

DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

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The Struggle for Female Authority in Biblical and Mormon Theology

Cory Crawford

Because for a very long time the office of high priestess had been forgotten and her characteristic features were nowhere indicated, I bethought myself day after day. The appointed time arrived, the doors were opened for me. Indeed I set my eyes on the ancient stele of Nebuchadnezzar . . . on which was depicted an image of the high priestess. . . . I carefully looked into the old clay and wooden tablets and did exactly as in the olden days.

—Nabonidus, King of Babylon¹

In every century including our own, history records women exercising leadership in Christian communities, and in every century that leadership has been contested, beginning in the early church and continuing through contemporary battles over the ordination and ministry of women.

—Karen King²

The introductory heading to the canonized 1978 First Presidency letter announcing the end of the racial ban on black males' priesthood ordination cites Second Nephi to frame the revelatory text that follows: "The Book of Mormon teaches that 'all are alike unto God,' including 'black and white, bond and free, male and female' (2 Nephi 26:33)."³ It goes on to note that "during Joseph Smith's lifetime, a few black male members of the Church were ordained to the priesthood. Early in its history, Church leaders stopped conferring the priesthood on black males of African descent." Although "Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice," this and other recent public statements on the topic of the racial priesthood ban bear the traces of the careful historical inquiry of the past fifty years.⁴ This work, like the scriptural citation,

demonstrates a “native” textual and historical LDS solution to a social problem that had been building for decades in the Church.

Although race and gender are connected in 2 Nephi 26:33, the historical origins of the gender ban have not yet been addressed with the same degree of attention in Church discourse.⁵ The recent statements made by the Church on the racial priesthood ban strongly emphasize the impact nineteenth-century US racial politics had on the development of the priesthood ban for members of African descent,⁶ but no such discussion of culture and gender politics has yet been addressed in Church publications on gender and priesthood. The most one can say is that recent statements have emphasized the unknown reasons for, but clear evidence of, the prohibition on women holding the priesthood. In a recent interview with the BBC, for instance, managing director of LDS Public Affairs Michael Otterson cited the absence of precedent as the reason women are not ordained in the Church: “Holding offices such as Bishop and Apostle—there is no scriptural precedent for that, *and so we don’t ordain women to those positions.*”⁷ What is striking about the recent official LDS appeal to scriptural silence is that it appears to ignore the most polemic passages, such as 1 Tim 2:8–15 (“no woman . . . [has] authority over a man”) and Gen 3:16 (“[Adam] shall rule over [Eve]”) as precedents for a gendered priesthood ban. Thus it may signal the emergence of a parallel with LDS discourse about race, in which appeals to scripture and tradition were replaced with similar expressions of agnosis.⁸ Continued attention to scriptural precedent and discourses of gender, as well as to the best recent scholarship on this issue, seem warranted, especially in the absence of detailed official commentary on the matter.⁹ Scholarly investigation of the cultural context of racial concepts of priesthood has done much to shed light on the origin and development of the racial priesthood ban, and it is toward the understanding of the same for the gender ban that I direct my efforts in this study.

Interrogating the Bible, however, is not simply a matter of one-to-one mapping from biblical norms to modern practice, even when one accounts for the differences between biblical and LDS priesthoods. Any study of the textual legacy of LDS canon (including the Bible) necessarily begins with the observation of the exclusively male perspective represented in its content, production, selection,

and transmission. Indeed, as scholars have shown repeatedly, the Bible is thoroughly and perhaps inescapably androcentric, and in this respect the expanded Mormon canon is not different.¹⁰ If we had nothing further from the scriptures to discuss on the subject of women, this fact alone would be sufficient to ask whether we can be sure not only whether women *were* ordained in Old or New Testament times, but whether we should even *expect* a record of such. There is indeed much positive evidence to discuss, but every text is thoroughly affected by this one overarching observation, since it limits our ability not only to make a scriptural claim about any single woman, but also to reconstruct accurately a spectrum of gender relations in the world of the Bible.

