, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Vella Neil Evans, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Kent Frogley, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Harvard Heath, Provo, Utah*  
*George Henry, Jr., Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Duane E. Jeffery, Provo, Utah*  
*Dale C. LeCheminant, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Kathryn Lindquist, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Rebecca Linford, Chicago, Illinois*  
*Ron Molen, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Martha Pierce, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Gregory A. Prince, Gaithersburg, Maryland*  
*D. Michael Quinn, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Marybeth Raynes, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Paul C. Richards, Orem, Utah*  
*Kent A. Robson, Logan, Utah*  
*John Sillito, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*Kathy Smith, Layton, Utah*  
*Margaret Merrill Toscano, Salt Lake City, Utah*  
*David P. Wright, Chelmsford, Massachusetts*  
*Lawrence A. Young, Salt Lake City, Utah*



# DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

*is an independent quarterly  
established to express Mormon culture  
and to examine the relevance of religion  
to secular life. It is edited by  
Latter-day Saints who wish to bring  
their faith into dialogue with the  
larger stream of Judeo-Christian thought  
and with human experience as a whole  
and to foster artistic and scholarly  
achievement based on their cultural  
heritage. The journal encourages a  
variety of viewpoints; although every  
effort is made to ensure  
accurate scholarship and responsible  
judgment, the views expressed are  
those of the individual authors and are  
not necessarily those of  
The Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter-day Saints or of the editors.*

CONTENTS

LETTERS

iv

ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

BORDER CROSSINGS	<i>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich</i>	1
TOWARD A MORMON THEOLOGY OF GOD THE MOTHER	<i>Janice Allred</i>	15
MY SEARCH FOR THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER	<i>"Linda Johns"</i>	41
"SEIZING SACRED SPACE": WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN EARLY MORMONISM	<i>Martha Sonntag Bradley</i>	57
ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED: AMY BROWN LYMAN AND RELIEF SOCIETY CHARITY WORK, 1917-45	<i>David Hall</i>	73
IN SEARCH OF WOMEN'S LANGUAGE AND FEMINIST EXPRESSION AMONG NAUVOO WIVES IN <i>A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS</i>	<i>Helynn H. Hansen</i>	93
JUANITA BROOKS AND FAWN BRODIE— SISTERS IN MORMON DISSENT	<i>Newell G. Bringhurst</i>	105
MAMA	<i>Guenevere Nelson</i>	129
MATRICIDAL PATRIARCHY: SOME THOUGHTS TOWARD UNDERSTANDING THE DEVALUATION OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH	<i>Erin R. Silva</i>	139
I MUST SPEAK UP	<i>Hilda Kathryn Erickson Pack</i>	157
THE SWEETNESS OF CHERRY COKE	<i>Joleen Ashman Robinson</i>	165
FAMILIAL, SOCIOECONOMIC, AND RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR: A COMPARISON OF LDS AND NON-LDS WOMEN	<i>Tim B. Heaton</i>	169

SCRIPTURAL STUDIES

TOWARD A FEMINIST INTERPRETATION OF LATTER-DAY SCRIPTURE	<i>Lynn Matthews Anderson</i>	185
---	-------------------------------	-----

NOTES AND COMMENTS

MESSAGES FROM THE MANUALS: TWELVE YEARS LATER	<i>Janine Boyce</i>	205
IF MORMON WOMEN HAVE HAD THE PRIESTHOOD SINCE 1843, WHY AREN'T THEY USING IT?	<i>Margaret Merrill Toscano</i>	219

FICTION

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY	<i>Mary Clyde</i>	227
--------------------------	-------------------	-----



## POETRY

FOR THE GIRL WHO SAW HER MOTHER COLD.	<i>Marni Asplund-Campbell</i>	9
NESTLING	<i>Michael R. Collings</i>	54
MORMON CONVERSIONS	<i>Laura Hamblin</i>	71
HIS SERMON	<i>Anita Tanner</i>	103
SERVING THE PAPERS	<i>Lance Larsen</i>	137
BEAUTIFUL NAKED WOMEN	<i>Holly Welker</i>	168
GOING DARK	<i>Anita Tanner</i>	184
THE INVISIBLE WOMAN	<i>Holly Welker</i>	218
MARCUS	<i>Brent Pace</i>	247

## REVIEWS 235

A DIMINISHED THING? <i>Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society</i> by Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher	<i>Cheryl May</i>
A HISTORY OF TWO STORIES <i>Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society</i> by Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher	<i>Peggy Pascoe</i>
SECRETS UNDER THE SURFACE <i>Crazy for Living: Poems</i> by Linda Sillitoe	<i>Emma Lou Thayne</i>

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS 249

## ABOUT THE ARTIST/ART CREDITS Inside back cover

*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* is published quarterly by the Dialogue Foundation, P.O. Box 658, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84110-0658, 801-363-9988. *Dialogue* has no official connection with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Third class postage paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Contents copyright 1994 by the Dialogue Foundation. ISSN 002-2157. Regular domestic subscription rate is \$30 per year; students and senior citizens \$25 per year; single copies \$10. Regular foreign subscription rate is \$35 per year; students and senior citizens \$30 per year; air mail \$55 per year; single copies \$15. *Dialogue* is also available on microforms through University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-1346, and 18 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4EJ, England.

*Dialogue* welcomes articles, essays, poetry, fiction, notes and comments, letters to the editor, and art. Preference is given to submissions from subscribers. Manuscripts must be sent in triplicate, accompanied by return postage, and should be prepared according to the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* including double-spacing all block quotations and notes. For the reference citation style, please consult issues from volume 26 on. If the submission is accepted for publication, an electronic version on an IBM-PC compatible diskette, using WordPerfect or other ASCII format software, must be submitted with a hard copy of the final manuscript. Send submissions to *Dialogue*, P.O. Box 658, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84110-0658. Artists wishing consideration of their artwork should send inquiries to the Designer or Art Director at the same address. Allow three to six months for review of all submissions.

### *Counting the Cost*

For decades a struggle has existed between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Christian community at large. The LDS church wishes recognition as a bona fide "Christian" denomination with full brotherhood in the Christian fold. They refuse on the basis of their definition of a Christian. The LDS church argues that a Christian is one who believes in Jesus Christ and follows his teachings and on that basis Mormons are Christians as much as they are. After all, in the name of the church, the chief subject of its sermons and central character of its theology is the savior Jesus Christ.

"No," they say, "you can't be Christian because you don't believe in Jesus Christ the *way* we do. Our Christ is part of the trinity, a concept you reject. You say the same religious words as we do but you mean different things by these words. Your meanings are alien to us. You don't belong."

Similarly, some leaders of the LDS church are employing the same exclusionary tactics against LDS intellectuals and liberals.

The alternate voices say that they believe in Joseph Smith as a God-inspired prophet who brought forth the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ in whom alone there is salvation from the sin and sorrow of this world. They acknowledge at the same time that there may be some difficulties in the historical facts which traditionally support Mormon beliefs. However, they steadfastly hold to the idea in spite of the historical anomalies. They want to belong. It is important to them.

Yet the official church tells intellectuals that they must believe in Christ the *way* the spokesmen do (with complete and unilateral acceptance of the histori-

cal traditions), otherwise they may not be "one of them."

If church leaders have been puzzled by the dogmatic, intolerant behavior of Christian fundamentalists toward Mormons, now they can at least understand where the fundamentalists are coming from. They can say, "We understand now why you exclude us. It makes perfect sense for you to protect your strict views by excluding peculiar notions. We won't try to persuade you any more. We didn't understand until now. We're sorry."

Or they can say, "If it is patently unfair for fundamentalist Christians to exclude us as they do, then it is equally unfair for us to do the same thing to our own brothers and sisters in the gospel, who are part of the church we all belong to. It didn't occur to us that this is what we were doing. It must have seemed very unjust. We're sorry."

If any of this argument makes sense, they ought to apologize to *somebody*. But maybe having power means never having to say you're sorry.

A second effect of this accusatory tactic is to objectify the LDS intellectual/liberal/dissenter/non-conformist the same way a slave or an abused individual is made into something morally less than all the rest of us. If you believe that a person is less than what you are or wholly other from you, a non-person, you feel morally justified when you abuse them. You can punish, you can restrict, you can muzzle them, you can label them, you can discount their experience, you can impugn their character and accuse them of being unrighteous, all without becoming blameworthy.

These responses to the intellectual by professing Christians are, however, blameworthy on other grounds. Is it what Jesus himself would do? How would he handle the "sinner," the way-



ward one, the prodigal, the one who has "lost his way"? (That is, if you believe the intellectual is one who is "wayward" or "has lost his way.") How long was he patient with stiff-necked Israel? (Maybe the fundamentalist Christians are right about Mormons not being Christian.) Are the actions in the above paragraph the sort of conduct enjoined in D&C 121? Would a priesthood brother do those things to another priesthood brother or sister? Isn't love the answer rather than objectification?

When you objectify someone—a woman or a foreign enemy or a perceived unbeliever—you are not obligated to "walk in their shoes," to try to understand things from their perspective, to ask yourself how they must feel. It would not make sense. They certainly do not feel the way you do, so you can mistreat them. Besides, it's for their own good, and they can't feel it anyway. Surely it would be improper to respond to their questions, to address the issues they raise. One cannot do that and maintain the objectified relationship. That would be treating them as you would wish to be treated. (Yet another familiar Christian injunction—"the Golden Rule"—falls victim to oppression.)

In conclusion, we must ask another question: Just how "dangerous" are these alternate voices? In a church of 8.5+ million worldwide, how threatening can less than .05 percent of the membership be? That is based on a rough estimate of *Sunstone/Dialogue* adherents. The actual voices are far fewer. When the Jewish nation was troubled by a small group of "alternate voices," one of the Sanhedrin proposed a different response than the usual. He suggested they be left alone on the grounds that error has a way of defeating itself and gradually disappearing from the scene, whereas truth will succeed in spite of

effort to extinguish it. Where is Gamaliel now that he needs him.

The general counsel coming down to the membership regarding response to opposing voices from outside the church, "anti-Mormons," etc., is to ignore them. Members are not to dignify their statements with a reply. Why does the church treat its own worse than it treats outsiders? Is it because its own are "family." In the church, the family is the central unit, the foremost model for governance. Yet social experience reveals that it is in the family where most of the abuses against individuals occur. It is where free agency is allowed to flourish least. Are official church actions just a reflection of prevalent, yet unspoken and unendorsed, attitudes toward family members who seem too different?

The previous questions demand a final question: Just how dangerous is the official response to these alternate voices? What do you stand to lose by allowing dissent and what do you stand to lose by crushing it? Count the cost.

Christopher P. Russell  
Salt Lake City, Utah

### *Profound Deceit*

Thank you for another attractive and substantive issue (Fall 1993). Let me offer a few comments about F. Ross Peterson's articulate review of *Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case*, by Richard Turley, regarding the Mark Hofmann case, that appeared on pages 217-19.

First, a correction. Although *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders* (which I co-authored with Allen Roberts) reached bookstores in April 1988, it was not "published before Hof-

mann's confession was released." The book deals thoroughly with his discussions with the prosecutors, released July 1987, and his January 1988 board of pardons hearing, at which he discussed the murders.

Certainly deceit fueled Hofmann's victimization of many including the LDS church and certain churchmen. How ironic that Turley's important disclosure (in proving that church leaders were straightforward) is that two apostles—and Turley and perhaps other employees—each knowingly withheld the William E. McLellin collection from court proceedings and allowed false testimony to be entered below the names of two general authorities.

Let Turley argue from hindsight with the views and conclusions of those most involved in the case and most interviewed; the existence and location of the McLellin collection were viewed by law enforcers as crucial. Beyond this profound deceit, consider the disrespect shown to the court, to the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, to the deceased and their survivors, and to all of us who accepted those sworn statements in good faith.

Thanks to Ross Peterson for a precise analysis of how history-phobia set the stage and moved the plot. Turley's information and the current openness regarding the McLellin collection are laudable since such improve the general enlightenment. Weighed against the human costs of this tragedy and the monumental effort to bring Hofmann to even a compromise justice, doesn't this influx seem a bit late?

### *Self-righteousness on a Pedestal*

Although I had heard about your journal I had never read it before a few days ago as I strolled through the BYU Bookstore on my way to do some homework. I began reading a wonderfully written article by Paul Richards entitled, "Does Paying Tithing Make You a Voting Shareholder? Brigham Young University's Worldwide Board of Trustees" in the fall 1993 issue, pages 59-69. Mr. Richards is like a breath of fresh air on paper concerning some of the problems he encountered as BYU's Public Communications Director for thirteen years. I found I couldn't put the article down, and although somewhat an expensive purchase for me, I purchased the journal anyway.

It's so good to see an administrator from BYU breathe some realism into some of the challenges they're faced with, particularly from our own LDS community. I'm quite sure because of the many controversial elements of our church that serving as BYU Public Communications Director is not an easy challenge, however Margaret Smoot (the current Public Communications Director here) should at least consider taking some lessons from a real pro.

Since my conversion to the LDS church and my flight here from Cincinnati to attend school I've been quite surprised by some of the extremely narrow-mindedness of the Mormon community here in this area. It's nice to see someone not pander to all of those who bring the church to a lower level by arrogantly and openly setting their self-righteousness upon a pedestal for everyone to view!

Linda Sillitoe  
Salt Lake City, Utah

John Pollard  
Provo, Utah



*Memberships on the Line*

The enclosed contribution will not only restore my *Dialogue* library from errant borrowers but is given in the spirit of saying thank you for issues such as spring 1993. For me, that issue is what *Dialogue* is all about and is representative of its best energy and creativity. It should be part of what is most helpful to the church but appears to be part of what is so unfortunate, namely, action such as that taken against Lavina Fielding Anderson.

I understand your challenges and vividly recall our executive committee meeting more than twenty years ago when we decided to print the spring 1973 issue of *Dialogue*, which included the article by Lester Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," as well as responses and perspectives. Since a draft of the article had some degree of circulation, we were told, by those who think they should speak up for the leaders of the church, that we were putting our memberships on the line. Although concerned about these rumors, our hope was that the article would motivate thought and prayer.

Keep up the good work.

Tom Anderson  
Los Angeles, California

*Damages Credibility*

I felt Brent Metcalfe's article in the fall 1993 issue on the debate about the Book of Mormon ("Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," pages 153-84) was quite weak. This kind of article damages *Dialogue's* credibility and its

appeal to the LDS community.

Russell Frandsen  
La Canada, California

*A Step in the Right Direction*

In my opinion Brent Lee Metcalfe's article "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity" in the fall 1993 issue was first-rate. He asks readers to reexamine our assumptions about the Book of Mormon, and to keep clear the important distinction between what the Book of Mormon says and what people say *about* it—either faith-promoting or critical. Particularly useful is his discussion of how some modern Mormon scholars limit Book of Mormon geography to Mesoamerica, and thus dismiss the traditional pan-American geographical context of Joseph Smith, W. W. Phelps, and Orson Pratt. This creates a quandary for anyone who wants to fit the Book of Mormon into a New World geography.

Metcalfe also points out the inconsistency of using examples of Book of Mormon chiasmas to demonstrate its historicity and antiquity, when just as intricate occurrences of chiasmas can be located in Joseph Smith's revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and in his private journals.

Metcalfe's essay is not the last word—when will we ever have the last word?—but it does provide an incentive to look again at the Book of Mormon. I often tell research patrons at the Marriott Library at the University of Utah, where I work, to read as widely as possible on all sides of an issue and then to draw their own conclusions. A lot is at stake and Metcalfe's article is a step in

the right direction.

Stan Larson  
Salt Lake City, Utah

### *Gifts to Offer*

Thank you for publishing the courageous article, "You Are Not Alone: A Plea for Understanding the Homosexual Condition," by T. J. O'Brien, in your fall 1993 issue, pages 119-40. It was carefully written, extremely well-documented, and very sensitive.

I am the mother of a bisexual son, who has had homosexual relationships. He is presently in a heterosexual marriage, and it seems to be successful. I am hoping that he and his wife continue to be happy and that they will give me grandchildren to enjoy, but none of us knows the future of relationships, we only work for and hope for the best.

For several years my son lived with another young man in a homosexual relationship. My husband and I tried very hard to support our son. He was quite afraid to divulge his situation to us, because he had known many friends in the gay community whose families had totally rejected them when they discovered the nature of their orientation. I refused to do this to my child and I hope that others can rethink their values enough to realize the great loss they are creating in their lives and that of their children, if they abandon their child because they happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. I know how confusing it can be to a parent to make this discovery, but if they will but listen to their child and try very hard to read and study about sexual minorities, they can become enlightened to the fact that simply because we are different from

one another in our perceptions of life, gender, and sexual orientations, doesn't mean that we don't have a gift to offer.

Those people in the church, who interpret things so harshly as to reject those who don't seem to fit the mold of conformity, make it very hard for both the family and the person who belongs to the sexual minority. I have found it quite distressing to consider even approaching this subject with the average members of the church, even though I know that there are many who are compassionate and understanding. It is frightening to many of us to take the chance that someone will not understand and instead preach to us. It is inconceivable to me to think that Christ would reject someone simply because they felt affection toward persons of the same sex. I was always taught that Christ wanted us to feel affection for everyone!

The issue of celibacy is an especially poignant one for me. I cannot understand how anyone can say it is acceptable, even desirable, for a heterosexual person to be encouraged to enter into a life of intimacy with an opposite-sex person, but deny that to the homosexual person. If committed relationships were encouraged for persons of same-sex orientation the same way they are for opposite sex persons, there would be far more stability in the gay community. People could more easily be honest about who their partners are and not live the life of lies because they want to remain accepted in the church and in society as a whole. It saddens me to see this condition exist.

I recommend that people follow Brother O'Brien's suggestions. If you know or meet (you have and will, you may not realize it) someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, be compassionate, kind, and accepting. If



you need support from others as a parent, sibling, spouse, child, or are yourself a member of a sexual minority, go to P-FLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Organization.

Thank you again for allowing Brother O'Brien to express the thoughts and ideas that have needed to be expressed to our community.

Carolyn W. Perna  
Seattle, Washington

### *A Clarification*

I recently received a letter of clarification from Gilbert W. Scharffs, a counselor in the presidency of the University of Utah Second Stake, who called a woman as president of the stake Sunday school. This incident is reported in my "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership" (Spring 1993), page 11, and is referenced to a news item in *Sunstone* (n8). Brother Scharffs wanted

to make it clear that he had not come to me "and complained about being harassed by Church leaders." He explains:

Yes, I was involved with calling sisters into our stake Sunday school presidency which the stake president approved after consulting with a General Authority. Then one of the sisters called mentioned this to her mother, who went to [a] General Authority to complain that she did not think this was right. I heard that this issue was discussed in a meeting of Church leaders and there was a difference of opinion. Our stake presidency was notified that although there is nothing doctrinally wrong with calling sisters to these positions, that it was felt that at the present time only men should be called, since it was important to develop male leadership qualities in the Church so that we might have stronger and more faithful husbands.

I'm happy to pass on his clarification.

Lavina Fielding Anderson  
Salt Lake City, Utah





# Border Crossings

*Laurel Thatcher Ulrich*

IT HAPPENED AGAIN AS I WAS WALKING through the New Hampshire woods with a woman I knew only slightly. We had been chatting amiably when the words "Mormon feminist" escaped my mouth. From the expression on her face, I knew exactly what she was going to say.

"Mormon feminist! That sounds like an oxymoron!"

I bristled, though I didn't mean to, annoyed at having to explain myself once again.

Yes, I am an active, believing Mormon. I was baptized at the age of eight, graduated from seminary, and married in the Salt Lake temple. For thirty-five years I have tried to remain true to my temple covenants, including the one about consecrating time and talents to the church. I have taught early morning seminary, written road shows, edited the stake newsletter, and picked apples, plums, peaches, and pears at the stake welfare farm. With my husband, I recently completed my third stint as Gospel Doctrine teacher in our ward.

And, yes, I am a feminist. I deplore teachings, policies, or attitudes that deny women their full stature as human beings, and I have tried to act on that conviction in my personal and professional life. I have written two books and more than a dozen articles in women's history. I give money to the day care coalition in my town and the women's political caucus in my state. I helped draft my university's non-sexist language policy.

I am quite aware that some people consider these commitments incompatible. A couple of years ago, a member of the Women's Commission at my university, learning that I was Mormon, said in astonishment, "I am surprised your church hasn't thrown you out long ago."

"Thrown me out!" I gasped. "I'm a pillar of my congregation." The very same day I was queried by an LDS acquaintance I had not seen for several years. Hearing about my awards for feminist scholarship, she asked earnestly, "Do you go to church? Do you bear your testimony?" I groaned and told her, tongue in cheek, that I was an agnostic Gospel Doctrine teacher.

Perhaps my disposition to stand apart is genetic. Elsewhere I have

written about my Thatcher pioneers who regularly disagreed with church authorities. I have said less about my maternal ancestors, the Siddoways. In my mother's home town, I am told, there are still three ways of doing things—the right way, the wrong way, and the Siddoway. Graduate school compounded what family inheritance and eight years of high school and college debate began. I am afraid I fit the definition of an intellectual as “a person who thinks otherwise.” Hence when I began this essay more than a year ago, I entitled it “Confessions of an OxyMormon.” According to my dictionary, the prefix *oxy* means, “sharp, keen, acute, pungent, acid,” not a bad description for one given to critical thinking. I admit to preferring vinegar to honey, being less interested in catching flies than in rousing the faint.

Yet I am not so sure I want to admit to all the implications of the epithet. Acid can burn as well as cleanse, and in my dictionary, the word “keen” slides along an enticing but slippery lexical path from “wise, learned, clever, and brave” to “proud, forward, and insolent.” Against such dangers my Mormonism buzzes: “O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God” (2 Ne. 9:28). As an intellectual I am forced to question my questioning. As a Latter-day Saint I acknowledge my foolishness.

Last winter the *Boston Globe* ran a story on *Exponent II* under the headline “Challenging the Mormon Church.” The author, free-lance writer Suzanne Gordon, had worked hard on her essay, interviewing members and non-members, scholars and activists, and attending at least one meeting of the newspaper staff. “To an outsider,” she confessed, “the very act of understanding these women requires a minicourse in cross-cultural studies.” Building on interviews with two non-LDS historians, she concluded that the editors and writers of *Exponent II* were not only risking censure in this world but salvation in the afterlife. In the context of Mormon theology, she concluded, “any talk about a female identity outside of the family, or critical consideration of the problems of family life, can be taken as a fundamental challenge to the very foundation of Mormonism itself.”<sup>1</sup> My youngest son, a man of quiet good sense who lives in a converted warehouse in the heart of bohemian Boston, said that while he enjoyed the article, he thought the author “exaggerated the rebellion.” He was amused that the sturdy Mormon mother he knew, a habitual reader of scriptures and monitor of hair length, could be seen as shaking the foundations of the church.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Suzanne Gordon, *Boston Globe*, 25 Mar. 1993, reprinted in *Exponent II* 17 (4): 5-7.

2. *Ibid.*, 6.

He is right. I am not an oxyMormon. I am a Mormon. And a feminist. As a daughter of God, I claim the right to all my gifts. I am a mother, an intellectual, a skeptic, a believer, a crafter of cookies and words. I am not a Jack (or a Jill) in one box, ready to jump when the button is pushed.

Perhaps I am comfortable wearing the feminist label because as a Latter-day Saint living in the east I have had so much practice being an oddball. Shortly after we moved to Massachusetts in 1960, I succumbed to the entreaties of the missionaries in our ward and agreed to help them with a telephone survey. We were to ask each person on our list the Golden Questions: What do you know about the Mormon church? Would you like to know more? One man silenced me by responding, "I don't know a thing about the Mormon church, but I shall look it up in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* immediately." His smug tolerance put me in my place—in the Ms, somewhere between moonbeam and moron.

I doubt his encyclopedia had an entry for feminism. Although the word was in common use in the United States between 1895 and 1930, it fell out of fashion before World War II, not to be revived again until the 1970s. My *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, copyright 1971, defines feminism as "The qualities of females." Until 1977, the index to *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* cross-referenced the word under "Woman—social and moral questions." It is really rather startling to think that in July 1974 a group of Massachusetts housewives could launch a quarterly newspaper, *Exponent II*, "on the dual platforms of Mormonism and Feminism." We did not think we had committed an oxymoron.

Today the computerized catalog at the University of New Hampshire library lists 777 books under the subject entry "Feminism." Obviously, any movement as large, as fast growing, and as complex as this one cannot be reduced to a simple definition. When I hear people rail against feminists I always wonder who they mean. Scholars have differentiated among radical feminism, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Christian feminism, lesbian feminism, and more. Pushing the concept back in time, they have coined terms like domestic feminism, social feminism, material feminism, relational feminism, and proto-feminism.<sup>3</sup> Long before there was an organized women's rights movement, there were women who struggled against arbitrary limits on their humanity. Though my dictionary doesn't have a definition for feminism as we know it, it does have an entry for bluestock-

---

3. For a useful discussion of the historical origins of the term feminism, see Nancy F. Cott, "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism': or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 76 (1989): 809-29. Although I agree with Cott's plea for an expanded vocabulary for female activism, I can think of no substitute for "feminism" when used in a broader context.

ing, a term coined about 1750 and applied "sneeringly to any woman showing a taste for learning."

When I say that I am a feminist, I identify with women across the centuries who have had the courage to claim their own gifts. Theologically, I don't have much in common with the Puritan poet Anne Bradstreet, but having been raised in a culture that simultaneously nurtures and mistrusts female achievement, I can identify with her words:

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue  
Who says my hand a needle better fits. . . .  
For such despite they cast in female wits;  
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,  
They'll say it's stolen, or else it was by chance.<sup>4</sup>

There was no organized women's rights movement in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, but there was something like feminism.

As a Mormon, I embrace ideals of equality and a critique of power that also shaped early feminism. Abigail Adams's "all Men would be tyrants if they could"<sup>5</sup> is not far removed from Joseph Smith's "We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion" (D&C 121:39). Mormonism rejects the Calvinist notion of predestination as well as the monarchical notion of a great chain of being in which each person is subordinate to the one above. Listen to Lehi: "And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon" (2 Ne. 3:26). Lehi's formulation is surprisingly close to the modern distinction between subject and object. That each person be free to think, speak, and act for herself is both a feminist and a Mormon dream. As a Latter-day Saint, I say with Mary Wolstonecraft, "Let not men then in the pride of power, use the same arguments that tyrannic kings and venal ministers have used and fallaciously assert that women ought to be subjected because she had always been so."<sup>6</sup>

Yet my commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ pushes me beyond a mere concern for "rights." As a feminist I know that structures matter, that formal authority makes a difference in the way people think as well as behave, that institutional arrangements can lock in prejudice, yet I also

---

4. Anne Bradstreet, "The Prologue," *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 62.

5. Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 Mar. 1776, in *The Feminist Papers*, ed. Alice S. Rossi (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), 10.

6. From *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, excerpted in *Feminist Papers*, 58.

know that legal protection is hollow without spiritual transformation and that the right spirit can transform a seemingly repressive system. My daily experience as a Latter-day Saint confirms the words of Margaret Fuller, a nineteenth-century feminist and contemporary of Joseph Smith: "Were thought and feeling once so far elevated that Man should esteem himself the brother and friend, but nowise the lord and tutor, of Woman,—were he really bound with her in equal worship,—arrangements as to function and employment would be of no consequence."<sup>7</sup> I have tasted equal worship in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Unfortunately, I have also observed the smug condescension of men who believe they have been called as lord and tutor. Against such behavior I assert both my Mormonism and my feminism.

To claim multiple identities is to assert the insufficiency of any one label, including Mormonism. According to my *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, an oxymoron is not simply a self-contradictory expression like "freezing heat" or "swampy desert." It is a rhetorical figure in which contradictory or incongruous terms are intentionally joined in order to complicate or enlarge meaning. Although in current usage the word is "often loosely or erroneously used as if merely a contradiction in terms," a true oxymoron is "an expression in its superficial or literal meaning self-contradictory or absurd, but involving a point." The phrase "Mormon feminist" can work that way. Those who assume Mormonism is inherently hostile to women or, conversely, that feminism undermines faith, sniff at the phrase. But when confronted with a real person claiming to be both things at once, they are forced to reconsider their assumptions. Feminism may be larger than they imagined and Mormonism more flexible.

As biologist Stephen Jay Gould has written, "We must categorize and simplify in order to comprehend. But the reduction of complexity entails a great danger, since the line between enlightening epitome and vulgarized distortion is so fine."<sup>8</sup> The *Boston Globe* crossed that line when it described the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as "quintessentially misogynist."<sup>9</sup> But when anxious church leaders denounce feminists they compound the distortion. Each group reduces the other to its own worst nightmare, and the war is on. In such a climate it is tempting to run for shelter, saying less about feminism among Mormons and less about Mormonism everywhere else. But a silence based on fear is no solution. As long

---

7. *Feminist Papers*, 164.

8. "Triumph of a Naturalist," *New York Review of Books*, 19 Mar. 1984, 58-71, quoted in Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *Deceptive Distinctions: Sex, Gender, and the Social Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), frontispiece.

9. Suzanne Gordon, "Herstory in the Making," *Boston Globe Magazine*, 31 Jan. 1993, reprinted in *Exponent II* 17 (4): 4.



as the issues are there, unacknowledged and unresolved, the anger and hostility will remain. I think it is better to gently but consistently tell the truth. I am a Mormon and a feminist.

I remember as a teenager standing up in my ward in Sugar City, Idaho, to repeat the MIA theme of the year: "Let no man despise thy youth: but be thou as example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). I am grateful for a religious education that taught me how to be different, though I had no idea it would sometimes make me feel like a stranger among saints. In my generation, being an example of the believers had a lot to do with the Word of Wisdom. In Sunday school and MIA we learned about the Mormon lad who resisted a proffered cup of coffee or a drink only to be rewarded with a promotion. (Nobody told us the promotion might be the biggest danger of all!) Fortunately, in the old seminary room above the Sugar City Theater, a mandolin-playing teacher named Ken Brown taught a more complex ethic. Gently and with humor, he led us through the New Testament, helping us to see the dangers in the Pharisees' attempt to separate themselves from the ungodly. The harder they tried to behave as "Abraham's children," the less they were capable of receiving the Messiah when he came.

A few years ago I attended an invitational conference in U.S. women's history. The organizers, fully committed to diversity, had gone out of their way to include women from large and small colleges, from every part of the United States, and from many minority groups. When one scholar expressed surprise that no one from BYU had been invited, a well-known nineteenth-century historian responded, "Oh, we don't want them!" Orthodoxy feels the same wherever it is found. Certainly there is a need for boundaries, for rigorous defense of ideas and ideals that matter, but defenders of every faith too often violate their own ideals in the very act of defending them. The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that light falls across borders, that the sun in its revolutions brightens both sides of a wall, spilling through the spaces in our fences. Mormon intellectuals should not forget that Jesus gathered his disciples from among sinners, publicans, *and* pharisees, even zealous pharisees like Paul, a man who knew what it meant to live in a multi-cultural world. To the saints at Ephesus, Paul wrote: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14).

Recently I assigned Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America* to my students in early American history. Reading it again I found personal meaning in the closing section which relates the story of the Spanish conquest to the problems of pluralism in our times. In Todorov's view, one of the few Spaniards who was able to transcend the brutality and condescension that characterized early Spanish treatment of the Indians was Cabeza de Vaca, an explorer who spent eight years lost in the interior of

North America. It wasn't only that Cabeza had experienced both cultures from within, it was that after his exile he never fully belonged to either. Without becoming an Indian, he "was no longer quite a Spaniard." For Todorov, Cabeza illuminates the mysterious words of Hugh St. Victor: "The man who finds his country sweet is only a raw beginner; the man for whom each country is as his own is already strong; but only the man for whom the whole world is as a foreign country is perfect." Todorov's insight helped me to reassess the dislocations in my own life. I have sometimes felt like a woman without a country. Perhaps the experience of "otherness" can be a source of strength. We are all prisoners of our culture, bound not by visible laws but by a net of assumptions and prejudices we cannot see. In the space between competing identities, I seek Lehi's freedom.

I do not apologize for what I am—an intellectual who reveres the scriptures; a Sunbeam teacher who would sooner write than eat; a transplanted westerner at home in the east. I can no more deny my religious identity than I can divest myself of my Thatcher freckles or my Rocky Mountain accent. Nor would I discard my feminist values. The women's movement has refreshed my life like the "sea change" that sometimes hits my town in those steamy, grey days so common on the east coast in mid-summer. At such moments a blue, almost Western, sky breaks through the haze.



# For the Girl Who Saw Her Mother Cold.

*Marni Asplund-Campbell*

July twenty-third in the canyon is  
almost like hell-fire—sulfurous hot  
waves off the powdery earth while  
the children play in the trees,  
avoiding the close sun, white  
not yellow at midday,  
five girls dressed in grey cotton dresses.

They find small, shining rocks, juniper  
berries, and a few star flowers,  
growing in a clump by some wet moss  
in the trees, and  
carry them in the wide folds of their skirts,  
to make a house in the trees with  
the flowers, berries, and the rocks.

Their hair is twisted around rags  
into hard knots on their heads—they  
will have long, springing curls for  
Pioneer Day, and so the rags must stay in  
one more night.

Family will be coming tomorrow, twelve miles  
up the canyon from Cedar City, for a party,  
to get away from the dust and crowds.  
New children, new games, and  
their father is bringing ice from the city  
which he will pack around the silver tub filled with  
milk, eggs, sugar. The girls know how it will  
be, and how their father will offer the largest  
helping to the child who eats, in a single bite,  
a huge spoonful, the first, just hardened,  
creamy white, with rim of salt along the edge of the spoon.  
And one child will take the bite, stagger off,  
temples throbbing, to grown-up laughter.

Kathryn walks to Crystal Stream, and stops,  
midway, to spread her fingers around her ribcage  
to contain the boisterous movement of her  
heart and breath, and the babies that  
roll inside her nearly every minute now.

Her husband has blessed her, she so far up the canyon,  
told her that she is carrying boys, welcome after  
the five daughters.

Her hair is tied up, against the heat, and she  
listens as she walks for the hum of her girls  
in conversation  
in the trees.

She hitches the two pails (she shouldn't be carrying  
water, but Lord knows who

will)

and walks on to the stream, slowly, the babies  
sending shots of pain down through her thighs.  
She bends and lifts the pail, full, from the stream  
and stops, again, to feel the babies, and then

she hears  
the clear laughter  
of her daughters, and then  
another sound,  
tighter, sharper, a waiting  
sound, she waits, and  
the air  
splits  
and she  
is split by  
a blade of light,  
lightning  
from the empty sky.  
For a moment she is filled,  
glorious,  
fibers, fluids, toned and  
perfected, purified  
in the twinkling  
of an eye,



then she falls, where her husband will see her later,  
her fingers combing the Crystal Stream water,  
her mouth still, belly heaving with labor.

Family comes, and she is still laboring, "hit by lightning,"  
her husband says, "out of the blue." He shakes his head,  
presses his thumbs to his temples, and the women set to  
work.

Scrubbing a linen sheet in the stream,  
they lay it out to dry in the sun,  
to whiten and stiffen it for sewing  
in the evening. They know how these things  
go.

The midwife sends the children to the trees. There are no screams,  
but there is a dying smell, and at first Kathryn speaks,  
her voice throbbing with the energy and the pain.  
"Keep the oldest girls please, and send the little ones  
to mother. They're too much for you, on your  
own," she says, slowly, slowly easing into the pain,  
the rhythm, the beating, beating.

Children sleep in the tents, aunts and uncles hover  
in the back bedroom, blessing and praying, but she is so, so  
tired. Let me go. Let me go. God. God. My God.

She is split again, this time released  
from the charred body, beaten, ecstatic  
she rips apart to deliver a tiny, silver boy—

four pounds, dark hair, all the  
fingers of his left hand wrapped  
around the thumb. A silent, silver  
child.

And then another comes with a rush of water, silent,

this one smaller than the first—two  
pounds, the midwife guesses, hardly  
a child even, with clear skin patterned  
like new ice,  
already dissolving in places—

Don't handle this one too much, the midwife  
says. She knows the flesh will slide off  
in smooth ribbons if he is touched too harshly.

Kathryn is dressed in the early morning, quickly, against  
the coming heat, the bloody sheets cleaned, floor  
scrubbed, the children fed. By sunrise they begin to sweat.

The little girls have their hair brushed into long, springing  
curls before they come into the back bedroom  
to finish dressing their mother. The husband covers her face  
with a veil, and kneels down to see his sons,  
wrapped in the clean linen tablecloth cut in two—  
his tiny sons  
lying in the bend of each of her arms.

"We'll have to pack them in the ice," he says, "for the ride."  
He stands and leaves.

And so Kathryn is placed in the wagon,  
packed with the ice, and pulled by her husband's  
two best horses.  
They lead the way down the canyon, slowly,  
a gentle ride.

The little girls in the next wagon sit  
in a quiet row, holding hands, watching their  
mother with her babies, and Blanche, the third daughter,  
lets a tear slip out of one eye. She doesn't move  
to stop it. "Don't cry," her sister says, "you know we  
shouldn't cry."  
"But mama looks so  
cold," Blanche says. She hates the cold.  
Can't she have a blanket,  
and the babies? she wonders.  
She has brought a soft blanket,  
folded underneath her  
on the wagon seat.  
They look  
so cold, so cold under the whitening sun.



# Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother

*Janice Allred*

"WHAT KIND OF A BEING IS GOD?" inquired Joseph Smith. "I will tell you & hear it O Earth! God who sits in yonder heavens is a *man like yourselves* . . . It is the first principle to know that we may converse with him and that he was once a man like us, and the Father was on an earth like us."<sup>1</sup> He also said, "If men do not comprehend the character of God they do not comprehend themselves."<sup>2</sup> Today Mormon women say, "If I do not comprehend the character of God the Mother, I cannot comprehend myself." They ask, "What kind of a being is she?" From Mormon theology there is one thing we can conclude: she is a woman like us; she has a woman's body. Without it she could not be our mother.

Feminist theologians have demonstrated the need for the feminine principle in our concept of deity. They have argued that picturing God as male leads to valuing masculine attributes, values, and experience over feminine ones and contributes to the oppression of women. The symbol of the Goddess is necessary, they say, to affirm the goodness of the feminine, to enable women to claim their female power, and to acknowledge the goodness of the female body. Ironically, the vast majority of them do not believe that the Goddess possesses a real female body.

It would seem that Mormons who have believed for over a hundred years in the real existence of the Goddess, the Mother in Heaven, should be far ahead of other Christians in developing a theology of God the Mother. However, our belief in her as a real person puts us at a disadvantage. If the Goddess is merely a symbol of deity, as the male God is also a symbol, then certainly God can be pictured as either male or female with equal validity. Joseph Smith, after asking what kind of a being God is, asked

---

1. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 344.

2. *Ibid.*, 340.



his congregation, "Have any of you seen or herd him or communed with him?"<sup>3</sup> For Mormon theology this is a very important question. God must reveal himself or we have no knowledge of him. Must we then wait for a revelation of the Mother before we have any knowledge of her? The answer is both "Yes" and "No." We must be aware of the possibility of idolatry, of creating her in our own image, of making her into what we conceive the perfect woman should be, of using our images of her to control or manipulate others. On the other hand, we should also recognize the importance of our own seeking after God. Comprehending ourselves is as vital to comprehending God as comprehending God is essential to comprehending ourselves. Our own experiences, our loneliness, our communion with others, our sorrows, our joys, our sins, our striving for righteousness, our demand for justice, our finding forgiveness, our reaching out to God for knowledge and comfort are all experiences with the divine. And we should not assume that there has been no revelation of the Mother or that waiting for her to reveal herself need be entirely passive.

In this essay I attempt to reinterpret the Mormon concept of the Godhead. This interpretation is based on three convictions. I believe that God the Mother is equal to God the Father in divinity, power, and perfection. I believe that God, both Father and Mother, is deeply involved in our mortality and immortality. I also believe that God the Father has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Although he is male, for me he is an adequate model. He modeled many roles for us—father, mother, teacher, friend, son, lover, servant, lord—and also many attributes. If he were the only God, he would be enough. But there is another god and she has a woman's body like mine. I want to know her, not simply as a model, but as a person. That she is God as well as woman is as important for men as it is for women as it affirms the equality of male and female and of masculine and feminine attributes and values. At the same time I must add that I am in no way whatsoever attempting an *official* reinterpretation of LDS doctrine; that prerogative rests solely with the leaders of the church. I am interested simply in offering a possibly new understanding and appreciation of the Mother based on my own reading and personal reflection.

The doctrine of the Godhead presently taught by the Latter-day Saint church is that the Godhead consists of three distinct individuals or personages. These personages are God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Each of these individuals has a particular mission in relation to humanity; God the Father is the father of all the spirits of mortal beings. He is the ultimate source of all power and knowledge, and the other two

---

3. Ibid., 344.

members of the Godhead are subordinate to him. Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father; he is the first born of the spirit children of God and the only begotten of the Father in the flesh. This enabled him to become the Redeemer and Savior of humankind. Because of his death and resurrection everyone will be resurrected, and through his atonement all who repent and believe in him will be forgiven of their sins and receive eternal life. Jesus represents the Father and acts as his agent. The Holy Ghost, unlike the Father and the Son who possess bodies of flesh and bone, is a personage of spirit. He is one of the spirit children of God the Father and has the mission of revealing truth and testifying of the Father and the Son. He is also called the Comforter because he gives peace, hope, and comfort.

Although Mormons believe that we have a Heavenly Mother, she is not included in the Godhead. Does this mean that she is not also God? Does this mean that she has no mission to perform in relation to our mortal probation, that her role is restricted to giving birth to our spirits and nurturing us in our premortal lives? I find such conclusions unacceptable. God the Mother must be equal to God the Father; she must play an equally active role in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man and woman.

I believe that a serious acceptance of the existence of God the Mother requires us Mormons to re-examine and reinterpret our doctrine of the Godhead. I also believe that such a re-examination must be firmly grounded in the scriptures. I acknowledge that there is no direct information given about God the Mother in the scriptures. However, both the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants teach that some revelations have been withheld. The Book of Mormon tells us of revelations given to a few which the prophets were not permitted to write or which they were commanded to seal up until a later time, and the Doctrine and Covenants speaks of knowledge "that has not been revealed since the world was until now; a time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest" (121:26, 28). One God that has not been manifest is the Mother. Surely this is a promise that she will be revealed. Also the fact that she is not directly revealed in the scriptures does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the scriptures have nothing to say about her. Indeed, new revelations always demand a reinterpretation of scripture and permit us to see things and understand things in ways we previously could not.

To re-examine our doctrine of the Godhead I examined all the references to deity in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. I then attempted to work out relationships between different names of deity without using traditional Mormon assumptions about the nature of the Godhead but simply relying on the evidence of the text. I recognize that every reader has her own prejudices and hidden assumptions as well as

the ones she shares with the various groups she belongs to, and that it is not possible to approach a text completely objectively; however, perhaps something may be gained by trying. I do not hope to present a complete or final interpretation of the Godhead as given in the scriptures I reviewed. Such a result is neither possible nor desirable. However, I do hope to present an interpretation which fits the text better than the one we presently subscribe to.

I did not begin my study without a hypothesis. My study of the scriptures over many years had presented me with several passages I found difficult to harmonize with the view of the Godhead I had learned from LDS seminary and church manuals and publications. The first passages that struck me were the teachings of Abinadi. He repeatedly taught that God himself would redeem his people and make an atonement for their sins (Mosiah 13:28, 32, 33; 15:18, 19; 16:4). He explained that God was both the Father and the Son (15:2-7) and concluded his testimony by saying, "Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father" (16:15). The most obvious interpretation of Abinadi's words is that God the Father and Jesus Christ are two names for the same being. There are other scriptures in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants which plainly teach the same concept. My initial hypothesis, then, was that God the Father and Jesus Christ are one individual. Do the scriptures bear this interpretation? Are there any which present difficulties for it?

The most common names for deity in the scriptures are God, the Lord, the Lord God, and Jesus Christ. Others include the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Father, the Eternal Father, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, the Creator, and the Almighty. I have excluded all terms referring to the Holy Spirit as these will be discussed later.

#### JESUS CHRIST, LORD AND GOD

The names God and the Lord are used synonymously throughout the scriptures, often being used together as the Lord God. "God" is the generic term for deity, the Supreme Being, the translation for the word El or Elohim in the Bible. The personal name for God in the Bible is YHWH which is translated as "the Lord" or "Jehovah." The Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants seem to follow this usage. "God" is more often used when general information about deity is being given, for example, "O how great the holiness of our God" (2 Ne. 9:20), and "the Lord" is used when specific acts and words of God are given, for example, "I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates" (1 Ne. 9:3).

It is possible to show that the names God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, the

Holy One of Israel, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Messiah, and the Creator all refer to the same Supreme Being in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. Every major prophet in the Book of Mormon taught this.

Writing of his vision, Nephi said, "And the angel said unto me again: Look and behold the condescension of God! And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world" (1 Ne. 11:26, 27). Literally condescend means to come down with. According to the angel the condescension of God is the Redeemer. So Nephi learned exactly what Abinadi later taught, that God himself would come down among his people to redeem them. Nephi also wrote, "For if there be no Christ, there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a God, and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time" (2 Ne. 11:7). Jacob declared, "He also hath shown unto me that the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, should manifest himself unto them in the flesh" (2 Ne. 6:9); and:

O how great the holiness of our God! . . .

And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men . . . And he suffereth this that the resurrection may pass upon all men . . .

And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

. . . for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel has spoken it (2 Ne. 9:20-24).

King Benjamin, in his great sermon to his people, said:

The Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, . . .

And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body . . .

And he shall be called Jesus Christ . . . the Creator of all things from the beginning (Mosiah 3:5, 6, 8).

He concluded his teachings with these words: "I would . . . that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, . . . that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things in heaven and earth, who is God above all" (5:15).

I have already mentioned that Abinadi taught that God himself would redeem his people. "And were it not for the atonement which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people, . . . they must unavoid-



ably perish" (Mosiah 13:28). Speaking of those who have part in the first resurrection, he declared, "They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them; thus they have eternal life through Christ . . . being redeemed by the Lord" (15:23, 24).

Alma wrote, "And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world" (Alma 42:15).

The word of the Lord came to Mormon saying, "Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God" (Moro. 8:8).

When he visited the Nephites, Jesus Christ introduced himself: "I am Jesus Christ . . . I am the God of Israel and the God of the whole earth" (3 Ne. 11:10, 14). Prophesying of the remnants of the house of Israel, he said, "And they shall be brought to a knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them" (20:13). His disciples "did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God" (19:18).

Moroni wrote of the vision of the brother of Jared in which he saw Jesus. "And he saw the finger of Jesus . . . he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; Wherefore having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil" (Ether 3:19-20).

The Doctrine and Covenants is in harmony with the Book of Mormon in using the names God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, Jehovah, the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Savior all to refer to the same God. Section 1 is given by the Lord. In verse 20 he says, "But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world." Section 6 begins, "Behold, I am God," and in verse 21 the same speaker declares, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ." In D&C 18:47 we read, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, and your Redeemer." Other passages read: "Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer" (27:1); "Verily thus saith the Lord, your God, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ" (66:13); "For the Lord is God and beside him there is no Savior" (76:1);

. . . as God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth, even so in the beginning of the seventh thousand years will the Lord God sanctify the earth, and complete the salvation of man, and judge all things, and redeem all things . . . and the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of his work . . . the preparing of the way before the time of his coming (77:12);

"We saw the Lord . . . and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah" (110:2).

## MEANINGS OF "THE FATHER"

My study of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants shows that it is consistent with the text to interpret the names God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the Creator, and Jehovah as all referring to the same being. My initial hypothesis was that all the names of God refer to the same being. The only names that posed any difficulty were those referring to the Father or the Son. Since it is easy to establish that the names referring to the Son also refer to Jesus Christ, it could be concluded that all the names of God except "the Father" refer to Jesus Christ. However, this leads to the conclusion that "God" and "the Son of God" are the same person. Indeed, for this reason most Mormons usually think of God as God the Father. But I have shown that "God" consistently refers to the same being who is Jesus Christ. A close examination of all the occurrences of the name "the Father" in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants suggests that it cannot be consistently maintained that the Father and the Son are simply two separate individuals. "The Father" seems to have several different meanings.

In many verses the Son is called the Father, implying that the Father and the Son are the same person: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (2 Ne. 19:6); "And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:8); "He said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things" (7:27); "Teach them that repentance cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father" (16:15); "Now Zeezrom saith unto him: Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father? And Amulek said unto him; Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are" (Alma 11:38-39). The resurrected Jesus said to the Nephites, "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in Heaven, is perfect" (3 Ne. 12:48). If Jesus were speaking of two individuals it would be more natural for him to use "and" rather than "or." The commas enclosing "or your Father who is in heaven" make this phrase an appositive explaining "I" rather than a compound subject. Also the verb is singular rather than plural. Finally, "And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, the Father and the Son" (Morm. 9:12); and "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son" (Ether 3:14).

Sometimes the Father and the Son seem to be spoken of as two separate beings, but closer examination of the text shows them to be the same person. In section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord (Jesus Christ) says, "But if ye enter not into my law ye cannot receive the promise of my Father which he made unto Abraham." Here Jesus seems to refer to his

Father as someone separate from himself. However, there are many references that show that Jehovah was the one who covenanted with Abraham. The next two verses confirm this. "God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham . . . Was Abraham therefore under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord commanded it" (vv. 33-35). This also shows that the Lord sometimes speaks of himself in the third person.

Sometimes "Father" seems to be an alternate name for God or the Lord. This poses a problem for my interpretation only when Jesus is the one speaking. However, again he may simply be referring to himself in the third person, saying that as the Father, the premortal Christ, he did and said certain things. This may have been the case when he visited the Nephites as the resurrected Lord. He talked to them about the covenants which the Father made with the house of Israel, with Jacob, and with Abraham, but it was the Lord God Jehovah, the same being who would become Jesus Christ, who covenanted with Abraham, Jacob, and the people of Israel (3 Ne. 20:27, 1 Ne. 15:18). Jesus gave the Nephites the same teachings which he gave the Jews in the Sermon on the Mount. In these he often referred to "your Father in heaven." Since Jesus' purpose in this sermon was to teach people how to live and about their relationship with their Father in Heaven rather than to reveal who he was, we cannot conclude that the Father he referred to was necessarily a different person than himself.

However, there are some passages in which the most natural interpretation is that the Father and the Son are two separate beings. These passages refer to the relationship between the Father and the Son. In the Book of Mormon most of these occur in the accounts of the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the Nephites. Jesus tells them that he suffered the will of the Father, that he glorified the Father, that his doctrine was given him by the Father, and that his Father commands all to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. He also talks about commandments which the Father gave him, says the Father sent him, talks of going to or ascending to his Father, and prays to the Father. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord or Jesus Christ speaks of the kingdom of his Father and those whom his Father has given him, says that he has done the will of the Father, claims to be our advocate with the Father, pleads for us before the Father, and says that no one will come unto the Father but by him.

How are we to understand such passages in light of our discovery that the Lord, God, and the Redeemer are one being? Should we reinterpret Lord-God-Redeemer passages in light of Father-Son passages or should we reinterpret Father-Son passages in light of Lord-God-Redeemer passages?

To attempt to answer these questions I will discuss the few scriptures which attempt to explain the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Only in two places in the Book of Mormon and one place in the Doctrine and Covenants is the question directly addressed. These passages all assert that they are discussing one being and explain why he is called the Father and the Son. First, let us look at Mosiah 15:2-5.

And because he dwelleth in flesh, he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—

The Father because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—

And they are one God, yea the very Eternal Father of heaven and earth.

And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God . . .

Verse two says that because God will dwell in mortal flesh he will be called the Son of God. Verse 5 interprets verses 2-4 by equating the Son to the flesh and the spirit to the Father. The Son subjects himself to the Father by subjecting the flesh to the spirit or his mortal self to his eternal self. Abinadi says nothing about the LDS church's current belief that Jesus is called the Son because he is the literal Son of God the Father in the flesh nor does he assert that Jesus receives his power to redeem and resurrect because his mortal father is God. According to Abinadi Jesus' power to redeem and resurrect comes from himself, his spirit being the Spirit of the Eternal Father himself.

The second passage in the Book of Mormon explaining the relationship between the Father and the Son occurs in 3 Nephi 1:14. Here the Lord, the premortal Jesus, tells Nephi, the son of Nephi, that he will be born the next day. "Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfill all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh." There is an interesting echo of Abinadi here. Abinadi said that the will of the Son would be subjected to that of the Father, but the Lord says that he comes into the world to do the will of both the Father and the Son. "Of the Father because of me," the Lord says, which means that he is the Father, "and of the Son because of my flesh." Here the Lord asserts that he is already a god of spirit and flesh and that the spirit and flesh are in harmony. Understanding the Lord's words as a comment on Abinadi's words, we conclude that "the Father" can mean "God the Eternal Father, a being of spirit and immortal glorified flesh" or it can refer only to the spiritual part of God's eternal being, and that "the Son" can mean either "God the Eternal Father, a being of spirit and immortal glorified flesh," putting the emphasis on the flesh to distinguish the person of God from the Spirit of God, or it can refer to God as a mortal being

dwelling among people to redeem them from their sins, or it can simply refer to the body of God.

Doctrine and Covenants 93 agrees with Abinadi in equating the Father with the spirit and the Son with the flesh. Verses 3-5 read:

And that I am in the Father and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—

The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men.

I was in the world and received of my Father, and the works of him were plainly manifest.

Note the parallel construction of verse 3 with the words of Abinadi and the words of the Lord. All explain why the Lord is both the Father and the Son. In section 93 the Lord says that he is the Father "because he gave me of his fulness." In verses 16 and 36 we learn that "he received a fulness of the glory of the Father" and the "glory of God is intelligence or, in other words, light and truth." Verses 9 and 11 call the Redeemer "the Spirit of Truth" which came and dwelt in the flesh. Thus in section 93 "the Father" seems to mean "the Spirit of God." Verse 17 substantiates this conclusion. "And the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him." According to Joseph Smith the Father cannot dwell in a person's heart because he has a body of flesh and bones (D&C 130:3, 22). Although the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, it also cannot dwell in a person's heart.<sup>4</sup> Our bodies can only be inhabited by our own spirits. Therefore, if the Father dwelt in the Son, "the Father" must mean the spirit body of God and the Son and the Father must constitute one eternal being.

However, "the Father" seems also to sometimes have a meaning beyond the personal spirit of God. Verse 23 of section 93 reads, "Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth." Here the Father is called Spirit and the Spirit of truth; the Redeemer, as was pointed out, is also the Spirit of truth. "The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God" (v. 35). The terms God and the Father in such passages seem to mean a spiritual substance or power that pervades all things. The Lord says, "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (v. 2). In section 88 this concept is amplified.

... he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth.

---

4. Ibid., 173.

Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ...

Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things (vv. 6-7, 12-13).

"The Father" or "God" or "the Spirit of God" or "the Spirit of the Lord" may mean this totality of spirit or a portion of it.

"Spirit," "intelligence," "light," and "glory" seem to be synonymous terms. A spirit or a personage of spirit is an individual being organized from spirit and given independence (D&C 93:30). Spirit is a unifying principle, but if it could not be divided up into separate spheres, there would be no existence.

Understanding that "the Father" can mean either "God the Eternal Father, a personage of spirit tabernacled by immortal glorified flesh," or "the personal spirit of God," or "the totality of spirit which emanates from God" illuminates some of the more difficult Father-Son passages. "I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one," could be interpreted to mean, "I am in the totality of spirit which emanates from the Father and the individual spirit personage of the Father dwells in my body, thus I am the Eternal Father."

The scriptures in which Jesus speaks of those who believe in him becoming one through him seem to require a different interpretation. For example, "that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one" (D&C 35:2). This speaks of many distinct individuals, each with his or her own spirit and body, becoming one. What does this oneness mean? Jesus explains it by comparing it to the oneness he has with the Father. But I have shown that the Father and Jesus, when the Father is an individual, are the same individual. To attempt an interpretation of this passage and offer another meaning for the term "the Father" I will examine a revelation given to Joseph Smith and several other scriptural verses.

Joseph Smith received this revelation probably in 1833. It was not written down but was related by Orson Pratt in 1855. It is given in the form of questions and answers.

"What is the name of God in the pure language?"

The answer says, "Ahman."

"What is the name of the Son of God?"

Answer, "Son Ahman—the greatest of all the parts of God excepting Ahman."



"What is the name of men?"

"Sons Ahman," is the answer . . .

This revelation goes on to say that Sons Ahman are the greatest of all the parts of God except Son Ahman and Ahman.<sup>5</sup>

In this revelation "Ahman" seems to be equivalent to God or the Father as the totality of spirit since Son Ahman and Sons Ahman are parts of Ahman. Son Ahman, Jesus Christ, is an individual, a personage who is embodied since "Son" refers to the flesh. As the greatest of all the parts of Ahman, he is creator of all things, ruler of all things, the God we worship. This revelation calls men and women "Sons Ahman." However, it may refer to exalted beings rather than mortal ones. To support this idea I offer the following reasons.

In Doctrine and Covenants 76 Joseph Smith describes the celestial glory and those who will receive it.

They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

And he makes them equal in power and might and dominion.

And the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one (vv. 56, 58, 95, 96).

Those who inherit celestial glory are called gods or sons of god. Christ has made them equal and has given them all things; they are one in him. As gods or sons of god, being embodied celestial beings, they are the greatest of all the parts of God excepting Son Ahman and Ahman.

And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things—where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever (vv. 92-93).

Celestial beings receive of the fullness of the Father through Jesus Christ. As many individuals partaking of one glory they may also be called the Father. With this additional meaning of "the Father" I can now offer a possible interpretation of D&C 35:2. "They may become the sons of God" means "inherit celestial glory"; "even one in me" means "become equal in power, might, and dominion, receiving all things from Jesus Christ"; "as I am one in the Father" means "as I am one among the celestial beings"; "as the Father is one in me" means "as the celestial beings have been made one

---

5. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, Eng.: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-86), 2:342.

by me"; and "that we may be one" means "that we may all dwell together in celestial glory."

#### THE MOTHER IN THE GODHEAD

Having reinterpreted "the Father," we now look for the Mother. She is present in the scriptures, but she is hidden; even as we do not see light in a room but see the room and all things in it by the light which is present, so is she in the scriptures.

Nephi explains why Jesus was baptized: to obey the Father in keeping his commandments and to set an example for us. "And he said unto the children of men, Follow thou me" (2 Ne. 31:10). In Doctrine and Covenants 132:6 the Lord reveals a "new and everlasting covenant . . . [which] was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law." The new and everlasting covenant is the covenant of eternal marriage. As we have seen, those who inherit celestial glory receive a fullness of God's glory and are called gods. According to the revelation on eternal marriage, those who do not marry by the new and everlasting covenant and are not sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise "cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods," but those who do marry by the new and everlasting covenant and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise "shall . . . be gods, because they have all power." If the Lord requires us to keep the law of celestial marriage to become gods, then Jesus himself must certainly keep it. The laws he institutes are to make us like him. In the celestial glory all are equal; therefore the daughters of God are equal to the sons of God and God the Mother is equal to God the Father in power, might, and dominion.

If the gods are divine couples, then we can assume that God himself is also a divine couple, that God the Father, as a being of spirit and body, is eternally joined to God the Mother, also a being of spirit and body. "The Father" then must also mean "the Mother" as "sons of God" certainly includes "daughters of God."

This suggests another way of interpreting the Godhead. The Father is the divine couple, Father and Mother, each possessing a spirit and a glorified body. They must together be the source of light or spirit which permeates all things. If the name "the Father" refers to the union of the two personages who together are God, then perhaps the other two names in the Godhead refer to them separately. As we have seen, "the Son" refers to the flesh, so the Lord or Jehovah, as the embodied God, is the Son. But the name "the Son," as Abinadi points out, more specifically points to his mission as the Redeemer, to his taking on himself a mortal body to redeem

us from sin. Perhaps, then, the Holy Ghost is the name of the Mother which refers to her work among us in mortality.

One objection that has been made to the suggestion that the Holy Ghost is the Mother is that the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit but the Mother must have an immortal, glorified body as the Father does. Indeed, this same objection is likely to be raised against the idea that Jesus is God the Father. If Jesus is God the Father, it will be argued, then he must have had an immortal, physical body before he took on himself a mortal body. But many Mormons will object that the scriptures teach that the resurrected body and spirit are inseparably connected, so Jesus must have been a personage of spirit before he became a mortal man and thus he could not have been God the Father. However, given the teachings of Joseph Smith about the importance of the body—that all beings with bodies have power over those who do not, that it was necessary for us to obtain bodies to become like God—it is impossible that Jesus, the Lord God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Holy One of Israel could have been what he was and have done all he did without a body. Although a resurrected person is not subject to death in the sense that his body and spirit will separate without his will or control, it may be that he has the power to separate his body and spirit if he so desires.

Is there any scriptural support for the view that the premortal Jesus had a body of flesh and bone? I have already discussed the passage in 3 Nephi where the premortal Jesus speaks of his flesh. In the New Testament Jesus says to the Jews, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself”; and “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again” (John 5:26, 10:17-18). This could refer not only to his power to lay down a mortal body and take it again as an immortal body, but also to his power to lay down an immortal body and take on a mortal body. The best evidence that the premortal Jesus had a physical body is in Ether 3. When the brother of Jared sees Jesus Christ he sees his immortal physical body.

And the veil was taken off from the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was like unto flesh and blood . . .

And he saith unto the Lord: I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood.