Related to this is the fact that although women arguably are never explicitly declared inferior as a sex in the Bible or in the extended LDS canon, both are replete with texts that declare women's subordinate status through violence, political and legal structures, access to worship, control over fate and property, and general assumptions and outlook. Most scholarly commentators on the subject casually label the Bible and its underlying society as patriarchal.¹¹ Women's agency is not everywhere restricted in these texts, but is often severely limited, especially in public spheres. Although it is important not to let the overarching androcentrism of scripture strip the texts of nuance and complexity, these observations are important for establishing a backdrop against which to contrast the texts that do show female ecclesiastical agency, even over men, since they swim against the current, so to speak, of the bulk of scriptural tradition. In such a thoroughly androcentric text, the women who occupy roles apparently reserved only for men demand greater hermeneutical attention rather than casual dismissal. Awareness of the elite androcentric authorship cautions against mapping biblical texts directly and uncritically onto our picture of the world of the Hebrew Bible and enhances the texts in which women do exercise authority in roles Latter-day Saints understand to require priesthood ordination.

Biblical scholarship will never yield Bibles full of women. Nonetheless, closer scrutiny and improved methods in this expanding field have shown a remarkable and often overlooked tradition of female authority. Further, critical attention to the

history of Biblical interpretation has revealed two and a half *millennia* of repeated efforts to suppress traditions of female authority and to present misogynistic readings as normative. Most modern appeals to biblical precedent on this subject fail to account and adjust for the cultural medium and biases by which that precedent was established. Reconstructing a world based on a thoroughly androcentric text produces a thoroughly androcentric world.¹² Recognizing this, biblical scholars like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza have largely abandoned the attempt to recover a robustly egalitarian ministry between the pages of the text partly because it results in the misguided search for pristine origins that conform to the observer's desired view of the future.¹³ Instead Schüssler Fiorenza focuses, as I will here, on possibilities opened by historical accounts in which the *struggle* between egalitarianism and hierarchy is visible, thereby revealing a past not so dissonant with the present.¹⁴ Attention to the implicit and explicit evidence of struggle within the text has the potential to inform current discourses.¹⁵

This stance also allows one to maintain a commitment to scripture while mitigating or neutralizing its more pernicious passages and interpretations. In any case, Michael Otterson's assertion of no female ordination in the Bible and the professed agnosis about the reasons for such invite a deeper exploration of the scriptural evidence within its social and textual environment. Furthermore, the Mormon destabilization of biblical inerrancy opens unique space for the incorporation of alternative readings and for the integration of the voluminous body of research on the role gender and power played in ancient Israel and in early Christianity.¹⁶ The LDS tradition provides robust resources for telling new stories, for going, as did Nabonidus, back to the texts, for (re)new(ed) understandings of old ways.

Thus disclosing instances of women occupying authoritative religious roles is not the end of the investigation. Discussions about priesthood also must consider the way in which narratives are assembled, shaped, and revised, and to what ends. Not only does the biblical evidence demonstrate clear precedent for female authority (understood as priesthood in the LDS tradition), it also shows how priesthood traditions were created, repackaged, contested,

and combined to come to new understandings or to make sense of social dissonance. It is this process of constructing tradition that is my ultimate focus here. To use Schüssler Fiorenza's metaphor, the role of this inquiry is not so much to uncover an objective reality, but rather to take the patches and fragments and assemble therefrom a quilt or a mosaic image of the past.¹⁷ Given the clear existence of multiple and contradictory precedents in the Bible, to appeal to any text as precedent is to engage in a process of selection and suppression, to highlight one and neutralize another. As we shall see, coming to new understandings through careful readings and retellings of even fragmentary old texts is itself not just a hallmark of ancient ways of thinking about priesthood but is also inscribed within the earliest strata of LDS tradition and practice. Coming to new views of dimly lit texts—especially about priesthood—is a quintessentially Mormon practice.

In the following, I investigate what the Bible has to say to Latter-day Saints about gendered priesthood and, equally important, how it says it. I update the discussion of scriptural evidence on the basis of new scholarly work and also attend to evidence from LDS scripture not discussed in prior analyses.¹⁸ I pay attention to the way the Bible shapes and configures priesthood through the formation, revision, and interpretation of narratives. I also look in greater detail at what is meant by ordination, including ritual practices, in an LDS context. I conclude by asking whether the dissonance that emerges between recent discussions and scriptural tradition can be resolved within the parameters of LDS theology.

Defining Priesthood in an LDS Context

Before moving to a discussion of evidence of women holding positions of priesthood authority in the biblical texts, it is necessary to have a sense of the expansive Latter-day Saint definition of priesthood, which extends well beyond the usual sense of a limited class of religious functionaries authorized to govern ecclesiastical communities and administer rituals thereof. A basic, current, Mormon definition of priesthood is “the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of mankind.”¹⁹ The term “priesthood” includes several related concepts: power, authority

to wield the power, and the right to preside.²⁰ Few aspects of LDS belief are described in more elevated language than priesthood. In D&C 84:20–22 Joseph Smith revealed that “in the ordinances [of the priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.” In a Nauvoo sermon, Smith called priesthood “the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven,”²¹ and declared, “the Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years.”²² The LDS canon links priesthood to the foundation of the world: “the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order . . . to teach these things unto the people. And those priests were . . . called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God” (Alma 13:1–3; cf. Abraham 1:3). A priesthood bearer wielding authority serves *in persona Christi*, as Elder Boyd K. Packer said: “When priesthood authority is exercised properly, priesthood bearers do what [Christ] would do if He were present.”²³ To “hold” the priesthood in Mormon parlance is to be ordained to a priesthood office, through which power to act in certain capacities at church and in private is granted. Unlike other Christian denominations, in which men and, increasingly, women take orders in what is comparable to a lifelong vocational decision, in the LDS tradition priesthood power is conferred on every male who meets the age and worthiness requirements as approved by local priesthood leadership. Thus priesthood reaches into every family structure, at least ideally, and has been described by some leaders as of greatest importance in the home. Elder Packer recited in the same 2010 talk the statement of President Joseph F. Smith: “In the home the presiding authority is always vested in the father, and in all home affairs and family matters there is no other authority paramount. . . . The father presides at the table, at prayer, and gives general directions relating to his family life.”²⁴ Although LDS leaders have drawn some distinctions between priesthood rights and responsibilities in the home and in the Church, it is clear from this brief description that priesthood is understood as the

governing force of both. Elder Oaks expressed the situation in terms of an ordered structure: “the government of the family is patriarchal, whereas the government of the Church is hierarchical.”²⁵

Priesthood is the beating heart of Church ministry and governance. According to the publicly available *Handbook 2*, “through the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Church leaders guide the Church, direct the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, and administer all the spiritual work of the Church. The President of the Church is the presiding high priest over the Melchizedek Priesthood.”²⁶ Not only is priesthood understood to be the authority by which the Church is governed, the Melchizedek priesthood is the centerpiece of the organization, being defined in opposition to its “auxiliaries”: “The Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School organizations are auxiliaries to the priesthood.”²⁷ A key component of priesthood, then, is agency—the power to act: to govern, preside, direct, create, administer, and so on.²⁸ In the discussion of biblical texts below, I will therefore pay particular attention to those instances in which female cultic agency is manifest, since it is this type of agency that is at the heart of priesthood in Mormonism.²⁹ Finally, when it comes to the current official LDS discourse about priesthood, I will restrict my comments to the statements made about scriptural bases for gender restrictions, though it is important to note that LDS leaders use a variety of approaches, including scriptural appeals, to talk about the reason for the ban on female priesthood ordination.³⁰ I hope this essay will contribute to the vitality of the ongoing discussion by charting important moments in the struggle for authority manifest in scripture and, especially, by outlining some of the scriptural resources for new approaches to power and gender in Mormon theology.