And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood . . . (3:6, 8-9)

This is usually interpreted to mean that the brother of Jared saw the spirit body of Jesus because he said, “I will take upon me flesh and blood.” But, as Joseph Smith taught, an immortal body is a body of flesh and bone

without blood, so it was necessary for the Lord to correct the brother of Jared. However, it is significant that the brother of Jared thought it was a body of flesh and blood. Many people have seen spirits and they never mistake them for bodies of flesh and blood. Jesus told the brother of Jared, "Behold, this body, which ye now behold is the body of my spirit" (Ether 3:16). A spirit body is composed of spirit. Mormons use the term spirit body to emphasize the fact that we believe spirit is a substance, but "body of my spirit" implies the body is not of the same substance as the spirit, that is, it implies a physical body belonging to the spirit. Jesus continued, "And man have I created after the body of my spirit." The creation of man and woman includes the physical creation. Moroni comments, "Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites" (v. 17). Usually this is interpreted to mean that this man saw the spirit of Jesus Christ. However, as Joseph Smith taught, it is necessary to be quickened by the spirit to see God in the flesh (D&C 67:11). Therefore this could simply mean that the brother of Jared was in the spirit when he saw Jesus. "Even after the manner" must mean in the same way, which included seeing and touching. "And in the likeness of the same body" is usually interpreted to mean that the physical body which the Nephites saw was in the likeness of the spirit body which the brother of Jared saw. However, this passage is also consistent with the interpretation I offer. The body which the brother of Jared saw was not identical to the body which the Nephites saw, although they were both in the likeness of Jesus' spirit. Moroni emphasizes that "he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites." Jesus ministered to the Nephites as their God, a being of flesh, bone, and spirit.

If it was possible for the Lord to lay down his immortal body to take on mortal flesh, then surely it is also possible for the Mother to lay down her immortal body to become the Holy Ghost.

The scriptures refer to the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Christ, the Comforter, and the Spirit of truth. Two possible meanings that we have ascertained for these names are the personal spirit of Jesus Christ and the substance or power that emanates from God and pervades all things in differing degrees. The scriptures do not make it clear whether the Holy Ghost is an individual being or a power. However, there are several passages which declare that the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God. How are we to interpret this? The official doctrine of the LDS church at this time is, as has been pointed out, that they are three distinct individuals. I have tried to show from the scriptures that the Son is one individual, who is also called the Lord, God, and our Redeemer, and that the name "the Father," when it refers to one individual, refers to the same person who is Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost could also be interpreted as the power of God, since Jesus refers to himself as the Spirit of truth and the names "my Spirit," "Spirit of the Lord," "Spirit of God," etc., are actually used more frequently than and often synonymously with the Holy Ghost. Thus the names "Father," "Son," and "Holy Ghost" could all refer to one individual God, but I would argue that this interpretation would also require us to recognize God as Mother, Daughter, and Holy Ghost.

There are, however, reasons to believe that there is an individual being, a god distinct from Jesus Christ, called the Holy Ghost who has a special mission to perform among humans. Nephi taught his people that the words of Christ are given by the power of the Holy Ghost. "I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels . . . Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore they speak the words of Christ" (2 Ne. 32:2-3). The connection between angels and the Holy Ghost is interesting. Angels are messengers of God who are seen as well as heard; whoever is ministered to by an angel knows he has seen and heard a being distinct and different from himself. The Holy Ghost, however, speaks to the mind and heart (D&C 8:2). It is sometimes difficult to distinguish her voice from our own inner voice. The reason she is not clearly pointed out as an individual in the scriptures is because she does not often manifest herself as an individual distinct from ourselves. It is also possible that there are many spirits working with the Holy Ghost to perform her work.

Jesus, during the Last Supper, spoke of two distinct comforters; one he called the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Truth, the other he also called the Spirit of truth. Joseph Smith taught that the Second Comforter was Jesus Christ himself.<sup>6</sup> He also taught that the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit who is also God who also has a distinct mission to perform for us even as the Son atoned for our sins.<sup>7</sup>

Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages, according to Abraham's record, are called God the first, the Creator; God the Second, the Redeemer; and God the Third, the witness or Testator.<sup>8</sup>

But numerous scriptures testify that the being who would become Jesus Christ created the earth. And in Moses 6:8-9 we read, "In the day that God

---

6. Ehat and Cook, 4-5.

7. *Ibid.*, 64.

8. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1968), 190.

created man, in the likeness of God made he him; in the image of his own body, male and female, created he them." If God created male and female in the image of his own body then God the Creator must be the Divine Couple, a Man with a male body and a Woman with a female body. If God the Creator is the Divine Couple and God the Redeemer is the male part of the Divine Couple, then it is reasonable to conclude that God the Witness or Testator is the female part of God the Creator.

God himself came down among the children of men to redeem his people. He sacrificed his immortal body and took on himself a mortal body to become one of us and suffer the pains and sorrows of mortality. He sacrificed his mortal body so that he might conquer death and bring about the resurrection of all humanity and he suffered the pains of all our sins so that we might be redeemed.

God herself came down among the children of women to succor her children. She sacrificed her immortal body to be with us; she remains a spirit so that she can always be with us to enlighten, to comfort, to strengthen, to feel what we feel, to suffer with us in all our sins, in our loneliness and pain, and to encircle us in the arms of her love. She bears witness of Christ and leads us to him, teaching us of their will so that we might partake of eternal life in their kingdom.

#### PROPHECIES OF THE REVELATION OF THE MOTHER

We find the Mother in the scriptures, then, wherever they speak of the Holy Ghost, but of course they do not identify the Holy Ghost as our Mother. When will she be revealed? Do the scriptures prophesy of her revelation?

Joseph Smith taught that in the last days many things would be revealed. The purpose of this is to bring about a whole and complete and perfect union. In order to do this, lost and hidden things from past ages will be revealed as well as things which never have been revealed (D&C 128:18). The Lord told Joseph Smith, "God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now" (121:26). The clause "that has not been revealed since the world was until now" is usually considered to modify "knowledge." However, it could also modify "the Holy Ghost," yielding "The Holy Ghost has not been revealed since the world was until now," that is, in the last days. However, whether this interpretation is admitted the Lord says that there is "a time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many, they shall be manifest" (v. 28). So the Holy Ghost, either as one with God or one of many gods, will be revealed in the last days. Therefore we should look for prophecies of her revelation among the prophecies of the last days. We

should not expect to find any plain prophecies. Prophecies of the future are usually metaphoric, allusive, and suggestive rather than plain and since the Mother herself is hidden in the scriptures, we can expect that prophecies concerning her appearance will be even more hidden.

I will discuss two clusters of metaphors which I believe refer to the Mother: the arm or the hand of the Lord and the bride of the Lord. In speaking of the last days Isaiah prophesied, "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations" (Isa. 52:10). In the Book of Mormon Nephi, Abinadi, and Jesus all refer to this prophecy and it is referred to four times in the Doctrine and Covenants. What is the meaning of "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord?" What is to be revealed in the last days? To discover this I undertook a rhetorical analysis of all occurrences of the phrase "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord" in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants.

There are a number of passages which indicate that "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord" denotes the means by which the Lord carries out his purposes or accomplishes his work. For example, "It is the hand of the Lord which has done it" (Morm. 8:8); "being directed continually by the hand of the Lord" (Ether 2:6); "he extended his arm in the preservation of our fathers" (Mosiah 1:14); and "my arm is stretched out in the last days to save my people Israel" (D&C 136:2). Of course, we regard such passages as metaphoric; we do not think that the hand or arm of the Lord is literally accomplishing the work. By what means, then, does the Lord carry out his purposes? To determine this I looked for parallel constructions that might explain or interpret "arm of the Lord" and found several such passages.

"I call upon the weak things of the world . . . to thrash the nations by the power of my Spirit; and their arm shall be my arm" (D&C 35:13-14). Since they are to accomplish their work by the power of the Lord's Spirit, the arm of the Lord is the Spirit of the Lord.

"For I the Lord have put forth my hand to exert the powers of heaven" (D&C 84:119). This tells us that what is done by the hand of the Lord is done by the powers of heaven.

"Thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and call upon his name" (Alma 19:36). This verse equates the Lord's pouring out his Spirit to extending his arm.

"He was taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord" (Alma 45:19). Again the hand of the Lord is equated to the Spirit.

Having identified "Spirit of the Lord" or "power of my Spirit," or "Spirit" to mean "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord," I checked to see if this was a plausible interpretation for all occurrences of "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord" and found it to be so except in the few cases where a literal interpretation seemed to be required.



The Spirit of the Lord is not necessarily the personage of the Holy Ghost, so something more would seem to be required to show that the prophecy that the Lord will make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations is a prophecy of the revelation of the Holy Ghost or Mother in the last days. I have one more interpretation to offer to show that the prophecy that the Lord will make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations is a prophecy of the revelation of the Mother. Isaiah's prophecy reads, "For the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (52:9-10). In his visit to the Nephites, Jesus rendered the prophecy as:

For the Father hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.  
The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father; and the  
Father and I are one (3 Ne. 20:34-35).

Joseph Smith taught that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Second Comforter and that when anyone obtains this last comforter he will have Jesus himself appear to him from time to time and that he will manifest the Father to him and they will together visit him.<sup>9</sup> If the Lord or the Father comforts his people, he appears to them and he also reveals the Father to them. Since the Father is also the Divine couple, the manifestation of the Father could mean the revelation of the Divine Couple, and "The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations" could mean that Jesus reveals himself as the Father and his divine wife as the Mother. Doctrine and Covenants 97:19 supports this interpretation. "Zion is the city of our God, . . . for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there." This implies that "the hand of the Lord" is indeed a person whose presence in Zion is as important as God's.

Interpreting "the Father" as "the Divine Couple" also suggests an interpretation for scriptures which assert that Jesus is on the right hand of the Father or God. These scriptures may picture the Father and Mother standing or sitting side by side and Jesus is on the right and she is on the left. Thus either the Son or the Daughter, the Father or the Mother could be called the arm or hand of the Lord.

The second cluster of metaphors which I believe point to the revelation of the Mother are those of the marriage of the Lamb. Jesus called himself the bridegroom (Matt. 5:19) and gave two parables, the Marriage of the King's Son and the Ten Virgins, in which he compared the Second Coming to a wedding and himself to the bridegroom. In the Doctrine and Covenants

---

9. Ehat and Cook, 5.

he refers to himself as the bridegroom five times in connection with the Second Coming. Will there be a real wedding at the Second Coming or is the wedding merely figurative?

The most detailed account of the marriage of the Lamb is in Revelation. Before Christ descends to the earth John hears a voice saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (19:7). The bride is usually interpreted to mean the church of God or the people of Israel. John calls the bride the new Jerusalem (21:2, 9-10). But a figurative meaning does not preclude a literal one. John also says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Since the Fall brought about the separation of many things—God from humanity, male from female, body from spirit, individual from community, faith from reason—the Millennium will bring all things into a new unity. But the Fall also brought about the separation of God from God, Father from Mother. Isaiah declared:

Yea, for thus saith the Lord: have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? For thus saith the Lord; Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement? To whom have I put thee away, or to which of my creditors have I sold you? Yea, to whom have I sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away (2 Ne. 7:1).

Our Mother exiled herself voluntarily to be with us. The Mother is identified with the Child: she also took our sins on herself.

In Revelation 12:1 John describes the Divine Mother. "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." A great dragon made war on her and she fled into the wilderness where the dragon continued to make war on her and her children. Joseph Smith in his translation of the Bible said that the woman was the church of God. The images of the sun, moon, and wilderness are also found in a description of the church given three times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;

And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens (109:73-74).

One metaphorical meaning of "wilderness" is given by the Lord. "Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—in the wilderness, because you cannot see him—my voice, because my voice is Spirit" (D&C 88:66). The wilderness where the Mother is exiled

is the realm of the Spirit which we cannot see. The description "fair as the moon" and "clear as the sun" and "terrible as an army with banners" reminds us of the glorious woman in heaven "clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet," her power denoted by the crown of stars on her head. Again Mother is identified with Child. She cannot come out of the wilderness adorned as a bride to meet her bridegroom until her child is sanctified. "But first let my army become very great, and let it be sanctified before me, that it may become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon, and that her banners may be terrible to all nations." The description "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" is taken from the Song of Solomon where it describes the bride of the king. If the Song of Songs is interpreted as an allegory of the hierosgamos or marriage of the divine male and female, this further supports the view that the marriage of the Lamb is literal as well as figurative and that the Mother will be revealed "adorned as a bride for that day when God shall unveil the heavens" and be reunited with his divine spouse.

As the time for the revelation of the Mother draws closer we should expect that some people will receive visions or voices or feelings which manifest her presence and her mission. I would like to share one such experience with you. My husband David and I were driving home to Provo after having been in Denver for David's twenty-fifth high school reunion. I will give David's account of what happened.

The time in Denver was good, along the lines of recovery as I felt, but better than I anticipated. No close friends were there but after a time I felt kinship with many I met again. I felt a great desire to celebrate the lives of these friends and comfort those who had discovered that their lives were not exactly what they had anticipated they would be. It was a time of reaching out with love and understanding. The epiphanal experience came on the way home. It was about noon. Janice was driving—she had been since Denver—and I was reading to her from Margaret's and Paul's book [*Strangers in Paradox*]. I got to a part of the book that overwhelmed me suddenly: "Rather each is cast in the Image of the Mater Dolorosa, the mourning mother who imposes upon herself a voluntary exile in order to wander with, and comfort her children, mourning and grieving in the veil of tears." At this point I felt tears welling up inside of me and I choked on, "She is like Rachel weeping for her children. She is De . . ."

I couldn't control my voice; I couldn't go on. I wept for a while and then said, "I am very touched by this." Janice said, "It's more than that. It's revelation." I said, "She is here with us. She is in the back seat with us and . . ."

What was I feeling? I was saying inside myself, "This is what I want—to comfort in this veil of tears, to nurture, not to advance myself. This is what I have always wanted." Yearning towards her, I cried out in my heart, "I want to share your loneliness and sorrows. How can I? Oh, that

I could comfort with you!"

I realized that she was not in the back seat. She was around me and before me. With tear fogged eyes I saw her fill the horizon in front of me. I couldn't go on reading. Tears were on my cheeks. I am not usually so overcome with feelings. I rarely cry. I stopped wondering if Janice would wonder why I was having such trouble going forward. I began wondering if I could remain on earth. I was being expanded and it was joyful—and it hurt!

This was not just empathy for the Mother. This was epiphany. She is here! I felt such love and identification for her and her work and rapture at her presence.

What would I tell Janice? What could I tell her? Finally I regained control and found out.

"I've given my heart to the Mother. She was here and I wasn't sure that I would go on living."

#### WORSHIPPING THE MOTHER

One question which has received a great deal of attention is whether we should worship the Mother and, if so, how? The question is important to those who sincerely believe that our Heavenly Mother is God, while those who believe that only the Father is really God tend to view the answer as self-evident (of course, we worship only God the Father) and the question as presumptuous. This is not surprising since fundamentally to worship God means to acknowledge that the being we worship is God. When Jesus first appeared to the Nephites they thought he was an angel. But after he told them that he was Jesus Christ, they fell to the earth. Jesus then invited them to feel the prints of the nails in his hands and feet. After they had done so, they all fell down at his feet and worshipped him. They worshipped him because they knew he was their God and the God of the whole earth, the light and life of the world who had atoned for their sins. Whether we should worship the Mother, then, depends on whether we know her and know who she is. We have not been commanded to worship her as we have God the Father. Worship demands a distance; he is the transcendent God, while she is the immanent God. She bears witness of him and leads us to him. Without her with us we could not see him as the Almighty God. However, once she has been revealed to us and we see and understand that she is also God, then we also, in the most fundamental way, worship her. There is no question whether we should worship her; no one can allow us or forbid us to worship her. We simply do.

We also worship God through rituals or ordinances. These connect us in some way to God and are the means through which we, by performing some action, receive blessings from him. All religions believe their rituals come from God. They are either transmitted from generation to generation

or rediscovered or revealed by God himself. Some women look for ancient forms of Goddess worship to express their devotion to the Goddess. However, we as Latter-day Saints only need to re-examine the ordinances given us through Joseph Smith to see that she is present in all of them. We cannot worship him without her presence. Because they are one there is no ordinance through which we worship only him or only her. We are baptized to show our faith in him, but faith is a gift of the Spirit which testifies of Christ. We repent of our sins believing that he has atoned for them and we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost to sanctify us and reveal his will to us so that we may retain a remission of our sins. In partaking of the sacrament we remember him and he pours out his Spirit more abundantly on us. The temple ordinances, as Margaret and Paul Toscano have shown,<sup>10</sup> symbolize both the sacrifice of Christ and her veiled presence.

Jesus taught that doing the will of God is more important than formal worship; indeed, it is the truest worship because it requires our deepest commitment and expresses our truest desires, our essential being. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (3 Ne. 14:21). If we want to worship the Mother, we must do the work of the Mother, and if we do the work of the Mother, we worship her. Her work is the same as his work. They are one God. Nephi taught that the words of Christ will tell us all things that we should do and that the words of Christ are given by the power of the Holy Ghost (2 Ne. 32:5).

For Mormons the question of whether we should worship the Mother has focused mainly on whether we should pray to her. Those who think we should not pray to her point out that Jesus commanded us to pray to the Father in his name and conclude that the only acceptable form of prayer is to address God as Heavenly Father and end the prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. I have tried to show that Jesus is the Father whom we worship. In Doctrine and Covenants 93, which clearly teaches that the Son is the Father, the Lord says, "I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name." This means that Jesus Christ is the name of the Father which we should use when we pray to him and worship him. He has other names but we should call him Jesus Christ because that is the name through which we are saved. "Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved" (D&C 18:23). If the words are changed around a little this reads, "Behold, Jesus Christ is the name of the Father which is given." Mormons usually interpret this verse to mean that Jesus Christ is the name

---

10. Margaret and Paul Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 265-91.

given by the Father, which is also a true interpretation, but it obscures the more fundamental one.

Doctrine and Covenants 109 is the prayer offered by Joseph Smith at the dedication of the Kirtland temple, which he said was given to him by revelation. In this prayer he addresses God as "Lord, God of Israel," "Lord," "Holy Father in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of thy bosom," "Holy Father," "Jehovah," "Mighty God of Jacob," and "O Lord God Almighty." All these names are names of Jesus Christ and this prayer is clearly addressed to him. It is concluded with a simple "Amen." Nephi, in his account of his life, usually tells us that he prayed to the Lord, and we have seen that he identified the Lord as the one who would come to the earth to redeem his people. He also exhorts us to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ (2 Ne. 32:9) and tells us to worship Christ (25:29). He does not distinguish between praying to the Lord, praying to the Father in the name of Christ, and worshipping Christ.

If we are to pray to Jesus, the question arises, "To whom did Jesus pray?" As a mortal man he prayed to the Father and as God among the Nephites he also prayed to the Father. But I have shown that the Father, the Man of Holiness, is Jesus Christ. Surely Jesus did not pray to himself. Perhaps the Father whom Jesus prayed to was the same being who on several occasions introduced Jesus as "My Beloved Son." Who was this? The voice is described in 3 Nephi 11:3.

. . . and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear it to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them that did hear it to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

This description has several points in common with descriptions given of the voice of the Holy Ghost. It was a small voice but it pierced those who heard it to the center and it caused their hearts to burn. I believe that this being who bears witness of Jesus Christ is his Beloved, the Woman of Holiness, who is now the Holy Ghost. She calls him, "My Beloved, who is the Son."

Should we pray to the Mother? Although we are not commanded to pray to her, we are commanded to pray with her. "He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God" (D&C 46:30). And when we pray, we invoke her presence (19:38). And our prayers are answered through her. Understanding this, we certainly may address her directly in our prayers. However, prayer, unlike ritual, does not require a form given by God in order to be efficacious. In its most fundamental sense prayer is a reaching out for God. The deepest longings of our hearts, our strivings for

goodness, our hearts broken by our sins and failures, the pains of our humanity, our hope for love, and finally our deepest desires to know God are all prayers to him and her.

Jesus taught us to pray to the Father, not to set up barriers between us and God, but to remove them. God is your Father, he taught us. You need not be afraid to approach him because he loves you. You are fathers yourselves, he reminded us; you know that you respond to your children's pleas. "How much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11) She is our Mother, a Mother who knows our needs before we can express them, a Mother who is here before we call out to her.

Which of you mothers, if your child cries out in the night, will not hear her cries and go to her and put your arms around her and comfort her? If you, then, being weak, know how to comfort your children, how much more does our Mother in Heaven comfort us when we stand in need of comfort?

Or which of you mothers, if your child is confused or has a problem, will not give him counsel? If you, then, lacking knowledge of the future, know how to counsel your children, how much more does our Heavenly Mother guide us when we ask to know what we should do?

Or which of you mothers, if your child asks you a question, will send him away? If you, then, being ignorant of many things, know how to enlighten your children, how much more does our Mother in Heaven give truth to those who seek it?

Or which of you mothers does not know that your children need you to be with them? If you, then, being selfish, will sacrifice to be with your children, how much more is our Mother, not in heaven, but here with us?





# My Search for the Mother and Daughter

*"Linda Johns"*

MY EARNEST SEARCH FOR THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER began in a time of spiritual and emotional pain. I had been reading the Gospel of John, and kept coming across statements such as: "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (1:3); "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (1:4); "He was in the world, and the world was made by him" (1:10); and "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (5:26).

John says that two *men* (exalted and glorified men, but men nonetheless) created all life, and that it only took the Father to give the Son the ability to have life in himself. In nature, the creation of new life requires both a father and a mother. And the highest role that women are allowed to fill in current Mormon theology is that of giving birth and being mothers. But John says that all life was ultimately created by two men. If what John says is to be taken at face value, then the glorified and exalted place of motherhood in Mormon theology must be a temporary and transitory one, because in the heavens two men create all life (or three men if you go by the temple account). And the only heavenly parent we are "allowed" to pray to or be guided by or have anything to do with is our male parent.

What I read in John was painful to me as a woman. If heavenly women are left out of all this eternal creating, if they are unnecessary (or even just less important than men) to the creation of life in the eternities, then so am I. I'm a woman, too.

But of course this cannot be. Logic and reason insist that all life has both a father and a mother. Whenever the scriptures speak of the creating or giving of life, there must be both a father and a mother involved, even if they do not explicitly say so. Clearly the scriptures are not complete where womankind is concerned.

Mormon doctrine goes a little further than John, acknowledging that we do in fact *have* a mother in heaven. But I find this mother of current

Mormon doctrine to be a strange kind of mother. She is a mother we do not talk to or about, and she does not have anything to do with us, at least not during our mortal lives. She is supposedly a loving and perfect mother who is also anonymous, silent, and uninvolved in the lives of her children.

If our priesthood leaders believe the men-have-priesthood/women-have-motherhood model of divine role division accurately reflects eternal reality, then why doesn't the preeminence of this mothering role for women carry over into the next life? If we really can pray to only *one* of our heavenly parents, then shouldn't Heavenly *Mother* be the one we are taught to turn to for parental guidance and comfort, since parenting is her highest role in the eternities? It seems inconsistent to teach that on earth women are not meant to hold priesthood because their divine calling is to be mothers instead, and yet to also teach (by only "allowing" us to cultivate a relationship with our Heavenly *Father*) that in the eternities it will be fathers who fill the preeminent parenting role in the ongoing development of their spirit offspring. Once her mortal life is over, is woman's highest and most noble calling, that of eternal motherhood, one that she will ultimately carry out in silent anonymity, being uninvolved in the mortal lives of her children?

Why is Mother in Heaven silent and hidden? Is she less important to our salvation and exaltation than Heavenly Father? In heaven do fathers matter more than mothers? Are mothers not necessary to their children's growth and progress there? Do mothers in heaven really play no part whatsoever in their children's mortal stage of existence? If Mormon scripture contains a fullness of the gospel, then is she not a part of the fullness of the gospel?

And what about me, her daughter? If I should some day grow up to be like Heavenly Mother, would I be less important in my children's eternal lives than their heavenly father? Would I have to be invisible, anonymous, and silent, too? Would I exist in the shadows of their father, just standing by in the wings while he brings about our children's immortality and eternal life all by himself?

This current doctrine of Heavenly Mother (or lack thereof) has been painful to me as a Mormon woman. It feels as though in heaven as well as on earth men remain the most holy, the most important, and the highest authorities who will continue to make all of the final decisions, as if there is something innately inferior about women that makes us unfit for such responsibilities, both here as well as in the hereafter. It has been painful for me to be taught (if only by inference) that in the heavens, even on the level of Godhood where love reigns supreme, men are still over and above women—they still rule over us and will have the final say in all actions and decisions regarding us and our children. This feels wrong to me, and it put a stumbling block in my path to Heavenly Father and Jesus. Eventually I

came to the realization that if this was what the Celestial Kingdom was really like, then I didn't want to live there.

It became clear to me that I would have to make my own search for the Mother and Daughter. It hurt that I had to search for them at all. It hurt that they are not revealed in Mormon and Christian scripture as plainly and straightforwardly as the Father and Son are. And it hurt to be taught, if only by omission, that a knowledge and understanding of my gender's half of deity apparently is not as necessary in our lives as is a knowledge and understanding of the male deities.

It hurt that my church leaders seem totally unconcerned about this absence of the Mother and Daughter in our scripture, doctrine, and practice. Recently I came across a statement President Spencer W. Kimball made shortly after blacks were given the priesthood. He said, "We pray to God to reveal his mind and we always will, but we don't expect any revelation regarding women and the priesthood."<sup>1</sup> When I read that, I thought of all of the scriptures that say, "Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and ye shall find" (Matt. 7:7; 3 Ne. 14:7-8; D&C 4:7); and "If any of you lack wisdom, let him [or her] ask of God, that giveth to all men [and I assume women, too] liberally" (James 1:5). And it occurred to me that perhaps one reason our leaders have not received a revelation of the Mother and Daughter is because they do not ask. Maybe they do not "expect" (or even want) any revelation of female deity. It does not appear to cause them deep pain as it does me that she is completely excluded from our faith. None of them are women. They can all see their potential end in Heavenly Father and Jesus. I cannot. I will never be an eternal father or son, no matter what. (And I do not want to be.)

So in my pain and frustration I began my own search for the Mother and Daughter, without official sanction or help from my church leaders. I began by reading everything I could find that others, both in and out of the church, have written about their search for her.<sup>2</sup> Some have speculated that she could be Mother Eve, the Holy Ghost, the Virgin Mary, Mother Nature, Mother Earth, Wisdom, or the Bride of Christ. I do not know with absolute

---

1. In D. Michael Quinn, in "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 376.

2. Suggested reading includes Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins, *The Feminine Face of God* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991); *Womanspirit Rising*, eds. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: Harper Collins, 1979, 1992); *Weaving the Visions*, eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (New York: Harper Collins, 1989); Margaret and Paul Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990); and *Women and Authority*.

certainty which if any of these represents her true identity. I can only search and try to sort through what seems right to me at this point.

I thought that one of the most effective ways to find Mother in Heaven would be to simply pray to her and ask her to reveal herself to me ("If any of you lack wisdom . . ."). I worried at first that I might somehow anger or offend Heavenly Father by praying to my Mother. I meant no disrespect to him, and it was not my intention to diminish his role in my spiritual life. I only desired to add to my experience of him the experience of my Mother, so that my worship and spiritual life could be whole and complete. I tried to explain this to Heavenly Father in prayer, and I feel he understood. What father in this life would be offended or angered if his children sometimes wanted to speak with their mother too, and not always just with him alone?

One of the first questions I had was whether I could find the Mother and Daughter in Mormonism. I grew up in the Church of the Father and Son. In it I grew to believe in and love them, and to feel their love for me. I am grateful for my faith in them, and I have no desire to abandon the Father and Son or to replace them with the Mother and Daughter. I would feel no more at peace with the absence of the Father than I do with the absence of the Mother; no more content with the ruling of female over male than I do with the ruling of male over female.

So I wanted to know if I could find the Mother and Daughter within the context of Mormonism—in Mormon song, prayer, scripture, and ritual, or if I would have to look outside of Mormonism for them. Were they hidden somewhere, waiting to be found? Or would I need to have two separate faiths in my life—one of the Father and Son and another of the Mother and Daughter—in order to know and experience both of them? One thing was certain, I knew I would not give up my search for them. No one could compel me to, and I would go wherever the search led.

I included in my search a review of the scriptures. I began with the idea that the Holy Ghost could be a female deity. I was struck by Doctrine and Covenants 121:26-28 which I understood to say that the Holy Ghost has not yet been fully revealed but will be in a time to come in which nothing shall be withheld, and whether there is one God or many, they will be made manifest. So I wondered if it might be possible that part of the knowledge about the Holy Ghost which has not yet been revealed is its gender.

The idea of the Holy Ghost being a female deity made sense to me for several reasons. First of all, it would mean that the Godhead is not made up exclusively of men. It would mean that she has been here all along, in Mormon and Christian scripture, doctrine, song, and ritual, participating in our lives and growth just as Heavenly Father and Jesus have been. It would mean that she has not been an anonymous, silent, and lesser God. And it would mean that there was a female counterpart to Jesus Christ in our creation, salvation, and exaltation.

I decided to investigate this idea further by reviewing all of the specific references to the Holy Ghost in latter-day Mormon scripture (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price). I wanted to see if anywhere in Mormon scripture the gender of the Holy Ghost was given or even alluded to by the use of "he," "him," or "his" when referring specifically to the Holy Ghost. I was both surprised and excited when, after going through each of these scriptures page by page, I found no reference to the gender of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was always referred to as, "it," "who," or "which," in non-gender specific terms. This furthered my belief that there is at least room for the *possibility* in latter-day Mormon scripture that the Holy Ghost is indeed a female deity.<sup>3</sup>

I was also intrigued by the woman referred to as Wisdom in both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. In the Old Testament a female voice identified as Wisdom says that those who seek her shall find her, that she leads in the way of righteousness, and that she was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth was made. She says she was there when the earth was created, that she was brought up with the Lord, and was his delight. (This sounds like a companion of the Lord, and a first-born spirit daughter of God.) She says that those who keep her ways are blessed, and that whoever finds her finds life (Prov. 8). The Book of Mormon also refers to Wisdom in female terms as someone we should seek and desire to have rule over us (Mosiah 8:20).

So the Holy Ghost and Wisdom are two possibilities that I encountered in my search for a female deity. While I do not claim to have a final, definitive revelation of her, my search has led me to some tentative conclusions. The conclusions I have reached thus far are these:

I still believe in the Father and Son. I believe in Christ and his atonement. I believe that he came to earth to save us from physical death through resurrection, and that through his atonement we can be reconciled to God and born into the new life of the Spirit. I believe he is my personal savior and redeemer. I believe that Jesus reveals the Father to us, and that if we know him, we also know the Father. I believe that Christ calls us to have faith in his love and in his atoning sacrifice, to repent of our sins, and to return to God. I believe in his teaching that in order to truly be his disciples, we must love one another. I believe that he loves us unconditionally and

---

3. In the Bible the Holy Ghost is referred to in masculine terms. However, as Margaret Toscano has pointed out in "Put on Your Strength, O Daughters of Zion" (in *Women and Authority*, 430), the original Greek term for the Holy Ghost was gender neutral. It is in Latin that it becomes masculine. If the biblical representation of the Holy Ghost as masculine is correct, then I find it curious that latter-day scripture does not confirm this masculine identity.

that he will forgive and accept us wherever we are. And I believe that his acceptance and love for us can help to heal our wounds.

My experiences in praying to Heavenly Mother have convinced me she also exists. I have felt her answers to my prayers. I have felt her presence, her understanding, and the comfort of her loving arms around me. I have felt understood by her as a woman, and I have experienced a greater love for my own earthly mother.

When I feel my Heavenly Mother near me, I experience a profound sense of my own connection with all of nature. I experience being a part of the whole circle of life, which includes the trees and animals and flowers and streams, and me, and I know that I am not alone. In her I find peace and comfort and the wisdom of nature.

In her wisdom I have also come to see something of the connection between our emotional and mental well-being and our spiritual well-being. She has helped me to understand that I cannot be completely whole spiritually until I am also emotionally and mentally whole, and that these three dimensions of my being are inextricably interwoven. And she has helped me to find a measure of emotional and mental healing, so that I could experience a spiritual healing as well. She has shown me that I matter to God more than my sins do, a possibility my heart never fully grasped during all of my growing up years in the church.

I believe that Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother together constitute God, and that together they have parented our spirits and sent us into mortality as the next step on our journey. I believe that Heavenly Mother participates fully as an equal partner with Heavenly Father in all of his dealings with us. I believe that whenever scripture, prayer, or song refers to Heavenly Father, it also refers to Heavenly Mother, and should be read to include her. I believe that both Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother hear and answer our prayers, and that they sent Jesus and the Holy Ghost to save and redeem us in this life and help us return to them.

I do not believe that Heavenly Mother is in any way subordinate to Heavenly Father, or that there is any need for him to "preside" over her. While I believe that they are surely one in their goodness, their love for their children, and their desire for our exaltation, I also believe that they each act out of their own power and authority, without any need for either one of them to be subject to the other.

I believe that the Holy Ghost is the Daughter, Christ's female counterpart in the Godhead. I believe that she is a full and equal participant with him in our creation, salvation, and exaltation. I believe that the scriptures which speak of Wisdom as a woman refer to her. I believe that her mission includes communicating directly with our spirits, comforting and guiding us, and teaching and leading us to all truth. I believe that she testifies of



Heavenly Father and Mother and Jesus, and that to know her is to know the Mother.

I believe that it is she who plants the seeds of faith and desire in our hearts that lead us to Christ, and that as we enter into his fold through baptism, we can find her living and waiting for us inside the church, filling it with her light and life (at least to the extent that we as members are willing to receive her in our hearts). I believe that as we emerge from the waters of our new birth in Christ, she takes our hand and becomes our constant companion, our personal guide and teacher throughout our spiritual journey.

I believe that the fruits of having her presence in our lives include love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance (Gal. 5:22-23), and that her gifts include the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophesy, healing, discernment, tongues, and the working of miracles (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

If the scriptures which refer to the Holy Ghost do in fact refer to a female deity, then she has been intimately and powerfully involved in the spiritual life of humankind from the beginning. The creation of the earth began when the Spirit moved upon the face of the water (Moses 2:2; Gen. 1:2). Adam prophesied as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost (Moses 6:8). After he was baptized, he was born of the Spirit and became quickened in the inner man, having been baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost (Moses 6:65-66). In some way Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost (Alma 7:10), and after his baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove (1 Ne. 11:27; 2 Ne. 31:8; D&C 93:15). Joseph Smith was inspired by the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation of the church (D&C 21:2). And it is only through the Holy Ghost that Jesus manifests himself to the gentiles (3 Ne. 15:23; 1 Ne. 10:11).

If the Holy Ghost is a female member of the Godhead, then Mormon scripture is full of information about her attributes and mission. She quickens all things and makes all things alive (Moses 6:61). She fills us with hope and perfect love (Moro. 8:26). She dwells in us and carries the truth to our hearts (2 Ne. 33:1; D&C 8:2, 130:22). She teaches us truth, and the peaceable things of the kingdom (D&C 36:2, 50:14). She knows each of our hearts and souls, and is able to meet us wherever we are in our own spiritual journey, giving us the individual personal guidance we need at the time (2 Ne. 32:5; D&C 18:18, 75:10, 79:2, 124:97). She can do this because she knows all things and has all wisdom (D&C 35:19, 42:17; Moses 6:61). She gives us utterance and the ability to speak, write, and teach truth (2 Ne. 28:4; Ether 12:23; D&C 14:8, 21:9, 28:1, 4, 42:16, 47:4, 68:3, 124:97). And whatever is spoken under her influence is scripture, and is the will, mind, word, voice, and power of God (D&C 68:4).

If the Holy Ghost is actually the daughter of God, then she is a deity

of great power and influence in our lives. To reject her is to make a mockery of the plan of redemption (Jacob 6:8), and to deny her once she has had a place in us is to commit an unpardonable sin (Alma 39:6). She has all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgement (Moses 6:61). Revelations and prophesy are given by her power (D&C 8:2-3, 20:26, 35, 34:10, 42:16, 90:14), and by her power we can know the truth of all things (Moro. 10:5). The gospel is declared by her power (D&C 18:32). Angels speak by her power (2 Ne. 32:3), and the mysteries of God are unfolded by her power (1 Ne. 10:19; D&C 90:14). Priesthood bearers are ordained by her power (D&C 20:60, 90:11), and our meetings are to be conducted under her direction (Moro. 6:9; D&C 20:45, 46:2). Whatever form of priesthood authority exists in the heavens, she participates and shares equally in it.

If the Holy Ghost is an exalted and glorified woman, then it is she who testifies of and leads us to Heavenly Father (and Mother) and Jesus (1 Ne. 12:18; 2 Ne. 31:18; 3 Ne. 11:32, 36, 16:6, 28:11; D&C 20:27, 42:17; Moses 1:24, 5:9, 7:11). The Holy Ghost together with the Father (and Mother) and Son are one God (2 Ne. 31:21; Alma 11:44, 3 Ne. 11:27, 36; Morm. 7:7; D&C 20:28). She is involved in all of the basic principles and ordinances of the gospel. The Holy Ghost is the first Comforter, and Jesus is the second. We are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost as well as the Father (and Mother) and Son (3 Ne. 11:25; D&C 20:73). After we are baptized by water, we are then baptized of the Holy Ghost and receive a remission of our sins (2 Ne. 31:13-14, 17; 3 Ne. 9:20, 12:1; Morm. 7:10; Ether 12:14; D&C 20:41, 33:11, 39:6; Moses 6:66). She cleanses and sanctifies us, and we are born of her (Alma 13:12; 3 Ne. 27:20; Moro. 6:4; Moses 6:59, 65) and receive the gift of her transforming presence in our lives.

In our gospel ordinances as they are commonly understood, all spiritual life is imparted to us by men alone—the Father, Son, and a presumed male Holy Ghost. But if the Holy Ghost is a female personage, then there is a female deity who is also a life-giving force in our spiritual development. This would mean that the giving of new spiritual life in the gospel of Jesus Christ requires both male (Jesus) and female (the Holy Ghost) acting together. This makes good sense to me, and it mirrors what I see around me in the world that God created.

In our baptism we are spiritually born of Jesus, becoming his adopted sons and daughters. Perhaps in the subsequent baptism of the Holy Ghost, we are spiritually born of her and become her adopted sons and daughters as well. This would give us both a spiritual mother as well as a spiritual father in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That our mother in the gospel should dwell on earth as a spirit makes sense to me. It seems like something a mother would do, because it allows her to be as close to her children as she can be without being physically

present. If she were always present with us physically, this would defeat the purpose of our coming to earth to be on our own and to learn and grow spiritually. As a spirit, she is able to communicate with our spirits and give us ongoing guidance, comfort, and help without being physically present.

Jesus' mission on our behalf required that he be born into mortality with us in order to overcome mortal death and atone for our sins. He gave us a concrete, visible God, a mortal example to believe in and emulate, and he established his church on the earth. He could not have completely fulfilled this mission as a spirit. Likewise, the Holy Ghost plays an ongoing role in our spiritual development that she could not fulfill in a single mortal lifetime on earth. Perhaps her mission on our behalf must be fulfilled by someone who is a spirit personage. The missions of Jesus and the Holy Ghost are complimentary and of equal importance in our ongoing eternal progression. They are both necessary, and either one acting alone could not bring to pass the plan of salvation. He shows us the way, and she enables us to live it. Working together in perfect harmony and unison, they bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of humankind.

Of course I realize that if the Holy Ghost in reality is not a female deity, then my belief will not make it so. I could be mistaken in my belief. If the Holy Ghost is not the Daughter, and the Godhead is in fact made up entirely of men, then I believe that a separate, complimentary godhead of three females must exist, and that they are equal in power, purpose, glory, and perfection to the male godhead. (And I will continue my search for them.) Perhaps such a female godhead might be comprised of Heavenly Mother, Eve, and a female Holy Spirit.

I know that my search for the Mother and Daughter is just beginning. I believe it will be a life-long search. My beliefs are always subject to revision as my understanding and experience continue to grow and expand. So far my search has been a meaningful experience which has greatly enriched my spiritual life. And wherever it eventually leads me, it has engaged me in Mormon doctrine and scripture again, an involvement I have not felt drawn to for the past several years. It has also led to my return to participation in sacrament meeting each week, as I seek her in Mormon song, prayer, and ritual. And I am finding that for me it is possible to know and experience the Mother and Daughter within the context of Mormonism. I can find her in our songs when I hear them like this:

Choose the right, when a choice is placed before you;  
In the right the Holy Spirit guides;  
And her light is forever shining o'er you,  
When in the right your heart confides.

Choose the right! Choose the right!  
Let Wisdom mark the way before;  
In her light, choose the right!  
And God will bless you evermore (see *Hymns*, #239).

\* \* \*

I know my Mother lives,  
And loves me too.  
The Spirit whispers this to me,  
And tells me it is true,  
And tells me it is true (see *Hymns*, #302).

\* \* \*

Through a still small voice,  
The Spirit speaks to me  
To guide me, to save me  
From the evil I may see.

If I try to do what's right,  
She will lead me through the night,  
Direct me, protect me,  
And give my soul her light.

Listen, listen.  
The Holy Ghost will whisper.  
Listen, listen  
To the still small voice (see *Children's Songbook*, #106).

\* \* \*

Children, God delights to teach you  
By the Holy Spirit's voice.  
Quickly heed her holy promptings,  
Day by day you'll then rejoice.  
O prove faithful, O prove faithful  
To your God and Zion's cause (see *Hymns*, #96).

\* \* \*

The Spirit, Lord, has stirred our souls,  
And by her inward shining glow  
We see anew our sacred goals  
And feel thy nearness here below.

No burning bush near Sinai  
Could show thy presence, Lord, more nigh (see *Hymns*, #157).

\* \* \*

O my Mother, thou that dwellest  
In the high and glorious place.  
When shall I regain thy presence,  
And again behold thy face?  
In thy holy habitation  
Did my spirit once reside?  
In my first primeval childhood  
Was I nurtured near thy side? (see *Hymns*, #292)

I can find her in our sacrament prayers when I hear them like this:

O God, our Eternal Parents, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this water to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God our Eternal Parents, that they do always remember him, that they may have the Holy Spirit to be with them. Amen (see D&C 20:79).

And I can find her in our sacred rituals when I hear them like this:

Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Mother, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen (see D&C 20:73).

My search for the Mother and Daughter in Mormonism does have some limitations. While reading scripture passages which refer to the Father to mean "Father and Mother" is an exciting beginning, if this is all we ever know of her then she may remain just a shadow-image of the Father. We may fail to see her own unique identity. I want to know more and more about the specific attributes and activities of both the Mother and the Daughter. And I want to know how they relate to their male counterparts—what is common to all of them and what is unique to each of them.

My search also feels limited by the fact that all of the revelations of God in our current scriptures have come through men in a patriarchal tradition. Growing up in the gospel I learned to love the scriptures. I have received inspiration, comfort, and guidance from them. And yet there are important parts of my life and my spiritual experience that they do not seem to address as fully as they do others. Our scriptures are replete with history and wars, doctrines and principles and theological teachings. These doctrines and theological principles have played an important part in my spiritual development over the years. But they do not express the whole of

my spiritual experience or my understanding of God. For me, as a woman, so much of my spiritual experience and understanding has come through my connections with others, through the many different kinds of relationships I have experienced. I have been forever changed by those I have known and loved, and those who have loved me. And it is this aspect of my spiritual life that I do not find fully addressed in our current scriptures.

I believe this is because women's voices and women's revelations are missing from our scriptures. Even if many of the revelations that make up our current scriptures were inspired by Heavenly Mother or the Holy Ghost, we are still limited to an official definition of deity and spiritual life that has come entirely through God's sons, without any of our scriptural understanding having come through their daughters.

Again, I do not wish to abandon the revelations that have come through the sons, because I have experienced their truth. I simply want to add to them some revelations of deity that have come through inspired women as well. I believe this would add balance and wholeness to our understanding and experience of God.

Although I do not believe in any restriction, institutional or otherwise, on praying to Mother in Heaven, I no longer wish for an official doctrinal definition of female deity from our church's priesthood leaders. My own personal search for the divine feminine has become one of the most joyful and meaningful spiritual endeavors I have ever undertaken. I treasure my moments of discovery of new ideas and possibilities for her. My flashes of insight and communion with her have been wonderful gifts in my spiritual life, and I want to continue to discover her for myself. I do not want my unfolding discovery of her to be circumscribed in any way by what could possibly turn out to be a limited institutional definition of her.

And so I continue to ponder the nature and gender of deity. On one hand I can see the danger in differentiating too strongly between male and female deities. It would be unwise to try to lock them into separate, rigidly defined roles in my spiritual life. The question of what a female deity can give me that Heavenly Father and Jesus cannot is a valid one. I believe that Jesus was a perfect man. I believe that he had all of the qualities that society has typically defined as male (strength, independence, intelligence, etc.), and also all of the qualities that society has typically defined as female (compassion, nurturing, connectedness, etc.). I believe Jesus was a perfectly complete and whole person, capable of giving us both "fathering" and "mothering." Likewise, I believe that any female deity is also perfectly whole and complete and has both of these sides to her personality as well. She would also be capable of giving us both "mothering" and "fathering."

If both the Father and Mother are whole and complete individuals, and either one is wise and loving enough to parent us well, then one might easily ask, "What's the big deal? What can a female deity possibly give you

that Heavenly Father and Jesus can't?" The answer is simple and yet profoundly important. Being able to see and know the Mother and Daughter gives me a picture of *myself*. Seeing them shows me where I came from, who I am, and what I can become. Knowing them empowers me. They show me what it means to be an eternal woman. And when I see the Mother and Daughter standing and working side by side with the Father and Son, I see a picture of my own infinite worth as a woman, and my *completely* equal place with men. I am able to see it in the heavens even if it does not exist on earth. I feel I must know my Mother and Sister in order to be whole.

So I will continue my search. My faith that it will be a fruitful one comes from our ninth Article of Faith: I believe all that God has revealed, all that they now reveal, and I believe that they will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

# Nestling

*Michael R. Collings*

They hatched today. Last night  
when I peeked among the apples  
they were eggs, four, end to end  
among twigs and scraps and a twitch  
of white yarn looped up and around,  
an inadvertent infinity.

*Jamie called  
last night to say he was doing well  
and for her not to worry.*

This afternoon I stood on tiptoes  
at the patio's edge and saw her tail  
upright, white striped with charcoal gray,  
upright and alert. I backed away and  
moved to the other side of the concrete  
slab to finish the barbecue.

*Jamie was going to come by for dinner  
but did not. His mother thinks his car  
broke down again, but I don't think  
that was the reason.*

After dinner, while we were cleaning up,  
I glanced at the nest once more. She was  
perched above my head on the power line,  
and this time when I leaned into the apples  
she shrilled at me—and then I saw four tiny  
bits of grayish fluff, four sharp orange throats  
stretched taut and expectant. It startled me.  
She shrilled again, and I stepped back  
into the shade.

*Tonight Jamie called but would  
not speak to me. His mother cried. I waited,  
but he would not speak through  
the static and the silence of  
the telephone.*



Sitting in my office, I can hear them, subtle  
*chirrup* just beneath the Mozart concerto  
playing on the tape to ward away the silence  
and the memories.  
Their infant song hangs softly,  
fragile on the air, underneath the mellow horns.  
I shall leave the window open for a moment more,  
then slide it shut, shut out their nascent song.



# “Seizing Sacred Space”: Women’s Engagement in Early Mormonism

*Martha Sonntag Bradley*

IN 1818, JUST AFTER THE WAR OF 1812, Zina Baker Huntington, a young wife and mother from Watertown, New York, wrote to her mother:

As to religion, it is a rather a stupid time as to that in this place and neighborhood, but there is attention in places all around here. I have to lament, my own coldness and stupidity, but hope the cause is equally as near and dear to me. If I cannot enjoy some comfort from the holy spirit, I think my enjoyments are faint indeed.<sup>1</sup>

This comment is part of a marvelous collection of letters that form what Zina called a “silent conversation” with her mother Dorcas Baker. These letters, written between 1807 and 1827, are filled with the disappointments and trials of Zina’s life, the changing seasons, the births and deaths of her children and loved ones, and her husband’s business. But it is religion—Zina’s preoccupation with matters of the spirit—that colors the pages of these letters. Two years later she wrote:

I would inform you that we feel steadfast in the faith of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We lament that we live no nearer to God and our deity, but my dear friends, we feel heaven honor and heaven bound. . . . I wish we might all be so happy as to all meet in a better world than this. There is little prospect of a reformation in this place.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Zina Baker Huntington to Dorcas Baker, 10 Mar. 1818, Watertown, New York, in Zina Diantha Huntington Young Collection, archives, historical department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter LDS archives).

2. Zina Baker Huntington to Dorcas Baker, 13 Mar. 1820, Watertown, New York.

Zina, like many other early converts to Mormonism, was a child of the Second Great Awakening. "There is a revivals [sic] of religion all around us," Zina would write. "Some places a few drops and other places a plentiful shower. The Lord has visited our family with his good spirit."<sup>3</sup>

Besides identifying her own religious conversion, Zina gloried in her young daughter's spiritual sensitivity.

Our eldest daughter, Presendia, has experienced the saving change of heart, I believe. She is 11 years of age last September and our little girl, Adaline, she is six last August. She has had remarkable exercises indeed for such a child, but known to God are all our hearts, and we ought to rejoice that we are in his hands.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that Presendia was only eleven years was of no consequence to Zina. It was assumed that young girls were open and receptive to promptings from God.

Zina's narrative is not unique, but one of many detailing the movement of women toward religion during the Second Great Awakening. This essay examines more than 200 such conversion narratives, like Zina Baker Huntington's, from the first two decades of LDS church history. Some are book-length, but most are first-person accounts of a variety of different forms—autobiographies, journal accounts, letters, and other types of narratives. They provide valuable insights into the conversion process, the men and women drawn to Mormonism's message, and the social milieu in which this drama played out.

The revivals Zina described were nothing short of revolutions, revolutions that caused men and women to realign their lives as they tried to find new paths to God. They were religious expressions of change that were sweeping the land during the first few decades of the nineteenth century, years of rapid social upheaval and unpredictable social change.

Religious historian William McLoughlin, in his book *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reforms*, proposes an intriguing paradigm which illuminates the significance of this movement of women toward Mormonism and other revival religions. He argues that America's periods of religious revival from the eighteenth century to the present correspond with periods of moderate but fundamental social ideological reorientation.<sup>5</sup> In other words, he suggests there is an inextricable connection between economic and institutional change and intellectual and social evolution. Periods of

---

3. Zina Baker Huntington to Dorcas Baker, 8 June 1822, Watertown, New York.

4. Ibid.

5. William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 7.

economic depression or prosperity stimulate change in ideas and relations. The religious disorder of the early nineteenth century mirrored social disorder.

Americans in the throes of social change questioned traditional authority and religious rituals, and sought new ways of invoking the forces of deity. Religious revivals, therefore, played just such a mediating role as they provided individuals with personal and collective religious experience that helped them readjust their lives or reconcile economic, social, intellectual, and religious forces that seemed beyond their control. Revival theologies, like Mormonism, held a sort of magical power: they provided the means with which to deal with some of the changes in their lives at the same time that it claimed to restore a sacred, ancient order.

In a sense, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other early Mormons were like refugees from the declining farming communities of upstate New York. They hoped to make the world anew, certainly to reform Christianity and familial relations. Their religious activism and that of the women that aligned themselves with them, symbolized a more generalized rejection of traditional ritual. For centuries, men and women had been segregated by gender in their religious worship. Here, at least momentarily, the needs of male religious spokesmen and of women corresponded. They met, but they did not merge. Women's religious enthusiasm reflected the general social fragmentation and movement which women and men experienced together.

#### WOMEN AND THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

Recent scholarship paints a picture of the Second Great Awakening as a sort of coming out party for women. This was an unorganized, unorchestrated, and diversified movement which fashioned a different face in every place it surfaced. Revivals pulled women out of their houses into the public arena, onto a very public stage, in unprecedented numbers and in unprecedented dimensions. The Second Great Awakening changed the lives of many women, enhanced possibilities for others, and empowered women in a way unheard of in our country's history. Scholars suggest that converts in the Second Great Awakening were predominantly female. Nancy Cott, for one, contends that in terms of sheer numbers alone, women dominated revivals and spiraled church membership.

One revival minister, Ebenezer Porter, estimated a proportion of three females to two male converts.<sup>6</sup> But once they were converted, whether they

---

6. Ebenezer Porter, *Letters on Revivals of Religion* (Andover, MA: Revival Association, 1832), 5. Women constituted the majority of New England church members from the middle of the seventeenth century on. See Edmund S. Morgan, "New England

were married or not, most female converts were eager to bring their husbands, brothers, and fathers into their faith.

This all played out against the backdrop of centuries of female passivity in religious settings. Traditionally, Christianity had silenced women. Men dominated ecclesiastical liturgy and ritual and women passively accepted the word and privately reveled in the mysteries of God. But all that changed with the beginning of the nineteenth century, when as one historian puts it, women seized "sacred space"<sup>7</sup> and intruded on male territory, taking the pulpit to expound their own spiritual experiences and calling others to repentance, speaking in tongues, and exercising other spiritual gifts. Some women prayed publicly, while others stood on street corners and preached to disinterested and disrespectful crowds. Many women dreamed remarkable dreams foretelling the end of an era and the beginning of a great and glorious new time of religious fulfillment. And for a time male religious leaders played on this newfound female power and called on women to join them in the Lord's work to organize in benevolent and missionary societies, to speak and to pray, and to take the lead in moral leadership in their communities.

Therefore, one of the most immediate and direct effects of the Second Great Awakening was that women's engagement in religion became more immediate and expansive. The conversion experience served as a rite of passage through which women became fully absorbed in religious life.

The concept of rites of passage, as delineated by anthropologists such as Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, provides additional insight into this perplexing problem. Gennep describes three specific states of rites of passage. During the first, *separation*, the individual separates from the group and earlier roles in the social structure. The individual then passes through a second phase, *liminality*, when she lives outside the parameters of laws, customs, conventions, and ceremonies. In a sense this creates an enormous sense of freedom. Liminal persons are felt to be outside of social restraints and norms, to embody the limitless power of disorder. The liminal stage is a time when disorder reigns, old rules and traditions are discarded, and the initiate feels reborn into a new order, a new way of being. In the final state of rite of passage—aggregation—society attempts to integrate the liminal person into a new role or social position.<sup>8</sup>

The rite of passage helps to mitigate the disorder of periods of social

---

Puritanism: Another Approach," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 18 (1961): 236-42; Darrett Rutman, "God's Bridge Falling Down—'Another Approach' to New England Puritanism Assayed," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 19 (1962): 408-21.

7. Carol Smith-Rosenberg, "The Cross and the Pedestal," *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 1986), 129.

8. *Ibid.*, 151.

change by promising stability or restoration of social order. Through formal ritual, forces that seemed to be moving out of control are reigned in and redirected. The rite serves in the socialization process, orienting the individual to new roles and expectations the new order places on her.

#### METHODOLOGY AND FOCUS: CONVERSION NARRATIVES

Nineteenth-century women wrote conversion stories that mark their religious empowerment. This well-established tradition followed uniform patterns and as a body forms a distinct genre of women's vernacular literature. Although these narratives reflect an outpouring of emotion posited in the language of the heart, they are nevertheless stylized and formulaic. This complicates the task of accessing their validity, for they bear an intricate relationship to the reality of women's lives.

This essay looks at narratives of male and female converts to Mormonism between 1830-45. Content analysis of these texts provides valuable insights into the emotional and religious life of the early church.

The typical nineteenth-century religious conversion narrative followed a predictable outline. Usually it described five phases of conversion experience: (1) The narrative described the individual's life before conversion as a life of sin, or at least as a time when she ignored the question of salvation. (2) This was a period of self-realization when narrators recognized their short-comings and became aware of the need for change. (3) The heart of the conversion came when the individual turned her life over to God. Many described a sense of relief when freed from one's sins. (4) Narrators then described how different their lives were because of conversion in terms of behaviors and attitudes. For example, many replaced their drinking and carousing with group singing and worship. And (5) in this final stage the narratives varied the most. Some described self-doubt when the exhilaration of the earlier stages waned. Others experienced surges of rededication or persecution from those outside the faith.

Despite the fact that each narrative recounts a unique spiritual experience, there are remarkable linguistic and thematic similarities in the accounts as a group. For instance, the issue of submission to God's will frequently figured prominently. Deference to God came naturally to women. Salvation was a metaphor for the relationships women had experienced since childhood. They had always been taught to defer to the authority of the men in their lives, to obey their fathers, to look to them for protection and guidance. Upon marriage, women slipped easily into the same type of relationship with their husbands. In fact, almost all women were identified by their connection to men as daughters, wives, sisters, mothers.

These conversion narratives exhibit remarkable similarity in language.

The rhetoric of conversion was based on a common stock of words, phrases (some biblical), and themes. Moreover, women like Zina Huntington had been immersed in the language of conversion from birth. They heard dialogue on conversion in worship services, prayer meetings, revivals, and in the context of their families. And even though they mastered the language of humility, submission, and dependence, they spoke to new reserves of strength, power, energy, authority, and confidence because of their new understanding of their relationship with God.

Regardless of the details of her story, each telling of conversion seems to have been a cathartic experience. Eliza Jane Pulsipher wrote her conversion story to inform her children about the "darkness and ignorance the world was then in."<sup>9</sup> Others noted the folly of the frivolous way they were living, dancing, drunkenness, and most importantly failing to take note of spiritual matters.

At age seventeen Abigail Smith Abbott felt ready to grow closer to God. "For some time I experienced great anxiety pertaining to the salvation of my soul." She wrote:

My prayers were answered with a dream. I dreamed that I was on a high, elevated plain which was a beautiful green. Standing alone and at a little distance from me, I saw a large company of people arrayed entirely in white apparel, who seemed to be marching at a slow pace, singing a song that sounded more glorious than any song I had ever heard before. I was filled with rapture and anxiety to learn the song and be associated with them. I did not go to them but learned one verse of the song. I awoke and sung this song and recited it to my friends and told them my dream.<sup>10</sup>

For some, like Eliza R. Snow, the relief felt after baptism was an immediate balm to their souls.

In the evening of that day, I realized the baptism of the Spirit as sensibly as I did that of the water in the stream. I had retired to bed, and as I was reflecting on the wonderful events transpiring around me, I felt an indescribable, tangible sensation, if I may so call it, commencing at my head and enveloping my person and passing off at my foot, producing inexpressible happiness. Immediately following, I saw a beautiful candle with an unusual long, bright blaze directly over my feet. I sought to know the interpretation, and received the following, "The lamp of intelligence shall be lighted over your path." I was satisfied.<sup>11</sup>

---

9. "Pulsipher Family History Book," 28, LDS archives.

10. "Abigail Smith Abbott," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, ed. Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers), 6:198.

11. Eliza Roxcy Snow Smith, "Sketch of My Life," in *Eliza R. Snow, An Immortal:*



Regardless of the comfort conversion brought, for many trouble began after baptism. In the words of Elizabeth Graham MacDonald: "As soon as I rendered obedience to what I had received as the Word and Will of the Lord, persecution commenced."<sup>12</sup>

The journey toward female empowerment formed the centerpiece of the conversion narrative. By focusing on the state of the female soul, the narrative made visible what had earlier been invisible, the process of moral decision making. These narratives helped women map female aspiration and identity at a time when many women became empowered and experienced an increased sense of female selfhood. The fact that conversion was religiously sanctioned particularly legitimated the narrative. Clearly, as would continue to be true for Mormon narrators into the twentieth century, these women counted their spiritual struggles as more interesting and important than the details of their daily lives. Nevertheless, the conversion narrative helped create a language for their lives, a language that revolved around matters of the spirit.

This religious introspection was frequently an act of worship as well as self-analysis. Women readily attributed the good in their lives to God. But, according to one historian, it was "Clear that religion, not writing, was their vocation. But writing was essential to that vocation. Theirs was no mere summary of a day's events but a searching reflection on its significance for their souls."<sup>13</sup> Here is a trail of a spiritual pilgrimage marked by the hand of providence on every side.

American evangelicalism of the early nineteenth century has been characterized as a religion of the heart rather than a theological system. A crucial ingredient of this "religion of the heart" was of course the prominence of women in nineteenth-century American religious life. It was left to women to feel their way to God. The power of female conversion narratives comes in large measure from this appeal to feeling over intellect. Frequently they reveal struggle, pain, intensity of emotion over concern with theological doctrines.

Conversion was tied to a wider social and cultural setting, and cannot be understood out of that historical context. These narratives helped women to define their societal roles at the same time they essentially subverted many of the foundational assumptions upon which their society was built. It is ironic that as women told their stories they had to be

---

*Selected Writings of Eliza R. Snow* (Salt Lake City: Nicholas G. Morgan Foundation, 1957), 1-53.

12. Elizabeth Graham MacDonald, journal, LDS archives.

13. Joanna Bowen Gillespie, "Clear Leadings of Providence," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (Summer 1985), 2:216.

anything but submissive, overcome shyness to exhort relatives or strangers, inspire, organize, publish, be dedicated, bold, and courageous.