The Struggle for Authority in the Old Testament

Eve, Adam, and Gender Hierarchies

The Bible makes no statement either on differences between genders or on the essence of female identity. One finds no labeling of specific activities as “women’s work,” no description of innate qualities bestowed upon the sexes, and certainly no direct appeal

to eternal gender roles. That is not to say, however, that divisions between sexes were not performed or *practically* understood or that women were not subordinated in Israelite or Greco-Roman text and society; for most intents and purposes, it suffices to note that ancient Israel inherited the ubiquitous patriarchal culture of its region.³¹ But there is no explicit theological or theoretical paradigm describing female capacities as the result of divine forethought, much less a rationale given for women being shut out of political and religious hierarchies.³² As Tikva Frymer-Kensky put it, “the Bible presents no characteristics of human behavior as ‘female’ or ‘male,’ no division of attributes between the poles of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine.’ The metaphysics of gender unity . . . is also expressed in the biblical creation stories.”³³ Some biblical scholars have revised the androcentric interpretations of the Eden narrative, showing that in the context of the narrative itself gender unity appears to be the norm even though the androcentrism of the intervening traditions of interpretation often want it otherwise.³⁴ Others, however, have criticized the idea of biblical gender unity on the basis of the social expectations of the ancient Israelite audience, pointing out that, as is seen in the prevalence of misogynistic interpretations over the course of millennia, an egalitarian reception of the story would constitute an unlikely exception.³⁵ A closer look at these stories provides backdrop for scriptural politics of gender also in an LDS context.

The ambivalence of the Hebrew Bible on the question of natural gender hierarchies is apparent from the first chapters of Genesis, which narrate not one but two creation stories, a doubling recognized at least tacitly since antiquity. These stories, which ultimately derive from different authors, present fundamentally different pictures of the creation of the sexes. Even though they appear to have had little influence in the Old Testament after Genesis 5, they constitute a—if not *the*—textual site of gender struggle in Judeo-Christian contexts from pre-New Testament interpretation right through to modernity, including Mormonism. Gen 1:26–27 tells how humans were created “male and female,” after the animals, dominating (together) the world order in the image of God who was himself at the top of the universal order. The grammatical plurals used to speak of the divine in these verses, coupled with the ambiguous number of the

noun *ēlohîm* have led some commentators to the conclusion that male and female humans were created in the image of male and female gods: “*ēlohîm* said, ‘let us make humankind’³⁶ in *our* image, according to *our* likeness. . . . So *ēlohîm* created humankind in *his* image, in the image of *ēlohîm* he created him: he created them male and female.” Some have read the final occurrence of *ēlohîm* not as a proper divine name but rather as the plural noun “gods,” owing to the apposition with “male and female,” which might represent a trace of a pantheon of male and female divinities in whose image male and female humans were created.³⁷ In the retelling of Genesis in the LDS Book of Abraham, Gen 1:26–27, as opposed to JST Genesis and the Hebrew Bible, is rendered entirely in the plural: “And the Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them” (Abr 4:26–27).³⁸ Thus no biblical or LDS rendition of Gen 1 shows any apparent hierarchy of sex; rather, both have dominion and are commanded to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth.³⁹ Further, in these divine plurals the presence of goddesses cannot be excluded.

In the account of Genesis 2–3,⁴⁰ on the other hand, God creates humans in a process out of sequence with the scheme in Gen 1, creating first the human (*ādām*) from dust before the plants,⁴¹ then the animals, then woman (not called Eve until after the expulsion), a “suitable helper”⁴² from the rib of the *ādām*. As Gen 2–3 unfolds, of course, the asymmetric order of events seems to dictate the severity of the divine response. The woman is first to eat the fruit, then Adam, and in the resulting confrontation with God the woman is explicitly subordinated to the man: “I shall multiply your suffering and your pregnancy; in suffering shall you birth children, yet your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you” (translation mine). Motherhood here is coterminous with suffering and subordination in a way not expressed in Gen 1. Thus it is Gen 1 that, since at least the first century, commentators have cited as evidence for an originally egalitarian creation, while Gen 2–3 expresses a hierarchy of the sexes that has more frequently been appealed to as *the* biblical basis of gender relations, especially in ecclesiastical settings.