Conversion helped women put aside the troubles and concerns of this world in anticipation of a better. It was easy for many to renounce this world while looking to another. This helped them adjust to challenging circumstances. Joining the work of kingdom-building gave them a new focus for their lives. "After receiving the Gospel," Elizabeth Whitney wrote, "I . . . determined to devote my life, my energies and all that I possessed, towards sustaining and building up the Kingdom of God upon the earth. My whole heart was in the great work of the last dispensation, and I took no thought of my own individual comfort and ease."<sup>14</sup> After leaving family, and in many cases their homeland, many now placed Mormonism at the center of their lives. The day after Sarah Layton's baptism she confronted her changed situation. "The next day was Sunday, and we all fasted until after sundown. I did not have anything but my new religion, that seemed all I needed. . . . I was not afraid, nor did I care who knew I was a Mormon."<sup>15</sup>

While the principle emphasis of this study is female conversion narratives, it is possible to make some tentative conclusions about differences between male and female experiences. The variations are subtle. Male narratives seemed to be more matter of fact, more preoccupied with scripture than intuition, and place less emphasis on a personal relationship with God. Women make frequent reference to being "naturally religious," as if religiosity were an inherent personal characteristic like meekness, mildness, gentleness.<sup>16</sup> Although men and women used much the same rhetoric to describe what had happened to them, employing common images and identical repeated phrases, the language itself meant different things to women than to men. A woman's expectations about the possibilities of her life were so fundamentally dissimilar to those of the men. Even though women's language was in some cases the same, it resounded differently.

#### CHARACTERIZATION OF THE POPULATION GROUP

A demographic description of female converts to Mormonism is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is possible to characterize the tellers of this group of stories. This is a group of women whose lives were profoundly changed by the effects of social change during the first four

---

14. Elizabeth Whitney, "A Leaf from an Autobiography," *Women's Exponent* 7 (1 Aug. 1878), 5:51.

15. "Autobiography of Sarah B. Layton," *Women's Exponent*, 1 Sept. 1900, 26.

16. Whitney, 61.

decades of the nineteenth century. Married and unmarried women's work in the pre-Industrial household economy had changed. These were women who either had been displaced or were willing to be displaced. Many had with their families experienced drastic economic dislocation.

As a group they were relatively young; many were what we would call adolescents. In fact, as was true of the Second Great Awakening generally, by contemporary estimates the majority of these women were between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five, either single or married but without children.<sup>17</sup> Mary Elizabeth Lightner, like Presendia Huntington, was a young girl but was a particularly precocious child in the matter of religion. She was ten years old when her family first encountered Mormon missionaries in Kirtland, Ohio. She attended a meeting where a Book of Mormon was displayed.

I felt such a desire to read it, that I could not refrain from asking him to let me take it home and read it, while he attended meeting. He said it would be too late for me to take it back after meeting, and another thing, he had hardly had time to read a chapter in it himself, and but few of the brethren had even seen it, but I plead so earnestly for it, he finally said, "child, if you will bring this book home before breakfast tomorrow morning, you may take it." He admonished me to be very careful, and see that no harm came to it.<sup>18</sup>

Mary brought the book home, showed it to her family, and promptly began to read the "Golden Bible." The next morning she brought the book back to Morley's house and handed it to him. He responded, "I guess you did not read much in it." She showed him how far she had read, and he said, "I don't believe you can tell me one word of it."<sup>19</sup> She recited verbatim the first verse of Nephi. Morley gave her the book and encouraged her to finish it.

The social upheaval of the period was particularly disorienting for young women such as Mary.<sup>20</sup> With their mothers, they felt the disruption of traditional domestic usefulness. These women already moved in a world of economic and legal dependency, always defined by their father or husband. Marriage was the primary way an adult woman could provide for herself. Nevertheless, because the social order was changing so rapidly,

---

17. Bennet Tyler, *New England Revivals* (Boston: Sabbath School Association, 1846), 76, 148, 159, 189.

18. Mary Elizabeth Lightner, journal, in *The Life and Testimony of Mary Elizabeth Lightner* (Salt Lake City: N.B. Lundwall, n.d.), 2-3.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Nancy Cott, "Young Women in Second Great Awakening," *Journal of Family History* 3 (1975): 19.

there was uncertainty about how they would support themselves, when they would be separated from their families, who they would substitute for their families, where they would go. All these questions seemed to create ambiguous prospects for marriage and hence an insecure future.

Conversion played a prominent role in providing young women with ideological tools to stabilize their lives and identities. And Mormonism proved to be a useful agent in helping them claim their own salvation. Equally important, religious events accompanying conversion provided opportunities for public expressions of anxiety, sympathy, and support as well as a ready supply of new friends. Young women experienced a phenomenon not unlike a new birth into an extensive family of sisters and brothers, a family that promised to be more secure than their original families. Patience Loader wrote:

I am thankful I accepted it just at the right time it was a Safe guard to me at a time when I was Young and full af [sic] life and Needed a guardian Angle [sic] around Me in the Midst of the worldly pleasures I was Surrounded with in a Hotel life So much company and pleasure of all Kind belonging to the world and the many invitations I had to join in with them it was no temptation to me I felt Satisfied that I had found the true way to pleasure and happyness.<sup>21</sup>

According to Cornelia Staker Peterson, her grandfather John Brown spent "six months teaching, preaching, and courting" before he baptized his future wife Elizabeth Crosby.<sup>22</sup>

The language of conversion occasionally sounds like that of seduction. "I first met the Mormon Elders at the home of a friend," Mary Brannigan Crandal later remembered. "One of the elders, after conversing for a short time, looked at me and said, 'Miss B. you will yet join the Church. Will you come and hear us preach next Sunday?' I could scarcely answer for a moment, but a spirit came over me which I'll not forget, and I answered, 'Yes, I'll come.'"<sup>23</sup> Others were as swayed by the face or demeanor of the male missionary as by the spirit. "But when I came to see the two Brother Youngs I had a testimony of myself that they were Servants of the Lord for they looked different to me than any other men I ever saw. They carried an expression in their countenance that bespoke men of God."<sup>24</sup>

In many cases it is difficult to see if the women were undergoing

---

21. Patience Loader, autobiography, typescript, 29, LDS archives.

22. "Cornelia Staker Peterson," in *Treasures of Pioneer History*, ed. Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughter of the Utah Pioneers), 5:215.

23. "Mary Brannigan Crandal," in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, ed. Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughter of the Utah Pioneers), 14:296.

24. Mary Noble, journal, LDS archives.

conversion or courtship. As John Dalling introduced Patience Loader to Mormonism, he moved discreetly from the subject of heaven to the "Subject of marriage and let me know that he was without a wife in the world and that he would like to get accompanion [sic] before he returned to Utah."<sup>25</sup>

As a group these women already had a religious life. Only rarely did they emerge from the ranks of the unchurched. Sarah Studevant Leavitt was preoccupied as a child with the "awful hell I had heard so much about. . . . I had a vision of the damned spirits of hell, so that I was filled with horror more than I was able to bear, but I cried to the Lord day and night until I got an answer of peace and a promise that I should be saved in the Kingdom of God that satisfied me."<sup>26</sup> Sarah was a clairvoyant who throughout her life had premonitions and dreams that foretold the changing fortunes of the church. "I had a place that I went every day for secret prayers," she would later write. "My mind would be carried away in prayer so that I knew nothing of what was going on around me. It seemed like a cloud was resting down over my head."<sup>27</sup> Overwhelmingly these women were from the middle class, the children of shopkeepers, skilled artisans, and farmers. No matter who one was, or where one came from, the process of conversion to Mormonism was one of empowerment. This was a decision, perhaps the first in her life other than marriage, that a woman both made and could make on her own. The choice to convert was consciously made and was an assertion of strength. Conversion was a sort of initiation into autonomy not yet comprehended. Here women could establish a direct connection to God without the mediation of male ecclesiastical leaders.

Once they converted during these early decades of the church, it was possible for women to play an active role in Mormonism. These narratives focus on the female inner light—dreams, personal revelations of a rich and varied texture, a preference for intuitive or instinctive forms of knowledge and religious experience, glorification of the individual, rejection of communal norms and harsh systems of punishment, all weakening and even denying of the boundaries between this world and the next.

Mormon women's religious enthusiasm was frequently manifested in speaking in tongues, shouting, dancing, or fainting. In a very important way these religious manifestations were a metaphor for the changes these converts experienced. These behaviors mirrored the fundamental values and beliefs of the early church and marked the path they traveled that transformed their lives and the world around them.

---

25. Loader, 28.

26. "History of Sarah Studevant Leavitt," 3, copied by Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher, LDS archives.

27. *Ibid.*, 3.

Women like Sarah Studeviant Leavitt preached Mormonism alongside their male counterparts and exercised spiritual gifts—speaking in tongues and administering to “rebuke diseases.”<sup>28</sup> Yet another woman remembered this time of spiritual gifts. According to Drusilla Dorris Hendricks, “The privilege was given to any who desired to speak and some spoke in tongues while others interpreted what they said. Others spoke by the Spirit of God in their own tongue and we all praised God for we had all drunk of that same spirit. We loved one another and met together often and had good meetings and it was now that persecutions began.”<sup>29</sup>

Elizabeth Whitney received in Kirtland the gift of singing “inspirationally.” “The first Song of Zion ever given in the pure language was sung by me then,” she would later write, “and interpreted by Parley P. Pratt, and written down; of which I have preserved the original copy. . . . The Prophet Joseph promised me that I should never lose this gift if I would be wise in using it; and his words have been verified.”<sup>30</sup>

Sarah Layton distributed tracts for the missionaries in her village. “We made a round each Sunday evening. We had three miles to the one place and two to the other, but we never missed going summer or winter for years. Sometimes the people would listen to what we had to say and sometimes they would not.”<sup>31</sup>

These narrators felt empowered by millennial zeal. They were now offered a central role in the religious revolution and this changed them and they disregarded virtually every restraint tradition had placed on women’s behavior. Conversion was a rite of passage that in part explains why women would later accept plural marriage. As they discarded the past and took on a more true partnership in the work of God, coupled with the power of religious belief itself, they grabbed at secular visibility and personal power. This resulted in psychological and sociological change. Still, they were not radicals. Nor were they seeking to move outside the parameters of life as they knew it. Self-fulfillment for them was in magnifying their community’s highest ideals, not fighting them and not in pulling away from them but moving toward the center. For it was only there that they experienced a new sense of power—the power of God—and it altered the way they looked at the world, at themselves, and at the people around them.

---

28. Ibid., 11. See Linda K. Newell, “A Gift Given, A Gift Taken,” *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, eds. Lavina F. Anderson and Maureen Beecher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 111-50.

29. Drusilla Dorris Hendricks, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, ed. Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers), 20:248-49.

30. Whitney, 83.

31. Layton, 55.

Nineteenth-century conversion accounts describe women who hoped for more power in their family arrangements but not by losing the significant men in their lives. The radical reorientation of women to men would eventually occur with the principle of a plurality of wives, but conversion narratives clearly indicate that these women believed religion would in fact solidify familial relations rather than put them at risk. The female sense of religious calling, ultimately and supremely, continued to be to live for others. Much of what they did, including communicating these conversion stories, was for the good of others. Many of these women refused to draw boundaries between their public and private lives, between the spiritual and temporal in their worlds. The line between family and community became blurred and less important. Significantly, these women remained for the most part rooted in the conventional world of marriage and motherhood. This continued to be the way they defined themselves.

Social and sexual proprieties did not bind these new Mormon women in the same way they did their contemporaries, and many began to regard themselves as the Lord's agents, forerunners of a new order—a redefined set of moral, religious, and ethical codes or ways of being. I believe this is another key to understanding why so many Mormon women accepted the principle of plurality of wives.<sup>32</sup> When women left relatives behind as they gathered to Zion, they were ostracized by fathers and mothers and set adrift; they moved for a time beyond the restraints of moral codes and community norms that had traditionally constrained their behavior.

Conversion was a rite of passage that ushered them into a new state of religious engagement. During the liminal stage Mormon women cried out, spoke in tongues, criticized their former ministers, renounced time-honored social proprieties. At the same time it created a heightened sense of power, self-awareness, and self-actualization. By the beginning of the twentieth century Mormonism had taken on a new social order of patriarchal rule, often constricting this new found power women had experienced. Earlier empowered women found themselves subordinated—a role change that tragically diminished their religious status and their position in society generally.

#### CONCLUSION

At the height of the emergence of the modern American family, industrialization, and the Second Great Awakening, women briefly experienced revolutionary, even bewildering change. To many the changes

---

32. During the nineteenth century Mormons called their practice of polygamy the principle of plural marriage. It was also referred to as the principle, living in plurality, or the celestial order.

wrought through widespread religious revolution seemed capable of revolutionizing women's secular as well as sacred roles. But ultimately the changes proved to be fleeting and a new pattern of subordination emerged.

After Mormons reached the Great Basin and commenced the task of physical kingdom-building, they experienced a period of redistribution of power and a redefinition of roles. By the dawn of the twentieth century few women spoke in tongues in public settings, and by the 1930s the church came out definitively against the practice of women giving blessings. The initial period of partnership in kingdom-building ended when the kingdom was secure. And the Mormon male hierarchy joined in with the rest of Victorian America in the first decade of the twentieth century in glorifying the Victorian mother.<sup>33</sup> The cult of true womanhood's four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity—rang true in Mormon Utah.

Through this final stage in their rite of passage, that of aggregation, Mormon women moved to a different position in a new social order. As this new social equilibrium evolved, new rituals, patterns, hierarchies, institutional arrangements emerged, and women became not participants but observers of their religious tradition.

When the wave of revival fervor ebbed, Mormon women tempered their public demonstrations of religious enthusiasm and relinquished their hold on sacred space and moved into a position of deference to the male priesthood hierarchy. Finally, in many ways it seems haunting how familiar almost one hundred years later the rhetoric of the cult of true womanhood still is in Mormon Utah. Consider that women have not yet regained the power or at least sense of power they had in the decades of greatest promise in the early church.

---

33. The cult of domesticity is most completely discussed in Gerda Lerner, "The Cult of Domesticity," Michael Gordon, ed., *The American Family in Its Historical and Social Context* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 372-92.



# Mormon Conversions

*Laura Hamblin*

The songs mutate  
like a virus in my blood:  
"I Am a Child of  
God," "Firm As the Mountains  
around Us," "The Golden Plates."  
I am twelve, have spent  
twelve years learning  
my insufficiencies,

my inabilities.  
I will never spread  
the white cloth, never  
break bread or fill  
the tiny cups  
with water, never  
speak sacred words over  
them, pass them.

Under the bright even  
sky, boys with shellacked  
faces play basketball.  
Closer to God (in the  
next life with numerous  
wives), they know power,  
vertical like the mount  
of Zion and wide—

I begin to bleed,  
am taught with the other  
girls to crochet, to knit  
a pattern of life,  
a pair of slippers  
for our fathers.  
Ah Penelope—  
unraveling woman.

Now, on the rock our fathers  
planted, in this house  
of love, making  
covenants, the congregation  
stands. We sing "The Spirit of  
God like a Fire  
Is Burning," and the live  
coal of reality ignites.

# Anxiously Engaged: Amy Brown Lyman and Relief Society Charity Work, 1917-45

*David Hall*

IN MARCH 1918, LDS CHURCH PRESIDENT Joseph F. Smith called Relief Society general secretary Amy Brown Lyman into his office to discuss the church's cooperative work with the Red Cross. The church had agreed to assume responsibility for looking after the welfare of LDS servicemen and their families soon after the onset of World War I. The previous fall this had led Lyman and three other Relief Society women representing Red Cross chapters from the four most populous counties in Utah to seek out special training in the latest social work techniques at a special conference held by the Mountain Division of the Red Cross in Denver.<sup>1</sup> After their return Smith had shown considerable interest in the methods they had learned there, and expressed his feeling that "if there was anything in the Church that needed improvement it was the charity work" as there was "much duplication and waste of effort and funds." Believing that a more efficient approach could be used to the church's advantage, he proposed that the Relief Society organize a social service department where these new techniques could be tested and implemented.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Amy Brown Lyman, "Social Service Work in the Relief Society, 1917-1928: Including a Brief History of the Relief Society Social Service Department and Brief Mention of Other Relief Society and Community Social Service Activities," 3, typescript, Amy Brown Lyman Collection, Archives and Manuscripts, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. These women and the Red Cross chapters they represented were Amy Brown Lyman, Salt Lake City; Annie D. Palmer, Provo; Cora Kasius, Ogden; and Mary L. Hendrickson, Logan.

2. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 4.

Amy Brown Lyman's life would be filled with noteworthy accomplishments, but this meeting with Smith marked the beginning of what was arguably her most important achievement: building a modern social welfare organization serving the needs of the LDS church. While doing so, she marshalled the talents and energies of Relief Society women in a movement aimed at helping needy men and women and improving the quality of life in their communities. In leading this endeavor Lyman faced daunting challenges, serious conflicts over goals and methods, and occasional disappointment, but ultimately her efforts bore fruit leaving a lasting legacy of reform and, at the same time, inspiring the hearts and minds of a generation of Mormon women.<sup>3</sup>

Both by temperament and inclination, Amy Brown Lyman was a natural choice to have undertaken such a task. Born in 1872, she was raised in the tiny farming settlement of Pleasant Grove, Utah. Her father served there as bishop for twenty-eight years, and for most of that time was also the town's mayor and its representative to the territorial legislature. To the women of the community, her mother was known as a sage whose advice was eagerly sought.<sup>4</sup> Together, her parents provided leadership and coun-

---

3. Lyman is one of the more important figures in twentieth-century Mormonism. Though brief studies have appeared examining portions of her activities, none adequately chronicles the range of her accomplishments. Among these are her own short autobiography *In Retrospect: Autobiography of Amy Brown Lyman* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1945), which first appeared in serialized form in 1942 issues of the *Relief Society Magazine*; essays by Loretta L. Heffner, which include a short biography, "Amy Brown Lyman: Raising the Quality of Life for All," in Vicki Burgess-Olson, ed., *Sister Saints* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), and two articles, "This Decade Was Different: Relief Society Social Services Department, 1919-1929," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Autumn 1982): 64-73, and "The National Women's Relief Society and the U.S. Sheppard-Towner Act," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (Summer 1982): 255-67. Jill Mulvay Derr's writings on the Relief Society are also important to understanding Lyman's activities: "Changing Relief Society Charity to Make Way for Welfare, 1930-1944," in Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, eds., *New Views on Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987); (with Janath Russell Cannon) "Resolving Differences/Achieving Unity: Lessons from the History of Relief Society," in Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen, eds., *As Women of Faith: Talks Selected from the BYU Women's Conferences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989); and (with Cannon and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher) *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993). Vera White Pohlman's *In Memoriam: Amy Brown Lyman, 1872-1959, Biographical Summary and Funeral Services* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 1960) is a concise summary of Lyman's activities and accomplishments but is not widely available.

4. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 5; John Zimmerman Brown, ed., *Autobiography of Pioneer John Brown, 1820-1896* (Salt Lake City: John Zimmerman Brown, 1941), 18, 140, 245; Mary Kimball, "Amy Brown Lyman, R.S. Magazine, Jan. 1929," 2, typescript, Amy Lyman Engar Collection, copy in my possession; Amy Lyman Engar Oral History, interviews by

sel to the people of Pleasant Grove on matters large and small. Precocious and self-confident, even as a youth Amy was not afraid to take charge and it was not long before her forthright, no-nonsense manner earned her the nick-name "Ready-aim-fire."<sup>5</sup> Years later family members would joke that she inherited the energy and intelligence of both sides of the family. As she matured, her keen mind, able to hold onto the larger perspective while attending to details coupled with her boundless energy, produced a woman of unusual ability. Able to grasp situations quickly and clearly, she offered advice freely about problems both personal and institutional. Not afraid to speak her mind, she possessed an enormous sense of integrity which led her to rigorously defend that which she felt was right, and in any argument she could hold her own. Just as importantly, free of pretense or false pride, she was unafraid to admit her errors but remained unwilling to dwell on them. While learning from the past, she never allowed herself to look back in regret. As an adult the strength of her personality manifested itself most obviously in a business-like and outspoken manner, and in a swift and purposeful walk that was so intimidating, it is said, that she could part a crowd merely be walking towards it, even when she was well into her eighties. Her manner led some to think her cold, but intimates knew her to be sympathetic and kind hearted, sincerely concerned for the welfare of her associates and deeply moved by the suffering of others. Permeating all these attributes was an unwavering devotion to the LDS church and its leaders.<sup>6</sup>

In her late teens Lyman received normal training at nearby Brigham Young Academy in Provo and after graduation taught school for six years in Provo and Salt Lake City.<sup>7</sup> Like other young women of her generation who later rose to positions of prominence in social reform, Amy was ambitious and not eager to assume the constrained role of a Victorian housewife.

---

David Hall, 1991-93, tapes in my possession; Susan Elizabeth (Beth) Swensen Driggs Oral History, interview by David Hall, 1991, tape in my possession.

5. Driggs Oral History.

6. Interview with Emily Pollei, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1992, tape in my possession; Amy Lyman Engar, "Amy Brown Lyman: Transcribed from a talk given at the University of Utah Institute 'Women of the Restoration,' February 26, 1987," original in possession of Amy Lyman Engar, copy in my possession; Vera White Pohlman Oral History, interviews by David Hall, 1991-93, tapes in my possession; Leona Fetzner Wintch Oral History, interviews by David Hall, 1991-92, tapes in my possession; Mark K. Allen Oral History, interviews by David Hall, 1991-92, tapes in my possession; Engar Oral History. Pohlman, Wintch, and Allen each worked with Lyman as adults over the course of many years in widely differing situations yet their observations concerning her character are fairly consistent. Amy Lyman Engar was raised by her grandparents, Amy Brown and Richard R. Lyman, after the untimely deaths of her parents. Beth Driggs is a niece who was closely associated with the Lymans from her childhood.

7. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 19-23.

At twenty-three she wrote a friend that she was somewhat hesitant in her feelings toward "the event" (marriage). "I want," she stated, "to see & hear a few more things before I sink into oblivion."<sup>8</sup> Typically she acted on this desire: before her 1896 marriage to Richard R. Lyman, son of Mormon apostle Francis M. Lyman, she traveled to Ann Arbor with her future father-in-law to attend Richard's graduation from the University of Michigan. She then joined a group of purchasing agents from Z.C.M.I., a Mormon-owned mercantile store, on a trip to New York, Boston, and Washington.<sup>9</sup>

By the time of their marriage, Richard had won an appointment as professor of civil engineering at the University of Utah. In 1902, during his first sabbatical year, the Lymans again traveled east, this time to begin Richard's graduate studies at Cornell.<sup>10</sup> A stopover along the way for a summer session at the University of Chicago proved especially important to Amy. Out of curiosity, she enrolled in a course on the relatively new subject of sociology which familiarized her with the scientific approaches then being developed to understand and resolve societal problems. Some of these new techniques included the use of a confidential exchange to coordinate the activities of community relief agencies and the adoption of the so-called case-work approach, which emphasized helping individuals to help themselves. The reasoned, practical nature of these methods appealed to Amy's logical mind and made a deep impression on her thinking.<sup>11</sup> When a field assignment for the course took her to Hull House where she met noted reformer Jane Addams, Lyman was so impressed that she

---

8. Amy Brown Lyman to Will Hayes, 24 Feb. 1895, 1a, original in possession of Barbara Carlson, copy in my possession. Hayes, the widowed husband of Amy's sister Margaret, was serving in the Eastern States Mission of the LDS church at the time. For examples of recent work which include examinations of the backgrounds of prominent female social workers, see Robert M. Crunden, *Ministers of Reform: The Progressives' Achievement in American Civilization, 1889-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Lela B. Costin, *Two Sisters for Social Justice: A Biography of Grace and Edith Abbott* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); and Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

9. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 25.

10. The Lyman's first child, Wendell Brown Lyman, was born in 1897.

11. For a description of the confidential exchange and case-work techniques by a prominent social worker of the era who took a leading role in their development, see Mary E. Richmond, *Social Diagnosis* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917). Lyman later became personally acquainted with Richmond and used her book in training social workers for the church. See Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 116. For a recent treatment of the development of modern social work techniques, see James Leiby, *A History of Social Welfare Work in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), esp. chaps. 7-9 covering developments from 1850-1919. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History; Evelyn Hodges Lewis Oral History, interview by David Hall, 1992, tapes in my possession.

sought first-hand experience through briefly serving as a volunteer with the Chicago Charities. Amy later said that she felt that during these days in Chicago a curtain had been drawn from her mind. By the end of the summer she was convinced that "no work could be more important and satisfying than that of helping to raise human life to its highest level."<sup>12</sup> Yet these seeds planted in 1902, which sank roots deeply into her soul, would not grow to fruition for nearly fifteen years.

After completion of Richard's studies at Cornell, the Lymans returned to Utah and Amy assumed the duties of a housewife. Then in October 1909 Amy, now a thirty-seven-year-old mother of two, was called to the general board of the church's Relief Society.<sup>13</sup> With her concern for others and lack of pretense, she quickly ingratiated herself with the other women of the board while her keen mind and genius for organization earned their respect.<sup>14</sup> In 1913 she was appointed general secretary of the organization, and at that time President Joseph F. Smith gave her several specific assignments, including instructions to make a thorough study of modern social work methods.<sup>15</sup> Though most of her energies over the next several years were devoted to updating the administration of the Relief Society, increasingly she also had opportunities to become involved in social welfare work.

During July and August of 1916 and 1917, for example, the Relief Society established milk kitchens at five schools along Salt Lake City's west side in an effort to improve the diet of poorer children in the area. Lyman presided over one of these stations where, in addition to providing milk, Relief Society workers went out into the community and taught motherhood education classes, examined babies, and made home visits.<sup>16</sup> About the same time she became involved with the work of the church's new Social Advisory committee which included officers of the Relief Society and other auxiliary organizations. Reflecting the strong moral overtones of progressive America, the committee began as an effort to promote the moral retrenchment of LDS youth, but early on it also became concerned

---

12. Lyman, *In Retrospect* 30, 114; Engar Oral History; Amy Brown Lyman, "Interview at KSL," no date, 3, typescript, Amy Brown Lyman Collection; see also Heffner, "Amy Brown Lyman," 102.

13. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 35-36. A second child, Margaret, was born while the Lymans were in New York.

14. Annie Wells Cannon, "Mrs. Lyman as a Relief Society Executive," no date, 2, typescript, Amy Lyman Engar Collection, copy in my possession.

15. Amy Brown Lyman, "Relief Society Address, Parley's Ward, March 1, 1957," 1, typescript, Amy Brown Lyman Collection. Included at this time were his instructions to update the business and record-keeping practices of the organization.

16. Amy Brown Lyman, "Notes from the Field," *Relief Society Magazine* 3 (Aug. 1916): 462; Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 68-69.

with social welfare work. In 1916 the committee began to study the case-work method and maintained a growing interest in modern social work techniques.<sup>17</sup>

After the onset of the World War I, Lyman was named a member of the State Council on Defense and served as chair of its social service committee. Nationally, the war prompted concern on the part of the War Department and the Red Cross about social problems that were expected to arise on the homefront. As a result, state governors were urged to send delegates to the June 1917 meeting of the National Conference of Social Work in Pittsburgh where these problems were to be discussed and plans laid to address them. Utah's governor Simon Bamberger appointed Lyman as one of the state's delegates to this meeting and Joseph F. Smith selected her to serve simultaneously as a representative of the church and Relief Society.<sup>18</sup> At this meeting civilian relief efforts received special emphasis and plans were made to establish training centers under the auspices of the Red Cross, where instruction could be received on how to conduct the work according to "the best social practice."<sup>19</sup> This was the purpose of the special Red Cross institute held in Denver which Lyman and the other Relief Society women attended in the fall of 1917. While there they received additional training in modern social work techniques from Denver's City and County Charity Department.<sup>20</sup>

---

17. Thomas G. Alexander, "Between Revivalism and the Social Gospel: The Latter-day Saint Social Advisory Committee, 1916-22," *Brigham Young University Studies* 23 (Winter 1983):26, 27. For a treatment that places the committee's activities in the context of other church auxiliaries, see Alexander's *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), esp. chap. 8, "The Church Auxiliary Organizations," 125-56. In 1918 the committee with other church auxiliaries sent delegates to the National Conference of Social Work meeting in Kansas City. Lyman attended as part of this delegation.

18. Rebecca N. Nibley also attended with Lyman as a delegate from the Relief Society. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 3.

19. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 3. Scholars long viewed World War I as having fragmented the progressive coalition of the early twentieth century, but more recently historians examining the period have demonstrated that parts of the coalition continued to press for reforms throughout the 1920s. Playing a dominant role during this dynamic period were local and national women's organizations. See James T. Patterson, *The New Deal and the States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), esp. chap. 1, "The 48 States in the 1920's," 3-25, for an account of this period as a time of modified but continued reform. J. Stanley Lemons presented a detailed look at women's reform efforts in the 1920s in *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973). More recently, Robyn Muncy's *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* focused on the cooperative efforts of local women's groups in association with the Federal Children's Bureau. LDS Relief Society welfare work and social reform efforts, which began in earnest during the war, fit well into this more recent interpretation.

20. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 3, 4.



All this set the stage for Joseph F. Smith's meeting with Lyman the following March during which he discussed his concern for the need of a social service department in the church. This meeting seems also in part to have been prompted by an article in *The Survey* (a prominent organ of the day for social workers and reformers) which had praised the willingness of Salt Lake City's Mormon bishops to turn to the local Charity Organization Society for assistance in performing family investigations and coordinating church relief efforts with those of other community agencies.<sup>21</sup> Smith found it disturbing that bishops needed to look outside the church to perform their duties and concluded that if a central office was required to clear cases and coordinate activities, one should be created by the Relief Society. Lyman agreed but felt she needed additional experience before she could accept this new responsibility, so in November 1918 she returned to Denver for six more weeks of training under the supervision of the Denver Charity office.<sup>22</sup>

Smith's death later that month seemed to call into question the plans laid out for a social service department, but by January 1919 his successor, Heber J. Grant, had given the go-ahead for its formal establishment.<sup>23</sup> Initially staffed only by Lyman and one other employee, the department soon proved so efficient that other community agencies overburdened by wartime needs and postwar recession, eagerly relinquished to Lyman's department that portion of their workload involving supervision of LDS families. The first of these transfers began that January when twenty-five families, victims of the influenza epidemic, were turned over to Relief Society supervision by the Red Cross. In August, with the establishment of the Salt Lake Community Clinic, the Relief Society accepted the responsibility to investigate all LDS families seeking treatment there. In the fall a similar request came from the juvenile court. As a result of these added responsibilities, three more workers were hired, but these new tasks proved so time consuming that the department was temporarily forced to turn down another request: investigating and supervising the cases of LDS families seeking Mother's pensions.<sup>24</sup>

---

21. "Jottings," *The Survey* 38 (16 June 1917): 252.

22. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 5. Despite Smith's concern, even after the church established its own social welfare agency through the Relief Society, it was still necessary to clear cases with other community agencies through the local Charity Organization Society to avoid duplication of services. Eventually the task of serving as a central clearing house was taken over by the county welfare departments. Vera Pohlman to David Hall, 15 Dec. 1993.

23. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 6.

24. *Ibid.*, 6-8. Utah had passed a law providing for widows' pensions in 1913. See State of Utah, *First Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare, July 1, 1936-June 30, 1938, With supplementary data January, 1935 through December, 1938 and a Review of Public*

Thus, within the first year of the department's operation, a pattern was established which would prove typical during the next decade: added responsibilities brought new requests to the Presiding Bishopric's office which, when approved, brought an increase in funding to employ more workers, with the result that the presence of more workers enabled the department to accept additional requests for assistance from other agencies in the community.<sup>25</sup> Over the next several years, in addition to the Red Cross, the Social Service Department worked closely with: the County Charity Department, the county hospital, city and county courts, the county jail, the police, the Salvation Army, the Traveler's Aid Society, the YWCA, as well as the Charity Organization Society.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout her career, Lyman believed that leaders should seek the best available individuals to aid them, and in the Social Service Department she surrounded herself with women of talent and intelligence whom she formed into a corps of dedicated professionals. Under Lyman's direction her staff's competent manner and demonstrated efficiency drew praise from state and local community leaders. With Lyman's encouragement to serve community as well as church, over the years many veterans of the Social Service Department moved on to positions of responsibility in other private or government welfare agencies both in Utah and elsewhere.<sup>27</sup>

Although Lyman's efforts were lauded in most quarters, not all were pleased by the influence she wielded. Susa Young Gates, formidable daughter of Brigham Young and member of the Relief Society general board, became an early and outspoken critic of Lyman's efforts to modernize the church's charity work. Gates was particularly concerned when she felt that activities in the Utah Stake were viewed by Lyman and others as an example for the church's general relief efforts.<sup>28</sup> There, under the

---

*Aid in Utah Prior to Establishment of the State Department of Public Welfare in May, 1935* (Salt Lake City: State of Utah, Bureau of Research and Statistics, 1939), 3. Vera W. Pohlman, then director of the Bureau of Research and Statistics, authored this report.

25. Compounding the difficulties brought to Lyman and her staff by these steadily increasing demands for services was the church's own tenuous fiscal situation in the 1920s. President Heber J. Grant's efforts to place the church on a sound financial footing meant that each of Lyman's requests for funding was subject to careful review. Lyman, "Social Service Work," *passim*. For an overview of the church's economic affairs during this period, see Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, esp. chap. 5, "The Temporal Kingdom," 74-92.

26. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 4-8.

27. Wintch Oral History; Pohlman Oral History; Lewis Oral History.

28. Susa Young Gates to the President and Board of the Relief Society, 4 Nov. 1919, Susa Young Gates Collection, archives, historical department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter LDS archives). I am indebted to Jill Derr for bringing this significant correspondence to my attention. See Cannon and Derr, "Resolving Differences/Achieving Unity," 128-31.

direction of stake president Joseph Keeler and stake Relief Society president Inez Knight Allen, the stake Relief Society organized a community welfare department in May 1919. Sixty stake and ward officers were trained to aid in its functioning, and it handled cases and distributed aid so efficiently that it enjoyed broad support among local bishops, who quickly came to depend on its services.<sup>29</sup> Gates feared that if the church adopted the use of specially trained workers in a central agency, LDS charity work would be radically altered and older women who had performed well for years in similar roles as Relief Society visiting teachers would be excluded from meaningful participation because they would not be able to adapt to new, more rigorous standards. She was proud that the church had long administered aid without cost and feared that adoption of "commercialized charity" and creation of a professional, salaried bureaucracy would eat up in overhead those funds which had been intended to help the poor. She also warned of the demoralizing effects that the professionalization of the church's charity efforts would have not only on those receiving aid but on those dispensing it as well.<sup>30</sup>

Both Lyman and Gates were noted for their strong wills and Susa remained determined in her opposition to adoption of the same modern methods that Amy just as vigorously recommended. Their disagreement seems to have come to a head during a January 1920 meeting in the office of church president Heber J. Grant in which each remained so fixed in her views that they were referred back to the general board to seek a solution.<sup>31</sup> Both women were sincere in their views and each found it difficult to compromise on an issue that had such important implications. Yet despite their differences, both suppressed their disagreement out of loyalty to the organization, and co-workers not aware of the matter did not sense any animosity between them.<sup>32</sup>

When the aged Emmeline B. Wells was replaced by Clarissa S. Williams as Relief Society general president early in 1921, Lyman won the new leader's unqualified support for her efforts. Yet, despite Gates's fears and continued opposition, adoption of more efficient approaches ultimately supplemented rather than supplanted the traditional charity activities of

---

29. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 6.

30. "Gates to President and Board"; Cannon and Derr, 129-30.

31. Susa Young Gates to Elizabeth McCune, 21 Jan. 1920, Gates Collection; Cannon and Derr, 130-31. Gates apparently remained opposed to Lyman's activities even after her resignation and release from the general board early in 1922. See Richard R. Lyman Journal, 26 July 1922, Richard R. Lyman Collection, Archives and Manuscripts, Special Collections, Lee Library.

32. Vera W. Pohlman, a perceptive observer, began working in the Relief Society offices in April 1920 as Lyman's personal secretary. She saw the two women interact on a daily basis and never sensed a strain in their relationship. Pohlman Oral History.

Relief Society women, and old and new methods united together in a complimentary relationship which effectively furthered the organization's efforts to serve the needy. The Social Service Department developed primarily into a resource agency for bishops and ward Relief Society presidents and served as a liaison between them and other community agencies. Over the next several years Lyman's department continued to expand its range of services, and in addition to the previously mentioned activities, it operated an employment bureau and a child-placing service and aided bishops by providing counseling services for difficult cases. The department also supervised the training of stake and ward Relief Society leaders through its Social Service Institutes which lasted from a few days to six weeks and were designed to provide specialized instruction in modern social work techniques. In addition many students received supervised training at the headquarters of the Social Service Department in the new occupation of social worker. While the institutes instructed stake and ward Relief Society officers, Lyman was also concerned that the general membership become familiar with the same concepts about the underlying causes of poverty and the resources available for its alleviation. This led to the introduction of a long-running series of monthly lessons dealing with social problems and their remedies which appeared in the *Relief Society Magazine* as part of the organization's course of study.<sup>33</sup>

The department continued to develop and to provide valued services to the church and the community, but despite its accomplishments over the years Lyman's emphasis on social work and her influence with Relief Society leaders continued to concern some members of the general board. They feared that social welfare work would so dominate the agenda of the Relief Society that other activities designed to fulfill its educational and spiritual roles would be excluded. Perhaps in response to the large number of Social Service Institutes held during the preceding years, in 1928 general board member Annie Wells Cannon complained to President Grant that Relief Society president Williams was not listening to her counselors but was instead allowing general secretary Lyman to run the organization. In her view "the spirit of the Gospel and religion seem to have disappeared, and it seems to be a social welfare organization."<sup>34</sup>

---

33. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 1, 6-27; Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 64-69; Cannon and Derr, 131-32.

34. Heber J. Grant, diary, 24 and 27 Feb. 1928, in Alexander, "Between Revivalism and the Social Gospel," 37. Grant was disturbed by this conversation, and Cannon's comments were not without merit: while Lyman was unquestionably committed to the spiritual and intellectual development of Relief Society women, under her influence the Relief Society of the 1920s was perhaps more active in social welfare matters than any time before or since. See Heffner, "This Decade was Different."

Insiders had known for years that Lyman had been the moving force behind many of the organization's innovations during the administrations of Emmeline B. Wells and Clarissa S. Williams. Both women welcomed Lyman's assumption of responsibilities large and small, and Williams especially gave strong support to Lyman's welfare work.<sup>35</sup> This included her activities outside the Social Service Department. In 1922 Lyman won election to the state legislature, primarily to introduce the enabling act providing for the state's acceptance of the matching fund provisions of the Federal Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921, better known as the Sheppard-Towner Act. After its passage, the Relief Society cooperated in the administration of these funds, which resulted in a 19 percent drop in infant mortality in the state by 1928, and an 8 percent drop in maternal mortality during the same period.<sup>36</sup> In 1928 and 1929 Lyman mobilized the resources of the Relief Society in an intensive lobbying effort which resulted in the creation of the Utah State Training School for the Feeble Minded.<sup>37</sup> Lyman's emphasis on social welfare activities was no doubt driven by her close experience dealing with problems of the community, state, and church. Over the years she noted that those who did not directly participate in welfare work were not fully able to understand the pressing needs involved and thus did not realize its importance.<sup>38</sup>

A short time after Cannon's conversation with Grant, Clarissa Williams resigned and her counselor, Louise Y. Robison, was appointed the new general president in October 1928. She chose Lyman to be her first counselor. In contrast to the close relationship Lyman enjoyed with both Wells and Williams, that with Robison was strained. Coworkers have cited possible reasons to account for this, including the fact that Robison came to her position as a relative unknown in contrast to Lyman who was already a prominent figure in the church and state and was widely respected for her accomplishments. Another reason may be rooted in differences in personality and interests between Robison and her forceful and outspoken first counselor. More reserved than Lyman, Robison has been described as "a woman's woman," noted for her kind heart and sympathetic manner

---

35. Williams's support was strengthened, no doubt, by the close friendship the two women enjoyed. She and Lyman not only worked together but socialized in the same circles and belonged to some of the same clubs. Telephone conversation with Amy Lyman Engar, 2 Feb. 1994.

36. Heffner, "The National Women's Relief Society," 256-63; Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 82-84; Pohlman Oral History.

37. Pohlman Oral History; Allen Oral History; Lewis Oral History; "Utah Provides for the Care of the Feeble-Minded," *Relief Society Magazine* 16 (May 1929): 253-54; Heffner, "This Decade Was Different," 70. By all accounts, Lyman was the motivating force behind the Relief Society's lobbying effort in the interest of the State Training School.

38. Wintch Oral History; Pohlman Oral History.

while her interests centered around what was then considered the feminine sphere. Though she showed some interest in child welfare work, and served on community and state welfare boards because of her position as Relief Society president, she did not herself initiate Relief Society social welfare participation in the interest of community and public welfare. Robison did not seem as driven in social welfare matters with the same passion as Lyman, and indeed over the years of her presidency some felt that she seemed to show a lack of interest in the affairs of the Social Service Department which Lyman continued to manage. Robison did, however, cooperate with some of Lyman's activities, including the statewide petition drive by Relief Society women in support of the state training school. But according to her own estimation, the eleven years of the Robison presidency were most noted for her furthering the general board's work in the Burial Clothes Department, establishment of the Mormon Handicraft shop to aid homemakers supplement their income during the Depression, and her efforts to increase circulation of the *Relief Society Magazine*.<sup>39</sup> Lyman did not openly discuss the strain in their relationship but by the early to mid-1930s coworkers were sensing it and noted that Lyman's accomplishments and activities both within and outside of the Social Service Department were given diminished recognition while her talents were underused.<sup>40</sup> But while the years of the Robison administration must have been difficult ones for Lyman, her devotion to the church and loyalty to the Relief Society permitted no complaint, and publicly she had only praise for the general president.<sup>41</sup>

A year after Robison became Relief Society president, the stock market crash ushered in the Great Depression. It was not long before Utah's economy, heavily dependent on agriculture and mining, was suffering the

---

39. Derr, Cannon and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, esp. chap. 8, "Dark Days—The Great Depression, 1928-1940," 248-275; Relief Society, *A Centenary of Relief Society, 1842-1942* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1942), 13. Contemporaries would add the Singing Mothers choral groups to this list. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History.

40. For the relationship between the two women, see Parry D. Sorenson Oral History, interview by David Hall, 1992, tapes in my possession; Wintch Oral History; Driggs Oral History; Pohlman Oral History. In addition to her work in the Social Service Department, Lyman's activities during the Robison administration included: work on a Relief Society handbook with Annie Wells Cannon and Vera W. Pohlman which was published in 1931; activities in local and national social welfare organizations and the National Council of Women; and continued association with the training school as a member of its board of trustees.

41. Lyman even gave Robison credit for some of her own accomplishments. See, for example, Lyman's account of the creation of the Utah State Training School, in *Handbook of the Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1931), 60.

full effects of the crisis. Throughout the decade of the 1930s Utah experienced high unemployment and depended heavily on public welfare. During the early months and years of the Depression, the church joined with other charitable agencies in the community to marshal scarce relief funds and to create some limited work projects, but these efforts were overwhelmed by the sheer scope of the emergency.<sup>42</sup> As part of the church's efforts to cut administrative costs to devote more of its resources to aiding the poor, during the summer of 1930 the Presiding Bishopric encouraged the Social Service Department to trim its staff and to concentrate on training unpaid stake and ward workers to perform their duties at the local level rather than to refer them to the central office. As part of this effort, the Social Service Institutes, which had not been held since the fall of 1928, were scheduled again at the request of the Presiding Bishopric. The first was held during the summer of 1930, and two more during 1931.<sup>43</sup>

When the Depression hit, Lyman had been deeply involved in social work for more than a decade, and from her years of experience she knew that even in the best of times resources for relief had always been inadequate. As the Depression deepened, like others across the nation, she began to look to the federal government to obtain funds that could not be found either through private agencies like the church or through local or state governments.<sup>44</sup> When U.S. president Herbert Hoover signed the Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Act in July 1932, which allowed the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) to loan relief funds to local governments who could certify that they lacked adequate resources, Lyman cooperated by assembling evidence attesting to the scarcity of funds as requested by Salt Lake County and the state's new Welfare Committee. Losing no time, she collected statistics and sample case histories, which were then presented as evidence of need at a special hearing held by federal agents at the state capital.<sup>45</sup> The county received its loan and the Relief Society Social Service Department cooperated with other agencies in the area to dispense the aid it provided to those in need. Private charities like the Relief Society were asked to assume this role because they already employed trained social workers and because they possessed the administrative structure to allocate relief effectively while the counties still lacked both. During this period, in addition to usual case work, Lyman and the

---

42. State of Utah, *First Biennial Report*, 3-4; Garth L. Mangum and Bruce D. Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1993), chap. 6, "Response to the Great Depression," 93-129.

43. Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity," 246; Mangum and Blumell, 99-100.

44. Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity," 251.

45. *Ibid.*, 250-52; Lewis Oral History; State of Utah, 4.

department's staff were responsible for issuing food, clothing, and fuel orders for church members from commodities in a county warehouse.<sup>46</sup>

The election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, and the enactment of the New Deal, brought continued cooperation between the Relief Society and local, state, and federal governments. Under the new Federal Emergency Relief Administration, rules were established in August 1933 which required federal funds for relief to be distributed through government agencies rather than by cooperating (private) agencies as had been the case under the RFC. This led to the temporary designation of the Relief Society Social Service Department as District 7 of the County Welfare Department. As such, it remained responsible for disbursement of public relief to LDS church members while the Salt Lake County Welfare Department expanded its staff.<sup>47</sup> By December 1934 the county gained the administrative capability to serve all applicants for federal aid and public work relief, thereby lessening the workload of the Social Service Department's staff. For a time it seemed that with this new aid the county would be able to handle all direct relief needs, and Lyman and others felt that the Relief Society Social Service Department would again be free to concentrate its resources on preventative work and counseling.<sup>48</sup>

Most veteran social workers like Amy Brown Lyman saw the federal government's assumption of responsibility for relief as inevitable. Many in private agencies had long been involved in a cooperative relationship with government, viewing it as a resource to be used for the common good. Lyman herself had worked closely with government at all levels over the years in a number of causes. In the early 1920s she had successfully pressured county authorities to provide more aid for the indigent.<sup>49</sup> Her activities on behalf of the Sheppard-Towner Act and the state training school similarly signaled a willingness to turn to government resources for the resolution of social problems. Likewise during the early years of the New Deal, Lyman had advocated government action in such areas as unemployment insurance and old-age pensions.<sup>50</sup> While many church

---

46. Pohlman Oral History; Lewis Oral History; Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity," 251-52.

47. While the county was expanding its welfare department, its director approached Lyman for a list of experienced social workers she could recommend for employment. Several Social Service Department workers moved to the county at that time. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History; Lewis Oral History.

48. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, 254-55; Pohlman Oral History; Lewis Oral History; Wintch Oral History; Derr, 256-57.

49. In Lyman, "Social Service Work," 13, Amy wrote, "It has been the constant aim of the Relief Society to point out to the County its responsibility in caring for its indigent families." Lyman herself no doubt represented the Relief Society in this matter.

50. See, for example, "State Body for Social Work Urged: L.D.S. Relief Society Starts



leaders shared these views about the role of government, this was not true of all.

In particular, counselor in the First Presidency J. Reuben Clark disapproved of LDS families receiving public, rather than church, relief. A veteran of long government service, he feared the corruptive influence of such aid no matter what form it took. Clark seemed to feel that anything coming from the government was a dole. As an ardent Republican, he especially feared the Democratic doles of the Roosevelt administration.<sup>51</sup>

Hoping to restore the church to its frontier ideal of taking care of its own, Clark initially found little encouragement for his views among church leaders. Those like Lyman, directly involved in relief, knew the church lacked the resources needed at such times of widespread crisis. While Lyman and many others were not blind to the problems, both actual and potential, that came with government relief, in light of the then current magnitude of need they were not opposed to federal help. Clark, however, remained convinced that a change had to come and patiently worked to gain the support of other church leaders, especially President Heber J. Grant. His opportunity finally arrived late in 1935, when general frustration with New Deal relief efforts made it possible to move ahead with his plans. In April 1936, with the support of President Grant, he announced establishment of the Church Security Plan, soon renamed the Church Welfare Plan.<sup>52</sup>

Clark's efforts brought many positive changes to the administration of church relief: it coordinated activities and brought more abundant church resources to the task. While Lyman and other experienced workers realized from the outset that even these additional resources would prove inadequate to the goal of meeting LDS relief needs, the welfare program did provide an important supplement to overburdened and inadequate federal efforts.<sup>53</sup>

The crisis of the Great Depression and the resulting programs of the New Deal are seen by historians as a watershed event in the transfer of responsibility for charity from private organizations to government agen-

---

Plans to Create Central Bureau," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 Apr. 1933, 1; "Job Insurance Advocated by Relief Society Leader: Mrs. Lyman Urges Women to Sponsor Reforms in Social Legislation," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 9 Oct. 1934, 6.

51. Pohlman Oral History. For a discussion on Clark and the development of the Welfare Plan, see D. Michael Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1983), 251-78. The material for this discussion of Clark's activities is drawn from Quinn's treatment.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Pohlman Oral History; "Vera W. Pohlman, Director of Research and Statistics [State Department of Public Welfare] to Mrs. Burton W. Musser," 20 June 1939, typescript, Amy Brown Lyman Collection.

cies, thus marking the decline of private relief activities.<sup>54</sup> The Church Welfare Program similarly affected Relief Society charity efforts, for while the organization remained active, it did so at the price of lessened autonomy. Instead of raising ward charity funds for their own activities, Relief Society women were now turning their efforts to help fill bishops storehouses.

Considering the Relief Society general board's leading role in LDS charity efforts of the 1920s and 1930s, it seems odd that Clark did not consult either President Louise Y. Robison or Amy Brown Lyman while formulating his own plans.<sup>55</sup> It is not known what Lyman thought about this—if she had any concerns, she kept them to herself. When the plan was first announced, the part the Relief Society was to play remained unclear and an unexpected change in her responsibilities prevented Lyman from initially contributing to the definition of a new role for the organization. In June 1936, Richard, a member of the church's Quorum of Twelve Apostles since 1918, was called to preside over the European Mission. Amy was to accompany him and take charge of the women's work there.<sup>56</sup>

In their absence responsibilities began to take shape: within the framework of the new Church Welfare Plan an important role remained for Relief Society women. Although Relief Society welfare projects were now under the direction of the all-male priesthood through the Church Welfare Committee, and it was reaffirmed that local Relief Society leaders were subject to the direction of their bishops in charity matters, properly trained ward Relief Society presidents and stake social service aides were needed to clear cases and advise the bishops and stake presidents in local relief matters. President Louise Y. Robison seems to have remained unsure, however, as to the Relief Society's role in the new program. This led to complaints such as that from the Church Welfare Committee in October 1938 that the Relief Society was showing a "lack of interest and cooperation."<sup>57</sup> In light of Lyman's experience with inter-agency cooperation in matters of social welfare work, it does not seem surprising that shortly after her return from Europe in September 1938 she was called on to facilitate increased Relief Society support of the Church Welfare Plan by presiding over a new series of Social Service Institutes beginning in the spring of 1939. These were

---

54. Muncy, *Female Dominion*, esp. chap. 5, "Contraction and Dissolution of the Female Dominion," 153-57.

55. Mangum and Blumell, 143-44.

56. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 123; Mangum and Blumell, 143. In addition to the Relief Society, Amy was responsible for the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association and the Primary Association.

57. Mangum and Blumell, 144.

intended to train those Relief Society women with assigned roles as stake and ward presidents and social service aides.<sup>58</sup>

Lyman's call to serve as Relief Society general president shortly thereafter, in January 1940, seemed to provide her with an opportunity to fully institutionalize her approach to charity work, and many anticipated a dynamic and exciting period for the organization. Sadly, World War II and personal tragedy prevented the full achievement of her goals.

Many of her efforts as president revolved around the Social Service Department and the Relief Society's role in the Welfare Plan. Lyman marshalled the Relief Society into a position of enthusiastic support for the Welfare Plan and earned the gratitude of the First Presidency in the process.<sup>59</sup> Seeking to make the program function more effectively, she hoped to rectify a problem involving stake and ward social service aides. Because of the lay character of Mormonism's local leadership, these aides typically moved on to new callings just when they were becoming skilled at evaluating the needs of families requiring assistance. Lyman felt that some sort of continuity must be established in order to ensure proper functioning of the Welfare Plan. To facilitate this she assigned general secretary-treasurer Vera W. Pohlman to work on a reference manual for distribution to the stakes. Drawing on the experience that Relief Society workers had gained over the previous two decades, Pohlman produced drafts ready to be tested in several wards by 1941.<sup>60</sup> In September 1940, Lyman also sought to extend the services of the Social Service Department by arranging for a branch office to be opened to provide a confidential exchange, employment services, and counseling to church members referred by bishops in the Ogden area.<sup>61</sup> Hoping to continue the steps taken in 1939 to resume the Social Service Institutes, Lyman saw that another series of courses was planned, but only two were held before wartime

---

58. Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity," 262. Eventually, Relief Society presidents were included in all welfare committees—general, stake and ward, with the ward president assigned the responsibility of aiding the ward bishop in welfare matters. Pohlman to Hall, 15 Dec. 1993.

59. While recognizing the laudatory tone of such letters generally, it seems significant that upon Lyman's release the First Presidency especially credited the Relief Society under her direction with being largely responsible for the success of the Welfare Plan. This stands in sharp contrast to the lack of cooperation complained of by the Central Welfare Committee in 1938. "The First Presidency to President Amy Brown Lyman and Officers and Members of the National Women's Relief Society General Board," 4 Apr. 1945, copy in my possession.

60. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History.

61. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 151; Wintch Oral History. A similar office had been opened in Los Angeles in 1934 to serve the large Mormon community in southern California.

restrictions on travel following Pearl Harbor forced the Relief Society to divert its energies to other tasks.<sup>62</sup>

Lyman was fully committed to supporting the war effort and was willing to wait patiently until hostilities were over to pursue her goals for the Relief Society, but an unexpected personal tragedy proved a final blow to her plans: the November 1943 excommunication of her husband Richard.<sup>63</sup> Despite recommendations from some church leaders that she leave him, the Lymans remained together and rebuilt their marriage.<sup>64</sup> But Amy came increasingly to feel that the incident had destroyed her ability to lead the women of the church.<sup>65</sup> Aware of the rumors and speculation about the incident that circulated throughout the Mormon community, by October 1944 she felt compelled to submit her resignation to President Heber J. Grant. After waiting six months, Grant accepted it and released Lyman honorably in April 1945.

Typically, during that final six-month period Lyman did not shrink from her duties. As the winter of 1944-45 began, it became clear that the end of the war was approaching so she authorized steps to prepare the Relief Society for the post-war period. Lyman sent Belle Spafford and Vera Pohlman on a trip through the western United States to evaluate conditions in local Relief Societies and to determine their needs. Lyman continued to be especially concerned that the social service handbook be completed and distributed before her release. The text had been approved by the general authorities and the type had been set in preparation for publication when the new general presidency took office. Lyman considered the information contained in that small volume to be a vital part of the Welfare Plan, and it was an important symbol of continuity with the work previously performed by Relief Society women. But after her release, the organization turned its attention to other goals and the manual was never published.<sup>66</sup>

62. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History.

63. Richard's excommunication and expulsion from the Quorum of the Twelve for "violation of the Christian law of Chastity" made headlines across the nation. See *Deseret News*, 12 Nov. 1943; *Los Angeles Times*, 13 Nov. 1943; *New York Times*, 14 Nov. 1943.

64. Richard was rebaptized into the church in November 1954. Engar Oral History.

65. Vera Pohlman remembers one factor that contributed to these feelings: Lyman often rode the streetcar from her home on Third Avenue to the offices of the Relief Society across from Temple Square. Always private about her personal matters, after Richard's excommunication she found the stares and whispered comments encountered on this daily trip especially hard to bear. Pohlman often bought taxi tickets for Lyman to spare her this embarrassment (Pohlman Oral History). Sadly, the discomfort Richard's excommunication caused the church eventually obscured not only his own contributions, but those of Amy as well. Thus one of the most important figures in Mormon history remains largely unknown to the present generation.

66. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History. To this day there remains a gap in the functioning of the Welfare Program which this manual was designed to fill.

While this was surely a final disappointment at the end of a long career of service and accomplishment in the field of social welfare, Lyman did not dwell on it. She enjoyed an active "retirement" until her death in December 1959 and remained involved in club work and civic organizations and of course the Relief Society.<sup>67</sup> Though it was not her nature to look back, if during the last decade and a half of her life she chose to reflect, she could find satisfaction with a career filled with impressive accomplishments. Treading her way along a difficult path, she was responsible for the modernization of LDS charity activities and establishment of the Relief Society Social Service Department which became, after fifty years of continuous service, the LDS Social Services. Dealing with divergent personalities and diminishing roles for women in the church, she made the most out of each situation she encountered. Lyman's efforts left an indelible mark on the church, the larger community, and perhaps most importantly, on a generation of Relief Society women. The Social Service Institutes which she initiated and presided over provided training to more than 4,000 students, while through the educational curriculum of the organization countless Relief Society women were schooled in modern methods of understanding personal and societal problems and encouraged to take a meaningful part in their resolution.<sup>68</sup> If at the end of her long career, war and personal tragedy prevented culmination of some of her accomplishments while obscuring others, she nevertheless left an important legacy which remains vital and inspiring today.

---

67. Lyman taught the monthly literature lessons in her ward Relief Society until her death. Engar Oral History.

68. "Centenary of Relief Society," 42; Pohlman Oral History.



# In Search of Women's Language and Feminist Expression among Nauvoo Wives in *A Little Lower than the Angels*

*Helynn H. Hansen*

VIRGINIA SORENSEN'S 1942 NOVEL, *A Little Lower than the Angels*, is a colorful, straightforward look at the Mormon experience during the four to five years in Nauvoo, Illinois, before the Mormons' exodus West. A careful reading beyond the historical aspects of the text also reveals a novel that is seeking a phenomenon as yet unnamed in the 1940s—*écriture féminine*, a means of expression that is uniquely women's own. Sorensen depicts through several different female protagonists in the novel the determined but ultimately frustrated search for a specific sort of language through which women can express themselves and discuss problems and emotions, both emotional and spiritual, that affect women in a way in which they cannot similarly affect men.

Although the narration is shared from the point of view of numerous characters, fictional and non-fictional, male and female, including the prophet Joseph Smith, I find the most touching and passionate narrative views are from the women characters, notably Mercy Baker and the poetess Eliza R. Snow. The novel is several decades in advance of the phenomenon of feminist literary criticism (beginning ca. 1968) that urges a casting off of male discourse, and of women critics' introduction of the idea of *gynesis*—a language that is conceived and expressed purely according to women's history and women's experience. Bits and pieces of women's thought and dialogue fall into place as *A Little Lower than the Angels* unfolds, as the Mormon women strive to express themselves according to the tumultuous and often violent history that is being made around them and the emotional upheaval that invades the core of their personal lives.

The novel opens with Mercy Baker, newly arrived in Nauvoo and not yet baptized into the Mormon church, reflecting on her contentment with the special closeness she feels to her husband, Simon. "All the little things that made him Simon and nobody else, they were mighty important. The one Simon."<sup>1</sup> The narrator reveals that Mercy keeps a likeness of herself in her Bible at the story of Leah.

This expression of Mercy's perception of the beauty of her monogamous marriage and her place as first wife sets up an ambiance of contentment and peace that creates an effective tension with the completely different philosophy on marriage that will soon be thrust on her and be explained away in terse, condescending, male terminology.

Ann Rosalind Jones wrote in 1981 that Western culture has always been phallogocentric and therefore fundamentally oppressive of women. Such oppression is particularly evident in traditional language, which Jones describes as "another means through which man objectifies the world, reduces it to his terms, speaks in place of everything and everyone else—including women." Therefore women have typically written "as hysterics, as outsiders to male-dominated discourse."<sup>2</sup>

This involuntary and crippling genuflecting by women writers to male language was not being identified in the 1940s. Nonetheless, Sorensen is in tune with her female characters' sentiments and with their *verbal* struggle to make sense out of the Nauvoo experience, which was all but monopolized by male discourse. In *A Little Lower than the Angels* early Mormon wives sought to articulate certain female experiences—polygamy in particular—in feminine terms. The women's dialogue with the men and with one another as well as their actions during the years leading up to the Utah exodus indicate that Sorensen was aware of the *spirit* of gynesis, or at least aware of a lack of feminist expression during the 1840s, and how destructive this lack proved to be in the lives of faithful Mormon women.

*A Little Lower than the Angels* contains numerous examples of women thirsting and groping for an accurate, sensitive way to express themselves according to their own sense of their terrestrial selves and what they understand and believe to be their divine destiny. The struggle is neither easy nor successful for Nauvoo women. In many instances one perceives the female characters, as Jones noted, striving to express their feelings and needs according to the strictly male terminology they have always been taught.

---

1. Virginia Sorensen, *A Little Lower than the Angels* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 55.

2. Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of *l'écriture féminine*," *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 358.



Through her female characters, Sorensen is straining for a yet-undefined mode of female expression. She is, as contemporary feminist critic Charlotte Hogsett describes it, "Chafing at the restrictions placed on women writers, tapping along the walls (of male language and expression) in search of a way out."<sup>3</sup> Sorensen is also aware of the male tendency to use and twist traditional male language and clichés to dismiss women's protests and to achieve their own ends.

The narrator notes that Nauvoo women and youths, many of whom love poetry, have been warned (by their fathers and husbands) against the works of certain English poets since, in the words of Simon Baker, "that man Byron was notably wicked, and Shelley, a deserter of wife and children" (116).

Ironically, though, the prophet Joseph Smith is seen wooing Eliza R. Snow into a polygamous marriage with a few lines from Shelley's inflammatory poem, *Epipsychidion*. He quotes:

I never was attached to that great sect,  
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select  
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,  
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend  
To cold oblivion, though it is in the code  
Of modern morals, that the beaten road . . . (90)

Although *Epipsychidion* is described by Shelley scholars as "the most outspoken and eloquent appeal for free love in the language,"<sup>4</sup> it would appear that the words of Shelley, as radical and anti-Victorian as they were, can become useful male language to achieve male purposes, even in Nauvoo. For certain goals and projects of Mormon men, Shelley's words can be cleverly interpreted to sound heaven-sent. "It seems to me that [Shelley] was inspired to write this poem," the prophet tells Eliza, "just the way I'm inspired to write my revelations" (90).

A sensitive, semi-fictionalized rendering of Eliza R. Snow's writing of the words of the hymn "O My Father" shows her epiphany with the concept that a heavenly mother must exist. Sorensen uses a combination of third-person narration and free indirect style to view Eliza's thoughts, and to describe her feelings when her poem is complete: "She was terribly excited, and her body was blazing with something besides the heat of the day. I have made something, I have made something; if you make some-

---

3. Charlotte Hogsett, *The Literary Existence of Germaine de Staël* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 65.

4. Harold Bloom, "Introduction," *Modern Critical Views: Percy Bysshe Shelley* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), 21.

thing from what you believe, then the blessing of belief can never leave you. I have something to show [Joseph] that he will like" (129).

However, when she seeks out the prophet to share the poem and its new idea with him, he is preoccupied and anxious to send her on her way. He, as well as the other men of the community, is well-meaning but painfully out of tune with a woman's striving for an expression and explanation of her own place in the church and in life's eternal plan.

Nowhere in the novel is the contrast between self-serving male language and lack of viable female language so evident as in the attempts to explain and to justify the practice of polygamy, to make it sound vital not only to building up the Kingdom of God on earth but to the individual lifestyles of men and women alike.

Joseph Smith's eloquence in explaining the divine nature of polygamy to Eliza is dramatically undercut by Eliza's sincere desire but complete inability to repeat his explanations convincingly to Mercy. Here Joseph's interpretation of the words of Shelley and the logic of the spiritual ideas as described by the prophet suddenly ring hollow. As two *women* now discuss the idea, not only do the words fall flat, they barely come at all.

"I wish I could tell you just the way he told it to me," Eliza tells Mercy. "'The most beautiful—' She spoke with unsteady lips and a shaking chin" (104). Eliza fumbles to recreate Joseph's exalted explanation for a higher order. "He tells you how it is and you see it differently, you forget about this world, and all you think about is the spiritual thing—about heaven" (107). Mercy, however, can only see the worldly (the male) aspects in the plan—"The human side of the whole thing, this side eternity," and she hopes the new idea will not get around. "You give men an idea like that and they'll all start looking around" (106). As polygamy takes an increasingly stronger hold in the community, male efforts to justify the practice and the difficulties that inevitably surround it are intensified.

On the evening after Eliza has written "O My Father," the prophet tells his "little Eliza-wife" (142) that he will visit her "when the moon is in the quarter" (143). Months later, after the party celebrating the finishing of Joseph and Emma's Mansion House, Eliza upbraids the prophet for not keeping his promise:

"Joseph,—you said when the moon is in the quarter—"  
"Well," he said brusquely, "it isn't."

Eliza's voice turns "steely sober" as she reminds him.

"No, it isn't in the quarter now, but it has been. Three—*four* times—since that last night. And if I'm your wife, as I hope in the name of God I am, you

owe me at least a quarter-moon. Not a whole one, I'm not asking that, but a quarter" (170).

Hogsett noted in 1987:

[Woman] is a secondary being who depends on the male mind for her existence. Every word she speaks travels out of her contingent place, its route to the listener inevitably indirect, distorted. The primary, fundamental role belongs to man. It is he who substantiates, who defines, who decides on and imposes meanings. He insists that she function in his world, where he has established the links between signifier and signified.<sup>5</sup>

Sorensen's women are slowly beginning to realize that they are being manipulated and put off by men's choice of metaphors and pretty expressions that may placate the wives for awhile but quickly turn out to be a mere means of sidestepping true communication, as well as a coverup for the full spectrum of men's true intentions.

A moving attempt to achieve a strictly female mode of expression for a heart-rending emotional situation comes midway through the novel from Melissa Vermazon, who has lost all four of her children to disease within the past few years. After the birth of Mercy's twins, Melissa appears inexplicably at the window of the Baker home, wishing to comfort the crying toddler-daughter, Beck, with the simple words, "Darling, Darling!"

Her pathetic expression of hurt, emptiness, and need to still give some measure of maternal comfort becomes a small legend among Nauvoo women. The unknown whisperer of soothing words from the window becomes known in the female community simply as "The Darling Lady." While some women try to explain the mysterious voice as the spirit of the martyred prophet come to watch over the settlements, "The men, who had learned to sleep whether babies cried or not, thought the whole tale as a woman-thing, a fabrication, and simply let it be" (249). Thus even the most rudimentary attempts of Nauvoo women to express themselves in purely feminine discourse tend to be dismissed by men as nonsense, while the women continue to search for and to hurt over the lack of an emotional and verbal language of their own.

When the matter of polygamy arises in the Baker home, the principle is explained and analyzed by Mercy, Eliza, and other women friends, but always according to male language—that is, the reasonable, logical justification of the doctrine that comes directly from the prophets (first from Joseph Smith, then from Brigham Young) and from Simon Baker's second-hand explanations. As Sorensen describes the women's struggle to make

---

5. Hogsett, 26.

sense out of a practice that puts their everyday lives in constant turmoil and wrenching them emotionally, the lack of a viable feminist expression becomes more painfully clear.

It is interesting to observe that Charlot Leavitt, one of the most admirable of all the women in the novel (she is intelligent, resourceful, creative, unselfish, compromising, and forebearing, among other things), comes off badly in the narrative simply because she is Simon's polygamous wife and therefore an interloper and spoiler. Although there is no female language that can justify her troublesome presence in the Baker household, there is more than adequate *male* verbiage to make her position seem natural.

Brigham Young encourages Simon's second marriage with painstakingly logical phrases:

Now, that's what Brother Joseph said about it. He was thinking of men like you when he wrote that, and of women like your wife. And he was thinking of women who love children and houses and don't have any of their own to take care of. And he planned it for men who were strong-minded, not for men who wanted a thing that's the least part of a woman . . . if a man lives this principle as it should be lived, he learns to be impartial, like God. And women learn to be unselfish, they learn what's the best and the most important part of marriage, giving and sharing. That's the best part of any life, Brother Baker (283, 284-85).

After the death of Joseph Smith, Eliza tries gamely to continue his justification of polygamy, telling Mercy, "If you're big enough, you can climb up in the middle of the fence, and look at both sides. You don't have to sit and growl over what's on your side like the old dog in the manger!" (269)

Prior to that, however, after the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum had come home in the wagon, the narrator shows Eliza thinking to herself, "If I should die first, if I should go on before any of them, then I would be the only one for a little while. I'd be the only one until she came, and the others" (241). Sorensen manages to show subtly how Eliza, despite her outward, male-originated attempts to explain polygamy, thinks of her marriage musingly, semi-consciously in an entirely different way. In the privacy of her own mind, to which Sorensen allows us access, Eliza sees her union with the prophet ideally in *monogamous* terms, however brief those terms might promise to be.

Also, as Mercy discusses polygamy with Portia Glazier, she recalls the reference to the dog in the manger and muses, "Only, Portia, it always seemed to me that there was something to the dog's side of it. A property right, really. Maybe the straw kept him warm even though he couldn't eat it" (344). Thus a piece of male language has been gently turned about and questioned without being defied.

Amid the constant bickering and unhappiness in the Baker household, Simon turns a blind eye and a deaf ear to the real difficulties and persists in viewing the situation in male terms only. He refuses to let Charlot leave the family home and return to her own house in town. Sorensen reveals Simon's thoughts:

He must not be the first to fail, or the second, even, or the last. . . . The blessed were those who bore the burden in the heat of the day. . . . Why should love alone be allowed selfishness? For a man it is even unnatural—did not most men cast their eyes on many women, suffering under their instincts and the burden of the other commandment? And did God smile on the rows of woman-bodies, unused and lonely . . . Before the first terrible misstep, a simple ceremony that gave sanction and invested pleasure with responsibility. It seemed a simple solution (332-33).

Simon mouths such justifications continually to his wives, promising, as did Brother Joseph, eventual "world harmony, world perfection" (334). Mercy, however, knows the pat, male phrases are impotent in the face of the hurt and indignation of everyday reality. "'You can hold up a penny,' Mercy thought, 'and it will hide the sun'" (334). Such verbalized female insights are few, however.

There is virtually no language that either Mercy or Charlot can employ that will assuage the pain or temper the emotional chaos that Charlot's mere presence brings to the home. Although Charlot runs the Baker home with cheer and uncommon efficiency, Mercy is driven to mute rage by Charlot's presence, the older Baker children detest and defy her, and we resent her too.

In the midst of this swirl of bad feeling, Sorensen herself does nothing to calm the storm. Readers observe the unhappiness in the household through dialogue and incidents. There is little probing into the women's minds except a brief note that Mercy calls this time the Era of Man's Patience (abbreviated E.M.P.) in her journal. Simon admires this reference, but the sensitive oldest son, Jarvie, knows that this is not really his mother's true self (340).

Therefore through the words and thoughts of the women themselves there are no indications that women can actually come to understand and accept polygamy because of their husbands' rote explanations. Sorensen's paucity of revealing *female* discourse here indicates that the polygamous family situation can be neither explained nor justified, nor even tolerated, if approached through women's language. Thus Sorensen begins in the last few chapters to employ a tactic that is traditionally a pathetic, although ultimately effective technique of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century women to express themselves in a world of men's rules and men's languages—the technique of *silence*.

"No one questioned the authoritative way in which a man could write (in the nineteenth century.) He shaped the world," recently noted Michelle Stott. "Woman was the Other. She couldn't shape, criticize, or speak in a voice of authority. Therefore, she used strategies of self-effacement, self-deprecation that would direct irony inward and against herself. Her silences, omissions, and self-protective rhetorical devices were meant to conceal and yet to *reveal*."<sup>6</sup>

When Mercy Baker falls into an inexplicable illness toward the end of the novel, her situation becomes another dimension of this strange yet effective oxymoron—woman's *expressive silence*. The narrator and dialogue indicate that there is no real physical cause why Mercy remains bedridden. True, she had a tendency toward weakness, and her recovery takes longer and longer with the birth of each baby. However, she is recovered from her twins' birth and from the death of tiny Mary and is up and about when she discovers the secret of Simon's second marriage to the woman whom she had been led to believe was hired help.

When Simon tries awkwardly to explain, again with the same male platitudes, Mercy realizes there is no *woman's* viewpoint he will tolerate from her. "He hates woman-emotion, uncurbed and hysterical; he's like other men, he gets out of the room before it, he shuns it, embarrassed" (322). All attempts at explanation, at verbalization from a woman's point of view, are void. Mercy's silence is now her only weapon.

There is an interlude of several months between Mercy's recovery from the twins' birth and the collapse that leaves her an invalid. During this time, the two wives can communicate only in terms of their disagreements over household chores and habits—"A waffle iron on a different hook . . . the plates piled in a different corner of the cupboard . . ." (329). Complaints to Simon are cut short by the usual references to the doctrine of practicing "unnatural unselfishness" (333). However, what he says "only served to stifle her words, not her feelings" (335). The wives' efforts to understand and accept their situation through male language is consistently undercut by a deep and festering silence, a rage that goes unarticulated, but is manifest in indirect ways—such as their power struggle within the domestic scene and their vying for the children's love and favor.

It is evident from the narrative that Mercy's final illness is an outgrowth of her inability to express her true feelings, her linguistic incapacity in the face of male prejudice and male language. Because Mercy is unable to verbalize her emotions, she is ultimately unable to cope. Her sickness has no apparent physical cause, yet the narrator eventually tells us she is "sick

---

6. Michelle Stott, "Speaking Silences: Literary Discourse of Nineteenth-Century German Woman Authors," 6 Mar. 1992, symposium address, Department of German and Slavic Languages, Brigham Young University, my emphasis.

at heart" (370), and Portia Glazier observes that Mercy's spells "are in the mind, not in the body" (417).

When the Baker home on the bluff is burned by persecutors, and the family must move into Charlot's house in town, the silence intensifies. Mercy withdraws increasingly into herself, she and Charlot rarely speak: "neither thought to find a way around their feelings; some things are not spoken" (381).

That her sickness is psychosomatic is evident as Mercy seems miraculously to arise from her sickbed and sit by Simon's side as the wagons leave Nauvoo. However, as she looks across the river to the bluff and sees the site of the home where she was once happy as a monogamous wife, the image and emotions are too much. There is no way, no language to express her feelings as woman, to articulate her sentiments of betrayal and loss; and there on the wagon seat Mercy slumps forward and dies.

"Masculine society has traditionally repressed woman's voice," says French feminist critic Hélène Cixous. "Writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural—hence, political, typically masculine—economy . . . where woman has never had her turn to speak." In this 1975 essay, Cixous proclaims boldly, "It is time for women to start scoring their feats in written and oral language. . . . Women should break out of the snare of silence."<sup>7</sup>

In 1942 Sorensen lacked the terminology and tight sisterhood of modern feminist writers to allow her to break out of this snare by verbalizing precisely what polygamous wives were facing in Nauvoo. From a historical point of view, Sorensen is aware that the Mormon women of the 1840s were lacking even further in any method of explaining to themselves or to one another their sentiments and perceptions about their bewildering new situation. Feminist language was simply a phenomenon which they could not be expected to develop or to comprehend in their era.

An early chapter of *A Little Lower than the Angels* shows a gathering of Nauvoo women at a quilting bee where Mercy is happy to learn that they can discuss together with ease anything from domestic concerns to sexual matters (38). However, as the novel progresses, we see such sisterhood unraveling as slowly and as painfully as the threads of the piecing on a quilt. Some good feelings among the women remain, but the erosion is evident as one realizes that at the novel's beginning Emma Smith and Eliza R. Snow were close friends and confidantes. Also it is logical that under different circumstances Mercy and Charlot might easily have been friends as well. In the course of the story, however, polygamy has taken enough of a toll on female solidarity in Nauvoo to scotch much development of common, sisterly expression and communication.

---

7. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Feminisms*, 337.

There is therefore some truth in Cixous's assertion that "almost everything is yet to be written by women about femininity."<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Sorensen's perceptions of the lack of a female mode of expression is made clear in her novel through her creative, varied narration and dialogues. Effective also is her method of backing away at times to let the story tell itself "cinemagraphically," thereby letting the characters' difficulties and silences portray their lack of language on a personal level. Sorensen's novel, therefore, is an effort towards a strictly female mode of expression that begs departure from accepted 1940s norms of thought and verbalization.

Thus in Sorensen's novel *Nauvoo* women struggle diligently for self-understanding and self-expression through the restrictions of men's explanations, men's stereotypes, men's clichés, and traditional male language. Their success is limited and their concept of the individual female self and her role in an unusual society is bewildering. Also we readers are left vaguely unsatisfied and disappointed in women's inability to protest and to cope.

Nevertheless, Sorensen's creativity in allowing readers to see the true sentiments and perceptions beneath the surface of male-dominated doctrines, and beyond the silences of courageous women, is an early foray into the now-prolific realm of feminist language and expression.

---

8. *Ibid.*, 342.



# His Sermon

*Anita Tanner*

He says there's very little truth  
in the world  
and he can't wait to go out,  
preach, and spread his own—  
like he has the corner on it.

Very little truth, I wonder,  
and take such pause  
I hardly return to his preaching  
except for the background hum  
of his mellow tone.

Very little truth  
and I am gone  
to the last time  
the earth spoke  
beneath my down bag  
with the stars overhead.

The last time I gaze at the mountains  
from my dawn window  
and the promise of sun titillates  
my outstretched arms,  
my deep-throated yawn.

The last book I open,  
time for but a few lines:  
    The boundary is the best place  
    for acquiring knowledge.  
And it reverberates off the page  
all the day long.

The last kiss my husband gives,  
routine, noncommittal,  
part of his slippage out the door  
on his way to work  
but the witness lingers

long after a hot cup of something,  
after hours at the kitchen oven,  
dough rising to camouflage a counter,  
truth coming up  
against the back drop of day.

# Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie—Sisters in Mormon Dissent

*Newell G. Bringham*

THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE Utah State Historical Society held on 23 September 1967 at the University of Utah brought together for the first time, in the same place, and at the same time three distinguished Utah-born scholars who were also well-known dissenters in the field of Utah/Mormon history. The first of these was Juanita Brooks, author of *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* and the controversial biography *John Doyle Lee: Zealot-Pioneer Builder-Scapegoat*, who was present by virtue of her position as a member of the Utah State Board of History. Also present was Dale L. Morgan, staff member of the Bancroft Library and author of several books and of three important definitive essays focusing on dissenting factions within Mormonism that emerged in the wake of Joseph Smith's 1844 death. Morgan had been invited from California, to deliver the featured keynote address. The third scholar, who, like Morgan, had travelled from California was Fawn M. Brodie, author of the highly controversial *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* for which she had been excommunicated from the Mormon church in 1946. Brodie had been invited to receive the Utah Historical Society's most prestigious honor—its Fellow Award.

Brodie made clear her role as a leading dissenter of Mormonism's past in what she termed her "two-and-one-half minute" acceptance speech. This "honor [had] a special quality," she noted, because it represented "a tribute to the right to dissent about the past." Brodie in discussing the past explained: "I never return to Utah without being forcibly reminded of the overwhelming significance of the past in this area." She then quoted the noted British philosopher Bertrand Russell: "The past is an awful God,

though he gives life almost the whole of its haunting beauty . . . [including] the continuity of life; the weight of tradition, the great eternal process of youth and age and death . . . Here the past is everywhere with us." Then Brodie quoted distinguished American author William Faulkner: "The Past is not dead; it is not even past." With clear personal allusions Brodie elaborated:

Certainly it is true that the way a person brought up in . . . [the Great Basin] . . . chooses to reckon with the past—either to wrestle with it, to abominate it, to submit to it, or to adore it and try to convert others to its overwhelming significance—has major consequences for his life. It determines the quality of his intellectual life; it very largely determines the nature of his friends; and has important consequences whether for good or ill upon his piece [sic] of mind.<sup>1</sup>

Brodie's comments on dissent seemed to allude to the crucial dissenting roles assumed by both Brodie and Juanita Brooks relative to Mormonism's past—albeit in starkly different ways. Indeed, the role of both women as dissenters of Mormonism's past was nurtured by a close relationship that evolved during the course of some thirty years.

Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie came from similar backgrounds and confronted strikingly similar experiences. Juanita, the older of the two, was born on 15 January 1898 in the small, rural Mormon community of Bunkerville, Nevada.<sup>2</sup> The second of nine children born to Henry Leavitt and Mary Hafen, she descended from Mormon pioneer stock. Her paternal grandfather, Dudley Leavitt, the family patriarch, was an imposing figure who had been a practicing polygamist with five wives and forty-eight children. Juanita herself was a bright, eager student, despite her rustic rural environment. She graduated from high school in 1916 and then enrolled in a "normal" or teacher training course in Bunkerville where she developed her initial interest in creative writing. Despite her talent, Juanita was painfully concerned about her physical appearance, developing an inferiority complex. She was sensitive about her "slight, ungainly body, protruding, crooked teeth; [her] disproportionate nose, [and] unruly hair."<sup>3</sup>

Juanita's early religious views were "brash and contentious." She

---

1. "Acceptance Speech of Fawn McKay Brodie, Utah Historical Society, Annual Meeting, 23 Sept. 1967, University of Utah," original in Fawn M. Brodie papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

2. The information for this biographical sketch is largely drawn from the definitive work of Levi S. Peterson, *Juanita Brooks: Mormon Woman Historian* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988).

3. *Ibid.*, 29.

became, in the words of her biographer Levi Peterson, "a Sunday School dissenter" regarded by her more devout Mormon neighbors "as verging on apostasy." But Juanita held her "nonconformity" in check and did not let it drive her from the church. Instead, she took to heart the advice of a favorite uncle who urged her to promote change from within the faith. Juanita's uncle drew an analogy with a cowboy driving his herd.

A cowboy who wants to turn a stampeding herd can ride neither in it nor counter to it; he must ride at the edge. Happy sounds are generally better than cursing . . . but there are times when he must maybe swear a little and swing a whip or lariat to round in a stray or turn the leaders. So don't lose yourself, and don't ride away and desert the outfit. Ride the edge of the herd and be alert, but know your directions, and call out loud and clear. Chances are, you won't make any difference, but on the other hand you just might.<sup>4</sup>

After teaching school first in Bunkerville and then in nearby Mesquite, Juanita met and married Ernest Pulsipher, a devout Latter-day Saint and returned missionary. Pulsipher, like Juanita, descended from pioneer Mormon stock. The newlyweds became the parents of a son, Leonard Ernest, born in September 1921. However, tragedy struck when her husband died the following January of a long, chronic ailment, apparently cancer, leaving Juanita a widowed mother at age twenty-three. Firmly committed to supporting herself and infant son, Juanita returned to school, attending first Dixie College in St. George and then Brigham Young University where she graduated with a degree in English in 1925. She then secured a teaching position in English at her Alma Mater, Dixie College. Juanita also pursued her love for creative writing and in 1926 her first published work, a poem entitled "Sunrise from the Top of Mount Timp," was published in the Mormon church periodical the *Improvement Era*.<sup>5</sup>

After teaching for three years at Dixie College, she took a sabbatical to complete a master's degree in English at Columbia University. She lived for a year, 1929-30, in New York City in an environment totally different from the small-town setting of Utah's Dixie. Thus Juanita experienced somewhat of a "culture shock." But she adjusted. According to Levi Peterson: "[Juanita] experienced the Outside [world] . . . first hand and . . . discovered that she had a tolerance and even a sympathy for it. Finally,

---

4. *Ibid.*, 29.

5. Juanita Brooks, "Sunrise from the Top of Mount Timp," *Improvement Era* 29 (Sept. 1926): 1124.

however, she had no compulsion to hew [or subsume] her identity to its dimensions." Thus after completing her master's, Juanita was "happy" to return home to St. George and her teaching position at Dixie College concluding that "The big city [of New York] is all right . . . but I do not belong there."<sup>6</sup> Three years later in 1933 she met and married Will Brooks, a widower, and Washington County sheriff, who at fifty-two was seventeen years older than Juanita and had three children of his own. During the next five years, the new Mrs. Brooks bore her husband an additional four children so that by the time she reached her fortieth birthday she had responsibility for a large family of eight children, four of whom were under the age of five.

Despite her extensive domestic responsibilities, Brooks steadfastly pursued her developing passion for writing and historical research. She, moreover, achieved a degree of national recognition. In 1934 *Harper's* magazine published an essay that she had written entitled "A Close-up of Polygamy," focusing on plural marriage within her own family. Seven years later, in 1941, the same periodical published her "The Water's In!"—an article describing the scarcity of water in her childhood hometown of Bunkerville.<sup>7</sup> Besides her own writing Brooks became involved in collecting and preserving pioneer diaries kept by early local residents. In this activity, she was encouraged by the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. This institution processed the diaries and provided Brooks with a financial stipend. Brooks's activities as a writer and collector of early Mormon diaries brought her into contact with Dale L. Morgan, who, at the time, was the supervisor for the Utah Writers' Project under the Works Progress Administration. In time Morgan became both a close friend and valued mentor.

More important as Brooks closely examined the pioneer history of southern Utah, she found herself "tantalized" by the mystery surrounding the Mountain Meadows Massacre. This incident involved the 1857 killing of the members of an obnoxious, disruptive non-Mormon immigrant party passing through southern Utah, nearly one hundred individuals in all, including women and children—an act committed by a group of native Indians aided and abetted by local Mormons, who in its wake, attempted to cover up their involvement. This bloody act was not openly discussed by local residents. Thus after almost a century Brooks "repeatedly . . . encountered guilt and grief over the massacre."<sup>8</sup> In 1940 she presented her first paper on the subject to the Utah Academy of Arts, Sciences, and

---

6. Peterson, 79-80.

7. Juanita Brooks, "A Close-up of Polygamy," *Harper's* 168 (Feb. 1934): 299-307; "The Water's In!" *Harper's* 182 (May 1941): 101-103.

8. Peterson, 114.

Letters. She pursued her research on this highly controversial topic in an indirect manner through her work on a biography of Jacob Hamblin. A legendary local figure, Hamblin was considered Mormonism's so-called "Apostle to the Indians." But he was reportedly present at the massacre itself. In 1942 Brooks applied for an Alfred A. Knopf fellowship to pursue the completion of her biography of Hamblin. Despite her fascination with the extremely controversial topic, Brooks remained a believing, active Latter-day Saint, serving at various times on the stake board of the Mutual Improvement Association and as stake Relief Society president. Her commitment to Mormonism notwithstanding, Brooks allowed herself to enjoy an occasional cup of coffee.

Meanwhile in Huntsville, Utah, another small, rural Mormon community located some 400 miles to the north, Fawn McKay was coming of age. Born on 15 September 1915 to Thomas Evans McKay and Fawn Brimhall, Fawn, like Juanita, was descended from pioneer Mormon stock.<sup>9</sup> Fawn's maternal grandfather, George H. Brimhall, like Juanita's paternal grandfather was a practicing polygamist, with at least two (and possibly three) wives by whom he fathered fifteen children.<sup>10</sup> But in contrast to Juanita's more humble origins, Fawn's family was more genteel and patrician. Fawn's grandfather Brimhall served for twenty-one years as president of Brigham Young University. Her uncle, David O. McKay, was a member of the Mormon church's ruling elite—the Council of Twelve Apostles—throughout her growing-up years; and her father served as president of the Ogden Stake during this same period. Fawn, while just a youngster, demonstrated early talent as a writer in a manner similar to Juanita. In 1925, at the age of ten, one of Fawn's poems entitled "Just a Minute Mother" was published in the Mormon church youth periodical the *Juvenile Instructor*—representing the first of her published works.<sup>11</sup> In school Fawn was precocious and did so well in her academic studies that she was advanced three grades. By the time she graduated from high school in 1930, she was just fourteen.

In addition to her precocity, Fawn was beautiful and statuesque, commanding the awe and attention of all who met her. Fawn, however, looked upon herself in a different light, developing like Brooks an inferiority complex about her physical appearance. Fawn was "painfully shy

---

9. Much of the information for this biographical sketch is drawn from my "Fawn Brodie and Her Quest for Independence," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22 (Summer 1989): 79-95; and "Fawn M. Brodie, Mormondom's Lost Generation, and *No Man Knows My History*," *Journal of Mormon History* 16 (1990): 11-23.

10. Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, *A Book of Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 24-28.

11. Fawn McKay, "Just a Minute, Mother," *Juvenile Instructor* 60 (Nov. 1925): 627.

about her height, "5'10", which she reached as a young adolescent, making her taller than all of the girls and most of the boys her age. Her older sister recalled that as Fawn kept growing her "tears would flow" because "in [Fawn's] eyes tall girls were not popular."<sup>12</sup> This, however, did not stop Fawn from dating. She was attracted to and "fell passionately in love" with Dilworth Jensen, who, like Fawn, was bright and articulate. They dated each other on a steady basis over the next six years and even talked of marriage.<sup>13</sup> From 1930 to 1932, Fawn attended Weber College, at the time, a two-year institution operated by the Mormon church. Meanwhile, Fawn's relationship with Dilworth continued apace even though they were separated during the two years that he served a mission for the Mormon church in Germany during the early 1930s.

Fawn's situation drastically changed following her graduation from Weber as she continued her studies at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. During the years 1932-34 the sixteen year-old coed was living on her own for the first time. Her views concerning Mormonism also changed. "I was devout until I went to the University of Utah." Fawn "began to move . . . out of the parochialism of the Mormon community."<sup>14</sup> Her doubts were nurtured by some of her teachers, the literature to which she was exposed, and the general academic environment at the University of Utah—an institution considered the "center of anticlericalism" concerning things Mormon. As she later recalled, "It happened very quietly."<sup>15</sup> She "began looking into the history of the Church . . . particularly the founder Joseph Smith."<sup>16</sup> Despite her growing doubts, Fawn returned to Ogden, accepting a teaching position in English at Weber College, her alma mater, following her graduation in 1934.

After teaching for just one year, Fawn left Utah in 1935 to pursue graduate studies in the East, following the course taken by Brooks some years before. But in contrast to Juanita, who returned to Utah upon completing her graduate studies, Fawn's departure was permanent. She left behind not only Utah but also her Mormon beliefs. She later recalled: "the confining aspects of the Mormon religion dropped off within a few weeks [after arriving in Chicago] . . . It was like taking off a hot coat in the

---

12. Marshall Berges, "A Talk with Fawn Brodie," *National Retired Teachers Association Journal*, July-Aug. 1977, 8; Flora McKay Crawford, "Flora on Fawn," 4, unpublished recollections, n.d., typescript, copy in my possession.

13. Letter to Elizabeth Jensen Shafter, 16 Oct. 1980, copy in my possession; letter to Newell G. Bringhurst, 24 Jan. 1988.

14. "Biography of Fawn McKay Brodie," interview with Shirley E. Stephenson, 30 Nov. 1975, 3, Oral History Collection, Fullerton State University, Fullerton, California.

15. Fawn M. Brodie, "It Happened Very Quietly," in *Remembering, The University of Utah*, ed. Elizabeth Haglue (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981), 85-95.

16. Crawford, "Flora on Fawn," 5.



summertime. The sense of liberation I had at the University of Chicago was enormously exhilarating. I felt very quickly that I could never go back to the old life, and I never did."<sup>17</sup> While at Chicago Fawn completely severed her relationship with Dilworth Jensen after meeting Bernard Brodie, a fellow graduate student from Chicago who came from a Latvian-Jewish immigrant background.<sup>18</sup> She married Brodie, after a whirlwind courtship of just six weeks, on 25 August 1936—the same day that she received her M.A. in English.

Soon thereafter the new Mrs. Brodie began the historical research on what would ultimately be her biography of Joseph Smith. Much of her research was done in the library at the University of Chicago where the Brodies remained until 1940 when Bernard completed work for his Ph.D. in international relations. A year later they moved to Hanover, New Hampshire, where Bernard accepted a teaching position at Dartmouth College. A year after that, in 1942, the first of their three children, Richard, was born. Meanwhile, the young housewife and mother continued to work on her Joseph Smith biography. In 1943 Brodie applied for an Alfred A. Knopf fellowship in biography. Brodie's application was like that submitted the previous year by Juanita Brooks to do Jacob Hamblin. But unlike Brooks, who failed to secure a grant, Brodie was awarded a fellowship which carried a stipend of \$2,500.<sup>19</sup> Brodie was further encouraged in her research by her "favorite uncle," Dean Brimhall, her mother's younger brother. Well-educated with a Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University, Brimhall, like Brodie, was a "skeptical," "rebel," freethinker, and critic of Mormon doctrine and practice.<sup>20</sup> Also encouraging Brodie was Dale L. Morgan whom she met in 1943 after the Brodies moved to Washington, D.C., following the outbreak of World War II and Bernard's enlistment as an officer in Naval Intelligence. Morgan, like Brodie, was not an active, practicing Latter-day Saint and, like her, was a religious skeptic. Morgan, despite being completely deaf as the result of a childhood illness, had established himself as a respected regional scholar. He had by this time published two major books, *Utah: A Guide to the State* (1941) and *The Humboldt: Highroad of the*

---

17. "Biography of Fawn McKay Brodie," 3.

18. For two good overviews of Bernard Brodie in terms of his life and activities, see Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York, 1983); and Gregg Herken, *Councils of War* (New York, 1987). For a discussion of Brodie in terms of his ideas, see Barry H. Steiner, *Bernard Brodie and the Foundations of American Nuclear Strategy* (Lawrence, KS, 1991).

19. M. Rugoff, "Biography Fellowship Evaluation," 17 Mar. 1943, original in Alfred A. Knopf papers, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas.

20. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 6, 20 Jan. 1945, originals in Morgan papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

*West* (1943).<sup>21</sup> Thus Brodie and Morgan soon became fast friends, with Morgan assuming the role of chief critic and mentor to the fledgling author. This was a relationship similar to that which Morgan had earlier developed with Juanita Brooks. Indeed, it was Morgan who apparently encouraged the initial contact between Brooks and Brodie and acted as an intermediary early on as their relationship evolved.

Brodie and Brooks met for the first time during the summer of 1943 when Brodie travelled to Salt Lake City to do research for her Joseph Smith biography.<sup>22</sup> Thus began what would become a mutually supportive relationship despite the sharply differing views that each woman had concerning basic Mormon beliefs and doctrines. Brodie expressed her admiration for the perseverance and productivity of Brooks in light of the obstacles that the St. George author had overcome. "Her story makes my own life seem all sweetness and light," Brodie told Morgan, adding, "Except for a certain amount of family bitterness over" her marriage to Bernard, she "never had [had] any real trouble."<sup>23</sup> On another occasion Brodie praised "the incredible Juanita" for her ability to write "with so many small fry under foot," a feat that Brodie would find "quite impossible."<sup>24</sup> In turn, Brooks, sensitive to the controversial nature of Brodie's Joseph Smith research, expressed admiration for Brodie's "courage," offering to provide the author whatever useful information that she came across in her own research.<sup>25</sup> Shortly thereafter, Brooks obtained and passed on to Brodie "an autobiography of one of Joseph [Smith's] wives—Mary Rollins Lightner."<sup>26</sup> When *No Man Knows My History* was finally published in late 1945, Brodie specifically thanked her fellow writer, characterizing Brooks as "notably generous in allowing me to examine the fruits of [her] own excellent research in early Mormon documents."<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Brodie reciprocated, assisting Brooks in her own efforts. Brodie took an active interest in Brooks's proposed biography on Jacob Hamblin. Brooks had continued work on Hamblin despite her failure to secure a Knopf fellowship. In February 1944 she sent Brodie a typescript

---

21. For a good overview of Dale L. Morgan in terms of his life and activities, see John Phillip Walker, ed., *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986).

22. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 9 Sept. 1943, original in Morgan papers.

23. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 22 June 1944, original in Morgan papers.

24. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 12 July 1946, original in Morgan papers.

25. Juanita Brooks to Dale L. Morgan, 7 Oct. 1943, quoted in Peterson, 141.

26. Fawn M. Brodie to Claire Noall, 8 Apr. 1944, original in Claire Noall papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library.

27. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), xi.

draft of the first four chapters of her Hamblin manuscript. Brodie then approached Datus Smith, director of Princeton University Press, who was also Brodie's personal friend, discussing with him the feasibility of publication. Brodie herself also read and critically evaluated Brooks's manuscript. In remarks shared with Dale Morgan (who also had read Brooks's work) Brodie indicated that the author needed to do a significant amount of revision before her manuscript would be ready for publication. Brodie was particularly critical of the first two chapters. "They are not too well-written, are far too pious, and contribute little if anything to the story." In Brodie's opinion the two chapters "could never be published anywhere" outside of the *Improvement Era*. As for form, Brodie suggested that the two chapters "be severely condensed, with the spotlight focused on Jacob's personal problems rather than upon the whole [history] of the Great Basin." On the positive side, Brodie had a much higher regard for the second two chapters, describing them as "fresh, vigorous, and exciting." Continuing, Brodie noted:

Once [Brooks] gets Jacob [Hamblin] to southern Utah she is a different writer. If she could bring more sharply into focus the contrasts between the Mormon and Piute cultures . . . the importance of Jacob Hamblin's story would [be] even further heightened. My feeling is that Juanita must forget the Church altogether and let herself go before she can make this book into what it should be.<sup>28</sup>

Brooks, however, suspended work on her Hamblin biography, for reasons that are not completely clear.<sup>29</sup> Instead, Brooks, prompted by the suggestion of Dale Morgan, concentrated on her own autobiography—a work ultimately published as *Quicksand and Cactus*.<sup>30</sup> This task occupied Brooks's major energies over the course of the next year. Again Brodie, along with Morgan, had opportunity to evaluate Brooks's work. In April 1945 Brodie expressed her opinions, passing them on through Morgan. Brodie told Morgan, "There is substance here for a fine and moving book.

28. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 17 Feb. 1944, original in Morgan papers.

29. Brooks's work was published thirty-five years later under the title *Jacob Hamblin: Mormon Apostle to the Indians* (Salt Lake City, 1980).

30. Peterson notes that Brooks "suddenly decided upon a new direction in her writing. It derived from Morgan's casual observation that she was a living remnant of the frontier . . . For Morgan, her connection with the frontier was nothing to be ashamed of. She should, he insistently replied, write her autobiography" (Peterson, 143). Morgan was apparently more blunt in revealing to Brodie his motives for encouraging Brooks to pursue her autobiography. Brodie referred to Morgan's "conviction that it would be better for Jacob to be her second book" (Brodie to Morgan, 17 Feb. 1944, original in Morgan papers).

She tells some wonderful stories . . ." Brodie then offered her suggestions for improvement. Pointing to the specific geographic setting, Brodie noted that "the reader is not sufficiently oriented . . . to the Southern Utah-Nevada desert area." She added: "We need a more vivid picture of the desert—with its color, heat, and terrifying isolation, with the forlorn little villages scattered along the road." "Even more important," Brodie continued, "we need more of Juanita in the story." Brodie suggested that: "[Brooks] should shed more of her inhibitions. Talking about one's own adolescence is difficult, and has to be done deftly. But there is too great a gap between her childhood and marriage. Moreover, the story of her marriage and early bereavement (which carries great dramatic punch) should certainly be expanded." Then touching on her own special interest in Mormonism's peculiar institution Brodie also suggested, "I'd like to hear much more . . . about the polygamous relationship" within Brooks's own family involving Brooks's grandfather, Dudley Leavett and his wives. Turning to a careful evaluation of Brooks's general prose style, Brodie expressed her "feeling . . . that perhaps the most serious weakness in the book is the careless writing." Despite her basic criticisms, Brodie told Morgan that in passing on her "negative comments, please make it clear [to Brooks] that they must not discourage her." And then in a revealing personal note, Brodie told Morgan that as she read through the manuscript: "I was struck again and again with the affinity of Bunkerville and Huntsville. Many of Juanita's childhood experiences parallel my own, even though geographically no two settings could be more unlike."<sup>31</sup> Morgan passed on Brodie's comments to Brooks, along with his own and those of a third individual, Darel McConkey—a mutual friend of both Brooks and Morgan.<sup>32</sup> However, Brooks suspended, for the time being, work on *Quicksand and Cactus*, concentrating instead on the controversial Mountain Meadows Massacre.<sup>33</sup>

Brooks, moreover, responded to a different type of controversy, the fire storm in Mormondom that developed in response to Brodie's *No Man Knows My History*, published in late 1945. Brooks wrote Morgan, outlining her own carefully thought-out evaluation of Brodie's biography. On the positive side she agreed with Morgan that it "needed to be done." "I think

---

31. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale Morgan [n.d.], original in Juanita Brooks papers, Utah State Historical Society.

32. Dale L. Morgan to Juanita Brooks, 26 Apr. 1945, original in Brooks papers.

33. It appears that Brooks's shift of focus was largely encouraged by Alfred A. Knopf who in April 1945 invited her to submit a manuscript on the Mountain Meadows Massacre for publication consideration. Knopf had heard about her work on this topic from Robert Glass Cleland of the Huntington Library. In addition, by this time two other publishers had rejected her "Quicksand and Cactus" manuscript for publication. As a result Brooks had developed a "distaste for the [latter] project" (Peterson, 155, 158).

it is scholarly; I think it is literary." Brooks then continued: "I think that it sets up new points from which to judge Joseph Smith. It certainly shows careful and patient research. I like especially her work on backgrounds and social conditions and current interests." But at the same time she questioned Brodie's central thesis:

I do not believe that [Joseph Smith] was a conscious fraud and imposter. The things that were real to him may not seem so to [Brodie] or to you or to most other people, but I think they must have been to him. I have felt that it was his own deep and sincere convictions that attracted and held his following. For a fraud, he inspired loyalties too deep in too many. Certainly he had something. Men, catching the spark from him, were willing to sacrifice too much to further his cause.

Elaborating on this point Brooks continued: "I believe that it is possible for human beings to tap the great source of all good—to contact God direct, if you will. I believe that there were times, rare perhaps, when Joseph Smith did that. I believe that it was those times that held his people to him in spite of all his human blunderings and frailties and mistakes."

To illustrate her point, she cited her own spiritual experiences for believing in Joseph Smith's spiritual experiences. She described specifically the miraculous appearance, many years before, of a strange little man who had blessed and comforted her dying first husband Ernest Pulsipher. Brooks also questioned Brodie's interpretations derived from contemporary, controversial statements made by Smith, noting that "different people put entirely different interpretations even on simple statements. So with some of Fawn's material, I didn't always arrive at the same conclusions from her evidence that she did." Then pointing to the basic dilemma confronting any biographer Brooks noted that it is not "humanly possible for anyone to collect all the evidence" adding that "all the written evidence must be, at best, only a fragment of a human life." At the same time Brooks was quick to confess that her own "background makes me slow to think that I can analyze Joseph Smith." Then pointing specifically to her own research Brooks noted that "the [pioneer] journals and diaries that I have found certainly give respect for a man who could inspire such devotion and loyalty. To me [Joseph Smith] seems to have a dimension that is quite un-get-at-able."<sup>34</sup>

Morgan responded to Brooks's thoughtful critique with a detailed, carefully written analysis of his own. It opened with a very positive observation: "If every member of the church united your feeling for the Mormon way of life with your intellectual objectivity and reasonableness,

---

34. Juanita Brooks to Dale L. Morgan, 9 Dec. 1945, original in Brooks papers.

no religion on earth would rival Mormonism, and the Kingdom of God would have a fair chance of early realization." Morgan made this statement despite his basic agreement with Brodie's "naturalistic interpretation" of Joseph Smith coupled with his own strongly professed "atheist views," that is, his stated belief that there was "absolutely no necessity to postulate the existence of God as explanation of anything whatsoever." With this "point of view on God" he asserted that he was "incapable of accepting the claims of Joseph Smith and the Mormons" and therefore stood "on one side of a Philosophical Great Divide" whereas Brooks with her basic Mormon beliefs would "always be on the other side of that [same] Great Divide." In conclusion, Morgan stated that despite such differences, he respected Brooks's "point of view . . . very highly." He stated his intention to send Brodie a copy of Brooks' letter "so that she also may read it" in order "to broaden her [own] viewpoint."<sup>35</sup>

Brodie, however, responded less positively to Brooks. Brodie described to Morgan her own direct correspondence with the St. George author as being much more limited, consisting of "an extremely guarded thank-you note." As a result, Brodie "immediately sensed" that her biography had "shocked" Brooks "profoundly." Then from the perspective of her own experiences, Brodie explained: "I think that [Brooks] must have felt a little bit like I did when I read that scurrilous *WIVES OF THE PROPHET* (by Hoffman Birney was it?) when I first arrived in Chicago. I was reasonably emancipated by then, too, but the book made me wild. No, no, these things simply can't be, I said." Brodie then turned to the specific observations that Brooks had made to Morgan noting that she had found them "extremely illuminating." According to Brodie, "the best evidence for the uneasiness in Juanita's soul is the fact that she felt the necessity of sitting down and 'bearing her testimony'" to Morgan—a person "whose judgement she respected." With more than a little sarcasm Brodie then observed that Brooks "had to return to the spiritual manifestations of her youth for strength. Isn't it incredible how those miracle tales pop up again and again?" A principal reason for Brooks's failure to subscribe to Brodie's own "naturalistic view" involved the limits of Brooks's environment. According to Brodie:

I think Juanita suffers, more than anything else, from the isolation of living in St. George. Were she in Salt Lake or Provo, where [Mormon] anti-clericism is really rampant, she would find many to talk to who would help her clarify her own thinking. As it is she seems to have only Maurine [Whipple]! And no one is better calculated to make one appreciate the homely Mormon

---

35. Dale L. Morgan to Juanita Brooks, 15 Dec. 1945, original in Juanita Brooks papers.

virtues than that gal. I'd prefer the Sunday School superintendent any-day.<sup>36</sup>

In response, Morgan felt compelled to defend Brooks, despite his basic agreement with Brodie's "naturalistic thesis." He told Brodie that she [Brodie] had "somewhat misconstrued [Brooks's] letter to me" noting that Brooks "did not make a special point of writing" in the way that Brodie perceived. "When [Brooks] is moved to communicate on any subject," Morgan continued, "she sits down and writes me like that" noting that Brooks's willingness to open up to him concerning her wide range of feelings intellectual and otherwise provides her "with a kind of intellectual companionship, if you get what I mean." Morgan then pointedly observed that: "Your own comments on Juanita's case interested me for the insight they afforded into your own personality as presently constituted. You seem to find it much more necessary to place things on a clearly rational basis than I do." He then continued with probing insight:

I have an idea that you haven't come full circle yet in liberating yourself from the church. You have an intellectual but not yet an emotional objectivity about Mormonism. You are still in certain [respects in] a mood of rebellion and you sometimes give vent to a sharp intellectual scorn for the Mormon way of life which practically speaking is an intolerance for it. I suspect that you won't begin to have really generous feelings, a live-and-let live philosophy, until you have finished disentangling yourself from the religion.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, Brooks herself defended Brodie in the face of what she considered unwarranted attacks from within the Mormon community. Thus Brooks affirmed anew her role as dissenter.

Initial church attacks on Brodie's biography came in the *Deseret News*, which published a series of articles, actually speeches made by church leaders in the April 1946 LDS general conference affirming the divine mission of Joseph Smith while assailing those who would question the character and motives of Mormonism's founder. Specifically, church president George Albert Smith asserted, "Many have belittled Joseph Smith but those who have, will be forgotten in the remains of Mother Earth and the odor of their infamy will ever be with them."<sup>38</sup> Brooks in writing to Morgan noted that she had "been amused to see what Fawn's book has done to the

---

36. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 22 Dec. 1945, original in Morgan papers.

37. Dale L. Morgan to Fawn M. Brodie, 7 Jan. 1946, in Walker, *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism*, 117-18.

38. *Deseret News*, 8 Apr. 1946.

Sunday issue of the *Deseret News*." President Smith and others, she noted, have denounced "authors who had set out to destroy" Joseph Smith without directly referring to Brodie or her book. "But they certainly let the people know what would happen to the likes of her."<sup>39</sup> Brooks responded more negatively the following month to an unsigned critique entitled "Appraisal of the so-called Brodie book" which appeared in the "Church News" section of the *Deseret News*. Directly assailing Brodie's book as "wholly atheistic" the "Appraisal" claimed that the author's "intense atheism" both colored and determined "the approach and . . . content of her book." Brodie's lack of objectivity, it continued, was influenced by the fact that her husband was Jewish.<sup>40</sup> Brooks responded to the *Deseret News* "Appraisal" condemning it as a "vitriolic attack" which made her "embarrassed and ashamed" making "it very hard for" herself as "a person who would like to be loyal to the church."<sup>41</sup> Brooks responded even more directly to Brigham Young University professor Hugh Nibley's famous rebuttal, *No Ma'am That's Not History*. Brooks wrote Nibley as "a good member of the church" who was "not defending" Brodie's book per se. Brooks frankly told Nibley that he, along with other members of the church, had "been entirely too hysterical about" the book giving "it an importance greater than it deserves." But at the same time, Brooks asserted that Brodie's biography was "good for the church and good for us all, if only to stimulate further study of this man who was the founder of our faith." Brooks then pointed out a number of errors and misstatements made by Nibley, noting that "in our zeal to answer Mrs. Brodie, we make some statements almost as far fetched as hers." Brooks then carefully noted that despite her own dissent, she still believed in the divine mission of Joseph Smith. She thus concluded with the rather earthy observation that: "Joseph Smith stands as untouched by Mrs. Brodie's attack as his monument does by the pecking of sparrows."<sup>42</sup> Brooks also reacted negatively to the church's drastic action of excommunicating Brodie in early June 1946. Writing Dale Morgan, she stated cryptically and with some sarcasm: "Now that [the church] has done its duty on that point, [it] can feel much more righteous, I imagine."<sup>43</sup>

Despite Brodie's excommunication, Brooks did not shun the ex-Mormon. Brooks maintained contact with Brodie, as she pushed ahead with her own controversial study of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Indeed, Brooks feared similar repercussions for her own work. Brooks confessed

---

39. Juanita Brooks to Dale L. Morgan, 15 Apr. 1946, original in Brooks papers.

40. *Deseret News*, 11 May 1946.

41. Juanita Brooks to Dale L. Morgan, 19 May 1946, original in Brooks papers.

42. Juanita Brooks to Hugh Nibley, 7 Nov. 1946, copy of original in Brooks papers.

43. Juanita Brooks to Dale L. Morgan, 25 June 1946, quoted in Peterson, 177-78.



to Morgan in a June 1946 letter: "I consider [the Mountain Meadows Massacre study] to be my final bow to the Mormon audience for I feel sure that as soon as [it] is finished I'll be OUT" of the church.<sup>44</sup> And in a letter written two months later to Brodie, Brooks said, "I'll not be surprised to be cut off right below the ears when this [Mountain Meadows Massacre] thing is finished."<sup>45</sup> Brooks, however, remained undeterred as indicated in Brodie's own observations to her uncle Dean Brimhall: "As to what the church may say or do about" Brooks and her Mountain Meadows Massacre, the St. George author "was just not going to worry" about it. But Brodie did confess that she herself "would be most interested in the Church's reaction" to Brooks's work. "Juanita is loved and respected in St. George and does a tremendous lot of church work, though she keeps her head marvelously above all the silly dogma."<sup>46</sup> Brodie could clearly identify with Brooks's situation as a fledgling author dealing with a controversial aspect of Mormon church history.

Brodie, moreover, could also identify with Brooks's difficulty at gaining access to sensitive historical materials, specifically Mountain Meadows Massacre affidavits in LDS church archives. Brooks made several attempts, all unsuccessful, in getting approval to examine these documents from Brodie's own uncle, David O. McKay. Indeed, Brooks was not even allowed to meet personally with McKay.<sup>47</sup> In response to this failure, Brodie sarcastically noted to Morgan: "it doesn't surprise me." Then alluding to her own background and experiences Brodie explained: "It is a well established tradition in the McKay family that avoiding trouble is the easiest way to handle it." All of the McKays "hate fights, squabbles, and arguments, and are all too often willing to tolerate error and injustice if it means avoiding unpleasantness." Brodie concluded on a personal note: "That is why [the McKays] all find me inexplicable."<sup>48</sup>

Despite such obstacles, Brooks finally completed her Mountain Meadows Massacre book in April 1950. Morgan commented to Brodie that its appearance would "be the acid test of the Church reaction to its history. . ." Morgan, however, did not believe that Brooks would suffer that fate of excommunication that had befallen Brodie some four years before. He made this point to Brodie in comparing Brooks's study with Brodie's *No Man Knows My History*. Brodie's book, he noted, was "automatically intolerable [to church leaders] because it tampers with the Church's legend of its origins" whereas "Juanita's book" deals "with a later period where

---

44. *Ibid.*, 178.

45. Juanita Brooks to Fawn M. Brodie, 25 Sept. 1946, original in Brodie papers.

46. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, 7 May 1947, original in Brimhall papers.

47. Dale L. Morgan to Fawn Brodie, 28 Oct. 1945, original in Morgan papers.

48. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 13 July 1946, original in Morgan papers.

there is a greater margin of tolerance" and "written by a respected church member" even though it critically examines "a chapter in its history [that] the Church is aching to forget."<sup>49</sup> Brodie responded in an extremely positive fashion to the actual publication of *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, praising her fellow author, "I can't tell you how much I admire the delicacy, dispassionateness, and understatement with which you have handled [the] potentially lurid and sensational" issue of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.<sup>50</sup>

In the years following publication of *Mountain Meadows Massacre* interactions between Brooks and Brodie continued, but became less frequent. In 1951 Brodie sent Brooks a copy of Eric Hoffer's controversial best-selling book, *The True Believer*. Brooks found it "very challenging" as an "analysis of mass movements" and of the "portrait of the people who are a part of them."<sup>51</sup> Hoffer's analysis seemed particularly timely in that Brooks saw parallels between Hoffer's "true believers" and certain prominent Mormons who reacted negatively to her *Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Brooks pointed specifically to William H. Reeder, former president of the LDS Eastern States Mission and prominent Ogden, Utah, judge, who had expressed great disappointment "regarding [Brooks's] approach and what she had published in the book." Reeder was "definitely of the opinion that Juanita Brooks' book [could] be classed with [Vardis] Fisher, [Maurine] Whipple, and [Fawn] Brodie."<sup>52</sup> Brooks told Morgan that Hoffer's *The True Believer* had helped her "to understand Brother Reeder and . . . others [in the church] who do not want new ideas, who fear any mental disturbance, [and] who prefer the established legends to any new versions."<sup>53</sup> To Brodie, Brooks stated: "You were right—these are the kind of people we both know." Then referring to her own situation and the fallout from *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Brooks explained to Brodie: "Well, I haven't been formally excommunicated yet. Around here, my crime is either overlooked or ignored." Brooks then went on to describe the short-lived interest shown by Warner Brothers in making the story of the Mountain Meadows Massacre into a movie. Although this project never came to pass, the St. George author described her "brief bout with the movies" as "fruitful of one thing

---

49. Dale L. Morgan to Fawn M. Brodie, 17 Mar. 1950, original in Morgan papers.

50. Fawn M. Brodie to Juanita Brooks, 9 Dec. 1950, quoted in Peterson, 209.

51. Juanita Brooks to Dale L. Morgan, 28 Sept. 1951, original in Morgan papers.

52. Milton R. Hunter to Frank H. Jonas, 2 Feb. 1951, original in Morgan papers. This was the same William H. Reeder who, as president of the Eastern States Mission, had supervised excommunication proceedings against Brodie in 1946 following publication of *No Man Knows My History*.

53. Juanita Brooks to Dale L. Morgan, 28 Sept. 1951.

at least. It forced [church leaders] to admit my existence and to admit, also that [her *Mountain Meadows Massacre*] had been written."<sup>54</sup>

Two years later, while visiting Utah, Brodie approached Brooks about writing an essay on Utah's colorful, controversial incumbent governor, J. Bracken Lee, for *The Reporter*—a New York-based periodical for which both Fawn and her husband Bernard had previously written essays. J. Bracken Lee was an ultra-conservative Republican whose policies of extreme retrenchment in education had caused Brooks, a partisan Democrat, to actively campaign against him in 1948 when he was first elected and again in 1952 when he was reelected to a second term. Brooks, according to Brodie, "was elated by the idea" of writing such an article.<sup>55</sup> Even though Brooks produced an unpublished fragment entitled "Governor Lee and the Schools of Utah," her impressions of Lee were apparently never published in *The Reporter* or elsewhere.<sup>56</sup> Brooks, however, did pursue her scholarly research in exploring the life and career of another Lee, one closer to home and directly implicated in the Mountain Meadows Massacre—John D. Lee. In 1955 Brooks completed editing Lee's journals. Brodie expressed her delight at the "fine review" given Brooks's edited work in *Time* magazine in the wake of publication.<sup>57</sup>

Four years later, in 1959, Brodie had the opportunity to visit once more with her St. George friend. Brodie noted that Brooks had recently moved into "the old red rock sandstone house her husband was born in" having added "a magnificent room overlooking the temple and the vast sweep of mesas to the South and East." "It was good to see" Brooks "living in such comfort and beauty." Brodie took particular interest in the progress that Brooks was making on her biography of John D. Lee which Brodie described as "almost finished." In line with that research, Brodie "greatly enjoyed hearing" about Brooks's most recent discoveries, in particular, some "interesting evidence that the \$4,000 in gold coin carried by the [Fancher Party] emigrants finally ended up in the lap of the church." According to Brodie, Brooks had "a photostat of a letter from someone who expressed 'great relief' at getting rid of the mass of the coin after keeping it for so long." "The evidence is a little tenuous," Brodie continued, "but quite convincing when put together with everything else."<sup>58</sup>

Two years later, in 1961, during another Brodie visit to Utah, Brooks told Brodie of a more immediate controversy involving Lee. Brooks indicated in her biography that Lee, originally excommunicated from the

---

54. Juanita Brooks to Fawn M. Brodie, 18 Jan. 1952.

55. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 29 July 1953, original in Morgan papers.

56. As indicated by Peterson, 228, 459.

57. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, 20 Dec. 1955, original in Brimhall papers.

58. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, 1 Sept. 1959, original in Brimhall papers.

Mormon church in the aftermath of his involvement in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, had recently been reinstated "into the church with all official privileges." When Brooks found out about this reinstatement as "done recently in a ceremony in the temple" she decided to include the information in her forthcoming biography. But when church leaders heard about Brooks's decision to discuss the fact of Lee's reinstatement they were, in Brodie's words, "incensed." David O. McKay himself demanded that Brooks remove this information from her work prior to publication, arguing that Lee's reinstatement "was a secret ceremony" the facts of which "should not be made public." But "actually word had gone out officially [from the church] to all of [Lee's] heirs describing the reinstatement." Then according to Brodie's account:

When Juanita insisted that she would keep the fact in the book, she was told that David O. [McKay] would revoke the whole process and presumably cast poor John D. Lee back into limbo again. Devout descendants of Lee in the St. George area [pleaded] with Juanita to delete the item and spare their celebrated ancestor this sad fate.

Ultimately, Brooks agreed to a compromise whereby the first edition of her biography would not include the objectionable information. But a second edition, published immediately after the first, would. Brodie wryly noted that since both editions were for all intents and purposes "being published simultaneously" she would "certainly . . . buy" the second.<sup>59</sup> In conclusion Brodie then editorialized to her friend Dale Morgan, "This is the kind of story that makes the Mormons endlessly fascinating."<sup>60</sup> And to her uncle Dean Brimhall, Brodie was even more blunt: "I think the whole story is utterly delightful. [The fact that] this kind of thing can go on and be taken seriously by educated people . . . is just beyond belief."<sup>61</sup>

Two years later, in 1963, Brodie wrote Brooks updating her concerning her own current scholarship, in particular, her ongoing research for a biography on Richard Burton, noted nineteenth-century British explorer and writer, whose unorthodox, rebellious life and behavior attracted Brodie. In describing Burton to Brooks, Brodie characterized him "in many ways as colorful and baffling as Joseph Smith" and at the same time "less melancholy and tragic than [Thaddeus] Stevens"—the leader of Radical

---

59. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, 23 Aug. 1961, 11 Sept. 1961, originals in Brimhall papers. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 19 Oct. 1961, original in Morgan papers.

60. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 19 Oct. 1961.

61. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, 11 Sept. 1961.

Reconstruction who had been the subject of her second biography, published in 1959.<sup>62</sup>

The next occasion during which the two women had the opportunity to get together was when Brodie travelled to Salt Lake City in September 1967 to receive her Fellow Award from the Utah Historical Society. Morgan, in a letter to Brodie, reflected on this event, expressing his pleasure at having been present with both Brodie and Brooks "in the same room at the same time: for the first time." Morgan then told Brodie that Brooks "like yourself [is] one of my favorite persons." In specific terms, Morgan characterized Brooks as "energetic . . . indestructible, [and] considerate beyond all measure."<sup>63</sup> Three years later, in October 1970, all three individuals got together, once again, when Fawn Brodie returned to Salt Lake City to present a lecture entitled "Can We Manipulate the Past?"—a historical critique on the now-defunct Mormon church practice of excluding blacks from ordination to the Mormon priesthood. She gave her presentation to a standing-room-only crowd of over 500 in the Hotel Utah Lafayette Ballroom.<sup>64</sup>

Six months later, a renewal of correspondence between Brooks and Brodie was prompted by the unfortunate death of Dale Morgan following a short bout with cancer. He was just fifty-six, and both women reflected on his sudden death while at the same time discussing the help and encouragement that he had provided. Brodie noted "how very much indebted to him" she "was for [the] important criticism that" he had given which "helped shape" her Joseph Smith biography. "I was astonished," she told Brooks, "at the maturity and perception [that] he showed even as a very young man." And then Brodie explained her grief: "His death is sad in so many ways that I don't like to think about."<sup>65</sup> In response, Brooks, like Brodie, acknowledged the help that Morgan had provided describing him as "so perceptive, and understanding and accurate." Brooks, like Brodie, poignantly manifested her grief: "I have long since ceased trying to figure out the WHY'S of the Universe. I can only accept these tragedies with what grace I can muster."<sup>66</sup>

Fawn Brodie and Juanita Brooks corresponded on one final occasion five years later, in 1976. Their correspondence was prompted by the

---

62. Fawn M. Brodie to Juanita Brooks, 3 Feb. 1963, original in Brooks papers.

63. Dale L. Morgan to Fawn M. Brodie, 5 Oct. 1967, copy in Morgan papers.

64. For a discussion of this event and the activities of Fawn Brodie relative to the controversy surrounding the place of blacks within Mormonism, see Newell G. Bringhurst, "Fawn M. Brodie as a Critic of Mormonism's Policy toward Blacks—A Historiographical Reassessment," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 11 (1991): 34-46.