Even though the gendered hierarchies of these accounts are not explicitly referenced elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the tension between the apparent egalitarianism of Gen 1 and the apparent hierarchy of Gen 2–3 is replicated in first-century biblical interpretation (including the New Testament) and beyond. Daniel Boyarin argues that the two accounts yielded two ancient theological constructs that anticipate even recent theoretical models of sex differentiation.⁴³ The first, visible in the Hellenistic Jewish interpreter and philosopher Philo of Alexandria and in the writings of Paul, seizes on the difference between Gen 1 and Gen 2–3 as expressive of the difference between the eternal and the temporal. In this strain of first-century thought, the ideal is the unsexed spiritual androgyne (the singular *ādām* here is both male and female), created in the image of God, as opposed to the physically realized male and (subordinated) female. According to Boyarin, this explains the contradictions in Paul, who said on the one hand that “there is no male nor female . . . in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:29), and on the other that “a husband is the head of his wife,” (1 Cor 11:3). He reads these as Paul’s expression of the [superior] spiritual ideal and the [inferior] physical reality that will eventually be overcome, pointing out that Paul goes on to say in 1 Cor 11:11, “nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, *in the Lord*” (1 Cor 11:11; emphasis mine).⁴⁴ Both of these texts from Paul express “an androgyne that exists on the level of the spirit, however much hierarchy subsists and needs to subsist on the fleshly level in the life of society.”⁴⁵ As New Testament scholars have argued, Galatians 3:28 is a part of the baptismal liturgy that specifically references Gen 1:26–27 and reverses the basic gender division to an androgynous state (Adam = male and female) as a way of expressing the future ideal.⁴⁶ In any case, there is no evidence to suggest that Paul thought there would be any heavenly hierarchy of gender any more than there would be divisions between “Jews” and “Greeks” there.⁴⁷ In the here-and-now discussed in 1 Corinthians, however, Paul’s theology could accommodate hierarchy (11:3, 9) and strong sexual differentiation in custom (11:6–10), even while it emphasized care and reciprocity (7:3–4; 11:11–12) so as to prepare for the coming time in which gender would be collapsed entirely.⁴⁸

Other traditions, such as early rabbinic Judaism, were “fully committed to a completely naturalized ‘sex.’”⁴⁹ In this vein the human creature of Gen 1 was not a *spiritual* unity but rather a *bodily* hermaphrodite, a “dual-sexed creature in one body”⁵⁰ that was simply split into two separate bodies in Gen 2–3. “In the rabbinic culture, the human race was thus marked from the very beginning by corporeality, difference and heterogeneity. For the Rabbis, sexuality belonged to the original created (and not fallen) state of humanity.”⁵¹ In this construct it is not sex differentiation that is the result of the disobedience but rather the hierarchy of Gen 3:16.

Boyarin points out that these two poles, the primal spiritual androgyny and the dual-sexed bodily creature, anticipate the extremes of modern approaches to sex and gender, between strong sexual dimorphism on the one hand and the transcendence of sex on the other.⁵² He goes on to show that all of these paradigms, whether ancient interpretation or modern theorizing, have difficulty avoiding the practical tendency toward a denigration of the female: “sexual dimorphism . . . seems fated always to imprison women within a biological role, while transcendence . . . seems always to be predicated on a denigration of the body and the achievement of a male-modeled androgyny, a masculine neutral.”⁵³

Against the backdrop of Boyarin’s analysis, we find that LDS interpretation straddles the division between the two extremes.⁵⁴ In Joseph Smith’s reworking of Genesis 1–6, known as the Book of Moses, the transition between the creation stories calls the first one spiritual and the second physical (Moses 3:5–7), similar to Philo, but within the same text yokes the male-female pair of Gen 1 to the body of God (2:27; 5:1–2): “In the *image of his own body*, male and female, created he them” (5:1; emphasis mine). Leaving aside the question of what it means for a singular male divine body to produce male and female spirits in its image, what is apparent here is a blurring of the polarity by articulating an ideal, *spiritual*, sexual dimorphism alongside the physical that has become a hallmark of Mormon theology.⁵⁵ Whereas for Paul it may be said that the hierarchies that he (only sometimes) condones are endemic to physical reality but have no place in the coming kingdom, the LDS interpretation raises the stakes by making both spiritual and physical creation dimorphic. This calculus is arguably the source of much of the current tension

in Mormonism over female authority, precisely because it is a battle not just for *earthly* equality (as Paul might have had it) but also for the meaning of *eternal* gender difference. Temporal arrangements are also heavenly realities.