65. Fawn M. Brodie to Juanita Brooks, 25 Apr. 1971, original in Brooks papers.

66. Juanita Brooks to Fawn M. Brodie, 4 May 1971, original Brooks papers.

publication of a new work on the *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, by William Wise. This work had plagiarized much of its material from Brooks's earlier *Mountain Meadows Massacre*. As such, Wise's volume incurred Brodie's wrath. Brodie found this volume's "claims to originality of research somewhat deceptive." Brodie wrote a letter of indignation to the publisher, Thomas Y. Crowell, in which she asserted that Wise had drawn "enormous quantities of material" from Brooks's earlier definitive work without properly acknowledging it. Not only had Wise drawn "most of the material in his volume" from Brooks but then had given her "the back of his hand" by accusing her of defending "the [Mormon] Church's reputation at any cost." Brodie dismissed Wise's accusation, pointing instead to Brooks's role as both the premier scholar on the Mountain Meadows Massacre and as a dissenting Mormon:

Juanita Brooks was the first serious scholar to amass all the available evidence concerning the massacre from historical archives and to risk—as a Mormon—expulsion from the Mormon Church by publishing the data as she found it. She is compassionate but not protective. She protects no one. She even describes [in her own book] her failure to get material which had been promised her, but which had been sent instead to the church archives in Salt Lake City, and her failure to get permission to see the material, despite repeated efforts.

Brodie contrasted Brooks's careful, thorough scholarship with that employed by Wise which she characterized as "careless, and notably ungenerous, even somewhat deceptive, about [its] indebtedness to Mrs. Brooks." Brodie's overall evaluation dismissed the objectionable book as "sensational, hostile, and angry."<sup>67</sup> Brodie then forwarded a copy of her critical letter to Brooks with an accompanying note evaluating Wise's work in even more blunt terms as "dishonest" and "a bad book."<sup>68</sup> In response, Brooks wrote back thanking Brodie for writing such a "generous and scholarly letter." "It was generous to me, and seething to" both the author and publisher adding that in no way could they "refute it."<sup>69</sup>

In Brooks's reply to Brodie, however, it was clear that the years were beginning to take their toll on the seventy-eight-year-old St. George author, as evidenced by the stilted, rambling nature of the letter and in the numerous typos it contained. Brooks herself seemed to acknowledge as much confessing to Brodie: "I am growing old at too fast a gait. I sometimes

---

67. Fawn M. Brodie to Cynthia Vartan, 18 Nov. 1976, copy in Utah State Historical Society Archives.

68. Fawn M. Brodie to Juanita Brooks, 18 Nov. 1976, original in Brooks papers.

69. Juanita Brooks to Fawn M. Brodie, 29 Dec. 1976, original in Brooks papers.

think I should lock up this machine, and perhaps talk into a proper device and have someone pick it up on paper."<sup>70</sup> Despite such problems, Brooks resumed work on her autobiography, *Quicksand and Cactus*, prompted and encouraged by the University of Utah Press, which was pushing for its long-delayed publication. The press moreover enlisted the services of Fawn Brodie, asking her to write a foreword. Both Brooks and Brodie looked forward with enthusiasm to their joint efforts on this project.<sup>71</sup> However, for various reasons, their joint effort never came to pass even though *Quicksand and Cactus* itself was ultimately published in 1982.<sup>72</sup> In the meantime, Brooks's physical and mental health continued to decline, as she suffered from Alzheimer's disease. In 1985 she was placed in a St. George nursing home where she remained until her death in August 1989. As for Brodie, she had died some eight years before, in January 1981. Brodie, like her mentor, Morgan, succumbed following a short bout with cancer, just as she completed her fifth and final biography—*Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character*.<sup>73</sup>

The relationship between Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie, twentieth-century Mormonism's two most noted female dissenters, was noteworthy for several reasons. First, it is significant that such a relationship developed in the first place, and indeed flourished, given the sharply differing views the two women held on basic Mormon beliefs and doctrine. But such a relationship did develop due in large part to the fact that each recognized the other as a sister in Mormon dissent—albeit of different types. Also nurturing this relationship was a sense of common heritage and parallel experience in overcoming many of the same obstacles. Each had grown up as a bright, articulate Mormon female coming of age in a male-dominated society both in the Mormon community and the larger American society. Each found herself adapting to the conventional, prevalent role expected of married women during the mid-twentieth century: first and foremost a wife and mother and then a teacher, scholar, and writer only as time and energy would permit.

A second noteworthy significance of the relationship between Brooks

---

70. Ibid.

71. This according to information in Peterson, 412, and from a telephone conversation of Newell Bringhurst with Trudy McMurrin, 4 May 1992.

72. Indeed, *Quicksand and Cactus* was not published until 1982—a year following the death of Brodie and not published by the University of Utah Press. Instead it was published by Howe Brothers of Salt Lake City. Hence these are the major reasons why a foreword by Fawn Brodie was not included.

73. For a discussion of Brodie's final years and the circumstances surrounding the completion of her *Richard Nixon* biography, see Newell G. Bringhurst, "Fawn Brodie's *Richard Nixon: The Making of a Controversial Biography*," *California History* 70 (Winter 1991/92): 379-91.

and Brodie involves the ability of each woman to successfully fulfill two concurrent, sometimes conflicting roles—a “traditional role” as wife/mother and a second “career role” as teacher/writer. For Brooks this meant a career of teaching at Dixie College over the course of many years combined with writing twelve books and editing four others which has caused observers to label her “the dean of Utah Historians.”<sup>74</sup> For Brodie, success was evident in her own career as a professor of history for ten years at the University of California at Los Angeles combined with her authorship of five major biographies on five prominent individuals: Richard Nixon, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Burton, Thaddeus Stevens, as well as Joseph Smith. As a result, Brodie gained for herself a national reputation in the field of biography. The ability of each woman to successfully fulfill a “traditional” role of wife/mother in combination with a career in teaching/writing foreshadowed the multiple roles pursued by women in the 1990s.

A third important significance of the relationship between Brooks and Brodie is in the contribution each woman made to the cause of dissent within twentieth-century Mormonism. However, it should be noted that certain high officials within the church vigorously disputed the merits of that cause. In particular, Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of the Seventy condemned the efforts of Brooks with the explanation: “I can’t understand why Juanita Brooks . . . who claims to be a good Mormon, should spend [her] time digging into stuff like the Mountain Meadows Massacre when there are so many wonderful achievements that have taken place in Utah that could be written upon.” Hunter dismissed the Mountain Meadows Massacre as “just a small incident in Utah history” noting that “such small incidents took place on all frontiers in American history” and are “parts of history which should be forgotten.” Hunter then drew comparisons between the work of Brooks and Brodie: “I suppose Mrs. Brooks has done like Fawn Brodie did” in rehashing “all of the old corruption instead of finding anything new.” He then concluded, “I went through Fawn Brodie’s [*No Man Knows My History*] very carefully and wrote a review” noting that this was “exactly what [Brodie] did under the pretense of new documents.”<sup>75</sup>

Whatever the merits of Hunter’s assertions, it is clear that he along with other observers considered Brooks and Brodie to be sisters in Mormon dissent. Also clear is the fact that neither woman acted alone. Crucial in the efforts of each woman was the role played by their common friend and mentor Dale L. Morgan. Indeed, Brooks, Brodie, as well as Morgan were

---

74. This according to an inscribed plaque honoring Brooks on display in the foyer of the Marriott Hotel in Salt Lake City, as noted by Peterson, 411.

75. Milton R. Hunter to Frank H. Jonas, 2 Feb. 1951.



all part of a larger regional literary movement that had its genesis in the late 1930s and came to full flower during the 1940s and 1950s. Also a part of this movement were such Mormon-born writers as Vardis Fisher, Paul Bailey, Maurine Whipple, Virginia Sorensen, and Samuel W. Taylor. Also involved were two notable non-Mormons with Utah roots, Bernard DeVoto and Wallace Stegner. These writers have been labeled by Edward A. Geary as "Mormondom's Lost Generation" because they tended to be alienated from their social-cultural environment.<sup>76</sup> This was certainly the case for Brodie whose role as a dissenter evolved into open and complete rebellion whereby she rejected basic Mormon beliefs and doctrines. Despite her own rejection, Brodie's dissent, according to Sterling M. McMurrin, helped to usher in "A new climate of liberation" insofar as Mormon letters were concerned: "Because of *No Man Knows My History*, Mormon history produced by Mormon scholars has moved toward more openness, objectivity and honesty."<sup>77</sup>

In contrast to Brodie's, Brooks's dissent was more moderate, directed not against basic Mormon beliefs or institutions but instead against what she felt to be both official and unofficial Mormon "coverup" of certain embarrassing events, such as the Mountain Meadows Massacre and of particular controversial individuals such as John D. Lee. As a result, Brooks, according to Levi Peterson, helped to make "the collective mind of Mormonism . . . more liberal and more at peace with itself than it might otherwise be." Specifically, "The Mountain Meadows massacre is no longer a repressed, subliminal disturbance in the Mormon psyche." In a larger sense, according to Peterson:

Juanita [Brooks] helped make Mormondom a little less suspicious about nonconformity in general. Voicing her contrary opinions unequivocally, she confronted scolding apostles with a courageous assertion of her faithfulness. The fame of her loyal dissent spread widely, and covert protesters of many varieties took heart.<sup>78</sup>

Clearly, both Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie stood as significant sisters in Mormon dissent whose contributions to Mormon historical scholarship and impact on the cause of dissent within the larger Mormon community continues to be felt to the present.

---

76. For a discussion of these writers, see Edward A. Geary, "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelist of the 1940s," *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Fall 1977). Also see Bringhurst, "Fawn M. Brodie, 'Mormondom's Lost Generation,' and *No Man Knows My History*."

77. Sterling M. McMurrin, "A New Climate of Liberation: A Tribute to Fawn McKay Brodie, 1915-1981," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 (Spring 1981): 73-76.

78. Peterson, 422-23.



# Mama

*Guenevere Nelson*

*JERI AND I WOULD HAVE SPENT ALL DAY, if possible, dancing through the sprinklers in our fruit-colored bathing suits. The asphalt intensified desert heat made the water games a necessity more than a diversion.*

*But soon, unfortunately, we would hear our names.*

*"Guenevere? Jerusha Lynn?"*

*Mama would call us in from the lawn for lunch and stories while she nursed Karissa. The baby's rhythmic suckling and Mama's gentle voice quickly made us close our eyes. That was her plan, but when she stopped, I awoke and protested, "Finish!"*

*And Mama smiled and told me as part of the daily ritual that I had to learn to read if I wanted to hear the end of Black Beauty that day.*

*Later, as I tried this, Mama would pull me out one of her unfinished afghans and quickly, magically turn ugly brown yarn into ugly brown covers. She fascinated me.*

*She could do anything. I wanted to be like her, to be her. Mama could do anything, make anything, control anything. With her presence, she taught of goodness and security. I trusted her.*

*While I am at my linguistics classes in Utah, learning about the origins of sounds, my father and Karissa, who is now fourteen, alternate mornings.*

*She must be cleaned and dressed and fed and encouraged and sometimes, since mornings are emotionally difficult, she must simply be tolerated. Soon after she awakes, whimpers for help, and is dragged—pulled—into her chair from the bed, the Snoopy electric toothbrush vibrates in her mouth. Her garments must be changed and her clothes carefully, precariously put on her lifted body, avoiding tubes and bruises—especially tubes. Her kinky black hair should be combed as a last tribute to vanity and femininity.*

*But usually there isn't time. Junior high and engineering firms start early, and breakfast—fed spoon by spoon of Quaker brown sugar oatmeal, or bite by bite of bagel and cream cheese—takes up all of the rest of the morning.*

I don't have the energy to think about these mornings and activities so far away. My class work consumes most of my passions and thoughts. The rest of my energies go toward dates, friends, duties, and an often troubled sleep. I cannot afford to think about my family—I cannot help them, I can't do anything to ease their mornings. I squelch sporadic guilt spasms by turning to my typewriter or texts.

As I avoid thought, real thought, Karissa cares for Mother with the same rhythmic movements that were once done on a smaller scale for her. Karissa sees nothing unusual about this life; this is all she has ever known. She cannot remember when Mother wasn't sick.

*The Easter after I'd begun kindergarten, Mama made Jeri and I matching dresses, the bodices covered with painfully small cross-stitched roses—mine in purple, and Jeri's in green.*

*I wore it to school the day Mama brought Karissa to class so that we could learn about babies. One girl, a friend of mine, asked her when my family was going to get another baby.*

*Two more Christmases, Mama answered smiling.*

*But instead, before the next Christmas, before the next summer, she started falling. She started crying. She stopped cross-stitching. But I didn't worry much because I was in school and my world was bigger than just my mama.*

*She had prepared me well for the other parts of the world. In Mrs. Pethel's class, I proudly read better than anyone else in the class, except Kristen H. and Kristen read the impossible word, "fantastic." I spent the rest of the day staring at the colorful word that had defeated me.*

*Mama had given me good defiant genes, not just good reading skills. When our teacher told us not to smudge our chalk drawings, I furiously smudged my picture of vases. It looked better that way. When I was finished, I had to do another for the teacher to put it on the wall.*

*Some days later, Mrs. Pethel gathered us for a class announcement.*

*"Don't eat the paste," she admonished. But how good was her advice? She had been wrong about the chalk drawings. I talked my arts and crafts table into ignoring this advice too.*

*My transcript had Mrs. Pethel's handwriting, "She is a very happy child."*

*While I smudged and ate my way through kindergarten, Mama went from doctor to doctor to find out why her legs numbed and her hands shook. Most said that she was crazy, but one diagnosed: Multiple Sclerosis.*

I do call home long distance, during the days, to talk to Mother, to hear her say that everything is fine and the neighbor women sometimes visit. Her days linger with monotony, both for her and her caregiver. There are bags and tubes to be emptied and cleaned, requests to fulfill, and nothing of importance to discuss. Since Grandma died a few years ago, the name

of the day help changes often. Sometimes my brother Keith interrupts high school to feed and watch her. When Aunt Ruth can come, she cleans Mother and counsels her on hygiene.

If someone strong arrives, Mother can go out. Anywhere will do, anywhere away from the earthy browns of the house and her afghans will do.

*It was exotic, really, having a mama with a disease—better than bringing a baby to show and tell. The celebrity status and the hospitals excited me. New nurses and packaged foods made me excited that I was different. Proudly I pronounced the name of the disease on the playground.*

*But the disease brought more than adventures. In the second grade, to honor Mother's Day, I wrote a card saying that mine was always tired. She was. She stopped making our clothes and dinners. She yelled more often. She couldn't read anymore. We didn't understand, we didn't help enough, she told us sometimes.*

*Sometimes, though, she seemed normal, like everyone else's mother. At first she hadn't even needed a wheelchair. Not even a walker. She took care of herself. For years I watched as she dried her hair straight for my father's benefit. At those times, I looked at her face and her wet black curls and wondered why my hair wouldn't darken like hers, why my nose looked so boring next to her exotic Hebrew one set on her olive skin.*

*She still loved music. Almost every day after school, we would listen to her records—John Denver, Julie Andrews, and Peter, Paul, and Mary. She let us tie her scarves on our heads as we danced to Fiddler on the Roof. She watched the three of us jump and prance with kerchiefs on our heads; my brother, my sister, and myself. Her voice sang over the stereo as she judged our dancing contests.*

*The dancing contests ceased as the disease withered her nerves. But she continued to work around the house, and I still had some spare time to read books—Harlequins and Steinbeck, Laura Ingalls Wilder and Judy Blume.*

*There was also enough time to practice sewing and crocheting to fill a hope chest for when I would be a mother and raise eight children when I grew up.*

I turned nineteen this year—a little more than half a decade younger than my mother was when she was diagnosed. But I did not have a husband or four kids or even a dog; not even a plant. I did not want to acquire any of the symbols of her life, and I could not stand to hear that I look or move or act as my mother did. I couldn't imagine being her; couldn't imagine my end beginning now. I would not imagine being a burden, an invalid, or being married to one. I could not imagine living her life.

And so, when people likened us, and told me to follow her example, my vase-smudging-self defiantly laughed. Mimic my mother's life? My

career plans didn't include any cross-stitching or housecleaning or diseases.

Attachments were not in my plans either. The word marriage, spoken over a pulpit or by a friend, made me shiver. I could not take that kind of risk. I was fine, just as I was, unattached and free and safe. Hope and idealism would never seduce me.

Just before Christmas break, I told my friend my reservations about commitment and hope. I would never marry him, I told him. He stared at me. Such a statement does not fit the idealism of a religious university. With clarity and confidence he told me, warned me, and encouraged me with a few words. "Don't be afraid to trust. Choose your risks wisely, but make sure that you take them. Don't be afraid, Guenevere."

At the time, I could not see the difference between risks and imprudence. Or the difference between folly and forever. I could never risk being a burden. I did not want to be attached to anyone, to depend on anyone. Nothing was sure, I knew with a surety.

I tried to forget my friend's words, studied for finals and went home for Christmas break—feeling guilty and wishing that I could not feel.

*I filled my hope chest as Mama graduated to walkers and then a temporary (we hoped) used wheelchair that we had found at a yard sale for fifty dollars. I moved into junior high and Mutual.*

*I didn't know how to move right in my dresses, or what dresses to pick out. I wasn't sure if I should even wear dresses.*

*But as we both aged, Mama's responses grew less usable. My life became more complicated as her world became more confined and simple. Grandma, her mother, visited us often and tried to work between us and involve my mother and me in each other's worlds.*

*Grandma would try this as she drove me to the mall to shop.*

*"Your mother really loves you, you know."*

*"Uh," I responded. I couldn't tell her about the tall blonde girl in my p.e. class who had beaten me up the day before. I had set myself up as her victim by declaring my religion. The story would make no sense in any of their worlds, and barely any in mine. School had become a strange and terrifying social order with no rules and no security.*

*Such problems, I knew, were life. My mother's illness was a logical extension of my unpredictable outside confusion.*

*I transferred junior highs.*

*My new school, ethnically richer and drug saturated, tempted me into its crowd for about five minutes. I withdrew into the art and academic departments. I drew pictures during lunch and wrote poems about kisses that I had only read about. A girl in my math class got pregnant by her Mafioso boyfriend. I painted and devoured*

*Harlequins and Nancy Drews and took care of home as much as I could. I never thought about it, though. I painted my pastel pictures.*

*Grandma would bring Mother to my art shows and debate tournaments. Successfully, I moved to high school. I sold my paintings. I won my tournaments. Of course I made the honor rolls. Mother was pleased, but beyond this she couldn't say much about my activities.*

*Mother needed more help at home, and I never thought her condition unusual anymore. After school, while I fixed dinner, I obeyed her requests without speaking. She listened to religious and motivational tapes—never music anymore. Her realm and mine were so different, but I silently tried to make hers physically easier. But I couldn't respect her. In that way I was like any other teenager. I had to assume that she made herself weaker; how could I live in a world where this had just happened? One day, she was my mama and she had created happiness for us all. A few years later, my mother was crippled in every way imaginable.*

*How could it happen?*

*But I really didn't think much about it—just silently resented as I methodically wheeled her chair.*

*Grandma helped wheel too, and she wheeled it with optimistic chatter, trying to bond us and save us. Her image blurs through all my memories until the year she died. It was one of my last years of high school, I don't recall which one. I do remember her funeral—Grandma in a box, my entire family crying, and me in a bright purple dress, Seventeen magazine in my hands. Grandma was dead, and I wanted the skirt on the cover of the magazine.*

At home this Christmas I tried not to remember as I just tried to help. For two weeks I could pay my penance for absence by doing everyone's work. I efficiently planned to clean the house, help the family, ease the work of my younger sister, and take over the care of Mother.

I was not good at caretaking. When I bathed her, her hands and legs twitched violently. My old techniques of lifting her ended with both of us on the floor—me underneath as a pillow to her crumpled body. My fumbling made her urine bags leak. But I did keep the house clean.

Instead of seeing my efforts with pleasure, Mother saw through my plan and sensed a competitor, someone who wanted to take over the family and destroy her role as mother.

Her paranoia as well as her slurred speech increased my guilt and my need for absolution. I, who had known Mother when she was well, could not, would not take care of her. I ran off to college instead. Karissa, fourteen years old, was doing my work and paying my penance while I read British literature in my quiet apartment. Karissa has never even known Mama.

But I wanted to forget, to have never known Mama. Mostly I wanted to hide and tuck my brain away as I watched a forty-year-old in a sixty-

year-old's body. I wanted to forget this woman who had given me my eyes and used to have my smile and my mannerisms. I wanted to pretend that I did not feel and would never cry.

Simultaneously I wanted to fix everything, clean the house, comfort everyone, and mostly forget. If I couldn't stop the pain, I wanted to feign that it didn't exist here, didn't exist anywhere. But I couldn't make it go away as I wished to. I remembered that Grandma used to tell me after I'd dreamily listed all of my desires, "If wishes were fishes then we'd all be very fat."

And because of this, I mostly wanted to hide at the library and read *Interview* and *Vogue* and *McCalls* and *People*. Anything unreal, that would keep me from wondering and wishing and remembering.

In between trips to the library, I did help, as I could, and I did continue to help. But I spoke quietly and without emotion while I perfunctorily made dinner and changed clothes.

The last night I was home, I began transcribing my mother's life history. I tried not to think of meaning or phrases as I typed in the old fashioned phrases. I tried not to think of the life she had planned. Her words sounded more like Laura Ingalls Wilder than Gloria Steinem. They sounded like the mama I remembered—the idealist who taught me to take chances. I typed as I thought of my homemaking mother who never had a career, but had a husband and four kids and dogs and plants. She had ideals and dreams and a secure world. I stopped. I did not want to think.

I did not want to question the whys and the hows and the whats. I wanted to type and read and shut myself off.

The computer screen glowed with blues and grays and hummed hypnotically. My comfort I found in the stoic machine. My penance I found in the service of typing for her. My guilt I eased by ignoring and typing.

In the other room, Mother called, no longer angry at me—her irrationality sporadic—and I interrupted my typing to make and feed her dinner. I moved unthinking, unfeeling, with the numbness not of familiarity, but the numbness I had created within myself—again.

"What would you think if I dated someone seriously?" I surprised myself by asking her.

"It would be very nice, dear."

No help. No contact.

I sat down after she ate, to say my goodbye before I went back to the computer. But more than that, I wanted to say my final goodbye before I went back to my comforts, to my books and friends and my church calling.

I told her I loved her. My words were soft, formal, and ritualistic. No response.

I went back to my computer. I went in to drown myself in its regularity and predictability and its mechanistic security.



*Everyone gave me advice as I went to college. Dad told me to watch my finances. My Laurels advisor reminded me of my moral standards. Grandma had left a rose-perfumed letter written before she died urging me to make sure that my schooling didn't get in the way of my education.*

*Her last line read, "Take care of your Mother." As if I could do both—get an education and take care of my mother. As if I could serve without resentment or leave without guilt. I didn't think that I could do anything that anyone wanted; I couldn't satisfy Grandma or myself.*

*My mother had made a simpler demand in her slurring voice. "Be good. Pray." No answers. Just be good and pray. But I wanted to believe that she meant to add, be good, be happy, and live. Live and trust and grow and learn.*

*At first, I hadn't been sure if she had meant to add these words. Now I had to believe that these words would have been hers. I had to give myself permission to believe that these were her wishes.*

Mother called for help again, predictably. At least I could count on her calls with regularity.

But this time, I turned off the computer and opened the washed doors into the front room where she sat. I used to dance in this room. I had my picture taken in this room, in my cross-stitched dress, with my sister in my small arms.

After I helped Mother I sat down for good, fingering the browns and golds of the afghan that Mama had made while nursing Karissa, done when life was secure. They thought.

Mama wanted some music. I put on *Fiddler on the Roof*, the loud and joyous songs that begin the record.

"I love you, Mama," I told her again and my tears finally fell. I cried for Mama and for Grandma and for us all. What did we expect from ourselves, from each other?

I was not sure, but I spoke to her again.

"Do you remember when you used to read to us? I do. I remember. Thank you."

She didn't say much—she just smiled—with her eyes this time.

By doing so, she welcomed me into the room, welcomed me to sit with her. I accepted, and I stayed all night.

I am back at school, my English and physical science classes. Most of my energies go toward my boyfriend and my friends, work, studies, and sleep. But I now enter that sleep more easily.

I don't have time to crochet or embroider for my old hope chest, and probably wouldn't do it anyway. My apartment stays cluttered as I work on literary analysis and talk with friends.

However, sometimes I do make lunch for my boyfriend—whom I now see regularly. He helps me take care of the plants that I have bought for my

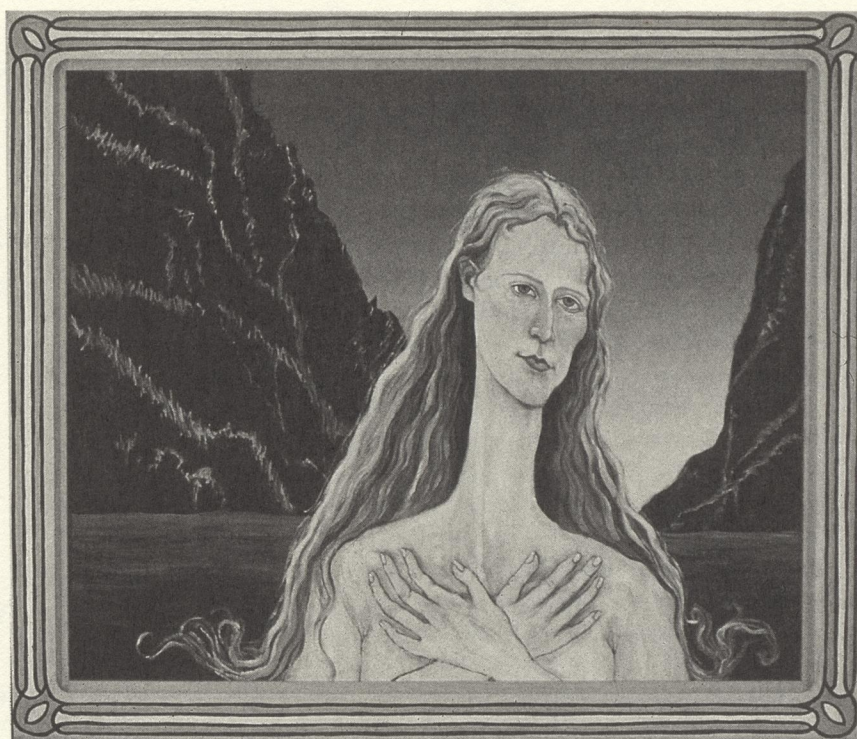
apartment. When I am sick, he brings me dinner. I let him ease my guilt and my fear and I let him make me feel and live.

At home, Karissa alternates mornings with my father, and she helps my mother with a numbness that comes from familiarity. But I would like to think that Karissa understands her more than she used to. I have begun to write letters to teach her about Mama, with her hugs and her kinky black hair next to beautiful, smooth, olive skin. The letters will teach her about and also help me remember Mama's soothing smiles.

# Serving the Papers

*Lance Larsen*

They sit in stiff unmatched recliners,  
a faint halo of grease smearing  
the head rests. The Bishop asks again,  
Do you want your names removed?  
They nod, the husband digging  
his thumb into his Bible—one of those  
slick-covered green ones J.W.s sell.  
“We have Jehovah now,” the wife says,  
leaning over to tap the cover,  
as if she expected it to grow  
a godly mouth and declare itself.  
“Study group right here twice a week.”  
They’re thin and brittle-looking,  
dusty almost, like figurines left  
on a closet shelf above unread books.  
Fourteen years they’ve been on church rolls.  
I look around. Matted carpet,  
a half-eaten dinner of liver and onions,  
the smell of dog and standing water.  
Maybe two visits a week is a sort  
of conversion—a window opening  
inside your chest, a twist of air.  
The Bishop’s voice brushes the walls,  
licks the corners, circles their faces.  
They still want out. So we take  
their signatures and, with no ceremony  
or dusting of our shoes, ease  
into the pounding heat, already erasing  
the faces tethered to the names.



# Matricidal Patriarchy: Some Thoughts toward Understanding the Devaluation of Women in the Church

*Erin R. Silva*

THE VIOLENT HISTORY OF PATRIARCHY reveals a system that is more than male dominance and the subordination of women. It is a system of power, dominion, and control that subordinates entire peoples, cultures, and natural resources. In her book, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Gerda Lerner traces the history of patriarchy as a creation of both men and women. "The system of patriarchy is a historical construct; it has a beginning; it will have an end. Its time seems to have nearly run its course—it no longer serves the needs of men or women and in its inextricable linkage to militarism, hierarchy, and racism it threatens the very existence of life on earth."<sup>1</sup>

Jungian scholar and analyst Marion Woodman suggests that patriarchy originated in the myth of the hero's journey. As a descendant of the sun god, the hero ventures into the world to conquer the forces of darkness that challenge the reign of his father's absolute authority. The moon, with its feminine cycles, rules the night as a symbol of darkness by reflecting the sun's light rather than radiating any light of its own. Woodman points out that this "relationship of sun and moon thus comes to symbolize the relationship between the sexes themselves. The feminine, standing for the forces of darkness and chaos, is brought within the orbit of a masculine light-bringing creation as a reflection of its power."<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 228-29.

2. Marion Woodman, *The Ravaged Bridegroom—Masculinity in Women* (Toronto, Can.: Inner City Books, 1990), 19.

Woodman further points out that the dragon or serpent has been traditionally related to the feminine lunar cycle and subsequently must be brought under "the dominion of masculine power" through the hero's act of dragon slaying. This occurs because men typically do not understand dragon slaying as the "symbolic process of transformation" but believe it to be part of rescuing the feminine (the maiden) from its own darkness (the dragon). "The solar hero, who stands for spirit and light, the penetrating power of rational insight, cannot comprehend this darkness, which comes down to us as the feminine mysteries."<sup>3</sup>

Woodman suggests that "a transformation in the male fear of the feminine process" is crucial to achieving equality between men and women.

The mutation in consciousness which is here suggested would reconstruct the foundations upon which the male ego has for centuries rested. Still it is clear in our evolving consciousness that slaying is at best an arrested act of transformation. The characteristic male response to the rejection of the dragon-slaying myth in favor of transformation is the ancient fear that the forces of darkness may then overtake the forces of light, leaving the man in the (Freudian) condition of the woman, denied his phallic power. Here we come face to face with what is involved in a man's response to his own inner feminine as anything other than a threat to his hard-won masculinity. Almost nothing in his social experience prepares him to view it in any other way.<sup>4</sup>

This fear of the feminine, coupled with the male's physical domination of his environment, has resulted in centuries of matricidal behavior by men in the sexual, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse of not just women, but anything associated with the feminine.

Matthew Fox begins his book, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, by describing a dream in which he witnessed our planet's devastation, "because we lack a living cosmology. I call this devastation matricide or the killing of the mother, for this is how the dream spoke to me." Fox speaks of the death of Mother Earth through neglect and exploitation, and points out, "If this continues, eventually we and our children will pay the price. If we persist in poisoning the 'mother of all,' then we will ultimately poison ourselves."<sup>5</sup> Fox laments the dying of wisdom, of native peoples and their mystical cultures, of human imagination and creativity, and of mystical awareness. In all this he believes we are losing the spiritual interconnect-

---

3. Ibid., 20.

4. Ibid.

5. Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1988); see Part 1.

edness of all things that binds us to God and to each other. He believes we are engaged in killing mother love and compassion, so necessary to the human soul, the source and fountainhead of our very being. We are also witnessing the death of mother church which he believes

is deeply entangled in the lethal embraces of matricidal patriarchy. Fundamentalism is a planetary phenomenon in religions today; Islam, Judaism, and Protestant biblical literalists all have their kind; Roman Catholics whose hearts and souls wait for papal order demonstrate their kind. This fundamentalism is the result of a deep-seated fear triggered by the breakup of cultural patterns. Religious fundamentalism exemplifies identification with the oppressor—the very hatred of mother that caused it is embraced and intensified by fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is patriarchy gone berserk. It is banishment of the mother in us all and in our traditions. It results from mysticism repressed and denied, and it always leads to scapegoating—the projected hatred of others. It occurs when the mother principle is rendered a shadow, that is, a repressed part of the personal or collective psyche.<sup>6</sup>

In what I believe to be the most disturbing part of his book, Fox writes of mother church succumbing to pressures of patriarchy and becoming an exclusively “father church.”

Any organization that is run exclusively by fathers, from the father's point of view and for the father's benefit will succumb to competition and jealousy and will remain out of touch with the deeper pain of our times—that of Mother Earth, mother wisdom, and mother peoples. . . . An almost fashionable fascism arises wherever religion or society repress the mother principle in the name of patriarchy. Power struggles, not mutual love, support, and solidarity, characterize such systems. This same kind of competition can be observed in fundamentalist church structures. The authoritarian character who thrives in such a system “is essentially sado-masochistic” according to psychiatrist Anthony Stevens, and is compelled to categorize others as either strong or weak. He worships the former and has contempt for the latter.<sup>7</sup>

Fox observes the merging of a mother-hating psychology and a mother-hating world view into what he describes as a collective fascism based in authoritarian character, “where the social and political (and ecclesiastical) structure is dominated by an order imposed by a single masculine authority.” Fascism is but one of many patriarchal

---

6. *Ibid.*, 27.

7. *Ibid.*, 28.

systems and is, he reminds us, "the ultimate expression of father-dominance . . ."<sup>8</sup>

In such a society, "persons are not educated to be true selves but to wear false persons modeled" on the demands of oppressors.<sup>9</sup> Psychologists Alice Miller and John Bradshaw have observed and described abuse resulting in the death of an individual's soul who must now wear the mask of a false self to survive in life.<sup>10</sup> Fox suggests that children in such oppressive patriarchal societies are forced to channel sexual and aggressive powers into "self-loathing and self contempt." He believes this original sin mentality—the notion that I came into the world despised, unwanted, ugly, and powerless—is displaced onto scapegoats such as racial minorities, homosexuals, and women. "It can also be transformed into worship of the oppressor who is always right (and ultimately) perverse energies are unleashed. Sadomasochism substitutes for morality; control for prayer; moralizing and condemnation for play and celebration; and a self-centeredness and preoccupation with human-made games and rules substitute for cosmic adventure, interest, wonder and living ritual."<sup>11</sup>

Centuries of misogyny based on dragon-slaying mythology have resulted in a patriarchal imperative that defined, devalued, suppressed, subjugated, silenced, and killed women. Misogyny has been justified and codified into Old Testament scripture and law by powerful but fearful dragon-slaying men. From the beginning of recorded biblical history, holy scripture tells how Adam was God's first creation. After Eve was created from Adam's body, she was named and her role defined by Adam as his helper so he, as patriarch of all living things, could exercise his role as head of this earthly family. His role as head was to rule and have dominion over all things on the earth, *including women*.

With the Adam and Eve story, patriarchy began the divinely justified rule of the father and dominion over women. We have inherited a system that is, as Heidi Hartman writes, "a set of social relations between men which . . . establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men

---

8. *Ibid.*, 28.

9. *Ibid.*, 29.

10. See Alice Miller, *Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self*, originally published as *Prisoners of Childhood*, trans. Ruth Ward (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984). See also *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, trans. Hildegard and Hunter Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1984); *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child*, trans. Hildegard and Hunter Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1984); and John Bradshaw, *Bradshaw On: The Family: A Revolutionary Way of Self-Discovery* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 1988).

11. Fox, 29.



that enable them to dominate women."<sup>12</sup> The Adam and Eve story was the recorded beginning of a history that justified the devaluation of women transforming them into objects for man's use.

Genesis 19 underlines patriarchal theory and sets a standard of male hegemony which, among other things, protected men at the expense of women. Rather than give up his male guests to a mob of inhospitable Sodomites, Lot was willing to throw his daughters to the crowd. "I beg you my brothers," he pleaded with the mob, "not to do this wicked thing [demean and rape Lot's guests]. I have two daughters who have never had intercourse with men. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you please. But don't do anything to these men, for you know they have come under the shelter of my roof." Fortunately the angel guests interceded protecting themselves and intervening for Lot's daughters.

In Judges 19:22-23, however, the same kind of story has a tragically different ending. A male owner of a home housing guests—as in Lot's case—was also confronted by inhospitable men of the city who demanded he surrender his house guest that they might do him harm. "The owner of the house went out to them and said, 'No, my brothers; do not be so wicked. Since this man is my guest, do not commit this crime. Rather let me bring out my maiden daughter or his concubine. Ravish them, or do whatever you want with them; but against the man you must not commit this wanton crime.'" At this the male guest seized his concubine and threw her outside to the mob. The scriptures tell us she was raped all night until dawn (while her master slept) and left to die on the innkeeper's doorstep.

Deuteronomy outlines one of many Old Testament laws that disadvantaged women in their marriage relationship with men. If the man, after marrying and having relations with his bride, discovered her to be undesirable, he was able to bring charges claiming she was not a virgin. The burden of proof was then on the wife's parents to produce evidence of her virginity (the blood-stained sheet). If they succeeded in establishing her virginity before the marriage, the husband was fined and the money given to the bride's father. The man was then, with no involvement from the bride, forbidden to ever divorce her (What about *her* feelings after all this?). But if the parents were not successful in proving her prior virtue, their daughter the bride was to be stoned to death and the husband freed to find another woman more worthy. "Thus," the law reads, "shall you purge the evil from your midst" (Deut. 22:13-22).

This is but one of many Old Testament laws justifying the harsh

---

12. Heidi Hartman, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 14.

treatment and devaluation of women for the next 4,000 years.<sup>13</sup> And because these laws were scriptural, men, especially those in ecclesiastical positions of power and authority, justified themselves in subjugating, violating, and dominating women. One of the most horrible examples of ecclesiastical patriarchal abuse occurred during the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. During this time the mother church linked witchcraft and women to heresy. Once witchcraft was ecclesiastically defined, it could be denounced as a Satanic religion.

This demonization of witchcraft was formalized in 1484 by Pope Innocent VII when he gave church power and authority to the Inquisition in hunting and prosecuting witches. Some time thereafter, two Dominican inquisitors, Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer wrote a manual for witch-hunting called *Malleus Maleficarum*, or *Hammer of the Witches*. That single document exposed deep-seated male fear and superstition about women as it outlined justification and ecclesiastical authorization for the brutal torture and murder of an estimated 7-9 million women. "When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil," they wrote. Witches were connected to the feminine because women were "more impressionable than men and more ready to receive the influence of the disembodied spirit." The priests further wrote that because women were weak they found "an easy and secret manner of vindicating themselves in witchcraft." Woman "is a liar by nature," they warned, "a wheedling and secret enemy."<sup>14</sup>

During this horrific feminine holocaust, with the blessing and encouragement of the church, inquisitions began persecutions and executions of women that continued until they reached their climax of brutality and murder during the seventeenth century. David Noble describes the magnitude of murder during that lamentable period in the history of patriarchy estimating the total number of witch-hunt victims to be in the millions. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Germany and Italy women were executed by the thousands. "In some German cities, executions averaged two a day; nine hundred women were killed in a single year in Würzburg, and over a thousand around Como. In the late sixteenth century, this wave of gender-bound genocide swept through France. In Trier, two villages were left with only one woman each; in Toulouse . . . four hundred women were murdered in one day."<sup>15</sup>

We want to believe that witch-hunting and the Inquisition are relics of a past we would prefer to ignore or forget. But they are not. Misogyny

---

13. For further discussion of women and Old Testament law, see Lerner, as well as James R. Baker, *Women's Rights in Old Testament Times* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

14. David F. Noble, *A World Without Women* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 207.

15. *Ibid.*, 209.

thrives in our own time with as much violence and cruelty. Crimes against women in our own cities have become a regular part of the evening news. Expanded versions of these stories are regularly carried on network news programs. Because these stories are so sensational and sordid they become an unending source of material for so-called infotainment television "news" programs.

During the past two years eastern Europe has become a backdrop for the latest atrocities committed against women. In the former Yugoslavia, Bosnian women have been systematically raped and murdered by Serbian troops as part of the latter's "ethnic cleansing." Following their capture, Serbian soldiers have confessed they were following orders from commanders to capture and rape women in occupied towns as part of a systematic process of dominating and eliminating an entire culture.

We continue to see television stories about events in India involving brides who do not live up to the financial, matrimonial, or sexual expectations of the groom. With the complicity of women in the groom's family, these young brides are shamed, returned to their families in disgrace, or, in the worst scenarios, are burned alive in a horrifying demonstration of women's devaluation and dehumanization. In Africa, young girls by the millions have been systematically brutalized with clitorrectomy in an effort to control and limit their sexual activity to that of bearing children.

We in the United States seem willing to accept and even dismiss the abuse of women in other parts of the world as cultural customs in backward-thinking third-world countries. Because we live in one of the most culturally advanced and politically powerful countries in the world, we are tempted to believe our women are safe from such things. We want to believe in the progression, goodness, and ultimate perfectibility of our system of government and society. Latter-day Saints, through scripture, proclaim the divinity of our Constitution—that it was inspired by God and implemented by spiritually-inspired men to provide sufficient legislation to protect all people's rights, including women's. When LDS leaders, feeling no need to specifically protect the interests of women through constitutional amendment, labeled the battle against the Equal Rights Amendment a moral issue, they persuaded women in the church to enlist the help of other women in defeating the ERA.

As a nation men are slowly coming to an awareness and understanding of the sexual harassment of women. The Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings brought this issue into focus as the entire nation, through television, witnessed how a woman's testimony about sexual abuse could so easily be dismissed. Members of the senate committee questioning Clarence Thomas reinforced the widely-held notion that "boys will be boys," and that what Thomas did was perhaps a regrettable but not

punishable offense. Thomas was eventually confirmed by a committee of his peers and seated on the United States Supreme Court.

Many women and men were outraged by Thomas's confirmation. But it was an inevitable result from an all-male Senate committee who in their own public and private lives had everything to lose by allowing themselves to believe Hill's testimony. The chilling reality for women in the United States is that these men, who supposedly serve the public good, are at the center of a government system that has been defined, designed, forged, and sustained by patriarchy. A system that teaches women to understand and live their male-defined roles as less powerful than and subservient to men. A system that defines them as prey to male strength and aggression—objects for male pleasure and oppression. A system that creates such a dangerous environment that women need to be afraid to walk into a parking lot alone at night.

Many believe that sexual harassment and the violent abuse of women in our own country is not as bad as it might seem. Victims' voices are minimized as the machinations of an hysterical fringe of discontented women—"feminazis," a vocal representative of the radical right calls them on the radio. They are simply the "hyperventilating" of the "church's detractors," one general authority recently stated in LDS general conference.<sup>16</sup> And while we as a church, society, and nation bury our heads in the sands of denial, women, including thousands of LDS women, continue to be emotionally, physically, politically, and spiritually abused. They are marginalized and devalued by their own church, objectified, abused, and molested in their own homes, sexually harassed at church as well as in the work place, stalked by former husbands, boyfriends, or just strangers, and raped in shopping center parking lots, on college campuses (including Brigham Young University), and even in their own bedrooms. In order to silence their victims and protect themselves, male perpetrators now frequently kill the victims of their violent sexual crimes. Week after week women are brutally beaten, raped, and murdered with their half-clothed bodies thrown into dumpsters like so much garbage. And as reports of sexual harassment and rape pour into police stations, and as shelters for battered women fill to overflowing, many still insist that things are not as bad as they appear. The truth of the matter, because of fear, intimidation, and an inadequate system for reporting crimes of abuse, is that things are worse than they appear and there is little promise for resolution in sight.

Catharine McKinnon helps us understand how extensive the abuse really is:

---

16. Neal A. Maxwell, "Behold the Enemy is Combined," *Ensign* 23 (May 1993): 76.

For those of you who think this is a lot of rhetoric, I want to specify the fact . . . When I speak of male dominance, I mean as its content facts from this culture. The facts have to do with the rate of rape and attempted rape of American women, which is 44 percent. If you ask a random group of women, "Have you ever been raped or been the victim of an attempted rape?" and do not exclude marital rape, that is the figure. Some 4.5 percent of all women are victims of incest by their fathers, an additional 12 percent by other male family members, rising to a total of 43 percent of all girls before they reach the age of eighteen, if sexual abuse within and outside the family is included. If you ask women whether they've been sexually harassed in the last two years, about 15 percent report very serious or physical assaults; about 85 percent of all working women report sexual harassment at some time in their working lives. Between a quarter and a third of all women are battered by men in the family. If you look at homicide data, between 60 percent and 70 percent of murdered women have been killed by a husband, lover, or ex-lover.<sup>17</sup>

Evidence of misogyny reveals itself in places we, as Latter-day Saints, least expect to find it—in our own history, in writings we consider scripture, and even in the attitudes of current general authorities. In the late 1970s women were likened by a member of the Quorum of the Seventy to black widow spiders who devour their mates.<sup>18</sup> Many Mormons were astonished when young women in the church were counseled by a member of the twelve apostles that Mormon husbands *need to feel dominant*, and were the young sisters to take that role away from them, they would reduce their husband's manhood.<sup>19</sup>

The question we must ask ourselves in story after story, paper after paper, book after book, is *why*? Why are men doing these things to women? The answers we find are as varied as the theories behind them. They range from the psychoanalytic to the political, from the anthropological to the philosophical. But the only common thread I have found is that *men do what they do to women because they can and because they justify their actions in the name of the law and in the name of God*. They rape women because they are bigger and stronger. Does this make every man a rapist or an abuser? Of course not. But an exception does not invalidate the truth of history. Men's brute strength and aggressive nature has helped them take control of

---

17. Catharine A. McKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified, Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 51-52.

18. See D. Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 382.

19. Boyd K. Packer, "Come all Ye Sons of God," *Ensign* 13 (Aug. 1983): 68; Packer, "Eternal Marriage," *Speeches of the Year* (Provo, UT: Brigham University Press, 1970), 5; Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood," 382.

business, industry, government, religion, and the family. Men justify this dominion because they believe it is their right as men, creators of a phallogocentric world, to rule and govern and control. Because God, in their minds, is male, men have created male ecclesiastical authority and have excluded women in church priesthood activities and decision-making processes.

Until recently, men for the most part have written the history, created the arts, speculated the philosophical, analyzed the psychological, and contemplated and revealed the spiritual. They have created and maintained governments, kingdoms, religions and their ecclesiastical structures, created the militaries, fought the wars, and enjoyed the spoils. Through male discourse men have defined women as less than, not equal to, themselves. They have male-written law and scripture to justify their dominion and they have male-defined priesthood/ecclesiastical structure to vindicate themselves in the eyes of God.

We want to believe that we as members of the restored church and kingdom of Christ on earth are safe from 4,000 years of patriarchal devaluation and abuse of women. But we are not. And how could we think we could be safe from the evils of patriarchy knowing that the ecclesiastical structure of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is at its base a patriarchal system whose imperative is male-hierarchical hegemony? It is an organization based on the rule of selected men through principles of power and authority claimed from God.

In spite of Joseph Smith's good intentions in restoring the gospel, in spite of the revelations and teachings of Jesus Christ, and in spite of the dedication of millions to participate, to preach and teach and give their lives to help build that kingdom, I believe that as a church we have not yet rid ourselves of misogyny. For much of our history we have not even recognized it. That misogyny now voices itself in a 1950s corporate-patriarchal hierarchy that we embrace as the church's ecclesiastical structure today—a system that marginalizes its women as well as its disenfranchised men and subjects them to the control and dominion of male authority.

Perhaps Joseph died too soon. Perhaps, as I believe, he did as much as could be expected, given the task of building a church structure that would be congruent with the grace-full teachings of the gospel of Jesus. He left us schematic plans for a structure we could build that would be safe for all of God's children; a place where they could grow spiritually in the fresh air of moral agency and reciprocal esteem, where none would ever be more important than another, and where women and men could live their lives as equal partners in the spiritual enterprise we call life.<sup>20</sup>

---

20. See Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood." Quinn's argument for women having had the priesthood since the time of Joseph Smith is convincing but not

But following Joseph's death, those plans were forgotten, lost, hidden, or destroyed. I believe the ecclesiastical structure we know as the LDS church today has been built and renovated over the past decades to conform with deeper cultural blueprints of patriarchy. I don't—can't—believe this is what Joseph Smith, as I struggle to understand his intentions on behalf of women, intended. The foundation for this building we call Mormonism today has been reinforced with male superiority, the columns and walls thickened and strengthened with male hegemony, covered with a roof structure of male control and dominion. Women and disenfranchised men of the church are locked inside by the power of denial and obedience to authority rather than entreated to stay through the power and grace of Christ's love. The blueprints of patriarchy call for windows to be sealed up through which the light of Christ might otherwise shine. In their place hang paintings of men in positions of leadership. Through the electrical outlets now runs male chain-of-command-authority rather than the power of the Holy Spirit. In the library, books of Christ's grace are being replaced with books by modern Pharisees—legalistic books full of rules and laws written by and for the benefit of men. And through water pipes runs the pedagogy of unrighteous dominion rather than the living water of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Door knobs designed to fit the male hand open doors that swing on hinges of obedience to patriarchal and hierarchical imperative, and open onto stairs that lead to upper rooms in the building reserved for men only. Inside everyone is persuaded and even coerced to think the same, talk the same, pray the same, and dress the same; and it is all dictated by male corporate imperative. There are many doors of seductive promise leading into this building. The modern-day church is not without its marketing skill and proficiency. But those who will not succumb to that corporate male dominion, to cult-like obsession with obedience to authority, and not subject themselves to ecclesiastical imperative, are shown to the doors leading to the building's outside. These are the doors of oppression, of silencing, of punishment, retribution, recrimination and reproof; doors of spiritual bankruptcy, loss of faith, and of excommunication.

Inside this patriarchal building women are taught that they must not want what men have in running the affairs of the church. They are taught they must worship and pray only to God the Father. It is under the threat of apostasy and resulting disfellowshipment or excommunication that they dare talk about or teach the concept of our Mother in Heaven.

What are women to make of a religion whose theology holds out the

---

comforting in light of what is happening to women in today's church. Soon after publication of *Women and Authority*, LDS authorities denounced Quinn's findings at the May 1993 general conference. The book as well as Quinn's essay is a rich resource for Mormon feminist bibliography and footnotes.

possibility of godhood and yet counsels that we must never teach or even talk about or pray to our Mother in Heaven? In Doctrine and Covenants 132 we read that men and women alike will pass by the gods on their way to exaltation and continuation of the seeds forever. It says that women and men both will be gods. But from teachings we hear over the pulpit in our own time we infer that even though a woman may attain godhood in worlds to come, she must forever remain unknown and unheard in an undefined cosmic subordination to male gods—voiceless, faceless, having no contact with her spirit children. Meanwhile we are taught her husband-god moves through his universe controlling, creating, and organizing galaxies while she stays home giving birth to millions of spirit babies.

I am confused by such teachings that devalue women when the concept of a heavenly mother is so empowering and liberating. Current church policies are, I believe, the consequences of men yielding to their darkest fears of women, of a patriarchy intent on keeping women and disenfranchised men subservient so that men in positions of power, as Doctrine and Covenants 121 warns us, can “cover their sins or gratify their pride and vain ambition.” This speaks to me of confusion, of fear, of arrogance and pride, and of spiritual schizophrenia designed to cast women in a devalued and subservient role in order to sustain male hegemony in LDS culture.

Church leadership masks the truth of gender bias by claiming that all are benefitted by patriarchy. In his keynote address “Women, Feminism and the Blessings of the Priesthood” at the 1985 BYU women’s conference, the school’s academic provost Bruce Hafen tried to make women feel better about their roles in the church. Remarkably, he told them they are equal to men in all things and have all the blessings of the priesthood available to them. However, he stated, “The one category of blessings in which the role of women is not the same as that of men holding priesthood, is *that of administering the gospel and governing all things.*”<sup>21</sup>

And what are we to make of this statement in the 1979-80 Relief Society manual: “Where the father is present, he should function as the head of the home, with the counsel and support of his wife. This pattern should be followed *whether or not the husband is a member of the church and holds the priesthood.* It is the revealed role pattern for all married couples.”<sup>22</sup>

The power, authority, control, and preeminence of patriarchy is male defined and male served. Woman is defined by patriarchy as object to the male subject. She is defined in sexual terms by male imperative in her role as “female” church member who must cooperate and sustain her own

---

21. Bruce Hafen, “Women, Feminism and the Blessings of the Priesthood,” 18, given at Brigham Young University Women’s Conference, 1985, italics mine.

22. *Relief Society Manual* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 131, italics mine.



domination and devaluation by the masculine ecclesiastical structure. Of course this makes sense to men in the church. What better way to justify the system than to demonstrate the support of women who sustain what is clearly not in their best interests. This is exactly what is happening in the LDS church. Women are enabling this system so that it will not only continue but thrive. As Gerda Lerner points out:

This cooperation is secured by a variety of means: gender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of knowledge of their history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining "respectability" and "deviance" according to women's sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to conforming women.<sup>23</sup>

Women have cooperated in building this gendered structure that devalues and silences their voices, ideas, analysis, and interpretations of how their spiritual lives should be lived. Many women actually seem to enjoy their subservient role. Others, by means of their capitulation, are rewarded with position and privilege. I remember watching the "Larry King Live Show" one evening as a church spokeswoman debated with Deborah Laake about her book *Secret Ceremonies*. When confronted with questions about church women in the male-dominated LDS church not being involved in the decision-making process for the whole church, she simply responded, "Well, it works for me." Of course it works for her. She does what is necessary to ascend to a certain amount of power and privilege by representing the male reality as beneficial to all women in the church.

It is no secret that men hold the greatest power and authority in the ecclesiastical structure of the LDS church—it is they who dictate practice, policy, theology, and proscribe spiritual experience. Access to power is for those who are male and is denied to those who are not. Church members are taught that the power and authority of God is a matter of sex and that there are consequential implications in the relationship between priesthood leaders and women. The door is open for men in the church to define women as objects for their own use and pleasure. When that happens, a man can transfer his quest for pleasure from the sexual sphere to the ecclesiastical. And if sex for men is power, the way is opened up for a man to misuse his ecclesiastical authority and work out sexual fantasies of desire, conquest, domination, and performance with his church authority.<sup>24</sup>

---

23. Lerner, 217.

24. See McKinnon's discussion of power and sexual objectification under male supremacy in her chapter "Desire and Power" where she suggests, "The feminist theory

Too often women are required to submit to their male authority's probing intimate questions during private interviews, where girls and women are urged to reveal their innermost feelings about everything in their lives, especially sex. This sets the stage for spiritual and sometimes literal rape. Whether the bishop's behavior remains above reproach, sexual power and control have been transferred from the physical to the spiritual. We talk of these things as though they are only possibilities. But they are not. The stories of this kind of abuse are more numerous than we want to believe.<sup>25</sup>

I believe it would be possible to minimize this misuse of authority if priesthood were not a matter of sex and women were able to interview women as men interview men.<sup>26</sup> But of course that erases grounds for men only to hold priesthood. When we (both men and women) as a church are willing to study the issue in our own minds and make it a holy quest of the spirit, I believe the soil will be prepared for a priesthood grounded in the equality of men and women working as partners in governing the affairs of the kingdom together for the mutual blessing of all.

Do we dare contemplate such sweeping changes in the relationship of men and women in the church? And how will they ever be possible? I believe they are possible because the cornerstone of the church is Jesus Christ, the bedrock is revelation, with a foundation of apostles and prophets. In an October 1992 general conference address Elder Dallin H. Oaks gave a talk outlining precisely why, from church history and current scripture, he believes women do not have the priesthood and do not fully participate in church decision making at the highest levels. The implication I inferred from his talk was that women do not hold the priesthood or participate at the highest levels of church government and decision making because that was the way God wanted it and that was the way he revealed it to Joseph Smith.<sup>27</sup> In his April 1993 general

---

of power is that sexuality is gendered as gender is sexualized. In other words, feminism is a theory of how the erotization of dominance and submission creates gender, creates woman and man in the social form in which we know them. Thus the sex difference and the dominance-submission dynamic define each other. The erotic is what defines sex as an inequality, hence meaningful difference . . . The act of control . . . is itself eroticized under male supremacy. To say women are sex objects is in this way redundant. Sexualized objectification is what defines women as sexual and as women under male supremacy." See also her discussion of rape and violence in her chapter "Sex and Violence: A Perspective."

25. See discussions on women and priesthood interviews in *Exponent II* 17 (1993), 2, esp. Scott Fisher, "By Virtue of Authority: A Bishop's Perspective," and Ellen Toronto, "Unequal Power and the Sexual Domination of Women."

26. Ibid.

27. Dallin Oaks, "The Relief Society and the Church," *Ensign* 22 (May 1992): 34-36.

conference talk Elder Boyd K. Packer, in spite of evidence from church history, did much the same thing as he denounced the idea that priesthood is in any way conferred through the temple endowment.<sup>28</sup> This is what they believe and teach and establish as doctrine in the church today. They are apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ called to set us straight in these matters. And as long as we sustain them in their offices, we have little choice but to believe them in faith. But we sustain them as prophets, seers, and revelators, and as a church, "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (A of F 9). Over the past two decades we have been witnesses to many of those important revelations. Who will ever forget that June day in 1978 when it was announced that *all* worthy male members would enjoy confirmation into the priesthood of God?

I believe a new day is at hand for women in the church. Those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators have the power to exercise their prophetic gifts of priesthood in behalf of women to finally erase gender discrimination in the church. I am convinced there is much yet to be revealed regarding the role of women in the church and that God is simply waiting for us to ask—waiting for us to repent, to "study it" in our own minds, and make it sufficiently important to formulate specific changes necessary to include women's views, opinions, and voices in the highest councils of the church.

Where does such an enterprise begin as far as we members of the church are concerned? Gloria Cronin, a professor of English at Brigham Young University, has eloquently written, "I think it is a process that begins in a holy kind of trembling in the presence of God—a trembling that first acknowledges our sin, and which then acknowledges multiplicity and 'Otherness' as the essence of Deity. It proceeds from there to acceptance of personal responsibility, hope for sanctified relation, and faith in a millennial future."<sup>29</sup>

Where does repentance begin? With both men and women opening their eyes and hearts to the terrible history of women's abuse—a history so horrible that, as Andrea Dworkin has written, it "should leave the heart seared, the mind in anguish, the conscience in upheaval."<sup>30</sup> Perhaps repentance begins when we confess that our own ignorance, denial, pride, and arrogance have blocked the way to understanding—and we recognize our

28. Boyd K. Packer, "The Temple, The Priesthood," *Ensign* 23 (May 1993): 18.

29. Gloria Cronin, "Gender, Power, and the Sexual Politics of Salvation," delivered at the 1993 Sunstone West Symposium, San Francisco, California.

30. Andrea Dworkin, *Right Wing Women: The Politics of Domesticated Females* (London: The Women's Press, 1981).

own complicity. With that recognition comes the ability to hear the uncountable individual screams and be willing to count the infinite tears. Our repentance must include sufficient patience and love to understand and feel the collective anger of women and let it pierce our souls and break our hearts. Then in the depth of our remorse we can begin to exercise compassion and ask forgiveness. Only then will true love be possible through the sanctifying of the spirit and the healing blood of Jesus Christ who calls us to come and lay this terrible and heavy burden at his feet. The price of reconciliation has already been paid by suffering that caused him, "even God, to tremble because of the pain and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18-20). He stands at the door and knocks for us to open it.

The ecclesiastical structure of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a patriarchal system whose imperative is male hierarchical hegemony. It is a church based on the rule of selected men through principles of power and authority claimed from God. I believe that as long as the male church leadership regards the subordination of women as god-given, the church will stand as a stumbling block to the spiritual growth of its members. Only when it becomes clear to church members that patriarchal hierarchy as the basis of the LDS ecclesiastical structure no longer serves the deepest spiritual needs of women and men will a new horizontal system of equality based on the grace and love of Jesus Christ emerge—a system, as described by Chieko N. Okazaki, counselor in the general Relief Society presidency of the LDS church, that is less like a ladder and more like the child's string construction called a "cat's cradle."<sup>31</sup>

I want to close with a dream, a quote, and a prayer. My dream occurred a few weeks after I received some unexpected money and decided to go shopping at a feminist bookstore. I have entitled my dream "My Sister, My Friend," and it came during the first few weeks of reading while I was trying to get a fix on various feminist theories and arguments that have developed in the past two decades. In the dream I found myself in a building, a large and dangerous building, that I and my wife knew we must escape. While in the dream I knew she was my wife, I also knew that she was many women, multi-faced, perhaps all women.

We entered what I discovered to be the last room before exiting a door to the outside. As we began to make our way across the room, a large man came through the door with an automatic pistol in his hand. He took one look at me and fired three shots into my arm and shoulder. I went down and he quickly stood above me. As he held the gun to my head I knew he

---

31. Chieko N. Okazaki, *Cat's Cradle* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993).

wanted to kill me. On my knees I begged for my life. I was in agony for my wounds, but they were nothing compared to my feelings of utter helplessness and terror.

As I begged for my life, I found myself crying and shaking with fright. He looked down at me, gave me a sarcastic smile, and with a look of satisfaction and complete conquest swaggered away. I woke up. A friend later visited our home and helped me analyze the dream. The importance of the dream to me was realizing that I had never really known that kind of fear before. As a young man I was either too stupid or too drunk to have been afraid. I cannot know what it is like to be a woman—that goes without saying. But I do know that my dream was so powerful and spoke to me with such strong, clear, personal insight that I believe it gave my life a final course correction. Never again will I be able to hear a story of powerlessness, unrighteous dominion, abuse, or rape without reliving that dream.

The quote is from Gloria Cronin's insightful paper, "Gender, Power, and the Sexual Politics of Salvation," in which she writes:

We already know through sacred text and testimony that we contain within us multiplicity and femininity, an excess of meanings which are prior to any phallogocentric order. Even now, as we see each other face to face we are much more already than the sum and contents of those gender types and relations masculinism or phallogocentrism describes. By seeing that multiplicity, recognizing our prior divine identity, acknowledging an ethical responsibility which is grounded in the pre-existence, we have a place to begin the task.<sup>32</sup>

My prayer is simple: Heavenly Father and Mother, please help us to be equal to that task.