Genesis 3:16—sometimes called the most misogynistic text in the Bible—has been a battleground of gender relations for centuries but it takes on a particular importance in LDS theology of gender for the reasons described above. In LDS commentary Gen 3:16 has commonly been read as a curse and used as evidence for the male right of rule in Church and home. In the 1973 *Ensign*, Brent Barlow used it to argue for the need to strengthen the patriarchal order in the family.⁵⁶ In 1975 President Spencer W. Kimball famously softened the language of the KJV to “preside” instead of “rule,” which change now links Gen 3:16 to the Family Proclamation statement that fathers are to “preside” in the home “by divine design.”⁵⁷ Others, like Jolene Edmunds Rockwood, have read the verse similarly to Paul as expressive of a temporary state: “the fact that [Adam ruling over Eve] is mentioned at all presupposes that man did not rule over woman before the fall.”⁵⁸ Boyd Jay Petersen has recently shown that nineteenth-century LDS women and even some male leaders assumed the verse to be temporary and frequently thought that the curse could be lifted in their lifetimes.⁵⁹

There is even a detectable rise in conservative LDS discomfort with an eternal hierarchy of gender. The increasing pressure towards egalitarianism in the Mormon heaven is confirmed in the extreme rereading of Gen 3:16 as a statement of equal dominion, advanced several times in recent years by a few prominent LDS commentators. In 2007 Elder Bruce C. Hafen and his wife Marie attempted to use this verse as evidence of egalitarian governance by an appeal to the underlying Hebrew preposition *bet*, the word translated as “over” in “he shall rule over you.” In the August 2007 *Ensign*, the Hafens, aided by a BYU professor of Hebrew, argue: “Genesis 3:16 states that Adam is to ‘rule over’ Eve, but this doesn’t make Adam a dictator. . . . Over in ‘rule over’ uses the Hebrew *bet*, which means ruling ‘with,’ not ruling ‘over.’”⁶⁰ Since then it has been repeated several times by LDS political scientist Valerie M. Hudson, including in the April 2013 *Ensign*.⁶¹ According to normal Biblical Hebrew usage and to the narrative context of Gen 2–3,

this translation is, unfortunately, impossible. The repetition of this mistranslation underscores well the increasing LDS need to neutralize scriptural gender hierarchies.⁶² The Hebrew verb *māšal*, “to rule” requires the preposition *bet* and always means in this construction “to rule (over),” as in the sun ruling over the day (Gen 1:18), Abraham’s servant over all his house (Gen 24:2), Joseph over Egypt (Gen 45:8, 26), Solomon over all the Levantine kingdoms (1 Kgs 5:1), and so forth. When the preposition *bet* is translated as “with” in English, it is an instrumental “with,” as in, “I hit my thumb with a hammer.” To say “together with” requires an entirely different preposition. Added to the Hebrew difficulties, the logic of the exchange—in which the sequence of the transgression yields negative consequences for the participants—clearly prohibits such an egalitarian understanding.⁶³ Thus, besides contravening basic Hebrew semantics and the plain logic of the verse in its context, this reading also stands in contrast even to previous LDS theology, including the JST.⁶⁴ The impossibility of this translation, and the extent to which the plain sense of the text is ignored,⁶⁵ highlights a growing discomfort, even among the ranks of General Authorities and conservative scholars, with bald-faced gender hierarchies in scripture. The only hermeneutic motivating this translation is the need to resolve the dissonance between text and modern sensibility by so thoroughly recasting the most blatantly hierarchical proof text of the Bible to legitimate the Church’s stance on egalitarianism.⁶⁶ The fact that this very same biblical text was used in the same LDS publication forty years earlier to argue for the divine institution of patriarchy in the home⁶⁷ suggests that biblical scholar Athalya Brenner was correct when she said Genesis 3:16 is something of a Rorschach test revealing the interpreter’s basic assumptions about gender.⁶⁸ It also underscores the fact that an appeal to precedent, especially on the topic of gender and authority, always amounts to a selection from among a variety of possibilities.