---

32. Cronin.



# I Must Speak Up

*Hilda Kathryn Erickson Pack*

*IN 1981 I DISCOVERED A CHURCH POLICY that saddened me deeply. The following year I wrote several letters seeking change. Now it is more than ten years later. Just recently I found out that a change did occur in policy in 1989. Regrettably, the change made things twice as bad.*

*Ten years ago I wrote an essay about this matter which, while therapeutic for me, was never published. I now feel compelled to dig it out because I can no longer patiently wait for the "right" change. A modified version of that 1984 paper follows.*

\* \* \*

## OF WHAT PRICE IS A VIRTUOUS MARRIED WOMAN? "SHE WAS BAPTIZED ON CHRISTMAS EVE"

My companion and I . . . met a lady from England and her family. At this time her husband was in Vietnam . . . she had a strong desire to bring her family of four into the Church. However, for this she needed her husband's permission.

One day shortly before Christmas she said to me, "Elder Affleck, the greatest Christmas present I could have would be to be baptized into the Church and receive the Holy Ghost, and see my family baptized. On that day, December 22, she wrote a letter to Vietnam, telling her husband about the Church and asking for permission to be baptized.

. . . the next morning we got a phone call from this woman. . . . She had received a letter from her husband in which he said, "Leslie, I have found the most wonderful thing! . . . I have joined the Mormon Church." Then he went into specific details about how she could contact the elders.

What a wonderful blessing this family had received! She was baptized on Christmas Eve.

Two years ago, I read the above story in our Sunday ward bulletin (no source was listed). A cold wave immediately chilled my soul. I felt betrayed

and angry. Finally, I felt disbelief. I could not believe there was a church policy that led to this purportedly inspirational story. After all, I was a thirty-six-year-old woman, had been raised in the church, and had always been active (except when I lived as a Peace Corps volunteer in a remote Brazilian town where there was no Mormon church to attend). Yet this was the first time I had ever heard the idea that a married woman must get "permission" from her husband to join the church. Elder Affleck was surely mistaken; it was not church policy, I decided.

My education was not long in coming. When I got home, I questioned my husband. "When you were on your mission, was there a rule that a married woman couldn't be baptized without her husband's consent?" I asked.

"Yes," came Jim's reply, tearing my soul asunder.

Jim got out his *General Handbook of Instructions* #21 (1976) and we read together, "A married woman should not be baptized without her husband's consent."

For a couple of weeks I battled my feelings about this policy. It seemed more wrong and loomed more important to me every day. I asked the missionaries in our ward about it, hoping that the policy was largely ignored.

A tall amiable missionary from Michigan remarked, "Two weeks ago my companion and I finished teaching a wonderful woman, but we couldn't baptize her because her husband didn't want her to join the Church. We were really disappointed. She had a wonderful testimony."

I responded immediately, "That's wicked!"

Startled, he tried to assure me, "Well, since it's the policy of the church, it can't be wicked."

"Does a man need a wife's permission in order to join the church?" I asked, though I already knew the answer.

"No."

During the next several months I struggled inwardly and outwardly. I discussed this policy with many people. Astonishingly, of all the women I talked to, only one (a returned missionary) had ever heard of this policy before. We women while constantly told to spread the gospel were completely unaware that our friends would not be free to join the church when converted.

One disturbing discussion I had was with a member of the bishopric. After diligent research, he reported that he could only find one possible, if "slightly remote," scriptural basis for it. He opened the Doctrine and Covenants and read:

We believe it just to preach the gospel . . . ; but we do not believe it right to



interfere with bond-servants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them contrary to the will and wish of their masters, . . . (134:12).

I admired his diligence. I was aghast at his response. When I asked if he truly felt that married women are bonded servants to their husbands, he reminded me that he did say the reference was "slightly remote."

On the homefront most of my discussions were impassioned, greatly one-sided, and directed at my husband. As I railed against the injustice of this policy, I noticed that he looked a bit uncomfortable, leading me to believe that he disagreed with me. One day I directly asked him his opinion. Unaccountably, it was terribly important to me to know how he felt. I trembled as I asked, "Jim, how do you feel? Is it right to withhold the blessings of the gospel from married women just because their husbands are contrary to it?"

Only someone who knew good, loyal Jim could understand the difficulty that Jim had to respond, "I wish the church would allow them the blessings of the gospel."

My heart rejoiced. Jim, who rarely disagreed with the church on anything, saw truth and goodness as I did on this important matter. He then suggested that I write letters to the general authorities. I had such definite feelings as to whom I should write and as to what I should say, that even though I knew it was naive to actually hope for change, I nevertheless did hope. In November 1982 I wrote to Elder James E. Faust, Elder Vaughan J. Featherstone, and Elder Neal A. Maxwell. To Elder Faust I wrote of Nephi prophesying of Christ and asking (in 2 Ne. 26):

"Hath he commanded any that they should depart . . . out of their houses of worship? . . . Hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness?" The resounding answer to all of these questions is "Nay" and "Come unto me all ye ends of the earth" and "he hath given it free for all men." Finally, . . . the last verse declares, "he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God, . . ."

I confess I felt presumptuous quoting scripture to an apostle, but I nevertheless felt compelled to do so.

I wrote to Elder Featherstone who had recently spoken in a meeting for women in our stake, directing much of his speech to women whose husbands were inactive or nonmembers. He promised them that if they lived the gospel to the best of their ability, their husbands would eventually become good church members. After reminding him of this promise, I asked if this promise could be valid for converted women who were presently denied baptism because of their husbands. If so, a change in

policy would allow these women to become members and eventually result in many wonderful families coming into the church.

Jim thought my letter to Elder Maxwell was harsh. Possibly it was, but the policy itself is harsh:

Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables* tells a story which reminds me of a policy in the church which seems to be unjust—the policy that a married woman cannot be baptized without the consent of her husband:

. . . the Arab woman who, having received a blow from her husband, went to complain to her father, . . . “Father, you owe my husband affront for affront.” The father asked, “Upon which cheek did you receive the blow?” “Upon the left cheek.” The Father struck the right cheek and said, “Now you are satisfied. Go and tell your husband that he has struck my daughter, but that I struck his wife.”

The story’s poignancy comes from the double betrayal received by the Arab woman from the two people in all the world who should have been least likely to do her harm—her husband and her father. She had every right to expect love, kindness, and consideration from her husband. When she received a blow instead, she turned to her father, fully expecting love, kindness, and perhaps some help in dealing with her husband. Sadly, she was treated equally brutally, doubling her injury and her disillusionment. . . .

In like manner to this story, but even more compelling in her justified expectation of love, kindness, and acceptance is a married woman today who seeks baptism into the church against her husband’s wish. What sort of treatment does this woman, married to a dictatorial husband (the first blow), expect from her Father in Heaven? Certainly she expects to be received, welcomed, loved, and invited to enter his church, receive the Holy Ghost, and find peace. . . . Yet, when she asks to be baptized, she receives an infinitely harsher second blow than the Arab woman. . . . The Arab woman was only betrayed by mortals with earthly and familial obligations to her. Today’s married woman with a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel is apparently rejected by her Father in Heaven. Ramifications to her (to say nothing of her children) are devastating: the blessings of church membership and the gift of the Holy Ghost are tragically denied her during her . . . mortal life.

A husband who obstructs his wife’s thrust towards the path of truth and right is lamentable but, unfortunately, believable; a Father in Heaven who rejects a worthy daughter’s faith and repentance and wish for baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost is likewise lamentable but, contrarily, totally impossible.

Victor Hugo wrote of man’s inhumanity to man. Church policy infinitely outdoes this theme in the apparent theme of God’s ungodliness to potential goddesses.

I have wrestled with many possible explanations for this policy and can find no solace. Finally, I feel driven to write a few of my thoughts concerning this matter with a hope that a change might occur, allowing all of God's children to "Come unto Jesus."

If I trembled a bit when I sent my letters, I trembled a little bit more when I started to get responses. My hopes competed with nervousness as I opened the official-looking envelopes. Hope and nervousness both lost out to eventual disappointment. Elders Maxwell and Featherstone said that they had referred my question to the First Presidency. Elder Faust did not reply. Francis M. Gibbons, secretary to the First Presidency, replied as follows:

... This policy has the approval of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve and was adopted as the result of long experience which has shown that in many cases serious marital upset is caused where a sister is baptized without the knowledge or consent of her husband. . . .

Soon after this reply, 1982 came to an end. During that year, I had learned about the policy, refused to believe it was policy, and had been proven wrong. Then I was apprised of its actual enforcement in the mission field. I had struggled in my soul. I had discussed it with my friends, and I had, after conferring with my husband, written letters, hoping that a change would occur.

A change in policy did not occur. I had worried what my reaction might be if a change was not effected. Though disappointed, I didn't despair. I retreated. I thought of George Bernard Shaw's observation, whose words I had clipped from a local newspaper, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man." I wryly decided to try to be "reasonable" for a while and continue with my life and activities.

This past year, 1983, I hardly discussed this policy with anyone. I tried not to dwell on it but continued my daily life, finding the matter easy to ignore when teaching a Girl Scout how to tie a bow-line, when showing a piano student how to play a scale, or when writing race-relations proposals for magnet schools to the school board. The only time it intruded into my consciousness was during those moments when I would think about one of the mothers I was working with, "Wouldn't so-and-so be a wonderful Mormon?" I find I am completely unable to ask what she knows about my church for fear she might want to know more and then be barred from membership.

The policy was harder to ignore while going to church meetings and

reading church history books. Though I tried to forget this policy, I am still often abruptly reminded of it.

I have felt bombarded by church talks that cause me pain about this issue. Many speakers talk on such basic ideas as God's love for each of us, the importance of baptism and the Holy Ghost, freedom of religion, and free will. Knowing church policy regarding baptism of a married woman and then listening to these speeches affirming our basic values was a truly jarring experience. After all, what do you do when policy seems to contradict doctrine? I strove to be reasonable; I tried not to think about it.

One speech, however, challenged this resolve. It was given at stake conference by one of the church's highest authorities living in the San Diego area. The theme was "The Gospel Is for Everyone." We were challenged not to judge people but to tell every person we meet about the gospel. To spur our missionary efforts, the speaker assured us that God can change the most improbable prospect. Over and over he repeated, "God wants everyone," the alcoholic, the thief, the chain smoker, the liar, . . . Do not judge them. God can change them; don't doubt his power.

Impressed with the motivating influence of his speech but still disturbed that God could want all categories of "sinners" but not a virtuous married woman, I felt compelled to talk to this man. As I mentioned to him my discomfort with the fact that, in practice, the gospel is not for everyone because married women are not allowed to freely choose baptism, I had my only unpleasant experience in discussing this matter. He questioned my piety and humility and informed me that whatever the First Presidency decides is right and true is by definition right and true. If I didn't believe that, he feared for my soul. I felt bad about the attack on my personal worthiness. Why, I wondered, had I decided to unreasonably follow my impulse to talk to him instead of adapting myself to Shaw's world? Yet, in this rebuff, I felt for a moment more strongly than ever somehow linked with women denied the gospel: surely they too felt that they were being told that they were somehow not "good enough." Their hurt became even more forcibly my "hurt."

Besides church messages constantly reminding me of this seemingly errant church policy, my reading in church history offered no relief. I discovered in *Saints Without Halos* that in pioneer days, Edwin Woolley, a Quaker, did not approve when his wife Mary was baptized into the Mormon church (apparently the policy was different at that time). He offered her "a new silk dress" if she would deny that Joseph Smith was a prophet. She would not. Later, Edwin himself joined the church.<sup>1</sup> His posterity includes grandson J. Reuben Clark and great-grandson Spencer

---

1. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *Saints Without Halos: The Human Side of Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 53.

W. Kimball. Spencer Woolley Kimball came to preside over a church that denies membership to contemporary Mary Woolleys. What irony! I thought.

Another book reminded me of this issue more obliquely. For many years before I married I regretted that the right to hold the priesthood was denied to blacks. I reflected that they were similar to me: as a single woman I had no priesthood either. Blacks had church membership and the Holy Ghost, which are the most essential church blessings; they could continue to progress as much as I could (though given a vote, I would have voted for them to hold the priesthood). *The Mormon Experience* quotes a black leader as expressing essentially this idea, "Many white people are hoping for a change, praying that the blacks will hold the priesthood, same as the blacks are. But for now, we're on the right train. Maybe we're not the engineer, but it's better than missing the train."<sup>2</sup> The pertinence of this to present-day church policy is this: Married women with recalcitrant husbands are not even permitted to be "on the train." Blacks are now engineers, but the doors to the train remain closed to the married woman.

Before 1978 many members talked about the possibility of blacks holding the priesthood. Black members formed support groups for each other while hoping to receive the priesthood. Today, in contrast, few people seem to hope that married women might some day receive church membership. This astonishes me. These women have no support group and suffer individually. Would Christ, always concerned about "the one," want us to unlock the door of the train?

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known His will for the blessing of *all* [my emphasis] His children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of His authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive *every* [my emphasis] blessing of the gospel.

This joyous message—announced as revelation in 1978—is at variance with LDS policy. This revelation, quoted in *The Mormon Experience*,<sup>3</sup> has been applied to the blacks in granting them priesthood but not to married women who wish for church membership even though the message states that it is the Lord's will to bless "*all . . . who will hearken . . . and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel.*"

Recently, my husband came home with his newly revised *General Handbook of Instructions* (1983). Irrational though it was, my heart leapt with

---

2. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 323.

3. *Ibid.*, 324.

hope. Then I read, "A married woman should not be baptized without her husband's consent."

And so my third year of knowing about this policy begins anew with disappointment. I risk abandoning last year's accommodation delineated by Shaw as I write this essay, still scarcely able to conceal the hope for a change that I "unreasonably" have. The rightness of allowing a married woman freedom of religion seems so self-evident that I keep hoping to find out that the policy opposing it is somehow just a typographical error.

While I await the proof-reader's discovery, my soul agonizes, "Of what price is a virtuous married woman?"

\* \* \*

*That is the essay I wrote in January 1984. Since then, I have continued to be blessed with church activity and service. A year ago, I was released as stake primary president, a calling which brought me almost unimaginable joy. Yet the more joy I receive from my church membership, the more pain I receive from knowing of the denial of these blessings to others.*

*A little over a year ago, in March 1993, I complimented a member of our stake presidency on his recent speech about individual responsibility and choice. Then I mentioned my struggle in viewing this common Mormon concept of free agency as being inconsistent with the church policy of denying married women the right to choose to be baptized. He apparently saw the contradiction and said that he would check on it. Ten minutes later he was back.*

*"The policy has been changed," he announced.*

*My heart leaped in eager anticipation.*

*"Now both a husband and a wife must receive permission from a spouse before he or she is allowed to be baptized."*

*"Oh, no," I responded in despair.*

*This changed policy is in the General Handbook published in 1989. The revised policy seems doubly bad to me. Potentially twice as many people are now denied the blessings of the gospel. A terrible thought comes to me. What if, in reviewing policies, some church authorities vaguely recalled, from my letters of so many years ago, my objections to the former policy? What if, not remembering them exactly, they felt that the objection had been that men and women were not treated equally and so they made this adjustment? If so, my calling attention to this policy resulted in an even greater injustice. Of course, I have no way of knowing if my letters had any residual influence, but the idea that they might have contributed to this change is excruciating.*

# The Sweetness of Cherry Coke

*Joleen Ashman Robison*

SOMETIMES INSTEAD OF WALKING the four blocks home after Sunday school I'd walk the block and a half downtown to the Millard County Courthouse in Fillmore, Utah, where my father worked as the county clerk. I loved the symmetrical purple brick building in the center of Fillmore's Main Street.

One Sunday in May I walked decisively to the courthouse because I had a problem only Dad could fix. No cars lined the street. No one was drinking from the water fountain in front, but I knew someone was inside, because my dad worked at the courthouse on Sunday. "It's the only time and place I can have peace and quiet to get something done," he'd grumble.

I walked up the cement steps, tugged the front door open, and stepped quickly inside as it clunked shut behind me. The cool, dark interior encapsulated me from the outside world. I'd never been to a temple but figured the Millard County Courthouse came as close as I'd ever get.

From the entry I looked full circle. Every door on the main floor was closed: Treasurer, Assessor, Recorder, Sheriff. As County Clerk my father worked in an upstairs office beside the judicial chambers. I stood still, listening for my dad, but could hear no sounds. It was dark after being outside in the sun.

For just a flash I thought of the jail in back and a shot of adrenalin propelled me toward the polished wood stairs that led to my father. My heart pounded as I tip-toed around the ornate tile seal of the state in the center of the floor. No one would see if I walked across it today but I didn't want to. Before climbing the stairs, I stopped again and listened.

This time I heard my dad whistling "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" and caught a whiff of his Camel cigarettes. No need to fear. Nevertheless, I flew up the stairs knowing my father's eyes would shine when he saw me.

"How's my little sailor girl?" he said admiring my white dress with the navy blue collar.

Biting the corner of my lip trying not to cry I answered, "Not good." He sat down and pulled me on his knee.

Surrounding him on the counter and tables lay huge books with court

records written in my dad's distinctive penmanship—decisive—flowing with every letter aligned perfectly to the others. Today was a work day for my dad but I knew he'd have time to hear my story.

"Well you better tell me about it, Honey," he said. Honey was my nickname. He said it partly because it was the color of my hair and partly because I was so sweet.

I looked into his face, "Dad, I am never going to Sunday school again. Never."

"Never? That's a long time. Did something happen this morning at Sunday school?"

I hoped I could tell my dad without blubbering. My voice cracked as I began to explain, "Yes. The kids started sniffing me when I sat down and they all scooted down to the end of the bench. They whispered, but I could hear them say I don't smell like a Mormon. And Daddy I want to."

"You mean we're going to have to get a year's supply of beans, so you can smell like a Mormon," my dad chuckled.

"Dad." I jumped off his lap and stamped my foot. "This is serious." In my mind I could see Merlene and Sam holding their noses and sliding down the bench. I started to cry. "The kids laughed at me and no one wanted to sit by me because I smell inactive."

"Smell inactive?" My dad hugged me close, "Hell, you just smell like your old dad's smokes. We can fix that."

I stopped snivelling to say, "I think it is more than that. Surely they wouldn't act like that because of a little cigarette smoke. Would they?"

"Yep. I think they would. For you, and only you, maybe I could not smoke on Sunday mornings. That way you can smell active like everyone else at church. How'd that be?"

"Okay. But Dad I want to smell active and really be active. Understand."

"Sure do. If that is what you want that's what I want you to be: really active."

I smiled at my dad and gave him a tight hug. I liked having my dad work in the courthouse. To work there he'd had to be elected. For all our family, even Grandma Fannie, the election was scary. It came down to who had the most votes, the actives or the inactives. My father's opponent was a woman who had held the position for one term and was a stalwart in the church.

Wonder of wonders my father won. The inactives said it was because he was a well-liked, intelligent man. The actives said it was because he ran against a woman who should stay home with her children, since her husband had a good job on the road crew. Grandma Fannie said he won in spite of himself.

Everyone, even the inactives, supposed he would give up his cigarettes



when he became elected. For no one who smoked had ever held an office in the Millard County Courthouse, unless you counted some of the sheriffs who smoked when they went to the Beaver Cafe or up Copleys Canyon. But he didn't.

"I love you, Dad." I hugged him again, nestling my nose in his wavy hair. "And it's okay with me how you smell."

He took my hand and we stood at the windows in the east and looked down at Swallow's Confectionery across the street. "How'd you like to buy a Cherry Coke before you head home?" He didn't know actives aren't supposed to drink Cherry Coke and he wanted to make me happy, so I said, "Sure, Dad. I'd love it."

# Beautiful Naked Women

*Holly Welker*

Beautiful naked women turn up all over,  
in California they hide behind redwoods,  
in Paris they picnic on the grass.  
My doctor sends me a postcard of a plump nude  
seated on Turkish pillows, smoking a cigarette;  
Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins pose behind her  
in their medals and space suits;  
it's someone's idea of a luncheon on the moon,  
and my doctor wrote, "Come get your new prescription!"  
But pills never told me that Botticelli's Venus  
holds her hand to her breast to frame her face,  
not because her nails are anything special.

In medieval tapestries virgins more beautiful  
than any Venus lure unicorns  
with purple heads and black-tipped horns.  
If someone stays pure it's because  
of a desire to hoard beauty. But that won't explain  
those beautiful nudes caught without pain  
or illness. Discarded Barbie dolls  
turn up years later missing one leg  
and all their clothes. If you're ugly  
and you need to cry in public, close  
your eyes and no one will see you, others  
return to their various destinies;  
if destiny blessed you with a fine figure  
then your fate is to be sure  
that your fine body carries  
your fine head erect.

# Familial, Socioeconomic, and Religious Behavior: A Comparison of LDS and Non-LDS Women

*Tim B. Heaton*

A PERSISTENT CHALLENGE FACING MORMONISM is striking a balance between accommodating the broader society and maintaining some sense of unique identity.<sup>1</sup> This problem is not unique to Mormonism, however. Sociological wisdom holds that new religious movements are in tension with the broader societies from which they emerge.<sup>2</sup> New movements emphasize other-worldly rewards and are critical of material success. Over time these movements generally go through a process of accommodation or disappear. In this essay I examine the balance between preserving a unique life-style and adaptation to broader societal norms by comparing LDS women's educational attainment, employment, religious participation, and family behavior with women nationally.

Early Mormonism was often in tension with the broader society. Tension was created because the domineering nature of Mormon religious culture often conflicted with American sensibilities of separation of church and state, practices such as polygamy raised public disdain, and Mormon missionaries were sometimes critical of capitalist society. Nevertheless, many activities of the LDS church were not exclusively focused on non-material rewards. City building and investments in industrial development were aimed toward worldly success. European converts were

---

1. Armand L. Mauss, "Assimilation and Ambivalence: The Mormon Reaction to Americanization," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22 (Spring 1989): 30-67.

2. Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

encouraged to migrate in order to help establish the Kingdom of God. This kingdom incorporated economic production with religious culture and ecclesiastical leadership.<sup>3</sup> This early emphasis on economic achievement paved the way later for more complete acceptance of American economic institutions.

Twentieth-century Mormonism has often opted for accommodation to capitalist economic systems. In contemporary Mormonism economic achievement is valued. Successful Mormon achievers are honored by the culture, and many high church leaders are drawn from the ranks of successful businessmen and lawyers. The church has a reputation for having more assets per capita than any other religious group of comparable size,<sup>4</sup> and economic self-reliance is taught as a quasi-religious principle. Recent evidence indicates that Mormons have above average educational attainment and that higher education is positively associated with church participation.<sup>5</sup> In short, economic achievement is condoned by and continues to be an important avenue to high status in Mormon society.

Mormon women's economic roles, however, have received little scholarly attention. Besides playing a key role in an economy that depended heavily on household production, early Mormon women were sometimes solely responsible for providing for their children because of widowhood or divorce, separation from a polygamous husband, or absence of a husband engaged in a church calling.<sup>6</sup> Collectively, women were also called on to produce silk, save grain, produce goods that were not available in the local economy, and constrain their consumption patterns.<sup>7</sup>

In the twentieth century, statements by church leaders have increasingly emphasized the importance of the family.<sup>8</sup> The church ideal for women emphasizes homemaking and discourages employment outside the home. As homemakers, women are taught that their roles as wife and mother are paramount and that gainful employment is inappropriate if it conflicts with these family responsibilities.<sup>9</sup> This emphasis on gender-

3. Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958).

4. John Heinerman and Anson Shupe, *The Mormon Corporate Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

5. Stan L. Albrecht and Tim B. Heaton, "Secularization, Higher Education, and Religiosity," *Review of Religious Research* 26 (1984), 1:43-58.

6. Linda Thatcher, "Women Alone: The Economic and Emotional Plight of Early LDS Women," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 25 (Winter 1992): 45-57.

7. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of the Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

8. Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, *A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984).

9. Linda P. Wilcox, "Mormon Motherhood: Official Images," in Maureen Ursenbach

typed familial roles for women has emerged as an important ideological difference between Mormons and mainstream American society.

Thus conflicting definitions of appropriate gender roles pose a dilemma for Mormon women. Pressures for accommodation to national norms that increasingly emphasize female employment are not inconsistent with Mormonism's acceptance of socioeconomic achievement as a legitimate goal. On the other hand, pressures for preservation of a distinctive life-style come from church leaders' reinforcement of values favoring the pre-eminence of familial roles for LDS women.

To understand how Mormon women are resolving these competing forces, this essay examines relationships among familial, socioeconomic, and religious roles. If employment rates and family patterns of LDS women are similar to national averages then we would conclude that they have accommodated. On the other hand, higher rates of marriage and larger family sizes along with lower employment rates would indicate that LDS women are guided by a different set of values. In addition, the emphasis placed on familial roles in the LDS culture may create greater perceived incompatibility between familial and socioeconomic roles. This would lead to a stronger negative correlation between family variables such as marriage and children and socioeconomic variables such as education and employment among Mormons. Finally, to the degree that Mormonism effectively promotes a familialistic role model for women, we would expect positive correlations between attachment to Mormonism (as measured by frequency of church attendance and family variables) and negative correlations between frequency of church attendance and socioeconomic variables.

#### DATA

In order to obtain a large enough sample of Mormons to justify statistical analysis, it was necessary to combine three national surveys conducted in the 1980s. Two cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth<sup>10</sup> and the National Survey of Families and Households<sup>11</sup> were merged. Women under age 18 are excluded from the analysis because most

---

Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., *Sisters in Spirit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 208-26.

10. *National Survey of Family Growth* (Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Center for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, 1982-88).

11. *National Survey of Families and Households*, James Sweet and Larry Bumpass, principal investigators (Madison, WI: Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987).

have not completed school and many have not started thinking seriously about marriage and childbearing. Each of these surveys included information about employment status, education, marital status, desired family size, frequency of church attendance, and religious affiliation. These characteristics will be used to explore relationships among socioeconomic status, family traits, and religious involvement, comparing Mormons with other Americans.

### RESULTS

Overall, Mormon women are about as likely to be gainfully employed (54.5 percent) as are women nationally (56.1 percent), but Mormons are slightly more likely to work part time (19.3 percent compared to 15.8 percent nationally). The pattern is different, however, for married and unmarried women (see Fig. 1). Nationally, there is little difference in employment rates of married and unmarried women except that part-time work is more likely among married women. For Mormons, in contrast, married women have lower overall employment rates than the national average while single women have higher rates than is the case nationally. Perhaps single Mormon women are responding to the church's emphasis on self-reliance and married women are responding to the church's emphasis on familial roles. More employment among singles and less employment among married women creates an overall rate very similar to the national average. Thus, similarity in employment rates between Mormons and non-Mormons cannot be interpreted to mean Mormons have ignored the church's teachings on employment and family roles.

The second figure shows a positive relationship between education and employment. The relationship is stronger for non-Mormons than for Mormons, however. Full-time work, in particular, rises with higher educational achievement. For example, Mormon women with a college degree are more than twice as likely to work full time as are those who did not complete high school.

The relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and desired family size is demonstrated in Figures 3 and 4. Desired family size is used because younger women have not yet finished childbearing and their current family size does not accurately reflect their orientation toward having children. Regardless of employment status or education, Mormon women want substantially larger families than is the case nationally. Some contradiction is evident, however, in patterns of association. Full-time employment is associated with smaller desired family size among Mormons but has little association with desired family size in the national sample. On the other hand, higher education is associated with smaller desired family size in the national sample but not among Mormons.

**Figure 1**  
**PERCENT EMPLOYED BY MARITAL STATUS**

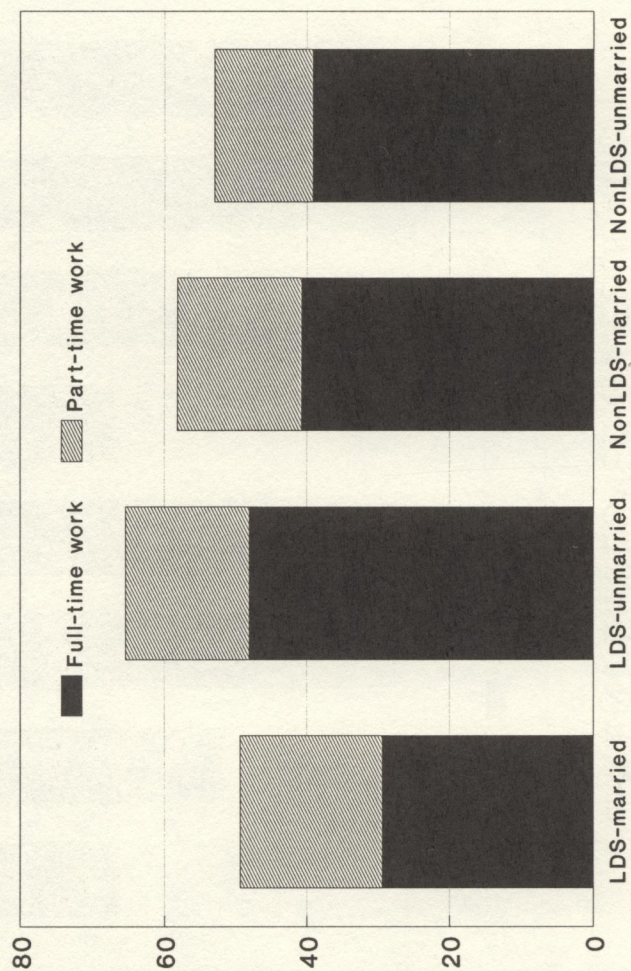




Figure 2  
PERCENT EMPLOYED BY EDUCATION

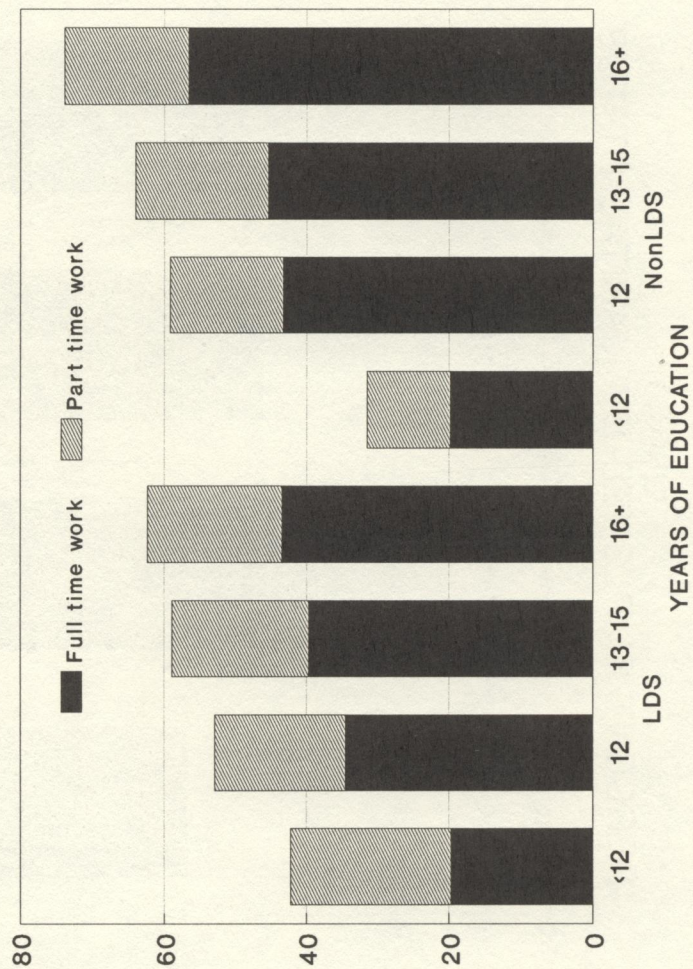




Figure 3  
CHILDREN DESIRED BY EMPLOYMENT

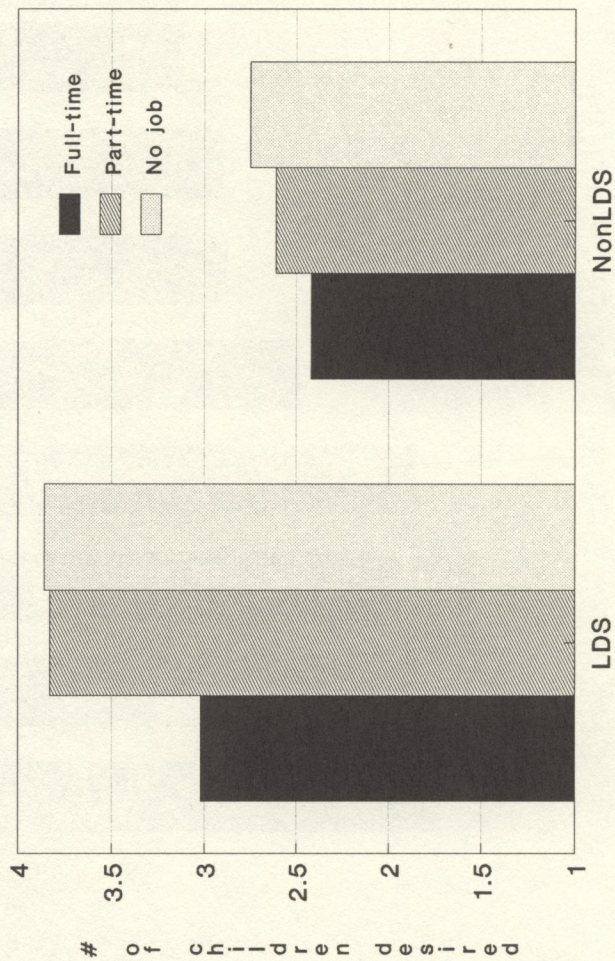
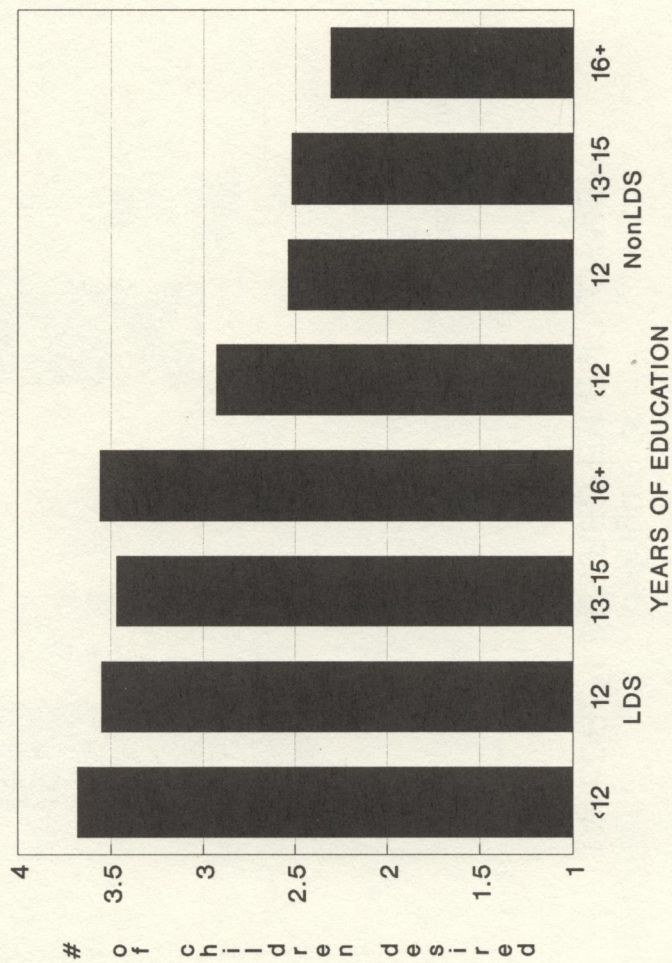


Figure 4  
CHILDREN DESIRED BY EDUCATION



Apparently, the meaning of employment and education is different in Mormonism. Results suggest that some Mormon women perceive incompatibility between full-time employment and raising a family, but the incompatibility does not extend to part-time employment or educational achievement.

Patterns of church attendance associated with socioeconomic behavior are similar to those for family variables (see Figs. 5 and 6). Although Mormon women are more likely than others to attend church regularly regardless of employment status, full-time employment does appear to deter church attendance among Mormon women. On the other hand, education has a healthy positive relationship with church attendance for Mormon women but not for other women in the sample.

Figure 7 demonstrates that the relationship between marital status and church attendance is greater for Mormons than for non-Mormons.

A summary of relationships is presented in Table 1. Mormon women who work full time are more educated, less likely to be married, want fewer children, and attend church less frequently than other Mormon women. Thus it appears that full-time employment conflicts with LDS values regarding family and church involvement. The same cannot be said of part-time workers, however. Part-time workers are similar to other women in terms of education, marital status, desired family size, and church attendance. Part-time work appears to provide a solution to competing economic and familial demands.

In contrast with full-time employment, higher educational attainment is positively associated with family variables and church attendance among Mormons. Educated Mormon women attend church more frequently and are somewhat more likely to be married than those with less education. Not surprisingly, being married, wanting more children, and frequent church attendance are positively correlated for LDS women.

Correlations for the non-LDS women show some interesting differences. First, full-time work has a higher correlation with education but a lower correlation with marital status, children desired, and church attendance for non-Mormon women. This suggests that full-time employment does not necessarily conflict with family roles and church participation in the national population. Rather the conflict appears to be a Mormon phenomenon. Second, higher education has a stronger negative correlation with desired family size but a weaker positive correlation with church attendance among non-Mormon women. Education, it appears, is more consistent with marriage, childbearing, and church activity for Mormons than is the case nationally. Third, the links among marriage, childbearing, and church involvement are not as strong for non-Mormons as for Mormons.

As the final step in the analysis, we examine the implications of family



**Figure 5**  
**WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE BY EMPLOYMENT**

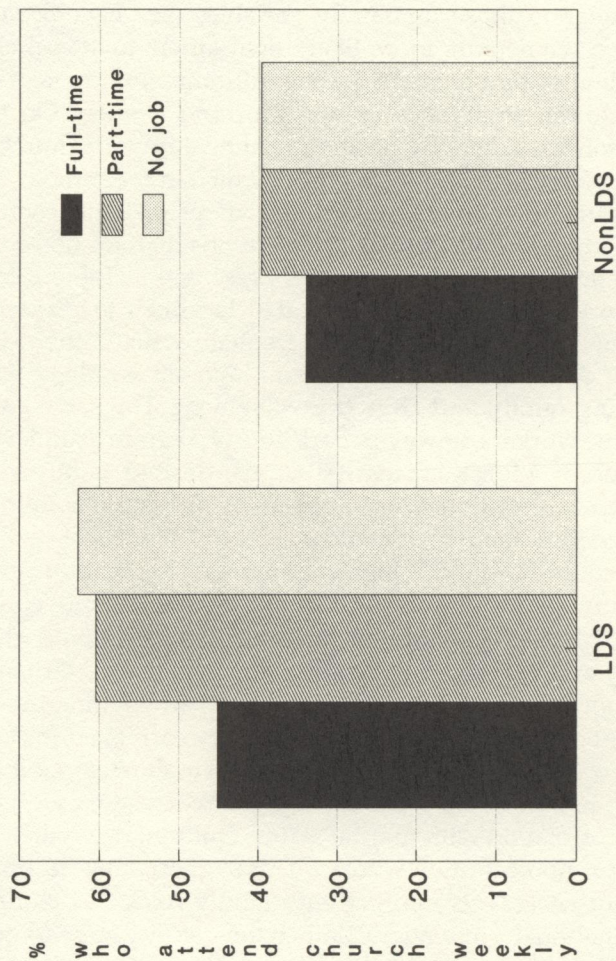


Figure 6  
WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE BY EDUCATION

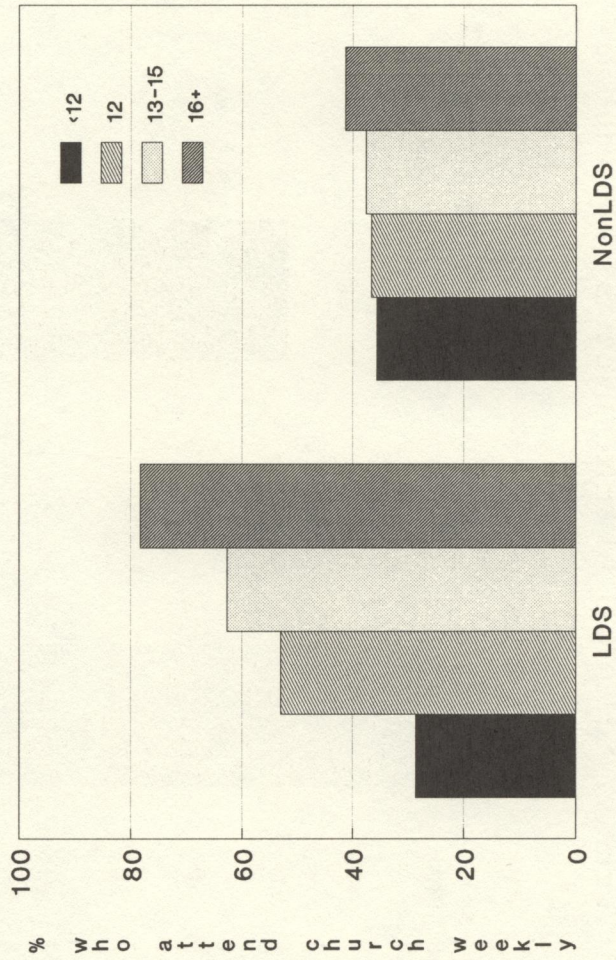
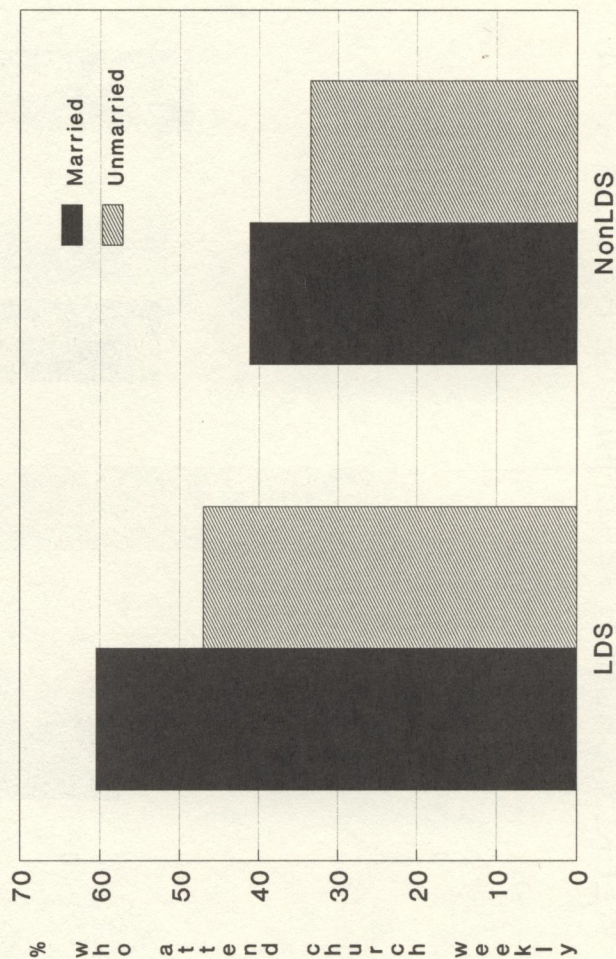




Figure 7  
WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE BY MARRIAGE



	Work Full-time	Work Part-time	Education	Married	Children desired	Church attendance
Work Full-time	1.000	-.360**	.106*	-.181**	-.205**	-.164**
Work Part-time	-.354**	1.000	-.001	.032	.070	.016
Education	.224**	.069**	1.000	.083	-.031	.259**
Married	.017**	.049**	.126**	1.000	.159**	.133**
Children desired	-.092**	.005	-.147**	.053**	1.000	.215**
Church attendance	-.034**	.018**	.025**	.059**	.089**	1.000
** p<.01						
* p<.05						

*Table 1. Correlations among Family Traits, Socioeconomic Status, and Religious Attendance (Mormons above the Diagonal, Others below).*

and socioeconomic traits for church participation. A multiple-regression model was estimated with church attendance as the dependent variable and each other variable in Table 1 as predictors. Beta coefficients from multiple regression show the relative association among variables when other factors are held constant. Beta values near zero indicate no relationship, while values near 1.0 indicate a near perfect relationship. Among Mormons, education is the best predictor and has a positive relationship with attendance (beta = .263). Desired children also has a moderate positive association (beta = .188), and full-time employment has about the same influence in the negative direction (beta = -.173). These three factors account for 13 percent of the variation in church attendance.

Among non-LDS respondents, family and socioeconomic traits have little influence on church attendance. Larger desired family size (beta = .087), being married (beta = .046), and education (beta = .047) each has a small positive association with attendance, while full-time workers are slightly less likely to attend church (beta = -.030). Collectively these factors

only explain 1.2 percent of the variation in non-LDS church attendance. In short, the connections among religious involvement, family status, and socioeconomic attainment appear to be substantially weaker in the national population than is the case for Mormons.

### CONCLUSIONS

Our results show that Mormon women differ from non-LDS women in three respects. First, their life-style appears to be more oriented toward family and church as indicated by higher rates of marriage, larger desired family size, and more frequent church attendance. These differences suggest that Mormons have not completely accommodated to national norms. Employment rates, however, are similar for LDS and non-LDS women, and LDS women have higher educational attainment. These similarities suggest that significant adaptation has occurred.

Second, full-time work appears to conflict with marriage, having a family, and church participation to a greater degree for Mormons. These data do not tell us why. Perhaps the larger than average family size and the expectation of serving in church callings are difficult to achieve when so much time is already committed to a job. Nevertheless, Mormon women who work full time still want larger families and attend church more often than do non-Mormon women—even more than non-Mormon women who are not employed. Women who work full time may be more influenced by social norms outside of Mormonism including those regarding appropriate church activity and family planning. Finally, official or informal actions by Mormons toward employed women may have lead to alienation and withdrawal from the LDS community. It is also important to note the relationships observed are not exceptionally strong, indicating substantial similarity among non-employed, full-time, and part-time workers.

The third difference is that higher educational attainment is more compatible with having a larger family and regular church attendance among Mormons. The LDS church has encouraged education as a worthy goal. It also relies heavily on lay staffing of positions that are often more readily filled outside Mormonism by those with educational credentials. Thus, education may be a source of status in the Mormon community. Finally, those having the motivation to go farther in school may feel comfortable with the achievement orientation embedded in Mormon culture.

These differences between LDS women and women in the nation create a source of potential conflict. Higher education is more consistent with Mormon values regarding church and family than is full-time employment. Yet educational attainment and full-time employment are positively related. As the women's movement and national economic trends sustain



continued career achievement and educational attainment for women, this conflict is likely to grow more intense.

Part-time employment appears to be one means of resolving conflict between socioeconomic attainment and family. Part-time employees are similar to non-employed women in terms of family and religious characteristics. Perhaps the lower commitment of part-time work allows women the flexibility to maintain family commitment and church involvement. Unfortunately, part-time jobs have many disadvantages such as lower wages, fewer benefits, and less opportunities for advancement. These disadvantages may limit the viability of part-time work as a long-term solution.

At first glance, an ideal solution for the church would be for women to pursue educational goals but to avoid full-time work. The positive correlation between educational attainment and full-time work suggests that this alternative would not fit everyone. Patterns of family violence raise an even more serious concern with this solution. A study of Utah families<sup>12</sup> found that the women most likely to physically abuse their children have a college degree but do not work full time. The juxtaposition of high educational achievement and limited roles outside the home may create serious frustrations.

If one were forced to choose between emphasizing education or deemphasizing full-time work, and the goal were to encourage church involvement, then one should focus on education. This is because the positive correlation for education and attendance is larger than the negative correlation for full-time employment and attendance. Yet the consequence of higher educational attainment would most likely be a modest increase in the percentage of full-time employed women.

Because a major emphasis and concern expressed by LDS leaders is on the quality of family life, solutions should have this goal in mind. National research suggests that the effect of women's employment status on family and marital quality depends a great deal on context.<sup>13</sup> Supportive attitudes by husbands and children and workable child care are particularly important. More generally, it appears that family life can be enhanced by finding ways to make employment more compatible with family life for men as well as for women. Trends in the economy and the family indicate that this will be an increasingly important challenge for Mormons in the years to come.

---

12. Boyd C. Rollins and Yaw Oheneba-Sakyi, "Physical Violence in Utah Households," *Journal of Family Violence* 5 (1990), 4:301-309.

13. Phyllis Moen, *Women's Two Roles: A Contemporary Dilemma* (New York: Auburn House, 1992).

# Going Dark

*Anita Tanner*

To escape from pursuers  
I flee to the car,  
gun the gas down the highway.  
They're on my tail.  
I flick the car light off,  
go dark until the fear  
of barrowpits and traffic  
overtakes me.

I flick the lights again  
to find my way,  
passing through the darkness.

Red tail lights finally appear  
for me to follow  
and fear of this midnight eases  
but not fast enough  
to elude the blackness.

I must pass, veer in the darkness  
and this time, stay dark,  
what's ahead or peripheral  
the lesser fear, what's behind  
in the shadow's shadow  
I must face, swallowing the pain,  
going dark,  
staying dark,  
until the darkness  
finally rescues me.

# Toward a Feminist Interpretation of Latter-day Scripture

*Lynn Matthews Anderson*

DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS I have read the Book of Mormon more than a hundred times both while working on *The Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon* and later.<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, I am astonished that it took so many readings and a focus on the question of using gender-inclusive language in the simplified version to discover something that should have been obvious to me from the beginning: females scarcely figure or matter in our sacred books. While this is true for the Bible, it is even more true for the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.

Writing of the effects of women's invisibility in Torah, noted Jewish feminist theologian Judith Plaskow observed, "The silence of women reverberates through the tradition, distorting the shape of narrative and skewing the content of the law."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Latter-day Saints' ignorance of and indifference to the content of our own scriptures *vis-à-vis* women distorts our own sacred narratives, skews the content and language of our doctrine, and short-circuits the revelatory process by promoting the erroneous belief that all answers to contemporary questions about women's place and role in Christ's church can be found in the standard works.

This essay briefly outlines the extent of the dearth of women and the feminine in LDS scripture, delineates some of the theological implications of women's absence in scripture, and then briefly discusses the possibilities

---

1. *The Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon* is a verse-by-verse paraphrase of the Book of Mormon written on a fifth-grade reading level. It is intended as a help for persons with limited reading ability and will shortly be available through Seagull Book & Tape. For more information, see my "Delighting in Plainness: Issues Surrounding a Simple Modern English Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 16 (Mar. 1992): 20-29. I have not received and will not receive any money for this work.

2. Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1990), 9ff.

for recovering women's stories as well as for developing a framework for a feminist interpretation of sacred writ.

#### WOMEN IN LATTER-DAY SCRIPTURE: IMPOVERISHED INHERITANCE

Judith Plaskow argues for the need to document and acknowledge the full extent of women's invisibility and marginality in Jewish scripture because, in her words, "if we refuse to recognize the painful truth about the extent of women's invisibility, we can never move forward."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps it has been too painful for Latter-day Saints to acknowledge the way women are overlooked or portrayed in our scriptures. Although the paucity of references to women has been acknowledged from time to time,<sup>4</sup> there has been no serious exploration of the implications of women's absence. I recently completed a lengthy study of women's treatment in latter-day scripture, and the reality of women's invisibility and marginality in Mormonism's sacred texts is not pleasant to contemplate.

Compared to the Bible, which mentions nearly 200 women by name, references to women in latter-day scripture are sparse. Out of the three latter-day books of scripture, only fourteen women are named: six in the Book of Mormon—three biblical figures (Eve, Sarah, and Mary), along with Sariah, Abish, and the harlot Isabel; five in the Doctrine and Covenants—Emma Smith, Vienna Jacques, Sarah, Hagar, and Eve. Surprisingly, the Pearl of Great Price contains the greatest number of named women (ten).<sup>5</sup> Whereas the Bible directly quotes scores of women (both named and unnamed), only three individual Book of Mormon women are quoted (Sariah, Lamoni's consort, and wicked King Jared's daughter), along with one group of women (the daughters of Ishmael). No women's words are recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants; and in the Pearl of Great Price only Eve is quoted.<sup>6</sup>

Although there are a handful of latter-day scriptures to which Mormon

---

3. Ibid., 8-9.

4. A candid summary of female characters and stories in the Book of Mormon appeared in the September 1977 *Ensign*, under the title "My Book of Mormon Sisters," by Marjorie Meads Spencer. Spencer acknowledged that "women characters seemed to be so few and far between among the overwhelming numbers of men that it was easy to conclude that women had been slighted," and that "outwardly, the Book of Mormon fails to create a strong impression of women" (66). But while Spencer notes most of the explicitly inclusive doctrinal passages, she does not address issues of exclusive language, assumed audience, and women's limited accountability in a patriarchal society.

5. Some women, such as Eve, Sarah, and Emma Smith, are mentioned in more than one book of scripture.

6. The female personification of the earth (the "mother of men") is also quoted (Moses 7:48).

feminists can point as markers of the right relation of women and men to one another and to God (e.g., 2 Ne. 26:33; Mosiah 5:7, 27:25; Ether 3:14), such can scarcely lessen the shock of such female-denigrating phrases as “the whore of all the earth” (1 Ne. 14:10, 11; D&C 29:21, cf. D&C 86:3), “the mother of abominations” (1 Ne. 14:9, 10, 13, 16; D&C 88:94, cf. D&C 88:05), and “the mother of harlots” (1 Ne. 13:34, 14:16) as metaphors for human (usually male) sinfulness. Nor can such entirely mitigate the overall impression of our scriptures’ negative portrayal of women, particularly in “the keystone of our religion”—the Book of Mormon. Women are frequently portrayed there as mere chattel—lumped together with flocks, herds, and other possessions (Mosiah 22:2, 8; Alma 2:25, 3:2, 7:27, 58:12; 3 Ne. 3:13; see also Mosiah 2:5, 11:12). Book of Mormon women are commodities to be used as gifts or bribes (Alma 17:24, Ether 8:10-12); their sexuality is used to protect men (Mosiah 19:13-14); they become the wives of their kidnappers (20:3-5, 23:33). Nephite women are not only taken prisoner (Alma 58:30-31, 60:17), they are evidently helpless to prevent their own starvation (53:7). Women’s minds as well as their feelings are “delicate” (Jacob 2:7, 9), and their emotionality is a threat to the survival of the community (Mosiah 21:9-12). Even individual women notable enough to receive positive mention are nevertheless also portrayed in negative ways: emotionally weak (Abish, in Alma 19:28); incapable of coherent communication (Lamoni’s queen, in v. 30); complaining and faithless (Sariah, in 1 Ne. 5:1-3).

There are scarcely any accounts of women acting in anything other than tightly-defined or constrained circumstances, with the possible exceptions of Morianton’s maidservant, who nonetheless responds as a victim of male brutality (Alma 50:30-31), and evil King Jared’s prodigiously evil Jaredite daughter (Ether 8:7-12, 17)—who, incidentally, seems to be the only literate woman in the Book of Mormon. What is more important, however, is that women’s infrequent appearances in latter-day sacred narrative serve only to facilitate the telling of male stories. To paraphrase Judith Plaskow, women in these male texts are not subjects or molders of their own experiences but objects of male purposes, designs, and desires. They may be vividly characterized, but their presence does not negate their silence. If they are central to plot, the plots are not about them.<sup>7</sup> Even the account of Lamoni’s unnamed queen (Mosiah 18:43-19:30)—arguably the most powerful story involving a Book of Mormon woman—is a supporting, secondary scene in the much larger story of the sons of Mosiah’s proselyting success among the Lamanites (Alma 17-26).

Of particular significance, however, is the fact that women are not

---

7. Plaskow, 2-3.

intended as the audience for God's word in either ancient or modern times. To illustrate, women are peripherally addressed (in other words, are acknowledged as being present) in only three out of two dozen or so major discourses or doctrinal expositions in the Book of Mormon, all of which are clearly addressed to men and often provably only to men. (Even the resurrected Jesus directs his words to men in the mixed-gender multitude, as in "Pray in your families, that your wives and your children may be blessed" [3 Ne. 18:21].) Without exception, every word intended for readers in modern times who "shall receive these things" (Moro. 10:3-5) is directed only to men: the writers, redactors, and even the translator of the Book of Mormon assumed a solely male audience for its salvific message.<sup>8</sup>

One might expect to find things more even-handed in our most modern book of scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants. Yet disappointingly, it is the worst of our scriptures where women are concerned. There are no women's voices or stories therein, and fewer than 4 percent of its verses pertain explicitly to women or use "female" language (in other words, use specifically female nouns or pronouns). Of this 4 percent, only one-third directly or indirectly addresses women or contains doctrine or counsel specifically applicable to women. The other two-thirds is made up of references to women as objects or as metaphorical images, the most prominent of which is the female personification of Zion, which accounts for 28 percent of all female language in the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>9</sup> With the exception of section 25, in which God directly speaks to Emma Smith through Joseph, only one portion of one other revelation (section 128, a canonized letter from Joseph Smith) directly addresses women.<sup>10</sup>

---

8. Lynn Matthews Anderson, "The Book of Mormon as a Feminist Resource, Part One: Dispelling the Illusion of Inclusion," 9-11, Aug. 1993, privately circulated.

9. An interesting verse to consider in light of the female personification of Zion, particularly when juxtaposed with the current policy proscribing women's ordination, is in section 113 and is in response to the question of what is meant by "put on thy strength, O Zion" (Isa. 52:1, cited in v. 7). The answer (v. 8): "He [Isaiah] had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel; and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power which she had lost."

10. Yet after the initial welcome burst of inclusivity—"And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters" (v. 15)—Joseph writes only to men, as in verse 22: "Brethren, shall we not go forward in so great a cause?" and verse 25: "Brethren, I have many things to say to you on the subject." Portions of sections 90 and 132 indirectly address specific individual women—in other words, God speaks directly to Joseph Smith about specific women, as in "it is my will that my handmaid Vienna Jacques should receive money" (90:28) and "if she [Emma Smith] will not abide this commandment, she shall be

But skewed statistics are hardly the only source of concern relative to women and the Doctrine and Covenants. Androcentric language and masculine focus in virtually all the revelations create barriers to understanding women's place in our doctrine and theology. For example, although women are mentioned as "begotten . . . daughters unto God" on the myriad created worlds (76:24), what does it mean that the vision of the celestial kingdom and criteria for entrance (76:50-70) are described in solely male terms? Those inheriting celestial glory are called "priests and kings" (v. 56), "priests . . . after the order of Melchizedek" (v. 57), and "gods, even the sons of God" (v. 58). If women are to share in "all things . . . present or things to come" (v. 59), or to "dwell in the presence of God . . . forever" (v. 62), and if our "bodies [will be] celestial," and our "glory [will be] that of the sun" (v. 70), no mention is made of these facts. In revelation after revelation women are completely unaccounted for—in the premortal existence, in this life, in the hereafter.

Another example of women's exclusion from larger theological considerations is in Doctrine and Covenants 84. In what ways can this section be applied to women? What can a woman infer about herself and her standing before God when she reads verses 33-38?:

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord; for he that receiveth my servants receiveth me; And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; and he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

Will women's bodies be sanctified unto renewal? Can women become daughters of Moses and Aaron, are women counted as Abraham's seed? (And what of Sarah and the other prophets' wives? Who are their children?) Are women part of "the church and kingdom, and the elect of God"? If women receive the Lord's servants by accepting the gospel and by being baptized and confirmed as members of Christ's church, are they eligible to receive all that the Father has, including priesthood? (Or will women receive what the Mother has, and if that is the case, what does the Mother have?) Might the "wo" pronounced on "all those who come not unto this priesthood" (v. 42) include the sisters of the church? (And if the temple

---

destroyed" (132:54). A handful of other verses deal with women in relation to church law (most of which are found in section 42).

endowment serves to induct women into the priesthood, as some have suggested,<sup>11</sup> why aren't Mormon women aware of this "induction"?)

Even in the handful of scriptures which focus on women's concerns, women are portrayed as passive objects—as victims or beneficiaries, never as subjects or principals. One of the most under-analyzed passages from a feminist point of view, in my opinion, is section 123. Historically, it pertains to keeping a record of persecution the Saints suffered while in Missouri, but verses 7-17 describe in strong terms the effects of the "creeds of the fathers" (v. 7) that have caused so much iniquity and suffering throughout the world, and enjoin recipients of this revelation to "wear out their lives" to do all they can in "bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness" (v. 13). On close scrutiny, this seems to be a superlative condemnation of patriarchy, yet the language Joseph Smith uses in urging the overthrow of "the very mainspring of corruption" (v. 7) actually reinforces that mainspring. Even recognizing the greater social and legal constraints on women at the time this section was written, what does it mean for women today that we are not urged along with our brethren to participate in this "imperative duty"?

Most sobering is to ponder the implications of Official Declaration 2, received and canonized in 1978: it is addressed only to general and local priesthood officers, beginning with the salutation "Dear Brethren." This letter's content is also male-oriented; while it mentions that from that point on, every worthy male can be ordained to the priesthood, "and enjoy with his loved ones . . . the blessings of the temple" (presumably some of the "loved ones" are female), women are not part of this momentous event—neither as audience nor subject, even though this announcement also paved the way for all worthy adult women of all races to attend the temple. Thus even toward the end of the twentieth century, one must ask: Why are women, who make up the majority of the adult membership of the church, still situated at the nether end of "revelatory channels"?

#### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXCLUSION

Some people, on being told of the dearth of things female in our scriptures, respond with indifference or a defensive "so what?"—the latter generally accompanied by the protestation that, regardless of the language, regardless of the erroneous assumption of audience, "obviously" women are *now* included and "of course" scriptures apply to women *today*. But previously there has been little detailed textual examination relative to

---

11. See D. Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 365-409.



women and the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, which makes the topic of women in latter-day scripture vulnerable to misinterpretation and manipulation. In a religion that adheres to a literalistic concept of dispensationalism—that is, that God has repeatedly revealed a set body of saving knowledge to human beings through prophets—it is only natural as individuals and as an institution to approach both biblical and latter-day scripture with the expectation of finding certain themes therein. Thus all too often what we glean from the scriptures is more a reflection of the assumptions we bring with us than what the texts themselves actually say. When we ignore the facts of women's historical exclusion in all walks of life—religious, economic, or political—we easily fall into the trap of projecting women's current status onto the reality of the past.<sup>12</sup>

Our own experience of greater inclusivity for women induces us to expect that women were included in the past—if not explicitly, then at least implicitly. This tends to give rise to the phenomenon of approaching our scriptures with “cultural overlay”—of making the unfamiliar familiar by projecting ourselves and our conditions onto disparate peoples, cultures, and circumstances. When scriptures abounding in masculine language are included in Relief Society manuals, for example, it seems obvious to us that those scriptures were meant to be universal in application. A refreshing, recent development has been hearing at least some general authorities modify the androcentric scriptures they quote in general conference to explicitly include women. Such efforts at inclusivity, however, can lead listeners to erroneously conclude that women are as integral to the ecclesiastical and theological scene as men, and always have been.

Mormon art has also gone a long way in popularizing the idea that gospel principles in all dispensations have been as essentially “egalitarian” as they are viewed today, and that the church, albeit restricting the role of women in formal ministry by precluding ordination to priesthood, is nonetheless a church with a membership composed of women as well as men, and always has been. For example, Arnold Friberg's famous depiction of Alma baptizing his people in the waters of Mormon (Mosiah 18:8-17)—an illustration included in missionary editions of the Book of Mormon for decades—shows women and men being baptized. But the account of the

---

12. A case in point is when President Gordon B. Hinckley pointed to the Declaration of Independence as proof that the word “men” included women (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Daughters of God,” *Ensign* 21 (Nov. 1991) [address delivered at the 1991 Women's Conference]: 98-100). In a note appended to the printed version of his talk, President Hinckley acknowledges that the Declaration of Independence was written at a time when women were disenfranchised; however, he insists that “subsequent generations have regarded *men* in a generic sense. I might have used various other examples on which there could be no question.”

event does not mention women at all (while explicitly mentioning men), and later references to the event in both Mosiah 25:18 and Alma 5:3 state specifically that Alma baptized “his brethren.”

While I am not arguing that women were not baptized, I am saying that there is nothing in either the Book of Mormon or the Pearl of Great Price to indicate that women were baptized or were even thought to need baptism; there is no clear evidence in these two sacred books that women received the Holy Ghost, partook of the sacrament, engaged in “Christian” service, or participated in any aspects of what we today consider the normal life of the church. In all, there is an abundance of textual evidence to support the conclusion that women’s accountability was limited, and thus they were not fully part of the early “church of Christ” among the Nephites. Moreover, in the Pearl of Great Price only Adam is instructed about salvation and is baptized (Moses 6:55-68)—and this particular pattern is given so that “thus may all become [God’s] *sons*” (v. 68, emphasis added). One wonders where God’s daughters are in all this.

So long as Latter-day Saints continue to believe that women are included in our sacred stories when they are not, we not only perpetuate the myth that each dispensation of the gospel was in most ways identical to our own, but we perpetuate the larger myth that all the answers to contemporary questions pertaining to women can be found in our scriptures. This fundamental flaw in the basis for traditional and contemporary interpretation of LDS scripture prevents us from seeking new revelation and answers to old problems.

A feminist re-reading and reinterpretation of latter-day texts should startle, discomfort, and inspire Latter-day Saints—especially our leaders—to ask questions both about the role of women in the church “back then” and especially about their role now. The importance of this issue cannot be overemphasized: If our theology and doctrine are based on texts exclusive of women in the past, how can we find answers there to questions which concern or include women today? The facts of women’s exclusion in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants carry with them important implications, not the least of which is the idea that a theology based on exclusion must be recast when those who were once excluded become included.

The evidence of women’s theological irrelevancy in scripture attests to the need for analyzing our reasons for now including them as well as for reexamining the rationale for that inclusion. If we now recognize that women were excluded previously because of past cultural biases, how can we know, short of revelation, that we are not also acting today on the basis of our own biases in continuing to exclude women from certain aspects of church membership? Although answers to certain questions, such as the

need for women to be baptized, are explicit in the Doctrine and Covenants (20:72-74), the Doctrine and Covenants does not give explicit answers to the proper relationship of women to priesthood authority and church governance, nor to what is becoming an even more urgent issue: the proper worship of God the Mother as well as God the Father.<sup>13</sup> Specific knowledge about these "new" issues cannot be found in our scriptures: the questions themselves, in the context of the times and cultures of origin (including the nineteenth century), were not comprehended, much less formulated. Indeed, such issues have only begun to be understood in our own day, and the vast majority of questions defining these issues have yet to be officially acknowledged, much less thoughtfully explored.

In sum, that there is so little pertaining to women in our scriptures indicates not that what little we have is somehow sufficient on which to base policy and practice, but that there needs to be more. Given the apparent attitude among some current LDS leaders that "if God wants things to be different, he will let us know," it seems likely that we will continue to trade our birthright of revelation for a pottage of culturally-contaminated tradition.<sup>14</sup> Until such new revelation is sought for, however, I believe it is the task of Mormon feminism to recover and reconstruct

---

13. In two separate instances in 1991 President Gordon B. Hinckley counseled first with regional representatives and then with women of the church about not praying to Mother in Heaven. President Hinckley cited several examples of Jesus praying to the Father, including the Lord's Prayer, and then said, "But, search as I have, I find nowhere in the Standard Works an account where Jesus prayed other than to His Father in Heaven or where He instructed the people to pray other than to His Father in Heaven. . . . The fact that we do not pray to our Mother in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her. None of us knows anything about her" ("Report of the 1991 Women's Broadcast," *Ensign* 21 [Nov. 1991].) The appeal to "argument from silence" rather than stating that the counsel represents God's will on the subject has troubled a number of Latter-day Saints (see, for example, the letters to the editor section in several issues of *Mormon Women's Forum* following publication of President Hinckley's statement in the *Ensign*). Interestingly, President Hinckley referred to Jesus' instruction in 3 Nephi 18:21 that his hearers should "pray . . . unto the Father . . . that your wives and your children may be blessed," apparently without noting the gender referent that excludes women and children from this counsel.

14. For example, while President Hinckley admitted to the possibility of change with regard to women and priesthood at the 1985 Women's Conference, his remarks seemed to indicate a desire for God to take the initiative, thereby marking a departure from what Mormons are taught is the pattern of revelation—that God bestows greater light and knowledge on those who pray, study, ponder, and ask (Lynn Matthews Anderson, "The Mormon Church and the Second Sex," 10, Oct. 1992, privately circulated; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, "Ten Gifts from the Lord," *Ensign* 15 [Nov. 1985]: 86: "[A] few Latter-day Saint women are asking why they are not entitled to hold the priesthood. To that I can say that only the Lord, through revelation, could alter that situation. He has not done so, so it is profitless for us to speculate and worry about it").

women's stories wherever possible, as well as to develop and promulgate new ways of evaluating and interpreting the scriptures.

#### RECOVERING WOMEN'S STORIES

Over the past two decades Jewish and Christian feminist theologians have made significant contributions to textual reconstructions to recover women's untold stories in sacred writ.<sup>15</sup> Textual reconstruction involves exegetical study—a critical examination of the original texts on which a given translation is based—as well as the incorporation of secular data to create a context for interpretative analysis. While Mormon feminists find their task more formidable because of the dearth of textual references to women and at least where the Book of Mormon is concerned the absence of original text material and corroborating historiographical and archaeological evidence, it is nevertheless possible to use correlative material from Old Testament studies to expand our understanding of women's position in portions of the Pearl of Great Price and the Book of Mormon—particularly if we treat the latter as a society shaped by the Law of Moses.<sup>16</sup> Let me give a brief example of this kind of reconstruction by focusing on Nephi's forgotten sisters, who are not even mentioned in today's seminary Book of Mormon study guide.

Nephi does not mention any sisters leaving Jerusalem with Lehi (1 Ne. 2:5). When Lehi "cast[s] his eyes about" in his dream of the Tree of Life, he mentions that Sariah and Nephi and Sam eat the fruit, but that Laman and Lemuel do not (8:13-18); he does not mention his daughters. (Nor does Lehi mention seeing his as-yet-unborn sons Jacob and Joseph eat the fruit; perhaps his daughters were born after he left Jerusalem? If so, no mention is made of their birth, although his later sons' births are spoken of in 1 Nephi 18:7.)

If we are dealing with older daughters, why are neither Sariah nor Lehi concerned about finding husbands for them? Even though in Israel marriage and childbirth was the key to women's redemption and social

---

15. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's work in New Testament studies has been particularly important in illuminating and analyzing secular sources about women's situations in the first and second centuries and what these might mean in understanding women's lot in the early Christian church.

16. I am aware of the controversy regarding Book of Mormon historicity. However, I believe it is important to approach all LDS scripture by accepting at face value the institutionally-accepted views of their historicity. The impact of these books on the lives of the majority of Latter-day Saints rests on a particular set of assumptions about their theology and history. While I believe it is possible to develop a method for reinterpretation which does not necessitate undermining that set of assumptions, obviously this is an issue which requires more exploration and discussion.

status,<sup>17</sup> God explicitly sends Lehi's sons back to Jerusalem to procure wives from among Ishmael's daughters (1 Ne. 7:1). A possibility is that the sons of Ishmael are already married to Lehi's daughters: 1 Nephi 7:6 mentions "the two sons of Ishmael and their families." Being married to the sons of Ishmael could explain why the daughters were not with Lehi's family during the initial escape into the desert: once an Israelite woman married, she legally belonged to her husband's family. The daughters' connection to Ishmael's family would also explain why Ishmael was inclined to view Lehi's cause with favor, but this same connection becomes more problematic later on.

The first and only mention of Nephi's sisters is in 2 Nephi 5:6, when Nephi takes his family, and "Zoram and his family, and Sam, mine elder brother and his family, and Jacob and Joseph, my younger brethren, and also my sisters, and all those who would go with me" into the wilderness to escape the murderous plots of Laman and Lemuel. This raises an interesting question: Have Nephi's sisters abandoned their husbands, the sons of Ishmael (who stay behind with Laman and Lemuel)—thereby giving greater cause for the Lamanites to hate the Nephites as home-wreckers? Or are there simply more of Nephi's sisters than there are sons of Ishmael, and it is only the unmarried ones who leave with Nephi?

Yet if the daughters were married to the sons of Ishmael, Lehi never acknowledges their direct connection to him; rather, he gives his conditional blessing only to "my sons who are the sons of Ishmael." This seems an odd way for a "tender parent" (1 Ne. 8:37) to overlook his own offspring, even if they are female, although it fits what seems to be a patriarchal pattern in the Old Testament of blessing only male progeny. But the plot thickens again in 2 Nephi 4:3-10 when Lehi gathers his grandsons and granddaughters—the offspring of Laman and Lemuel—and gives them all a conditional blessing. Thus if the grandfather blesses both male and female progeny in this instance, why would Lehi overlook his own daughters earlier?

Other possibilities to account for the seeming anomalous recording (or lack thereof) include such plausible but fantastic scenarios as (1) Lehi dies before Sariah knows she is pregnant with twin girls, hence he does not bless them; (2) Sariah dies in childbirth, the daughters survive, but Lehi and Nephi blame them for Sariah's death, hence it is too painful to mention them; (3) Joseph Smith mistranslated "nieces" or "maidservants" or some other word as "sisters."

While there is too little textual material from which to draw a complete

---

17. See Rachel Biale, *Women & Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), and Blu Greenberg, *Women & Judaism: A View from Tradition* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981).

portrait of womankind among the Nephites, Lamanites, and Jaredites, this example shows that it is possible to flesh out at least some of the passing references to Book of Mormon women. Just as there is more that we can infer about the harlot Isabel, other than the fact she was a success in her career (cf. Alma 39:4), there is likely more we can infer about other "inconsequential" women whose lives are probably more inspirational than Isabel's.

The few women's stories in the Pearl of Great Price also invite recovery and reconstruction. The book of Moses, for example, paints an interesting portrait of Eve and her relationship to Adam following the Fall—a portrait that varies with the sex-role stereotyping still prevalent in the modern church.<sup>18</sup> The lesser-known story of Lamech and his wives in Moses 5:47-54 (cf. Gen. 4:19-24) tells of a different kind of far-reaching consequence. Lamech, a member of one of the earliest secret combinations, tells his wives Adah and Zillah that he has secretly slain Irad, not for "the sake of getting gain, but . . . for the oath's sake" (v. 50), Irad having begun to reveal the secret oaths to "the sons of Adam" (v. 49). Lamech's wives are unimpressed, rebel against him, and reveal his secret, which apparently is why secret combinations were found "among the sons of men" (v. 53), but "among the daughters of men these things were not spoken" (v. 54). The all-male composition of secret combinations in the Book of Mormon thus reflects a long-standing tradition, one which continues to be observed in modern-day analogs (organized crime families, cartels, etc.).<sup>19</sup>

Another kind of challenge awaits LDS feminists in approaching the Doctrine and Covenants, which differs significantly from other scriptures in that it contains little narrative history but instead records God's direct words to Joseph Smith, often in response to Joseph's or other men's questions or concerns. Still, during the past twenty or so years there has been an upsurge of interest in the stories of early LDS women, some of

---

18. Although Spencer W. Kimball stated that "the male [is] to till the ground, support the family, to give proper leadership; the woman [is] to cooperate, to bear the children, and to rear and teach them" (*Ensign* 16 [Mar. 1976]: 70-72), Moses 5:1 indicates that Eve worked alongside Adam; verse 3 reports that the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve tilled the land and tended flocks. Interestingly enough, verse 5 seems to say that both Adam and Eve were commanded to make offerings to the Lord, perhaps indicating that priestly prerogatives were not yet assigned on the basis of gender. Evidently Mormon doctrine about male leadership stems from the same sources in traditional Christianity which insist on treating God's description of what life would be like in a fallen world (cf. Gen. 3:16-19, Moses 4:22-25) as God's will concerning the stereotypical dichotomizing of human gender roles.

19. Lee Flosi (former head of the FBI's Organized Crime Task Force in Chicago and former legal attaché to Rome), "Some Families Aren't Forever," Oct. 1992, notes in my possession.

whom kept diaries and journals. While one cannot extrapolate from these sources and put words into God's mouth, it is nonetheless possible to explore in greater depth the impact of these androcentric revelations in the lives of women who were admittedly only "auxiliary" thereto. For nearly every man called by revelation to serve a mission in the early days of the church, for example, there was a wife left behind to grapple with the vicissitudes of supporting a family in difficult circumstances. God's help to these women deserves to be recognized as equally essential to the growth and progress of the church as the better-publicized stories of God's help to their missionary-husbands.

Nevertheless, adding historical depth to commentary about scripture and its coming forth or implementation in people's lives—specifically, women's lives—is not the same as those stories and experiences being part of scripture itself. While I cannot help but wonder how long it will take for women's stories to merit canonization, I am more staggered at the thought that God had no words of encouragement to give through a living prophet to women whose efforts enabled their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers to undertake the proselyting work that society at the time rarely permitted women to do.

#### ESTABLISHING A MORMON FEMINIST INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

We cannot ignore the foundational texts of our religion; nor can we afford to dismiss those things in them we find unsettling or distasteful. But unless we are willing to worship a God who is sexist, partial, and misogynist, we cannot ascribe all that is found in our scriptures to deity. Rather, we need to develop an interpretive framework that permits us to distinguish between timeless truths and human influences. In short, although we as Mormons, and more particularly we as Mormon feminists, are decades behind colleagues in other faiths in recognizing the need for developing a feminist interpretive approach to scripture, we can begin to make amends by building on the work of non-LDS feminists in approaching scriptural interpretation faithfully yet critically—reevaluating texts that appear out of harmony with the life and mission of Jesus and highlighting previously overlooked, undervalued, or misunderstood texts in which God affirms the equal worth of women and men.

While I believe part of this critical reevaluation necessitates a shift in our assumptions about scriptural authority, Latter-day Saints are theoretically in a strong position to make such a shift. For one thing, our scriptures attest to the notion of human error and weakness intermingling with timeless truth: the Eighth Article of Faith says that we believe the Bible is the word of God "as far as it is translated correctly" (with the clear

implication that not all of it reflects God's will); Moroni's preface to the Book of Mormon speaks of the possibility of faults which are "the mistakes of men"; but most important is what this scripture tells us: God works with people "in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding" (D&C 1:24; see also 2 Ne. 31:3). In other words, God speaks to people within rather than outside of their particular cultural context, and such contexts have everything to do with the perception of women's stories and experiences as worthy for inclusion in sacred writ.

Our own belief about the relative authority of scripture makes it possible for us to use some, if not all, of the tools being developed by Judeo-Christian feminists to reinterpret biblical texts. One such tool is what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls "a hermeneutics of suspicion." This "hermeneutics of suspicion . . . takes as its starting point the assumption that biblical texts and their interpretations are androcentric and serve patriarchal functions" and "questions the underlying presuppositions, androcentric models, and unarticulated interests of contemporary biblical interpretation."<sup>20</sup> This tool, I believe, can be applied to latter-day scripture and its tradition-based contemporary interpretation whether one attempts to find the applicability to women of an exclusive, androcentric text such as Alma 13; or to reconcile the unchristian elements of coercive polygyny with the expansive elements of eternal marriage relationships in Doctrine and Covenants 132; or to make sense of the negative characterization of Lamech's wives as lacking compassion when examined in the context of the fuller narrative of Moses 5:43-55.

Despite the fact that our texts are steeped in patriarchal language and imagery, I believe the tools of feminist theology can enable us to use latter-day scripture to overcome the sin of patriarchy in three ways: contextually, interpretively, and thematically. By contextually, I mean that latter-day scripture provides evidence to show that the structures of patriarchy, both ancient and modern, deny the full humanity of women. This denial establishes the unreliability of uncritically using patriarchal prooftexts as a means of authoritatively answering questions relevant to contemporary gender issues. By interpretively, I mean that despite the patriarchal context and androcentric language of our scriptures, modern prophets have interpreted the doctrines found in many specific texts as binding on, applying to, and inclusive of women. Such texts in and of themselves testify to the need for serious reconsideration of current attitudes, practices, popular "theology," and doctrinal interpretation concern-

---

20. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 15ff. Hermeneutics is the critical analysis and/or development of interpretive methodology.



ing the status of women in God's church.<sup>21</sup> By thematically, I mean that latter-day scriptures, taken as a whole, contain recurrent ideas and motifs, two of which, however dimly or differently understood by their writers and redactors (or even by their translator), point to: first, that the parameters of the salvation offered through Christ's atonement are universal, crossing lines of gender, race, and class; and second, that equality in a society is a correct measure of its righteousness—when the people are righteous, they treat one another as equals; when they fall into unrighteousness, there is great inequality both temporally and spiritually.<sup>22</sup>

Scripture not only functions as a record of God's dealing with people in particular social and cultural milieus, but also as history. Latter-day Saints, as with most other faith groups in the Judeo-Christian tradition, understand that just because a practice, an act, an event, or a custom is mentioned or described in sacred writ does not constitute divine approbation of that practice, act, event, or custom. (For example, the fact that the Book of Mormon contains lengthy accounts of warfare and strife cannot be construed as scriptural advocacy of warfare and strife; to the contrary, Mormon's purpose in including these narratives seems to be to show the violent consequences of power-seeking and sin.) A Mormon feminist hermeneutic proposes to expose patriarchal biases which account for women being overlooked, excluded, or negatively portrayed, thereby refuting the notion of divine approval for any supposedly scripturally-based hierarchical ordering of the sexes. Viewed from a feminist perspective, an enormous number of "case histories" in biblical and latter-day narrative do not uphold the concept of patriarchy, but rather give proof of the adverse consequences of gender inequality and sexism. Even women's invisibility, in a certain ironic way,<sup>23</sup> functions as a testament against the dehumanizing elements found in every form of patriarchy, including its most benign incarna-

---

21. Regarding the modern-day prophetic inclusion of women in otherwise exclusionary texts, Mormon feminist David Anderson notes: "It's important that these more inclusive interpretations be recognized for what they are; as things now stand, with our leaders not explicitly stating (or even understanding) that they are doing something new, we've left open the possibility for later leaders (and members) to claim that these broad interpretations were the unintended result of unexamined popular notions" (personal correspondence).

22. I am not suggesting that equality and respect for others ever eliminated gender discrimination even during periods of greatest righteousness, as in the City of Enoch or during the 200 years following Christ's visit to the Nephites. To propose such, especially for the latter situation, would be problematic, since women of the first generation (to say nothing of men) would have been completely unprepared psychologically, culturally, and otherwise for such equality. See my "Nephite women & patriarchy," 30 Nov. 1992, electronic essay, Mormon-L archives, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

23. I am indebted to Martha Pierce for this insight.

tion (i.e., the patriarchal order).<sup>24</sup> A feminist re-reading of latter-day scripture provides a new paradigm for interpreting the dearth of women's voices and concerns in scripture—one that uses scripture, both ancient and modern, as evidence of societies in the thrall of patriarchy, societies out of balance and harmony with fundamental aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ

Finally, a careful reading of all scripture, biblical as well as latter-day, points to two core values on which the entire gospel of Jesus Christ is predicated, and which provide a standard for judgment and reevaluation: first, God's commitment to human moral agency; and second, love of God and of one's neighbor, which we Latter-day Saints further define as charity or "the pure love of Christ." Both values affirm the worth and divine potential of each human being; neither delimits that worth or potential on the basis of membership in any particular human category of gender, race, or class. Both values are inextricably intertwined as foundational elements on which all other gospel principles are based: one value cannot stand without the other. I believe a critical reevaluation of all latter-day scripture in light of these two core values makes a strong case for the revamping of our notions of hierarchical, patriarchal priesthood and for the dismantling of patriarchal systems generally. Just as the Book of Mormon is, as Carol Lynn Pearson points out, the history of a fallen people and an unrelenting testament to the failure of patriarchy,<sup>25</sup> so the void of God's words to and about women even in modern-day scripture attests not only to society's continuing failure to recognize the equal personhood and worth of more than half of humanity, but also to the church's continuing failure in this area.

Using a dual basis of agency and charity for reinterpreting those texts used historically to justify oppression of women also enables LDS feminists

---

24. This is not to say that the patriarchal order was not inspired; on the contrary, I believe it was probably the best system men were capable of receiving from God. Nevertheless, it represents the best of a fallen and telestial world, not a system that is in any way "celestial" in nature.

Gerda Lerner provides the following definition of patriarchy: "Patriarchy . . . means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power. It does not imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources" (*The Creation of Patriarchy* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1986], 239).

Key elements of the patriarchal order are the same as more virulent forms of patriarchy, and thus the order itself is antithetical to the core values of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

25. Personal correspondence, 19 May, 8, 28 June 1993. See also Carol Lynn Pearson, "Could Feminism Have Saved the Nephites?" 1993, privately circulated.

to question larger assumptions imposed by millennia of patriarchal influence. This telestial influence continues to make itself felt even in the restored church, as our adherence to rigid sex-role stereotypes and increasing emphasis on "channels" and "protocol" shows. Those with an authoritarian bent will likely view reducing the gospel to its foundational elements as dangerous: doing so ultimately returns individual salvation to a place of primacy in the church, as well as restores an important key in discerning between human opinion and divine revelation. These two criteria hold in abeyance any assignation of divinity to human pronouncements, policies, and programs which uphold rather than destroy inequality, sex-role stereotyping, and other dehumanizing aspects of sexism; and, further, such criteria empower the Saints to break away from the ever-growing weight of patriarchal tradition which increasingly insists on enforced conformity rather than freely-chosen unity, on loyalty to persons and offices rather than to principle, and on assumptions of infallibility and inspiration even when those holding positions of authority do not ascribe their utterances, programs, or policies to God's inspiration.

#### CONCLUSION

Shortly after Official Declaration 2 was made public in 1978, Elder Bruce R. McConkie gave an address to Church Educational System personnel entitled "All Are Alike Unto God," in which he cited 2 Nephi 26:33:

For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.

He then went on to make an extraordinary admission:

These words have now taken on a new meaning. We have caught a new vision of their true significance. This also applies to a great number of other passages in the revelations. . . . Many of us never imagined or supposed that they had the extensive and broad meaning that they do have. . . . We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.

We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. We have now had added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness and all the views and all the thoughts of the past. They don't matter any more.

Despite this recent experience with the limits of human understanding, it remains to be seen how long it will take for church authorities to reexamine what this and other texts say about the relation of women to priesthood authority, as well as about the nature of priesthood authority itself.<sup>26</sup> Until Latter-day Saints look again at our scriptures and ask what it is they say and mean in light of issues confronting us in the late twentieth century, we will continue to suffer the effects of sexual dichotomizing and gender bias—of belonging to two churches, one for women and one for men, rather than all of us belonging to one church headed by Christ Jesus. In the words of Mary Daly,

The Church has been wounded in its structures, for it has deprived itself of the gifts and insights of more than half of its members. It has been grievously hurt in its members of both sexes, for in a society which welcomes and fosters prejudice, not only is the human potential of the subject group restricted, but the superordinate group also becomes warped in the process.<sup>27</sup>

The marginalizing of women in scripture, as Rachel Biale explains from her perspective as a Jew, “results in laws which exclude women from the central activities of Jewish life as well as laws which make them dependent on men and vulnerable to exploitation and denigration.”<sup>28</sup> These same words held true for Nephite, Lamanite, Jaredite women, nineteenth-century Mormon women, and likewise hold true for late-twentieth-century Latter-day Saint women. While I do not believe that people will be penalized beyond the natural consequences of the way they understood the gospel because of their cultural context, I nevertheless feel that we who live in a time when women are beginning to break free from male domination are obligated to hasten the day when male and female truly will be “alike unto God” and treated as such in Christ’s church.

---

26. Bruce R. McConkie, “All Are Alike Unto God,” address to Church Educational System personnel, 1978, copy in my possession. That it may take a while for our understanding to increase *vis-à-vis* gender issues is typified by the refusal to acknowledge the issue’s existence, even in a peripheral sense, in the following quote of Howard W. Hunter. He first cites 2 Nephi 26:33, then says, “From this statement it is clear that *all* men are invited to come unto him and *all* are alike unto him. Race makes no difference; color makes no difference; nationality makes no difference” (“All Are Alike Unto God,” 1979, emphasis in original). But by its very omission from his comments, apparently *gender* does make a difference. This omission is consistent throughout his talk.

27. Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 176ff.

28. Biale, 263.

# RECOMMENDED READING

- Daly, Mary. *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).
- . *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1961).
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).
- . *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).
- . *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1990).
- French, Marilyn. *Beyond Power: On Women, Men, and Morals* (New York: Summit Books, 1985).
- Jewett, Paul K. *The Ordination of Women: An Essay on the Office of Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990).
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).
- Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed., enlrg. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1970).
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- McFague, Sallie. *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
- Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991).
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (New York: Beacon Press, 1983).
- Stendahl, Krister. *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).
- Thrall, Margaret E. *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: A Study of the Biblical Evidence* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1958).
- Wren, Brian. *What Language Shall I Borrow?: God-Talk in Worship: A Male Response to Feminist Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).



# Messages from the Manuals— Twelve Years Later

*Janine Boyce*

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION (YMMIA) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has played a key role in the lives of LDS young women for 125 years. Designed for LDS girls between the ages of twelve and eighteen, the program consists of first- and second-year Beehives, ages twelve and thirteen; first- and second-year Mia Maids, ages fourteen and fifteen; and first- and second-year Laurels, ages sixteen and seventeen. The goal of YWMIA is to teach young women to live in a manner pleasing to their Heavenly Father and to their immediate families, and to help them develop values which will give them strength in times of adversity.<sup>1</sup> Because the program plays an important part in the girls' lives, a content analysis of YWMIA lesson manuals can help determine if the portrayal of womanhood and motherhood are realistic and relevant to young women today and consequently how well these materials prepare girls for the future.

A similar study of Young Women's lesson manuals was done by Lavina Fielding Anderson, who analyzed the 1977 and 1978 manuals. Anderson published her findings in an article entitled, "Messages from the Manuals," in *Exponent II* in 1982. At the time of her study, the lesson manuals were being revised by the LDS church curriculum department.

This essay examines the revised editions of Young Women's lesson manuals published in 1983 and 1988 and still in use in 1992. The church curriculum department issues a separate lesson manual for each of the six years of participation in YWMIA. Because of space constraints, only the first-year manual for each group is included in this study. Selected lessons in Young Men's manuals are also examined in order to determine if the

---

1. "Past 115 Years Serve as Prologue," *Church News*, 9 Dec. 1984, 5.

topics presented to young men differed from those presented to young women.<sup>2</sup>

Young Women's course materials are not written by the general Young Women's presidency, nor does the presidency have much control over the content of the manuals. According to the senior editor in the church curriculum department, the lessons are authored by a writing committee selected by the church curriculum department. The lesson manuals are not necessarily up-dated every time they are published. In fact, the lesson manuals issued in 1988 are reprints of the 1983 editions. The only difference between the two sets of manuals is that the 1983 publications contain a page in the introduction which explained how the lessons could be used to complement the Personal Progress Areas of Focus, a separate program designed to encourage girls to set goals in specific gospel-related fields. This introductory page was deleted in the 1988 version since in 1986 the Personal Progress program was replaced by a new program of Young Women Values.

According to Lavina Fielding Anderson, manuals published in 1977 and 1978 succeeded in explaining doctrinal subjects, although they were ineffective in clearly defining priesthood responsibilities and in giving realistic examples of motherhood. She also noted that the lessons contained no examples of working women; she felt the manuals side-stepped the issue of divorce, of education for women, and of the possibilities of combining motherhood and professional life. Anderson stated that the lessons portrayed modesty as a problem for girls only, and she worried that the lessons were "'herding' the girls into 'femininity'"<sup>3</sup> by placing too much emphasis on external physical traits.

In some respects, little has changed since Anderson wrote her article twelve years ago. Sadly, many of the problems Anderson described have not been rectified in the newer manuals. The current lessons have improved slightly, but they still do not discuss full-time missionary work for women, encourage education for women, cite realistic examples of motherhood, and support working women and non-traditional families. Perhaps not as much emphasis is placed on femininity in the new manuals, although they do include lessons on proper grooming.

In the revised manuals, the lessons dealing with spiritual topics such as developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, prayer, honesty,

---

2. Sources used for this paper include all of the lessons in the first-year Young Women's manuals published in 1983 and 1988. Selected lessons in the 1983 Young Men's manuals on missionary work, priesthood, dating, marriage, or fatherhood were also examined.

3. Lavina F. Anderson, "Messages from the Manuals," *Exponent II* 8 (Winter 1982): 18.



Word of Wisdom, etc., are still good. For example, almost all of the lessons encourage girls to search the scriptures to find answers to their problems. They are also heavily laced with quotes and advice from modern-day prophets and general authorities. The lessons feature important topics such as setting goals, building self-esteem, avoiding drug abuse, becoming dependable, handling peer pressure, managing money, and choosing uplifting media.

The new manuals treat the lessons on priesthood somewhat better; however, the difference between "priesthood holder" and "priesthood stewardship"<sup>4</sup> is not clarified any more in the new manuals than it was in the old. Girls are encouraged to help young men honor their priesthood by being modest, setting an example, and encouraging the young men to attend their meetings and to complete their assignments.<sup>5</sup> How these actions help to honor the priesthood is not explained.

According to Anderson, the previous lesson manuals made almost no mention of women serving full-time missions. This continues to be the case in the new manuals. The apparent lack of encouragement for women missionaries is curious because more and more young women are serving missions today.

According to statistics compiled by the *Deseret News*, at the end of 1981 more than 3,000 young single women were serving missions.<sup>6</sup> That number doubled by the end of 1988 and has continued to rise.<sup>7</sup> As a response, one or two lessons on missions should be included in the manuals. Lessons which pertain specifically to full-time missionary work could help encourage young women to prepare to serve missions and could prepare them for the trials they may encounter as missionaries. As would be expected, manuals written for young men contained one or two lessons for each age group on preparing to serve a full-time mission.

Young Women's manuals did contain lessons on missionary work; however, the emphasis was on fellowshiping and member-missionary work. Nearly every story in the lessons involving missionaries or missionary work referred to elders; even the picture of missionaries included in the Laurel lesson manual portrayed two young men.<sup>8</sup>

---

4. Ibid., 5.

5. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Beehive Manual 1* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 52.

6. *Deseret News 1983 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1982), 1.

7. *Deseret News 1989-1990 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1988), 1.

8. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Laurel Manual 1* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), Appen. 1.

In fact, one Laurel lesson, designed to help girls become involved in missionary work, reads as follows: "when a missionary begins *his* mission, *he* is given several rules . . . . The missionary must commit *himself* to these in order to serve the Lord and have the Spirit to guide *him* [italics mine]." <sup>9</sup> A little later, the lesson continues, "how can an LDS girl help a missionary meet *his* responsibilities in *his* work for the Lord? [italics mine]" <sup>10</sup> Part of the objective of this lesson is to discourage young women from flirting with or encouraging a romantic relationship with elders who may be serving in their area. Nevertheless, referring to missionaries in general as male could discourage young women from considering serving missions. Certainly, if young women saw more pictures of sister missionaries and heard success stories of sister missionaries, they would feel more comfortable and confident about the possibilities of serving a full-time mission.

One lesson in the Laurel manual does refer to a woman's decision to go on a mission. However, the lesson topic is on consecration and sacrifice, not missionary work. The woman in question had just graduated from college and was planning to travel when she was called by her bishop to serve a mission. <sup>11</sup> In this case, serving a mission is not portrayed as a desirable opportunity, but as an obligation for which something more pleasant must be sacrificed.

Not surprisingly, the lesson manuals place a heavy emphasis on preparing girls for marriage and motherhood. Consequently, the lessons seem to under-emphasize education and vocational training for young women. Anderson noted the same problem in the 1977 and 1978 lesson manuals.

The revised Beehive manual contains a lesson on setting goals and progressing. A list of suggested long-term and short-term goals for girls is provided. Neither list proposes continuing education as a possible goal. <sup>12</sup>

A Mia Maid lesson entitled, "The Purpose and Value of Education," describes the importance of learning and explains that education can help with future employment. While this is a good point, the lesson contains some quotes which seem to undermine this advice. For example, Howard W. Hunter remarked, "If a woman does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts." <sup>13</sup> Are girls to assume that married women do not have the right to engage

---

9. Ibid., 89.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 125.

12. *Beehive Manual 1*, 191.

13. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Mia Maid Manual 1* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 180-81.

in a profession? Since all the girls are probably planning to marry, will they assume it unnecessary for them to plan and prepare for a career?

This lesson also quotes George Q. Cannon who, in an 1868 address, said: "The proper education of a man decides his welfare, but the interests of a whole family are secured by the correct education of a woman."<sup>14</sup> While Cannon seems to be encouraging education, what he means by "correct" education for a women is not explained. This quote is plainly out-dated. The education of a woman decides her welfare as much as does the education of a man, and the interests of a family are surely affected by the education of the father as well as by the education of the mother.

The Cannon quote could easily be replaced by a more contemporary statement. For example, President Spencer W. Kimball frequently encouraged women to "pursue and achieve that education, therefore, which will fit you for eternity as well as for full service in mortality."<sup>15</sup>

The Laurel manual devotes one entire lesson to the importance of choosing a vocation. This is a positive step, since the old manuals made no mention of preparing for a vocation. The lesson encourages Laurels to prepare for a job even if they are planning to marry and become a homemaker, and offers practical advice about choosing a career. Girls are reminded that even if they do marry it could be necessary for them to work to supplement their husband's salary, or in case of divorce or death of a husband, as the sole support of the family. Young women are then urged to choose a job that they will enjoy and one that will provide them with financial security.

Unfortunately, the lesson then suggests that girls ask themselves if the vocation they have chosen is one which will "help me fulfill my roles as wife, mother and teacher."<sup>16</sup> This statement could unintentionally cause some young women to confine their career choices to traditional female-dominated jobs such as teaching, nursing, or day-care. While these are honorable professions, a girl may feel pressured to choose one of these over another vocation for which she may have equal talent or interest. Why encourage women to pursue education and then limit their career choices?

If statistics are an indicator of future trends, most of these young women will find themselves in the work-force at some time in their lives. According to a study by sociologists Tim B. Heaton and Ben Parkinson, 64 percent of married Mormon women with preschoolers were employed in 1981.<sup>17</sup> If girls prepare for work while they are young, they are more likely

---

14. Ibid., 181.

15. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Role of Righteous Women," *Ensign* 9 (Nov. 1979): 103.

16. *Laurel Manual* 1, 209.

17. Tim B. Heaton, "Four Characteristics of the Mormon Family: Contemporary Research on Chastity, Conjugalility, Children, and Chauvinism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Summer 1987): 108.

to be employed in jobs which they find enjoyable, fulfilling, and financially rewarding.

Anderson noted that the old manuals contained no stories or case studies that mentioned a mother at work outside the home. The same holds true for the revised manuals. Once or twice a lesson refers to a mother who is "away during the day"<sup>18</sup>; this could be interpreted to mean that she was working or only that she was running errands or attending meetings that day.

The Mia Maid manual contains a lesson that encourages girls to get to know their mother. Girls are to complete a questionnaire about their mother's life. One question is "Did she work outside the home before her marriage?"<sup>19</sup> This same wording appeared in the lesson manual analyzed by Anderson. The question assumes that all mothers have not worked since they married. This is clearly not the case. In many cases, a girl's mother is currently working outside the home.

The church still promotes the traditional family. Church leaders encourage women to remain at home to care for their children while their husband provides for the family financially. Anderson noted that the church promotes families, but that unfortunately "it supports only one kind of family, and that support comes at the price of condemnation for other kinds of families. Sadly, it may be these other families who need the emotional support even more than traditional families."<sup>20</sup>

The new lesson manuals indicate the same trend. The manuals are filled with lessons that encourage girls to prepare for marriage and children, and to be eager to fulfill these roles. While this is an honorable pursuit, one might question the emphasis placed on this topic at the expense of other equally important topics such as education, a profession, and missionary work.

The lesson manuals acknowledge that women play many different roles; however, they stress that the most important role for women is the "divine role of women as wife and helpmeet, mother, and teacher."<sup>21</sup>

The emphasis on domestic topics in the women's manuals is surprising when compared with the lesson topics in the Young Men's manuals. Apparently church leaders are not as concerned about preparing young men for their future roles as husbands and fathers.

The Beehive manual, written for twelve-year-old girls, contains thirty-five lessons, seven of which are on dating, preparing for marriage, or developing homemaking skills. Homemaking is defined as "a woman

---

18. *Laurel Manual* 1, 40.

19. *Mia Maid Manual* 1, 34.

20. Anderson, 6.

21. *Beehive Manual* 1, 14.

taking care of her family."<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the Deacons' manual, for boys the same age, does not include any lessons dealing with dating, marriage, or fatherhood. There is one Deacon lesson entitled, "Respect for Mothers and their Divine Role"<sup>23</sup>; the objective of this lesson is to instill in boys a respect for their mothers. It does not mention respect for their future wife, the mother of their children.

In the Mia Maid manual, for fourteen-year-old girls, four of forty-four lessons directly relate to dating, marriage, and homemaking. The fourteen-year-old boys' Teachers' manual contains nothing on dating, marriage, or fatherhood. Although Teachers have one lesson on honoring womanhood, this is illustrated by encouraging the boys to help their sisters with chores, and to be polite to girls with whom they associate.<sup>24</sup>

Laurels, at age sixteen, have possibly begun to date and are getting closer to adulthood. Their manual contains seven of forty-nine lessons on dating, marriage, and homemaking. Sixteen-year-old Priests have two of thirty-five lessons on dating and marriage. Those lessons, though, do not contain any guidance on preparing for fatherhood or family life.

Based on this information, one might assume that church officials feel women need to be taught to become good wives and mothers and to develop homemaking skills, but men either already have the skills necessary to become supportive husbands and fathers or they are not expected to help their wives rear their children.

Many Young Men's lessons pertain to priesthood responsibilities and attempt to prepare the boys for future priesthood duties they will eventually assume. Since women do not hold the priesthood, their lessons emphasize their future roles as mothers, implying that priesthood responsibility is analogous to motherhood. This approach neglects the important role of a man as a father. If the family is the most important organization in the church, why are the young men not also instructed in the essentials of becoming supportive husbands and fathers?

Since the writers of Young Women's lessons assume that mothers will be homemakers, many of the stories about family life depict the traditional definition of men's and women's household chores and responsibilities.

The Beehive manual includes a lesson on developing home skills. This lesson has girls take a quiz on their abilities to perform simple household

---

22. *Mia Maid Manual* 1, 22.

23. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Deacon Course A* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 38.

24. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Teachers Course A* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 47.

chores. The list was fairly well balanced. Besides asking if girls could perform tasks such as defrost a refrigerator and clean an oven, it also included questions about their ability to drain a water heater, change a tire, replace a lawn sprinkler, or repair a frayed cord or plug.<sup>25</sup> This lesson goes on to state: "Some think women are responsible only to learn to bake bread, clean houses and take care of children. But women can and should develop abilities and skills in many other areas, even those often thought of as men's areas."<sup>26</sup> This is a good point; however, the fact that a similar lesson is not included in the Deacons' lesson manual suggests that men do not need to learn home skills or other tasks often thought of as women's work.

A lesson entitled "Love, Harmony, and Homemaking" in the Beehive manual stresses the importance of women as homemakers who "serve their family with love and harmony."<sup>27</sup> Included in this lesson is a story of a twelve-year-old girl whose mother is away. In her mother's absence, she cooks dinner, irons her father's shirts, and helps her younger brothers and sisters.<sup>28</sup> This story leaves one with the feeling that only a woman can perform homemaking duties, or why else would the father not assume some of the responsibilities of his wife in her absence?

The Mia Maid manual contains a story of a woman who had a busy week and consequently fell behind in the housework. Once again the daughter assumes the duty of cleaning the house, doing the laundry, and caring for younger siblings.<sup>29</sup> Again, the story does not show the father helping with the chores.

These kinds of stories indicate that a woman should take full responsibility for household work. Would it not be better to portray the whole family pulling together in times of trial with husbands and brothers and daughters and sisters all dividing up the chores?

The Beehive and Mia Maid manuals report that a woman receives rewards from being a homemaker. One reward is that the work becomes pleasant because the "personal satisfaction that comes to a homemaker in knowing that she is contributing to her family's happiness sustains her through the daily activities."<sup>30</sup> The Beehive manual reassures the girls that they will develop "special feelings about our duties and chores. As we do this, they are not duties or chores anymore, because we are doing them to make our surroundings lovely and pleasant and doing them for those we

---

25. *Beehive Manual* 1, 177.

26. *Ibid.*, 178.

27. *Ibid.*, 28.

28. *Ibid.*, 25.

29. *Mia Maid Manual* 1, 24.

30. *Ibid.*, 23.

love."<sup>31</sup> Although homemakers probably do feel satisfaction in knowing they are helping their loved ones, can these "rewards" truly compensate for all of the difficulties involved in caring for a home and children?

A Laurel lesson entitled "Preparing to Become an Eternal Companion"<sup>32</sup> states that it is "especially important for a wife to put many of her husband's interests and desires first."<sup>33</sup> Compromise and sacrifice are essential characteristics for a successful marriage; however, the fact that young men are not also advised to be willing to put their wife's desires ahead of their own is disconcerting. The Priests' manual includes a lesson on "Choosing an Eternal Companion,"<sup>34</sup> but this lesson concentrates mostly on timing for marriage, not on preparing to become a supportive husband.

Including lessons to prepare young women for their roles as wives and mothers is valuable, but concentrating these lessons in women's manuals and not even broaching the subject in Young Men's manuals is unrealistic and ineffective. Surely men must be able to care for a home and children if they are to one day become fathers.

The proportion of lessons in Young Women's manuals that refers to dating, marriage and motherhood could inadvertently encourage young women to seek marriage at a young age, before many are mature enough, especially since the lesson manuals concentrate heavily on the positive aspects of marriage and motherhood. The young women are told that homemaking is an "important and sacred responsibility"<sup>35</sup> and that it is one of the greatest honors a young woman can experience.

In the Priests' lesson on marriage, proper timing is discussed and early marriage is discouraged. The lesson contains an excellent story about a seventeen-year-old boy and a fifteen-year-old girl who marry and soon have a baby. The new baby has medical problems, and the couple's finances are strained. The couple soon becomes frustrated with their situation; they feel they are missing out on activities with their friends and soon regret their decision to marry so young.<sup>36</sup>

This story is not in the Young Women's manual, but perhaps it should be included. The young women would equally benefit from learning of the

---

31. *Beehive Manual* 1, 27.

32. *Laurel Manual* 1, 16.

33. *Ibid.*, 18.

34. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Priest Course A* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 17.

35. *Mia Maid Manual* 1, 22.

36. *Priest Course A*, 33.

problems that can accompany a marriage before either partner is mature enough.

Almost all of the Young Women's lessons on domestic topics assume that mothers will be at home with the children while their husbands are away from home at work. This is not always a realistic example of the kinds of homes girls live in currently or necessarily will be after they marry.

Because of the emphasis in the church on families and children, young women are encouraged to plan to have children once they marry. Birth control for selfish or unwarranted reasons is discouraged.<sup>37</sup> Official church counsel on the subject is that husbands should be considerate of their wives' health and strength and that the couple should seek inspiration from the Lord in all of their decisions.<sup>38</sup>

The Laurel manual contains a quote from President David O. McKay which refers to birth control. It reads, in part: "we feel that men must be considerate of their wives who bear the greater responsibility not only of bearing children, but of caring for them through childhood. To this end the mother's health and strength should be conserved and the husband's consideration for his wife is his first duty, and self-control a dominant factor in all their relationships."<sup>39</sup>

Besides the fact that this is not the most current church policy on birth control, this statement also assumes that women have little or no sexual drive, since women are not also counseled to practice self-control in their relationships. Would it not be better for the lesson manuals to contain the current church policy on birth control so that girls are informed of the church's position on this delicate subject?

There are two other comments in the Young Women's lesson manuals about birth control which could cause some confusion. The first, in a lesson on priesthood in the Beehive manual, is an exercise to help girls learn which priesthood authority performs specific duties. Girls are given an example of a priesthood responsibility and asked to guess who holds the authority for that function. Some of the questions are: who can call someone to serve as a ward bishop, who can receive revelation for the church, and who gives "church policy concerning current evils of the world, such as birth control, abortion, pornography, and drugs."<sup>40</sup>

The second example is in the Laurel manual. The objective of the lesson

37. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign* 6 (Mar. 1976): 71.

38. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 11-4.

39. *Laurel Manual* 1, 167.

40. *Beehive Manual* 1, 134.



is to help Laurels cope with worldly influences by relying on the word of God. The lesson provides a list to be written on the chalkboard under the headings "Satanic Philosophies and Deceptions" versus "Gospel Principles and Truths." On the list under the heading "Satanic Philosophies" is the following: "Birth control, abortion, divorce," the opposites being "Parent-hood, sanctity of life and celestial marriage."<sup>41</sup>

Labeling all forms of birth control as "evil" could be harmful and confusing. If the prophet reminds members to consider the health of the mother when determining family size, then certainly some form of birth control is permissible. Furthermore, if the prophet counsels husbands to practice self-control is he referring to abstinence? Abstinence is certainly a form of birth control. Perhaps these statements should be re-defined to comply with the current policy on birth control or even omitted from the lists entirely. This complaint may seem minor; nevertheless, current word-ing could cause some frustration for a young mother who desires to limit her family size or who wants to space her children at comfortable intervals.

While the importance of marriage and bearing children should not be discounted, perhaps both the positive and negative aspects of these roles should be presented. Since lessons on motherhood rarely mention the trials or frustrations associated with this function, girls may be led to believe there are few or no problems affiliated with the role of mother.

Modesty and chastity are also important topics for young women to discuss. While the lesson manuals stress the importance of remaining morally clean and virtuous, they contain some flaws.

A lesson in the Beehive manual describes the consequences of being unchaste. The list of the physical consequences mentions only pregnancy, abortion, or rejection by others.<sup>42</sup> The lesson does not mention the possi-bility of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, which could ultimately be more devastating than pregnancy or feeling rejected.

The most significant flaw, however, is illustrated by the following examples. In the Beehive manual is a case study of a girl who approaches her school counselor for advice. Some boys at the school had been spread-ing rumors about her apparent lack of virtue. The counselor advises the girl that the fault is her own because the way she dresses gives the wrong impression to the boys.<sup>43</sup> This explanation seems to absolve the boys of gossiping and lying. The girl may be guilty of giving a false impression; however, the boys are guilty of spreading rumors at school.

This same lesson has another example of a girl who is leaving the house to attend a dance. Her brother sees the way she is dressed and comments,

---

41. *Laurel Manual 1*, 165.

42. *Beehive Manual 1*, 121.

43. *Ibid.*, 125.

"With that kind of an advertisement, someone might answer your ad."<sup>44</sup> This comment also suggests that if a young woman chooses to dress immodestly, she is responsible for anything that a young man might think about her or do to her.

The most alarming example along the same line is from the Laurel manual. This lesson is not on modesty or chastity, but on "Avoiding Dishonesty."<sup>45</sup> The lesson includes a story about a young girl who begins dating an attractive LDS young man named Rod. The girl soon begins to suspect that Rod has a drinking problem, but she rationalizes her fears and decides she can help him overcome this addiction. One night the girl attends a party with Rod where he begins drinking. That night when he takes her home, the story continues:

After a few kisses he began to overpower me in a very intimate way. I did not have the strength to control him. Somehow I was able to jump from the car. . . . As I ran home, my clothes were torn, I sobbed uncontrollably, and my body shook all over. I realized that the first lie to myself was Satan's invitation to take over as the Holy Spirit departed from me. I almost lost my virtue that night with Rod, and now I know it all began with a lie to myself.<sup>46</sup>

The girl in this story did not almost lose her virtue; she was almost raped. Here again the story shows the girl blaming herself instead of blaming the young man. Of course, the point the lesson is attempting to show is that the girl allowed herself to get into a compromising situation. While it is important to teach the young women to consider the consequences of their actions and to exercise good judgment, the story unfortunately shifts blame from the young man to the young woman.

If a young woman does become involved in a date-rape situation, a story like this may cause her to blame herself. She would then have to cope with unfounded feelings of guilt as well as the trauma of rape. Although the girl in the story may have misled the young man by her dress or behavior, the guilt associated with his actions is clearly his own.

The final area in which the manuals seem to be lacking is in providing realistic role models for young women. The manuals are filled with quotes and stories from the lives of prophets and general authorities, past and present. While it is important for young women to hear the words of the latter-day prophets, it is also important for them to hear from women in church leadership positions.

---

44. *Ibid.*, 126.

45. *Laurel Manual 1*, 147.

46. *Ibid.*, 150.

Girls could learn from the examples of other women who have been successful in living the gospel. The heroine in many of the stories and examples in the lesson manuals is frequently some fictional mother of several children or the wife of a bishop, stake president, etc. Would it not be more beneficial for girls to learn how real Mormon women overcame real trials and went on to lead exemplary lives? Young women may find it easier to relate to the problems and trials faced by actual Mormon women.

LDS history is filled with wonderful examples of accomplished women such as Emmeline B. Wells, a successful editor and mother of six children; Eliza R. Snow, a writer and poet; Mary and Ida Ione Cook, founders of a school; Ramonia B. Pratt, the first resident physician at Deseret Hospital; Susa Young Gates, founder and editor of a college paper and mother of thirteen children; and Ellis Shipp mother of seven and the second woman in Utah to earn her M.D. degree.<sup>47</sup> There are also many examples of successful contemporary LDS women such as Camilla Kimball, wife of President Spencer W. Kimball and champion of education for women; Elaine Cannon and Ardeth Kapp, former general Young Women presidents; and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, historian and Pulitzer Prize winner.

Overall, the lesson manuals currently used in the Young Women's program are successful in teaching girls the basics of living the gospel. They fail when they insist on reinforcing the traditional cultural ideal of Mormon family life.

According to sociologist Tim Heaton, the dynamics of Mormon families have changed over the years. Heaton reveals that Mormon couples are having fewer children (three to five instead of seven to ten),<sup>48</sup> more mothers are working outside the home, a greater number of couples are divorcing—especially young couples—and 30 percent of the population of the church is comprised of single adults.<sup>49</sup>

In the face of these statistics, one would hope that the writers of the lesson manuals would take a more realistic view of the current circumstances of these young women as well as the situations they will likely encounter in the future.

That the lesson manuals used today are so similar to manuals used over ten years ago is surprising. The areas in the 1977 and 1978 lesson manuals which Lavina Fielding Anderson considered weak are still lacking. The revised manuals need further improvement in order to make them more realistic and relevant to LDS young women in the 1990s.

---

47. Leonard J. Arrington, "Blessed Damozels: Women in Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6 (Summer 1971): 25-28.

48. Heaton, "Four Characteristics of the Mormon Family," 111.

49. *Ibid.*, 105.

# The Invisible Woman

*Holly Welker*

The invisible woman is angry.  
Boy is she mad.  
She took her books to the library last night  
and last night she burned the library down.  
She hates all her stories and  
nobody else wants to read them  
either. They go like this:  
*I don't want to be here.*  
*There's not any place in this world I want to be.*  
Someone should tell her howling  
is the wrong thing to do at the moon,  
the moon's just a flashy advertisement  
above the fire engines saying,  
STAY TUNED FOR TOMORROW'S EPISODE OF "THE SUNRISE"!  
Still, the man in the moon, if there is one,  
had the very best view  
when the burning roof smashed flat  
all the shelves of burning books,  
the firemen gesturing with  
grim authority and their hoses  
to anyone wanting to gasp in amazement  
at the light and the noise, up close.

No one thought about the invisible woman  
when the engines were called in;  
no one thought about her when the engines drove away.  
She doesn't know this.  
The invisible woman dreams of  
Death by Public Hanging  
until she realizes all clues linking her  
to the library fire are invisible too.  
She thinks of an old man crying,  
probably the man in the moon.  
The invisible woman is happy.  
The invisible woman's relieved.

# If Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood since 1843, Why Aren't They Using It?

*Margaret Merrill Toscano*

IN AUGUST 1984 I PRESENTED MY FIRST Sunstone Symposium paper: "The Missing Rib: The Forgotten Place of Queens and Priestesses in the Establishment of Zion."<sup>1</sup> In it I declared my belief that women receive priesthood through the LDS temple endowment. Nine years later, in August 1993, I participated with Maxine Hanks, Michael Quinn, and Linda Newell on a Sunstone Symposium panel entitled "If Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood since 1843, Why Aren't They Using It?" The title was taken from Michael's chapter in the book, *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine, and to which Linda and I also contributed chapters. This panel was especially significant to me because it showed that in the nine years since my first paper the discussion had moved beyond the initial inquiry of whether women should or do hold priesthood. Although this remains a hotly debated question, even among Mormon liberals, it appears that the climate of opinion is changing in the wake of mounting historical evidence and theological argument. In the brief essay which follows, I do not reassert the arguments supporting women's right to priesthood, but focus on certain problems raised by the assumption that women have priesthood authority.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Margaret M. Toscano, "The Missing Rib: The Forgotten Place of Queens and Priestesses in the Establishment of Zion," *Sunstone* 10 (July 1985): 16-22.

2. For full discussions of this question, see Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple," *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, eds. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 80-110; Linda King Newell, "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and Priesthood," *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 23-48; D.

"If Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood since 1843, Why Aren't They Using It?" To answer this question, I will first address two other preliminary questions: What is priesthood? And in what sense do women have it? The view of priesthood promulgated in the modern LDS church is based in part on Bruce McConkie's definition from *Mormon Doctrine* that "priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of men."<sup>3</sup> While not a bad definition as far as it goes, this formula has been used narrowly in the church to the detriment of both men and women. For example, there is the problem of what is meant by delegation. In response to those of us who have argued that the endowment confers priesthood, Boyd Packer recently stated that "ordination to an office in the priesthood is the way, and the only way, it has been or is now conferred."<sup>4</sup>

I see several problems with Elder Packer's statement. First, it fails to deal with the historical development and use of the priesthood in this dispensation. The priesthood was at first undifferentiated into offices and callings. This happened in steps between 1829 and 1844. Moreover, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were not ordained to offices by the heavenly messengers. They simply had priesthood conferred upon them, which authority contains the right and the keys to create the various priesthood orders and offices, which are merely "appendages" to the more comprehensive authority of the priesthood (D&C 84:29-30, 107:5).<sup>5</sup>

Brother Packer also fails to deal with any of the historical and scriptural texts dealing with the transmittal of priesthood. Strangely, he quotes Doctrine and Covenants 124, which says that without the temple there is no place that the Lord can come to restore the "fulness of the priesthood" (v. 28; cf. vv. 34, 42). But then he ignores the text's implication that the temple confers the fulness of the priesthood and reasserts that the laying on of hands is the only way priesthood is conferred.

Brother Packer also ignores such scriptural texts as Alma 13, which does not speak of priesthood ordination by the laying on of hands but by a ritual that prefigures the redemption of Christ (vv. 2, 8, 16), suggesting the temple ritual, not the laying on of hands. For in the temple the tokens

---

Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," *Women and Authority*, 365-409; and Margaret and Paul Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 143-220.

3. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1958), 534-35.

4. Boyd K. Packer, "The Temple, The Priesthood," *Ensign* 23 (May 1993): 20.

5. See also Margaret Merrill Toscano, "Put on Your Strength O Daughters of Zion: Claiming Priesthood and Knowing the Mother," *Women and Authority*, 414; Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood since 1843," 375.

of the Lord's crucifixion are given to us to symbolize that the purpose of the priesthood is to connect us with Christ and help us follow in his path.<sup>6</sup>

Brother Packer quotes the Fifth Article of Faith as an argument against temple priesthood and as proof of how priesthood must be conferred: "a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority." But the temple can also be seen as reinforcing this pattern. Every woman and man who has been endowed in the temple has had hands laid on their heads anointing them to become priestesses and priests. And the anointings are performed by those who have the authority to do so within the priesthood structure of the church. Temple priesthood is not a "free-floating" authority as Elder Packer claims. Since it is tied to an ordinance in the control of church leaders, it very much follows the requirements stated in the article of faith.

It should also be noted, though, that the article of faith states that in addition to the laying on of hands by one who has authority, there must also be a calling from God through prophecy. The usual assumption in the church is that this calling comes only through church leaders. The scriptures do not say this. The Book of Mormon in particular emphasizes the importance of an unmediated calling which comes directly from God.<sup>7</sup> Alma 13 describes priesthood ordination as a two-step process: a person must obtain both a "holy calling," which is equated with foreordination by God through faith, and a "holy anointing" into a priestly community.

We often forget in the church that priesthood has two aspects—what Doctrine and Covenants 121 calls the "rights" and the "power." The rights, the legal authority to act within the scope of the church, are given by ordination to priesthood and church offices or a setting apart to church callings. But the power of the priesthood comes only from God. It comes through faith and divine love as a spiritual gift.

Priesthood power is "free-floating" in the sense that it is not in the control of church leaders or any other human agency. It is connected with the Holy Spirit, which the Gospel writer tells us is like the wind because it blows where *it* wants, not where we want it to go (John 3:8). The essence of priesthood is the power of God. The revelations define this power as a literal substance, the glory of God, which is equated with light, truth, intelligence, and love. This glory proceeds from the presence of God to fill all space. It is the life of God. It quickens all things. It is the power by which

---

6. Alma 13 contains several phrases which Joseph Smith typically links with the fulness of the priesthood: "holy ordinance," "holy order," "high priesthood of Melchizedek" (see Toscano and Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox*, 180, 198-99).

7. See Paul James Toscano, "Priesthood Concepts in the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 13 (Dec. 1989): 8-17.

all things are governed, not by rules and threats, but with the authority of truth and love (D&C 88, 93).

Doctrine and Covenants 121 teaches that the rights of the priesthood are “inseparably connected” with these powers which are given only from heaven. I believe that priesthood rights and power are meant to serve as a check and balance system to prevent the abuse of both ecclesiastical and charismatic authority, to promote the spiritual equality of every member, to include the voice and vote of each member in the governance of the church, and to integrate our need for both order and freedom, structure and life. I also believe that these two elements of priesthood are dangerously out of balance in the church today because we ask only if a person is properly ordained but not whether a person is filled with the spirit and power of God. The priesthood is out of balance in the church because we see it in terms of corporate management, order, correlation, and hierarchy, not in terms of spiritual gifts and fruits, not in its relation to the gospel as a means of transforming each soul into the image of God. The priesthood is out of balance because we have used it to set up a system of inequality that creates barriers between men and women, members and leaders, general authorities and local leaders, the Saints and their God. The priesthood, which was meant to create a Zion community where all things are held in common, has become instead a stratified system which divides on the basis of gender, race, class, wealth, position, and age.

We need to repent and recenter the church on the foundation of Christ’s gospel of love and equality. One way to begin correcting this imbalance is to acknowledge the priesthood of women and to include them in the councils of the church.<sup>8</sup> To do this we need not abandon Mormon tradition, nor do we need new revelation (although more is always good). There is plenty of evidence in Mormon texts to demonstrate that women have both the rights and the power of the priesthood. The rights have been conferred through the temple. The power has been given by God. This is evident in the lives of the faithful women of all dispensations from Sarah the princess of peace to Huldah the prophetess, from Eliza R. Snow the high priestess to Chieko Okazaki the healer.

This brings us back to our main question: If women have the priesthood, why aren’t they using it? It must first be acknowledged that many women *are* using their priesthood in private and quiet ways. Women are giving blessings and using other spiritual gifts such as revelation without asking permission from church leaders. Sister missionaries are preaching the gospel as ministers of salvation. Women temple workers are perform-

---

8. I am not suggesting that the inclusion of women will eliminate all problems. The only cure for sin is the gospel. But the distribution of power reduces the possibility of its misuse.



ing ordinances and passing on priesthood authority to other women. Relief Society presidencies are exercising their keys in behalf of their sisters. And women all over the church are using the power of God to bless their own lives and the lives of others too.

Much of this, however, is being done without a conscious realization on the part of women that they are exercising priesthood. And whatever is not named lacks the force and authority of that which is clearly defined and consciously used. Not only that, but women's self-esteem is damaged because they think men have a greater right than they do to receive and use the power of God. Many Mormon women are not using their priesthood because they don't know they have it. Consequently, many women are failing to develop their own spirituality because they think they need a male priesthood holder to intercede between them and God. The whole church is suffering because the power and spirituality of women are restricted to narrow categories and confined to small groups. Women's voices and concerns are not being heard because they have little or no say in the governance of the church.

While women do not need and should not ask permission from male leaders to use their priesthood in private ways or accepted venues, it is impossible for them to use it in visible ways or in official capacities without an acknowledgement of women's right to priesthood. But is there evidence that women have the right to offices? Although there is no historical evidence of women being ordained to church offices, there are statements which equate Relief Society offices with priesthood offices, making the Relief Society a parallel organization to the priesthood quorums.<sup>9</sup> Though I believe that women need their own autonomous organization and publication, I also believe that they cannot be equal or valued in the context of church government until they are part of the larger, comprehensive body of the priesthood and are included in the highest councils of the church. Separate but equal is never really equal because gradations are usually created on the basis of differences. Nor does separation promote understanding and interconnectedness among different groups.

I believe that women have the right to church offices and priesthood positions by virtue of their temple endowments. Joseph Smith said that all "priesthood is Melchizedek; but there are different portions or degrees of it." The priesthood bestowed in the temple is the same priesthood given by the laying on of hands, but it is a fullness of that authority and embraces all other authorities, appendages, and offices.<sup>10</sup> It is true that women cannot

---

9. Toscano and Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox*, 182; Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood," 373-5; Linda King Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit," *Sisters in Spirit*, 116.

10. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980), 59; Toscano and Toscano,

be ordained to offices in the church without official acknowledgement of their priesthood or acceptance of their authority by the president of the high priesthood; nevertheless an important beginning is seeing how the fulness of the priesthood given in the temple carries with it the inherent if latent right to perform ordinances and constitute offices.

Why aren't women using their priesthood? Because they are prevented from doing so by the current policy of the church which many assume to be the will of God without examining the historical evidence or theological assumptions behind this policy. But many women are saying that even if the present policy were changed, they would not want to participate in the priesthood structure of the church. Two major reasons are being given for this response, both of which are compelling to me.

First, many women feel they do not want priesthood that is derived from and defined by men. They do not want simply to be incorporated into a male system which would then coopt their energies and talents and subordinate female concerns and desires to the service of the male structure. This is a legitimate concern. How can women function in the priesthood system without losing their personal autonomy and authority?<sup>11</sup> I do not have a complete answer to this question. I am struggling with it, in the same way feminists are struggling with comparable questions dealing with women's relationships to all patriarchal structures. But I do know this: Women cannot simply be incorporated gradually into the male system. They must have immediate access to the highest councils of the church if there is ever to be any equality. I also believe that there must be a major transformation of the entire Mormon priesthood structure and that women must have an important and equal role in redefining and restructuring it. We must rethink the meaning and essence of priesthood. We must reconnect the priesthood with the gospel. We must revive the spiritual dimension of priesthood. And we must move away from outmoded models of control and hierarchy toward the establishment of shared power and priesthood community.

This brings us to the second reason why many women do not use or want to use the priesthood. (And I believe many men feel the same way.) Women do not want to be a part of an abusive, hierarchical system. The question is this: Is it possible to participate in the priesthood system of the church without advancing the abuses that are being done in the name of the priesthood? Let me say first that I think much good has and is being done with the priesthood. Many are using it to serve and love others. However, the problem is deeper than simply a misuse of power; the

---

*Strangers in Paradox*, 151.

11. Men face a similar but not identical dilemma, which is really the question of individual rights versus the common good.

problem is systemic. The very structure of the present priesthood hierarchy sets up abusive power relationships and promotes false concepts of priesthood authority which encourage the misuse of power even by very good people. Here are some of the worst problems I see:

1. The priesthood is used to set up a stratified system of power based on gender, age, race, class, and wealth. Male general authorities, who are predominantly white and affluent, are on the top, while women and children are on the bottom. Spiritual and temporal inequality is fostered, and many groups remain invisible and voiceless.

2. Sharp divisions have been created between members and leaders. Leaders do not have to be accountable to members. They can keep secrets about church finances, history, and procedures, while members are expected to reveal their personal sins and finances.

When disputes arise between leaders and members, the leaders are believed over members; and members have no recourse and little chance of getting an impartial or fair hearing. Members cannot question leaders, and if they do so in public they risk being labelled as apostates. The spiritual gifts of members are not valued on an equal footing with those of leaders.

3. There is an emphasis on ecclesiastical office rather than spirituality, truth, and love. Church office is seen as competence, and deference is given to office rather than to truth. Leaders can contradict the gospel or act against the teachings of Jesus without accountability to those they presumably serve.

4. Priesthood is seen as the right to command, and leaders expect obedience simply because they said so. Whatever the leader says is correct by definition.

5. The checks and balances on the abuse of power have been overlooked. Common consent has been reduced to a loyalty test, and the appeal process is a sham.

6. Emphasis is put on a good public image, the use of titles, and the show of respect for church authorities. In a recent general conference Russell Nelson talked about "proper priesthood protocol" and the sacred nature of titles for church officials.<sup>12</sup> How is it that we have come to a place where titles are considered more sacred than the individual members of the church?

The excommunications which have taken place in the last year dramatically highlight the consequences for those who challenge the authoritarian nature of this system. As I have watched my family and friends being severed from the church one by one, I find myself in a continual state of mourning. My mourning is not simply for my personal losses because of

---

12. Russell M. Nelson, "Honoring the Priesthood," *Ensign* 23 (May 1993): 38-40.

my husband Paul's excommunication or the threat of possible church discipline against me. Though I prize my membership and value the ordinances, I am not afraid of losing my salvation because I know that it rests in the hands of Jesus Christ himself, not with any church leader. What I mourn is the loss of community among the Saints. What I mourn is the loss of a great religion. I love Mormon theology and scriptural texts. I love the temple and believe that priesthood is an eternal principle. But I have seen all of these things used in damaging ways to control people's lives.

Instead of being an instrument for spiritual empowerment to lead each individual to God, the priesthood is too often used to compel obedience to an earthly power system which privileges some people above others. I believe that the priesthood has become the chief idol of the modern church because it is the object we are asked to give allegiance to, above Christ himself.

If the temple, the scriptures, the priesthood, or any other gift from God is seen as more holy than God or the individual members in whom the Spirit of God dwells, then they are idols which must be torn down, rent like the veil of the temple. The priesthood, the temple, the church must be taken down stone by stone and rebuilt again on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ and his love which calls for the spiritual equality of all members, whether rich or poor, black or white, young or old, male or female.

# Faith, Hope, and Charity

*Mary Clyde*

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE WHOLE DIFFICULTY of our friendship was reflected in our names. It wasn't that we had feuding surnames—certainly no Capulets and Montagues—but in fact the conflict was more fundamental because it arose from our given names, choices our parents had deliberately made with connotations they liked and most wanted to hear.

"I have never had a close friend named Christine," she told me with uncharacteristic shyness, either because she had called me a close friend or because the statement acknowledged unreconcilable cultural differences. "There are no Jewish Christines."

Christine as in "Christ," I thought, understanding, but feeling stupid too because it had to be explained to me. It seemed pointless to mention my uncle Christopher as the actual source of inspiration. I sipped the herbal tea she had given me, trying to ignore the cat hair floating in it.

"Your name reminds me of 1 Corinthians, chapter thirteen," I told her. I recited the verses, as any church-going Mormon my age could have. "Faith, hope, and charity. You see, I think 'Faith' is a Christian name, too."

"Let's not mention it to my mother," she whispered, but she said it with complicity, so that I understood her regard for me, as she smiled and passed me bread thickly smeared with exhaustingly sweet halava.

Faith and I were neighbors at 43 Henry Street in Brooklyn Heights when I was new to the city and not just a little lonely. I had observed her family through my peep-hole in front of the elevator: Faith entangled in dog leashes and dogs, and Ben with an assortment of riding toys perched on his shoulders, trying to keep track of their perspective riders: some interchangeable blond children. A family, I thought, with a stab of homesickness for my own in Utah.

It was probably the loneliness more than the ostensible need for an egg that prompted me to cross the hall and knock so boldly on their spectacularly multiple-dead-bolted door. I waited, uncomfortably doubtful about the permissibility of egg-borrowing in New York and intimidated by the sight of an ivory *mezuzah*, ominous to me in my innocence.

But the door was flung open by a small curly-headed six-year-old who

apparently knew nothing of the legend of New York paranoia. Behind her I was greeted first by the organic scent of clutter and then by chaos itself as I was seemingly borne on the shoulders and backs of children and animals to be deposited in front of a thoroughly welcoming Faith. "Hello," I said, knowing that nothing in Pleasant Grove, Utah, had prepared me for this. Pleasant Grove, I thought, where animals were mostly kept outdoors and cleanliness was mostly kept in.

"May I please borrow an egg, please?" I was so confused that I almost curtsied.

But Faith was not queenly. In fact, she was small and round and looked very much like a fairy godmother on her day off. She wore a well-worn jumper and school-girl tights with a mischievous run sneaking up her calf.

"Hello," she said, three times in rapid succession after I introduced myself. "Chris," she said, pronouncing it exotically, "you're new here," she informed me. "Where are you from?"

"Utah," I said and began a mental count. On the count of two—with most people I got to four or five—she asked, "Are you Mormon?"

I nodded my head bravely, never sure what response awaited me. "Oh, nice," she said, generously ecumenical. "We're Jewish. Let's get you a drink."

They took me into their tiny kitchen, and the children and animals followed, piling in like some fraternity prank. They gave me a Dr. Brown's cream soda to drink, which must have seemed to them one of the few safe drinks to offer a Mormon. For no readily discernible reason, they yelled to me, and they yelled around me to each other, and occasionally to the children and animals.

"Chris," Faith shouted, "get some tickets for the Brooklyn Academy of Music. They have them half-price, don't they, Ben?" But Ben was doing his own yelling at two cats that were fighting on top of the refrigerator.

"Have you been to the Cloisters yet?" he asked, when he had separated the cats. I wondered if the suggestion came from some subliminal religious association.

We abruptly left the kitchen when they decided to take me on a tour of the apartment. In their son's bedroom I admired a postage stamp view of the Statue of Liberty as I balanced precariously on his bed with my nose pressed suffocatingly near to the wall. "Great," I said, feeling a little foolish.

"There's an exhibit on Pompeii at the Natural History Museum," Faith told me, still tossing out suggestions of places to visit. "I'm taking a group from the church to see it."

"Church?" I blurted, confused. Synagogue, I thought. "I work at a church, All Saints Episcopal. I'm the assistant coordinator for volunteers and services. Have you noticed that the longer your title is the less important you are? Anyway, I help arrange care for the elderly. I arrange various

outings for interested members, and coordinate community volunteer activities." The equivalent of the Mormon Relief Society, I thought, suddenly at ease, grateful for solid footing wherever I could find it.

They grandly called their furniture antiques, which perplexed me because at home we would have called them old or used. But the furniture was secondary to the books. Like the dozen cats of some elderly woman, the books dozed in corners and brushed against the legs of chairs. Many seemed to have found homes where someone put them down on the way to answer the phone. *Holidays Jewish Children Celebrate* was abandoned next to *Lolita*.

But occasionally I noticed, due to the huge number of them, despite the randomness of their storage, some books were stored in places of odd appropriateness; Hardy's *The Waiting Supper* was over the stove, and Johnson's *The Tale of the Tub* was in fact in the bathroom.

"*Barchester Towers*, my favorite Trollope," Ben said, patting the cover affectionately before he handed it to me.

I negotiated my way around the children and animals (which I had discovered to my amazement numbered only three of each). Faith called my attention to a French pot and an old world *menorah*. When I returned to the peaceful barren quiet of my apartment, I had four books, a subway map, a bagel for my next day's breakfast, and no egg.

I had learned from my short time in the city and now in my neighbors' apartment that westerners move more slowly, but also more quietly and with distance between them. If you asked to borrow an egg in Utah, you got, well, an egg.

It was one of many lessons I was learning as I made an adjustment to New York, freshly M.B.A.-ed, profoundly liberated, and surprisingly employed in commercial lending at a respectably large bank. My new citizenship was wondrously foreign and sometimes frightening.

At home the only person my parents had ever tipped was the waitress at Bob's Big Boy. Now their daughter was tipping a woman standing primly in a public bathroom. A bathroom? Taxis were another problem. Lacking a native's brazen, graceful salute, I had trouble hailing one. I raised my hand tentatively, like a student not entirely sure of his answer. That hesitancy rendered me invisible to cab drivers.

But Faith took me under her wing—or her wand—when she appeared at my door the following Saturday. Looking over my shoulder at my decidedly used furniture, she said, "Great rocking chair," and pointed to my parents' 1955 Sears purchase. She handed me an egg with an apologetic shrug and offered to take me shopping in the neighborhood.

We walked into a warm spring afternoon. Faith showed me the house where Arthur Miller had lived when he became engaged to Marilyn

Monroe. She pointed out a building that had the schizoid past of having housed both a monastery and a brothel.

She introduced me to the butcher as "Chris from Utah," with wonder in her voice, as if I had walked from there. When we left the store she told me that their family didn't really keep kosher though there were some foods they didn't eat because it didn't seem right. When I looked puzzled she explained, "I think we have inherited some restrictions just because we're born into a certain culture. We're stuck. It doesn't always make sense."

"I don't eat bacon," she announced, "but I do love the smell."

"Coffee," I countered, "what a sweet aroma."

As we walked on, she indicated the best pastries at the bakery. And when I asked her where all the drive-up windows were, she gestured grandly as if to indicate the madness of her city, "Taxis, buildings, traffic. Oh, Chris, they wouldn't fit here." And she laughed at the happy incongruity of it.

She greeted nearly everyone we passed enthusiastically, as we walked toward Montague Street, and after they passed she would comment on them with a succinct statement, as if she had read bumper stickers pasted on their hearts. It was the sort of summary that could be carved on a headstone, a tender explanation.

She took me to see her church. It was a large city church now on a very small piece of land. It looked Dickinsonian, encrusted in New York soot with a few worn and tottering headstones in the side yard.

"Do you like your job?" I asked standing in the chapel looking at the solemn colors of the stained-glass Jesus.

"It has so much variety. I get to travel this amazing city, doing all kinds of things. But most of all, I love the people."

But she hadn't answered what I really wanted to know: how it was to be Jewish working there. Did she find it awkward that she didn't belong? What happened when she observed her Sabbath on their Saturday? Did she have to decorate the Christmas tree?

Faith was not so reticent in her questioning of me. She told me that she had once visited Salt Lake City and asked—trying unsuccessfully for nonchalance—if I had any ancestors who were polygamists.

"Why, yes," I said, realizing for the first time the nefarious distinction of the practice. I felt uncomfortable about it, though I knew Faith wouldn't ask me to defend ancestral behavior. As I left, Faith told me sympathetically that she knew that my predecessors had all been the first wives. Somehow, it made it sound as if I were from Siam, and I felt like a movie extra in *The King and I*.

I remembered how New Yorkers sometimes smiled in comprehension when I explained that my accent was from Utah.



"Ah," they would say, "the mid-west." I was pleased to realize that not all the cultural misunderstandings were mine.

Faith called me a few days later to invite me to join the church in picking up litter on the Promenade.

"You can meet some of the people in the neighborhood. Afterward we'll have dessert and coffee. We'll give you your own to smell."

I picked up trash, pausing occasionally to admire the panorama of Manhattan that I had seen in movies all my life. But I also admired Faith. She put an arm around the women; she kissed the men. She fairly danced from a crushed paper cup to a newspaper in flight.

"Faith without works is dead," I thought, thinking I would have shared the scripture with Faith if it had been in the Old Testament instead of the New.

Afterward at the church, as the others drank coffee and I drank herbal tea, I watched Faith talk to an older man who had rubbery, dropping features.

"You know, Jesus was a Jew," he said, gesturing backward, perhaps toward the stained glass of the chapel. I winced at his insensitivity. But I saw that his purpose was to include her, to say that her background was immaterial to him, though he said it apologetically, as if the gesture were doomed.

"You're right," Faith said, simply, as if Jesus being a Jew was a nice touch to this lofty Protestant religion.

In the following months I attended a very off-Broadway play with Faith's group. We then cleaned a shelter for abused women. I told *them* about quilting, grateful for my pioneer heritage.

Sometimes the similarities made me forget the differences. I would remind myself with obvious profundity that we all embraced the Old Testament. But then something trivial—a Yiddish word, the Protestant cross—would startle me into recognizing that we also studied with exclusivity the Torah, the Apocrypha, and the Book Mormon.

I talked about it to Faith one evening as we made kits to distribute to an emergency room. I told her about how I had startled my colleagues that day by ordering a Bloody Mary. "Virgin," I had corrected, speaking too loudly, blushing as if I were making an embarrassing—albeit true—sexual confession.

"I just wanted to order a drink with a little more dignity than a Coke. I'm always making mistakes," I admitted.

"Christine," she said, "it's a journey. A journey," she repeated, pleased by the word. "Just keep working at it. Don't worry."

I ran into Ben a few days later as he was returning from moving the family's rusty Plymouth station wagon from one side of the street to the other.

"Hey," he said, "ask Faith the news." Apparently not able to wait, he continued, "Her boss, the director of volunteers and services, is resigning. Faith has been asked to be acting director until the board is able to meet this week to make a permanent decision." He told me that in the past the assistant who had been the acting head had always been made the director. He interrupted my congratulations by saying that they were premature, but his smile said otherwise.

I paid a congratulatory visit to Faith as I left on a business trip to Ohio. She thanked me for my good wishes and raked her fingers through her hair, curls like those of the infant cherubs at the Metropolitan Museum: short ringlets, innocent of much combing. She straightened her dress, her delicate fingers with the uneven nails stroking the fabric downward, as if preparing even now for the interview.

"Have you been to Cincinnati before?" she asked and joined my laughter realizing that, of course, I had not.

I left my suitcase just inside the apartment door when I returned from my trip. When I visited Faith, I smiled confidently. "Am I speaking to the new director of volunteers and services?"

Faith had some malady of the eyes that caused one of her eyes to focus differently from the other. This lack of harmony gave her a more distracted appearance than was fair to her. It also caused her to rub her eyes, perhaps in an unconscious effort to correct it. She repeated this mannerism now and forced a smile. "They haven't come to a decision yet," she said quickly, and I feared, bravely, trying not to show the hurt.

She told me that they had hired her as the director only until they came to a decision.

"What does that mean?" I was filled with the righteous indignation we save for a wronged friend. "Faith, you need to tell them that it is important for you to know where they stand so that you can make plans. I know that that is a bit intimidating, but how dare they string you along this way!"

Faith looked generally uncertain and definitely miserable. "I don't know. I don't know that that would do anything to further my cause. These men are, well, they are just what you would expect."

I considered how useful those words would be under the viney writing of the name and dates on a headstone: "Just what you would expect."

But I replied, "What I would *expect* is fairness. This is a job you enjoy, a job you do well. Faith, don't let this go. How dare they act this way: indecisive, cruel, incredibly unchristian."

Christian. It almost echoed. I felt my stomach constrict. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say . . .," I mumbled lamely. Faith smiled her cherubic smile. I knew why the elderly parishioners adored her. She answered quietly, "You are right. You are right. Christian." The word held no hope.

I didn't know how to make things better with Faith and I feared making

them worse. I felt trapped in my Mormon-ness, doomed by my provinciality, dimly aware that if Faith had created such a faux pas she could have remedied it. But I didn't know how to ask or receive her forgiveness.

I limited my association with the family to chance meetings in the hall. Shame and remorse caused some unbridgeable gulf between us. But when I saw Ben loading the children, animals, and several suitcases into the back of the Plymouth, I knew that they were going on vacation and that I had to know about Faith's job. The children and Faith waived happily to me through the open car windows. I yelled to them, "Lucky!" and turned to Ben as he shoved in the last "antique" suitcase and slammed the tailgate several times before it latched.

I told him that I had been worried about Faith's job. "Tell me, did she get it?"

Ben showed a flash of emotion and answered unhappily, "I guess that just wasn't meant to be." I was pained but not surprised by the news. Actually, what most startled me was his choice of expression, because it was just what my Mormon father would have said.

"Who got the job, Ben?"

"A board member's niece. Nice fresh-faced *shiksa* with an M.B.A. They've expanded the job to fit her over-qualifications."

"How is Faith?"

"All right, but she is looking for a new job."

He patted my back, returned to the car where he had to nudge an animal out of the way to push in a tattered beach umbrella, then got in. I waved to them and called, "Take me with you." They laughed in happy anticipation of their time at the shore, and drove off, leaving this not so fresh-faced *shiksa* behind.

New York City and I have parted company. I went back west.

I married and we live in a suburb of Salt Lake City. Ordering something to drink is easier. I ask for some "pop" which we all know means a carbonated soft drink—"soda" is what we use in baking. The people I tip are waitresses. And sometimes as I dry my hands in a public rest room I think fondly of the hair-netted women who once stood there in another part of the country.

Most of the time I understand my neighbors. We go to a modern brick chapel together, and they think a request for an egg means a request for an egg, which they answer with precise courtesy and often disappointingly little else.

The "Christmas" card I sent Faith and Ben this year has a picture of our three children, so many years younger than theirs. I wrote in the card that I have finished the new biography on Trollope. I told them that my son, Nathan, wants to be a banker too, because he is optimistically mistaken

about the ownership of money at a bank. I told them we got a dog, just one. And along with whatever other news I could think of that would maintain that tenuous long-distance link between us are the careful words, "I hope that you have a lovely holiday season."

### A Diminished Thing?

*Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society.* By Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992).

Reviewed by Cheryl May, adjunct associate professor of political science, University of Utah.

THE PUBLICATION OF *WOMEN OF Covenant*, during the Relief Society sesquicentennial year, gives us the first comprehensive history of a remarkable women's organization. This account is part of the equally remarkable history of the LDS church over the same period. The 430-page work, thickened with another hundred pages of notes, is painstakingly researched, as one would expect of the respected historians who wrote it. It provides a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history and heritage of Mormon women. It is enlivened by hundreds of individual, human stories of women at every level of Relief Society work as they strove to meet the challenges of their callings, as well as by many a felicitous phrase.

*Women of Covenant* displays the strengths and weaknesses of an "authorized history." The authors seem to have been given access to virtually all of the rich store of records, diaries, pictures, and accounts accumulated over a century and a half by a record-keeping church, and enjoyed other benefits bestowed by a cooperative Relief Society and priesthood leadership. The price paid was a certain loss of independence.

Since all three authors count themselves among the faithful, one might assume considerable consensus between them and the brethren who reviewed the manuscript. But one suspects that the text would have been different in some places if the authors had employed traditional methods of historical analysis, rather than directions from the official readers, in deciding how to deal with controversial issues.

What would appear to be one example of the censor's hand is the fact that while the reasons for releasing most general Relief Society presidents are discussed, no reason is given for President Amy Brown Lyman's release. Since the family and church crisis attending the release were of major magnitude, it seems likely that it was not mentioned because a reader thought it best to avoid discussion of the only twentieth-century excommunication of an apostle—Amy's husband Richard.

This is not to say that *Women of Covenant* glosses over all of the problems and conflicts that punctuated the history of the Relief Society, or always portrays the actors in the drama in a positive light. For example, in simple but powerful prose, the book describes the circumstances of Emmeline B. Wells's release from the Relief Society presidency. Due to her failing health, she had moved into the home of her daughter Annie. A few days after she attended the Relief Society board meeting on 23 March 1921, this self-named "last branch on the tree" of the Nauvoo

Relief Society generation received a visit from church president Heber J. Grant. Grant announced that he was releasing her from her calling: "She was astonished and hurt, knowing that Joseph Smith had declared that 'like the first Presidency of the church,' the Relief Society presidency was 'to continue in office during good behavior, or so long as they shall continue to fill the office with dignity'" (222). The account goes on to mention that none of Emmeline's predecessors had been released in spite of age and ill health, and concludes, "Already ill, and wounded by this final change, Emmeline failed rapidly. She died April 25, 1921" (223). The authors' view of President Grant's insensitivity in dealing such an unnecessary blow to a sister who had given five decades of extraordinary service to the women of the church is not explicitly spelled out. It is nevertheless unmistakable.

Reading through the remarkable chronicle of Relief Society achievement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I am reminded of the surprise and elation of a group of LDS women living in the Boston area when we found copies of the *Woman's Exponent* in Harvard's Widener Library in the late 1960s. For those, including myself, who had thought that Relief Society was mainly a place where women listened to lessons, quilted, and prepared for bazaars, the activities described in the *Exponent* were a revelation. "Ordinary" Mormon housewives had built hundreds of co-op stores and Relief Society halls; had saved thousands of bushels of wheat after the brethren failed in the effort; had spun silk, organized mass rallies, and were national leaders in the women's suffrage crusade. They had sponsored churchwide programs to improve maternal and child health, and sponsored high quality publications and education

programs. This was on top of their daily, one-on-one acts of compassionate service.

Most of these activities would have been considered by the surrounding Victorian world to be beyond women's capacities and against their essential natures. But as this volume makes clear these women were inspired by their testimonies of the Mormon gospel to which they had converted, and by the mandate given to the original Relief Society by Joseph Smith. The prophet made clear that the society was not to be just another "women's benevolent society," with a standard constitution and by-laws. Instead, it was the agency through which the daughters of God were to prepare for their eternal future as heavenly queens and priestesses. This vision, combined with the support of priesthood leaders who desperately needed their talents and energies to meet the challenges of the desert kingdom, unleashed an unparalleled half-century of Relief Society achievement.

The second half of the book, reviewing the period from 1922 to the present, continues to chronicle impressive Relief Society achievements. But the idea so often repeated by Eliza R. Snow that Relief Society enabled Mormon women to extend their capacity for service to a "wider sphere" clearly loses ground. The reasons for the society's loss of financial autonomy, loss of its publications, loss of direction over welfare and social service work, loss of its direct access to upper priesthood councils often make sense. A worldwide church demands clear and simplified organization and unity among all of its components.

In the concluding chapter, the authors point to the fact that though many opportunities for leadership development have been taken away from

the Relief Society sisters, the opportunity to perform charitable acts under the guidance of divine inspiration remains—a somewhat ironic interpretation, perhaps, of the organization's "Charity Never Faileth" theme. The power of compassionate service is no trifling thing, and *Women of Covenant* reviews many inspiring examples of Relief Society women at the general and local level exercising ingenuity, initiative, and often sacrifice as well in the exercise of this great gift.

We comprehend the reasons for the great changes in the power and scope of Relief Society concern in recent years, and might even agree with Emmeline B. Wells's conclusion at the end of her life that "Nothing has been irretrievably lost." Still, in comparing the magnificent past with the present prospects of the Relief Society, I am reminded of Robert Frost's poem about flowers at the end of the summer that closes with a reference to "what to do with a diminished thing."

## A History of Two Stories

*Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society.* By Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992).

Reviewed by Peggy Pascoe, professor of history, University of Utah.

THERE IS A MOMENT IN *WOMEN OF COVENANT* I find absolutely haunting. It comes at the end of chapter 6—or, put another way, at the beginning of the twentieth century—at a moment when Emmeline B. Wells, perhaps the best-known of all the Relief Society's long line of presidents, worried over whether anyone would remember her lifetime of work as a Mormon, a feminist, and a leader of women's organizations. In this rather discouraged moment, Wells tried her best to turn fear into hope. She wrote: "History may not have preserved it all, there may be no tangible record of what has been gained, but sometime we shall know that nothing has been irretrievably lost" (223).

Like generations of women before

her, Mormon and non-Mormon, Emmeline Wells realized that despite her many accomplishments her history was a precarious one. Whether her life story would be preserved depended on a leap of faith—her faith that women of future generations could and would remember and honor her. The academic field we now know as the history of women, a field that burst onto the scene in the 1970s, came into being through many similar acts of faith, as women of our own time set out to honor women of earlier days, some long forgotten, others whose life stories had been covered over by layer on layer of stereotype and misunderstanding. In *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society*, Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher honor the legacy of women like Emmeline B. Wells, leaders they see as a part of their tradition of Mormonism.

I am not Mormon, but I too find something inspiring about Emmeline Wells, because Wells was the leader of the Relief Society who was most con-

cerned with—and most successful at—building bridges between Mormon and non-Mormon women. In her long and distinguished career, the highlights were moments when she was able to carry off this delicate balancing act. As Utah vice president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, Wells built coalitions with the best-known feminists of her day, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. As delegate to the National and International Councils of Women, she brought news of Mormon life to non-Mormon women most of whom were inclined to dismiss Mormon women as nothing more than deluded practitioners of polygamy. As editor of the famous *Utah Woman's Exponent*, she brought news of women outside Utah to her sisters in the state. In other words, Wells was what politicians of the 1990s might call a first-class coalition builder; she was the kind of person who always looked for common ground.

Common ground is something that has been in rather short supply between Mormons and non-Mormons. Nowhere is this truer than in the writing of Mormon history. Ever since news of Joseph Smith began to filter out of his small New York community in the 1820s and 1830s, there have been deep disagreements between Mormon and non-Mormon historians about how to tell the story of Mormonism. Relations between Mormon and non-Mormon women have been shaped by these dividing lines. But as the history of Emmeline Wells indicates, there have also been times, such as the first two decades of the twentieth century, when Mormon women leaders emphasized what they had in common with women in the outside society.

The LDS Relief Society is, I think, a particularly interesting group through

which to examine this history of conflict and common cause between Mormon and non-Mormon women. Despite its claims for uniqueness, the Relief Society had a great deal in common with more mainstream women's organizations of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century Relief Society not only supported the central feminist demand of the period—the fight for votes for women—it supported suffrage earlier and more forcefully than many other non-Mormon women's clubs. But in the twentieth century, the Relief Society found itself in a much different position: in the 1970s and 1980s it was almost alone among women's organizations in opposing the central feminist demand of that period—the Equal Rights Amendment.

The contrast suggests, I think, that there is a very interesting story to be told about what happened to the Relief Society between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The authors of *Women of Covenant* have provided a valuable service in giving us a way to get started. Immersing themselves in the records of the Relief Society, they have traced its development from its beginnings in 1842 to the present. Their account significantly expands our knowledge of the history of an organization which has until now been thought of by most historians (if they think of it at all) as a nineteenth-century phenomenon. In so doing, they have not only honored and preserved Emmeline Wells's history, they have given historians of women yet another reason to read more Mormon women's history. (A good starting point is Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., *Sisters in Spirit* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987].)

What I want to do is to read *Women of Covenant*, a story presented by church



insiders, from the perspective of an outsider, paying special attention to two themes: first, the rise and fall of common ground between Mormon and non-Mormon women; second, the long history of Mormon women leaders' conflicts with male church officials. I will start by putting things in context, describing how the nineteenth-century Relief Society fits into the larger pattern of the history of U.S. women's organizations, then I will move on to consider what I think of as the most intriguing question raised by the book: how to interpret the situation of Mormon women in the twentieth century.

Although historians of Mormonism tend to treat everything about the church as if it were unique, there is, I think, a good deal about the Relief Society that echoes the history of other nineteenth-century women's organizations. The most obvious parallel between the two is that both had their origins primarily in charitable activities. In setting out to care for the needy, the Relief Society echoed a pattern of women's organizations that had come into its own in benevolent and charitable societies started and run by women in the early years of the American republic. Sometimes these women's charitable organizations were local and sometimes regional, sometimes they were denominational and sometimes interdenominational. Seeking out the needy in their communities, women's organizations took it upon themselves to offer help. Often, their goals were expressed in their names, such as the New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children, the Boston Society for Employing the Female Poor, the Seamen's Aid Society, and so on. As they gained experience and confidence in their abilities, they graduated from granting individual relief to building institutions, from

lying-in hospitals to homes for reformed prostitutes, from orphan asylums to juvenile reformatories. By 1900, women's organizations had established nationwide networks ranging from missionary and temperance groups to suffrage organizations.

One of the contributions the authors of *Women of Covenant* make is to show that the LDS Relief Society is part of this larger tradition. As they put it, the Relief Society has often played "the role of change agent, recognizing a need and demonstrating how it could be met by the Church at large" (108). The list of Relief Society innovations is long and impressive. In addition to providing relief to individual families, its nineteenth-century members organized stores in which women sold home manufactures on commission, started a silk industry, established and operated their own Deseret Hospital, and created a grain storage program that seems to me so innovative as to be almost unique in women's organizational annals. Its twentieth-century members opened the Cottonwood Maternity Hospital; they also administered a Department of Social Services that offered an employment bureau, an adoption service, foster home care, and an Indian child placement service.

By any standard I can think of, the turn-of-the-century Relief Society was an organizational success. By 1888, it had financial assets of more than \$95,000, a substantial sum for the day; by 1917, it had assets of more than \$750,000. The authors of *Women of Covenant* provide a snapshot of Relief Society activities in 1917: in that year the society's 45,000 members made 78,000 visits to sick people, helped nearly 6,000 families in need, prepared 2,311 bodies for burial, and dispensed \$53,000 to charity. In addition to its charitable activities and

financial achievements, the society also created (the word they used was "mothered") spinoff societies, including both the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association and the Primary Association.

The Relief Society shared with other women's organizations a tradition of devotion to charitable activities, and it shared with them a characteristic style of speaking, a rhetoric heavily laced with notions of women as benevolent domestic beings devoted to family, community, and sisterhood between women. By 1900, this rhetoric had taken on a strong undertone of activism for women's rights. One evidence of this was the widespread support for women's suffrage; another was that women's organizations sponsored a whole variety of legal reforms. As the authors of this book demonstrate, during the first two decades of the twentieth century the Relief Society cooperated with non-Mormon women in a number of Utah reforms. Together, they worked to establish a juvenile court, to pass a minimum-wage law for women, to appoint a woman to the minimum-wage commission, and to pass a widowed mothers' pension law.

The reform victories in Utah, impressive as they were, were hardly unusual. One of the major contributions of the field of women's history is to show the extent and significance of women's charitable and reform networks across the nation. In fact, historians of women have shown that despite the fact that the typical women's organization depended on voluntary labor, scraped by on a shoestring budget, and turned up its nose at bureaucracy, it was the patient labor of women's organizations that laid the basis for what we now call the welfare state. It is, I might say in passing, more than a little ironic that

most Americans now identify the welfare state primarily with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "New Deal"—ironic, but typical of a long-term historical pattern in which women poured their heart and soul into women's institutions only to find that as soon as they became successful the institutions were taken over by men—and only at that point were they deemed significant enough to enter the historical record.

Those thoughts bring me to the third thing the Relief Society had in common with other women's organizations: its long history of losing control over its projects to male officials. To explain this dynamic, I must say something about a pattern which characterized most women's organizations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a dynamic I think of as the search for female moral authority. (For more information, see my *Relations of Rescue* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990].) As participants in the search for female moral authority, women tried to turn a pervasive Victorian stereotype to its best advantage. Living in a time when both men and women identified women primarily with domesticity, motherhood, and morality, women tried to turn this moral influence into real authority. In effect, they accepted a kind of Victorian bargain: yes, they said, women are more moral, more charitable, and more religious than men, so let women manage moral, charitable, and religious affairs all by themselves.

I call this dynamic the "search" for female moral authority because even in the largest and most independent groups, Protestant missionary societies, women never quite succeeded at turning influence into authority. The difference between influence and authority was significant. People with influence

are listened to politely, but may be dismissed, while people with authority have the power to enforce their opinions. And if Protestant women had a hard time making their claims to authority stick, women of the LDS Relief Society had an even harder time. Protestant women had, after all, an advantage, because Protestant men were so busy turning away from the church to concentrate on politics and business that they all but surrendered the field of morality to women. No such thing happened in the Mormon church, however, for Mormon men retained such strong claims to religious and moral authority that Mormon women had no real argument that women were better equipped than men to be moral arbiters of society. As a result, Mormon women had little bargaining power to use with church leaders.

Once we understand the situation Mormon women leaders were in, the history of the Relief Society ends up being two stories: first, the overt story of a proud tradition of impressive charitable and community achievements and, second, a much sadder story of women continually losing control over their work to men. The authors of this book would like to emphasize that Mormon prophet Joseph Smith intended from the beginning to give women "keys" (or authority) to certain aspects of church and charitable work, but whatever Smith's intentions may have been in theory, in practice it seems clear that Mormon women were expected to remain subordinate to the all-male priesthood. The pattern was clear as early as the 1840s, when Joseph Smith's wife Emma tried to use her influence as the first Relief Society president to encourage women to express their distress about the new system of polygamy. As the authors of the book comment, "In pit-

ting her authority against that of the prophet through whom her authority had come, and in planting disorder and disunity among the sisters, Emma Smith had erred egregiously" (62). Emma Smith quickly felt the consequences of her so-called error. The Relief Society was disbanded and would not be reconstituted for almost twenty years. When a new society did emerge, it was placed under the leadership of Eliza Snow, a woman notable for her willingness to adhere to the dictates of priesthood authority. Snow told her followers, "We will do as we are directed by the Priesthood," and under her leadership they did (62).

Once these general lines of lines of authority were established, most conflicts between Mormon women and men were played out over specific projects rather than on the larger issue of organizational autonomy. But whatever the issue the pattern remained the same: in a system in which men started out with more power than women calls to make sacrifices for the "unity" and "harmony" of the church inevitably meant that women would have to give in to men. In the name of unity and harmony, Relief Society women repeatedly closed projects that were judged unsuccessful and gave projects that were judged successful over to men. For now, one example will suffice. Nineteenth-century Mormon women pioneered in demonstrating the need for modern health care by opening the Deseret Hospital. But by 1896 the hospital had closed; when the LDS Hospital replaced it in 1905, Relief Society sisters were asked to provide its linens but offered no role in its management.

As I have tried to suggest, until about 1920 Mormon and non-Mormon women's organizations had a great deal in common. They shared a devotion to

charity, a language of female domesticity, and a continual, if usually unsuccessful, search for control over their work. In the 1920s, however, the two groups began to move apart.

In many ways, the 1920s were crucial years for the history of American women. Until the 1920s Victorian rhetoric about women had provided common ground on which to build not only charitable projects but also formidable arguments for social reform and women's rights. In 1920 the height was reached with the passage of women's suffrage. But if the surface story was one of success, just beneath the surface the ground was about to shift dramatically. Passage of women's suffrage created a dilemma for mainstream women's organizations: What should be done next? Some argued that the logical plan was to continue in the old path of women's charitable sisterhoods; others argued that women should devote themselves to the cause of world peace; still others insisted that the logical next step was to replace the old rhetoric of moral influence and female sisterhood with a new rhetoric of individual equality. Although it would take them until the 1970s to consolidate their victory, the advocates of individual equality would win in the end.

There were several reasons for the triumph of the rhetoric of women's equality. One is that the 1920s was the decade which marked the gradual disintegration of Victorian culture and its replacement with one version or another of what historians are now calling Modernist culture. The shift toward modernism eroded the influence of both Victorian morality and evangelical religion; accordingly, it left women who continued to emphasize female morality and piety with a dwindling audience. Another reason is that the 1920s

was a decade in which young women were caught up in one of the most notable of American generation gaps; they were far more likely to disdain tradition—especially Victorian tradition—than to follow in their mothers' footsteps. To young women of the 1920s, women's liberation was important, but it was more a matter of sexual expression and wage work than benevolence or social reform. As a result, women's organizations went through a substantial reorganization: those which survived and thrived (and those which pointed the way toward the future) were much less gender-conscious, much less moral and religious, and much less all-around "Victorian" than their predecessors.

All those, I should say, except for the LDS Relief Society. In the decade between 1910 and 1920, the Relief Society was, like other women's organizations, at the height of its influence. Under the presidency of Emmeline B. Wells, the Relief Society was enjoying its widest political influence and was enjoying its greatest cooperation with non-Mormon women. But like other women's organizations the surface success was deceptive, for the Relief Society too was about to be turned in a new direction. Oddly enough, though, its new direction would come from holding on to old values. As historian Lawrence Foster once aptly argued, in the twentieth century, Mormons tried to out-Victorian the Victorians ("From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity," *Journal of Mormon History* 6 [1979]: 3-21). For the Relief Society, this meant that they held firm to the old notions of morality, religion, and domesticity for women.

In taking this path Mormon women had the support of Mormon men. Yet simply by holding on to their

traditional values both groups moved further and further out of step with the world around them. It is not, I think, too much to say that since the 1920s Mormon women and men have been on something of a collision course with the twentieth century. In interpreting these years, the authors of *Women of Covenant* tend to echo the rhetoric of Relief Society leaders of the period. In their eyes the 1920s was a time when church leaders tried to prevent "the moral fabric of the western world [from] unraveling" (240); World War II was a time when "efforts to strengthen family life became more urgent" (281); the 1960s and early 1970s were a time "plagued" by "discontent with the status quo" and "a time of ferment and dropouts, high ideals and bitter rebellion" (329). The only decade Relief Society leaders felt in harmony with was the 1950s, which, they said, was a hopeful, "halcyon" time (329).

I cannot disagree with this interpretation more. Like most U.S. historians, I am inclined to see the 1920s as the crucial beginning point of "modern" America and the 1960s as the formative decades of contemporary America. The 1950s seem to me to be the most exceptional of twentieth-century decades, and therefore the most dangerous to single out as either a model for the future or a focus for nostalgia. But despite this basic disagreement, I feel some empathy for the women of the Relief Society because as it turned out they spent much of the twentieth century in a defensive posture, trying to protect themselves from male church leaders' attempts to gain control over Relief Society enterprises.

Much to her dismay, the crucial first steps in this process were taken during the Relief Society presidency of Emmeline Wells. Significantly, church leaders

started by urging Mormon women to withdraw from cooperation with other women's groups. In 1914, for example, church president Joseph F. Smith told women he did not want "to see the time when our Relief Societies will follow or commingle and lose their own identity by mixing up with these woman-made organizations that are coming to pass" (218).

The second step was already in progress. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, church leaders announced a program of "correlation" that was supposed to bring efficiency and order to church programs. The authors of *Women of Covenant* have been polite in exploring the results of this program; they do their best to describe the changes as healthy adaptation to new challenges. Still, there seems little doubt that the Mormon Relief Society was one of the central victims of the campaign for church correlation.

The list of Relief Society losses is almost overwhelming. In 1915, for example, Emmeline Wells and the society lost control over its beloved grain storage program when church leaders directed the women to move their grain to "elevators owned and conducted by responsible parties" (181). In 1918, the Presiding Bishopric sold all the grain, then amounting to more than 200,000 bushels, to the U.S. government. They did so without even consulting the women, then added insult to injury by announcing the sale in a letter sent out in the women's names. When Relief Society leaders protested, the bishopric agreed to give women the interest (but not the principal) that would accumulate on the profit from the sale. In the name of harmony and adaptation, women acquiesced in this decision, then decided to use the interest money to finance a program of maternal and child welfare

work that was considerably less innovative than the remarkable grain storage project.

In 1921 Emmeline Wells had to endure yet another blow. She became the first Relief Society president ever to be relieved of her duties before her death. The Relief Society, of course, found new leaders, but the loss of control continued. In the 1930s church leaders redirected women's welfare work into priesthood channels; by 1939 they began mailing the interest checks on the wheat fund to bishops instead of to Relief Society presidents (260, 268). In the 1960s the Relief Society lost control of its home teaching programs. In 1970 the society lost its financial independence and turned all its assets—then totaling more than \$2 million—over to church leaders. Soon afterward, the *Relief Society Magazine* was condensed into a couple of pages in a larger church publication. In 1971 the society lost control over its membership when the church directed that every woman in the church would automatically be registered as a member (345). Although there were always plenty of Relief Society activities, the overall pattern of organizational losses cannot be denied. Between 1915 and 1970 there was only one significant exception to the rule: in 1956, after more than fifty years of planning, the women of the Relief Society were finally able to build their own building. No wonder they looked so longingly to the 1950s.

The history of the Relief Society I have been telling here is one with which I expect the authors of *Women of Covenant* would disagree. As church insiders, they record this litany of losses but tend to interpret them as inevitable adaptations to change, as triumphs for church unity and harmony. They look forward to what they call a "brilliant

future" (420). Unable to find much evidence for this contention in the actual record of male church leaders, they console themselves that "Women of the twentieth century, like their sisters of the nineteenth, have learned to reach for and receive the assurances of the Spirit that their service is accepted" (431).

I must say, though, that I think it is hard to tell the tale of the Relief Society in the twentieth century as a story of progress toward perfection. Indeed, I think the evidence suggests that the LDS Relief Society approached its sesquicentennial in 1992 in something of a crisis. One part of this crisis was the long history of losing control to male church leaders. Another was the estrangement between Mormon and non-Mormon women's organizations, which reached its worst point in the 1970s fight over the Equal Rights Amendment. But perhaps the most urgent part of the crisis was the growing number of Mormon women who seemed disaffected from the Relief Society. As the authors of *Women of Covenant* point out, the Relief Society has been "forced now, perhaps more than in any previous era, to be conscious of itself less as a charitable organization than as a group representing church attitudes toward women" (359).

Representing Mormon women of the 1990s is a task for which the central legacies of twentieth-century Relief Society history—the rhetoric of domesticity and the example of the 1950s—are simply inadequate preparation. I suspect that Relief Society leaders know this all too well. One of the most interesting things about the last chapter of *Women of Covenant* is that Relief Society leaders who once spoke of "strengthening the family" (in the singular) are now beginning to speak of "families" in the plural, to talk less about married women and more about women they

call "unmarried sisters," and to say less about women's shared experiences and more about women's diversity.

In writing *Women of Covenant*, Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher have done their best to honor the legacy of 150 years of the LDS Relief Society. Because of their efforts, Emmeline Wells,

for one, can rest assured that she will not be forgotten. Whether the church Wells loved so much will ever honor her hope that, as she put it, some day "The man and the woman will be equal" remains to be seen (179). It is a question about which the history of the Relief Society offers much food for thought.

## Secrets under the Surface

*Crazy for Living: Poems*. By Linda Sillitoe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993).

Reviewed by Emma Lou Thayne, author, *Things Happen: Poems of Survival*.

JUST UNDER THE SURFACE OF THE OBVIOUS lie the secrets. Linda Sillitoe sees, hears, tastes them, feels where they lead, trusts them, takes us along. It is never a perilous journey. Rather, it resounds with understanding and connectedness.

As a journalist she sees beginnings and ends. Behind her observations is always the story. Images are accurate and suggestive of more: In "Driving to Work in Winter," she tells us "Possibilities appear before me like green semaphores." So do they in her poems.

In "Writing Copy" the grotesque in the news floods into a real day and "the sheepish guy in the parking/ terrace who waits in his warm car." Sillitoe's encounters with the otherwise hidden seep into her lines and into the consciousness of the reader. By some subterranean tug we follow "the journalist" "like our lost halos/ tipping us to/ who rolls our spotty dice/ in every game."

In "November's End, 1979," we see "women in a yellow room,/ and me seeing not the future/ but us where we

were/ like dew on a slick leaf/ in the murmurous night."

This musical maneuvering is the poet with a keen ear and eye interpreting disillusionment in "an elegy in lower case" as eloquently as transcendence in "sonnet for spring" or nostalgia in "During Recess."

In "Killer" the poet merges with the Navajo sun that attracts her deepest yearning and cleanses her of the nightmares of a murderer she has written about in her earlier *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders*, and concludes with deadly aim, "a sane man lives by his heart./ A crazy man lives in his head."

In Part II, "Journeys in Tandem," cadence flows undeterred by invasion of other forces than the different *two's* together, in "an intricate, slow unfolding" or crickets "violining melodies pitched/ between currents of our speech." She can explain on that enchanted lower level and sometimes in lower case the attachments, the arrivals, the leavings, full of the poignancy, the joys, the flailings—of family, lover, generations, the earth, even creation.

Armed with infallible instinct, Sillitoe is never dull—or without surprise.

Whimsy startles a wry encounter with reality in "To an ESTJ from an INFP with love": "Threads become dust, an architect's foe. I can always do it again."

In the title poem, "crazy for living," she convinces us "we hone our weapons carelessly/ and hide our injuries./ we never cry." Separation pulls at the time together as "we huddle and circle. we fly as if unaware/ that an explosion coils in every flower's heart."

Section III, "Journeys Between," moves seamlessly into the mystic to "see how far we can go against what currents/ only to reach old shores in unexpected ways." The poet provides the passage and the travel, drawing on her intimate acquaintance with Indian lore and practice together with her intuitive connection to the land and those who live in harmony with it. A crystal or an eagle can be medicine for a shattered spirit in "exploring a strange land through the narrow passages/ where harm does not come" ("Journey Poem 1").

Loveliness plays counterpoint to scavenging just as the poet is "soothed and disturbed" ("Journey Poem II")

"drawn by the vortex" ("Journey Poem III") of what "happened before—the vision and the road block."

From these poems comes a new enlightening and lifting, yes, even a lilt, in the face of distance and return to the commonplace: "Now in the barn, you sing to your horses/ as you pour out their oats. That song enters/ my window now as I prepare dinner,/ winding peace around me, a soft balancing light."

Like a healer herself, Linda Sillitoe sees the miracle as "everything connects, the fissures race." She has seen "eagle feathers die and live again." She has held stones that "fit my hands," that "soften as we learn/ a common pulse."

This poet and these poems are messengers of heart, mind, and spirit that bring their mystery and magic as alive and rewarding to me as if they were my own. With Linda I can be sure "Tonight where the sky is whole/ mesa to mesa, no clouds, no lights/ but theirs, the little people pipe/ their own melodies around the moon."

Read these poems and find the stars.



# Marcus

*Brent Pace*

It is not that I miss you now  
but I miss it—when I  
swallowed your finger the first night  
and restrained myself in deference to  
your more familiar Eric von something  
who calls you “muffin.”

I warm soup tonight on  
a stove that burns too hot  
and sleep in the living room  
for the stench of my bedroom’s new paint,  
Alaskan White.

And I find no wisdom here—the ashtray  
in the shape of a frog, the man  
who grills salami in the street  
before my house, the soft rattle  
noises of Rex the bunny in his  
wire cage. I simply don’t find you.

And then you come to take your clothes  
with Michael in your car. I’ve  
washed more windows since you last  
were here, have scraped paint from  
the panes with a razor blade. I’ve  
lost three books of matches.

You are past, not yet memory, the line  
between two New England cities where  
the trash begins to grow thick along  
the streets. Like seeing the twins,  
a niece and nephew, once before I  
left, lying still like a bundled  
yin and yang on a couch at home.



## CONTRIBUTORS

---

JANICE ALLRED and her husband David live in Provo, Utah, and are the parents of nine children. "Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother" was presented at the 1992 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, Utah.

LYNN MATTHEWS ANDERSON received a B.A. in English from Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, in 1977, and served in the Belgium-Brussels Mission of the LDS church from 1978 to 1979. She is currently working on a study of Mormon feminist theology.

MARNI ASPLUND-CAMPBELL lives in Orem, Utah, with her husband Greg and two children, Eliza and Thomas.

JANINE BOYCE holds a B.A. in history from Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. She lives in Maryland with her husband Steven and son Andrew.

MARTHA SONNTAG BRADLEY, author of *Kidnapped from that Land: The Government Raids on the Polygamists of Short Creek*, is co-editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and teaches at the University of Utah. She is a partner in History Projects, Inc., a public history writing firm.

NEWELL G. BRINGHURST, an instructor in history and political science, College of the Sequoias, Visalia, California, is author of *Brigham Young and the Expanding American Frontier*. He is currently completing a book-length biography of Fawn McKay Brodie.

MARY CLYDE graduated from Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and received an M.A. in English from the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. She writes fiction and lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

MICHAEL R. COLLINGS lives in Thousand Oaks, California.

DAVID HALL, a Ph.D. student at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is currently working on a biography of Amy Brown Lyman. He thanks the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, as well as Vera White Pohlman, Leona Fetzer Wintch, Amy Lyman Engar, and Jill Mulvay Derr.

LAURA HAMBLIN lives in Orem, Utah. She teaches English part time at Utah Valley State College.

HELYNNE H. HANSEN holds a Ph.D. in French from the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, and is assistant professor of modern languages at Western State College of Colorado.

TIM B. HEATON teaches courses on social inequality, population, and family demographics in the Department of Sociology at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. He appreciates suggestions from Bill Heaton, Cardell Jacobson, Arland Thornton, and an anonymous reviewer.

"LINDA JOHNS" was born and raised in the LDS church, served a full-time mission, and graduated from the University of Utah. She lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

LANCE LARSEN holds a Ph.D. from University of Houston and teaches English at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. His poetry has appeared in *New Republic*, *Salmagundi*, *Poetry*, *Shenandoah*, and elsewhere.

GUENEVERE NELSON is a student at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

BRENT PACE graduated from Brigham Young University in 1988 with a degree in French. He currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he works as a counselor in a half-way house for mentally-ill adults.

HILDA KATHRYN ERICKSON PACK resides with her husband Jim and their seven children in San Diego, California. She formerly taught history in the Davis (Utah) School District.

JOLEEN ASHMAN ROBINSON lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

ERIN R. SILVA is an architect in Salt Lake City, Utah. An earlier version of "Matricidal Patriarchy: Some Thoughts toward Understanding the Devaluation of Women in the Church" was delivered at Spaces and Silences: An Enhanced Women's Conference, 28 Apr. 1993, Salt Lake City.

ANITA TANNER lives in Cortez, Colorado, with her husband and their two teenagers.

MARGARET MERRILL TOSCANO is coauthor (with her husband Paul) of *Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology*.

LAUREL THATCHER ULRICH is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard*. An earlier version of "Border Crossings" was presented at the northeast Sunstone Symposium, 13 Nov. 1993, Boston, Massachusetts.

HOLLY WELKER studies literary nonfiction at the University of Iowa.



## ARTIST'S STATEMENT by Lee Bennion

My paintings deal with form, color, and feeling. Although I primarily paint the human figure, portraiture is not one of my main concerns. Sometimes a likeness of the model occurs, and I enjoy this when it happens. I mostly paint myself, my daughter, and my friends. I have been asked why I don't paint more men. The answer to this lies in the fact that my work is very personal in content. Painting is the way in which I tell others (and often myself) about my feelings and experiences. Images come from my subconscious, and it takes months of living with certain pieces before I understand what the images mean.

Over the last few years I have painted more still life and landscapes. The still life reflects the contents of my home, studio, and gardens. As with my figurative work, I tend not to use the objects as a model for too long. I love to work from memory, using feelings and affections for people and things to guide my work. I believe the paintings are stronger this way. The same thing is true in my landscapes. So far I have not felt comfortable painting on location. My paintings of places are done back in the quiet of my studio, based on visual memories and feelings. They are more a record of how I felt there than what the place actually looked like.

As a child I was drawn to the works of Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Dürer. When I was at Brigham Young University, Trevor Southey was my first teacher and mentor. Bruce Smith was also an influence on me there. Both good men gave me plenty of space to develop my own style, and they were helpful in their critiques, prodding and pushing me to activate my heart and mind while working with my hands. I still admire the works of Van Gogh and Gauguin, but have some new heroes today: the Swedish painter Carl Larson, Minerva Tiechert, Georgia O'Keefe, and Maynard Dixon to name a few. I also love folk art of all kinds.

## ART

Front Cover: "The Guardians," 1991, oil painting, 30" x 56"

Back Cover: "Canyon Passage," 1993, oil painting, 12" x 16"

p. x: "Morning Ritual," 1991, oil painting, 36" x 48"

p. 8: "Persephone," 1992, oil painting, 42" x 58"

p. 14: "The Paper Cutter," 1992, oil painting, 30" x 36"

p. 40: "The Flowers of Havasu," 1993, oil painting, 18" x 24"

p. 56: "Reflections," 1993, oil painting, 40" x 30"

p. 92: "Quiet Model," 1993, oil painting, 18" x 24"

p. 128: "Self with Adah," 1993, oil painting, 20" x 26"

p. 138: "A Woman in the River; Baptism," 1993, oil painting, 36" x 30"

p. 156: "Sanpete Poplars," 1993, oil painting 14.5" x 18"

p. 204: "Red and Green Rhubarb," 1993, oil painting, 36" x 30"

p. 248: "Divine Meditation," 1994, oil painting, 26" x 18"

FORTHCOMING IN  
*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*  
FALL 1994

"Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry':  
The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism,"  
*by Michael W. Homer*

"Joseph Smith and Kabbalah:  
The Occult Connection,"  
*by Lance S. Owens*

"The Locations of Joseph Smith's Early Treasure Quests,"  
*by Dan Vogel*

"One Face of the Hero:  
In Search of the Mythological Joseph Smith,"  
*by Edgar C. Snow, Jr.*

"From Temple Mormon to Anti-Mormon:  
The Ambivalent Odyssey of Increase Van Dusen,"  
*by Craig L. Foster*

"The Temple:  
Historical Origins and Religious Value,"  
*by Edward H. Ashment*

"Toward an Introduction to a Psychobiography of Joseph Smith,"  
*by Robert D. Anderson*

# THE MORMON WOMEN'S FORUM

Founded in 1988, we invite all people to examine women's issues, particularly within the context of Mormonism. We make no formal demands on any organization or system of belief. We do, however, examine and question traditional interpretations of women's roles, their history, and their relationship to deity.

---

## *Counterpoint Conference*

The Mormon Women's Forum announces its second annual Counterpoint Conference, to be held November 4-5 in Salt Lake City. This conference is dedicated to the discussion of Mormon women's issues.

**We are now accepting proposals and papers for review**

---

### ***Mormon Women's Forum: An L.D.S. Feminist Quarterly***

Subscriptions are: \$12.00 for 4 issues or \$22.00 for 8 issues

***Articles are now being accepted for review***

---

#### ***Listen to our new radio broadcast!***

The Mormon Women's Forum will be airing a new radio show the last Thursday of every month at 12:30 P.M. -1:00 P.M. on KRCL 91 FM.

#### ***For information write to:***

The Mormon Women's Forum,  
P.O. Box 58281, Salt Lake City,  
UT 84158, or call  
(801) 297-2120 - Salt Lake County  
(801) 370-3839 - Utah County

# **A Woman's Place Bookstore** recommends. . .

## ***The Great Cosmic Mother***

"Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth"

by Monica Sjoo & Barbara Mor

\$17.95 (HarperSanFrancisco)

## ***The Once & Future Goddess***

"The Sacred Female and Her Reemergence in Cultural Mythology"

by Eleanor W. Gadon

\$26 (HarperSanFrancisco)

## ***Sacred Stories***

"A Celebration of the Power of Stories to Transform and Heal"

Ed. Anne Simpkinson & Charles Simpkinson

\$14 (HarperSanFrancisco)

## ***Women's Rituals***

"A Source Book"

by Barbara Walker

\$14 (HarperSanFrancisco)

## ***Weaving the Visions***

"New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality"

by Judith Plaskow & Carol P. Christ

\$15 (HarperSanFrancisco)



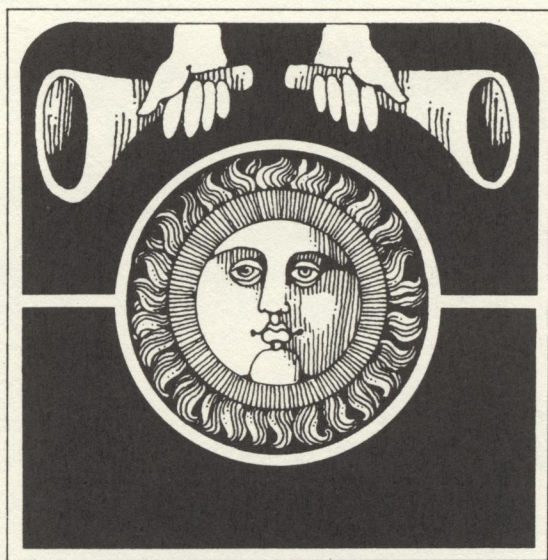
**BOOKSTORE**

Foothill Village  
Cottonwood Mall  
Park City Plaza  
Hidden Valley Center

*Books, by, about, and for women.*



T W E N T Y   Y E A R S   O F  
CELEBRATING MORMON  
EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES, & ART



1   .   9   .   9   .   4  
SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM  
17-20 AUGUST • SALT LAKE HILTON HOTEL

•  
THEMES: EVALUATING SUNSTONE'S HISTORY  
THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH

•  
PROPOSALS FOR PAPERS & PANELS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

•  
CALL OR WRITE TO RECEIVE PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

•  
SUNSTONE 331 RIO GRANDE, STE. 206 SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84101 801/355-5926



# DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

P. O. BOX 658  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT, 84110-0658

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT  
PERMIT NO. 4559