Lady Wisdom and LDS Priesthood

The struggle for authority is also expressed on the heavenly level in hierarchical struggles between male and female deities in the Hebrew Bible. A full discussion of divine gender relations would take us too far afield here; it is sufficient to point out, with Tikva Frymer-Kensky,

the long history in the ancient Near East of goddesses' power, once expressed in a rich variety of roles and characters, subsumed by ever more powerful male deities. The Hebrew Bible manifests the same trajectory of subordination, especially in the shift from polytheism and monolatry to monotheism; it preserves knowledge of once-legitimate Israelite female divinities, if only known either obliquely as traces of a worship system thriving before the seventh century BCE or as targets of reformist's cult reform.⁶⁹

The question of the status and role of the goddess is closely connected with the question of priesthood authority in LDS theology. Since the particular LDS notions of priesthood are tied to the universal gendered existence discussed above, the discussion of the goddess is more salient to the question of priesthood than may be the case in other traditions. When priesthood, as we have seen, is less an authorization of a hereditary human exercise of cultic responsibilities than it is an eternal power exercised solely by male gods and male humans, any limitations on the agency of the goddess can serve to reinforce the gendered mortal arrangement. The previous and current theological inquiry into Mormon notions of the divine feminine have crucial implications for LDS notions of gendered priesthood, since a goddess devoid of power does not easily admit female authorities possessed of it. In any case, even a cursory study of the goddess in the world of the Hebrew Bible and in Mormon theology reveals that the opposing forces of egalitarianism and hierarchy are felt in heaven as they are on earth.⁷⁰ That this was a struggle and not simply a unidirectional sublimation by fiat is shown by the divine female figure of Wisdom, who is under-represented in LDS theology.

The closest a woman deity comes to speaking and displaying complex agency in the Bible is in Proverbs 1–9, which presents the figure of Wisdom (*hokmā*), remarkable for her unabashedly female voice and her disruption of roles that have come to be defined in LDS thought as stereotypically gendered. Wisdom is personified here as a public teacher (“at the busiest corner,” 1:21), and speaks in the first person (1:22–33; 8:2–36). In 3:19–20 she is the means by which Yahweh created the world, and likewise chapter 8 speaks to the role of (“Lady”) Wisdom in creation: “The LORD acquired me at the beginning of his work / the first of his acts of long ago.

/ Ages ago I was poured out / at the first, before the beginning of the earth” (8:22–23). And further, “when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker”⁷¹ (8:29–30 NRSV). She is the source not only of righteousness and creativity, but of power, wealth, knowledge, foresight, and justice: “I have good advice and sound wisdom; / I have insight, I have strength. / By me kings reign, / and rulers decree what is just; / by me rulers rule, / and nobles, all who govern rightly. . . . Riches and honor are with me, / enduring wealth and prosperity. I walk in the way of righteousness, / along the paths of justice” (Prov 8:14–16, 18, 20). Many scholars see this chapter as the reflex of a once vibrant tradition of goddess worship in Ancient Israel that was suppressed as strict monotheism became entrenched, or as an originally Egyptian or Canaanite goddess translated into a post-exilic Israelite context.⁷² Some, including even LDS authorities, have connected this creative, agentive aspect of Wisdom with the (grammatically feminine) spirit (*ru^{ah} ’elohim*) in Gen 1:2 that moves on the face of the waters.⁷³ This interpretation may also be supported by the description of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:23 as having been “poured out,” which may evoke the pouring of oil for anointing kings, of other liquids for rituals of worship, and/or the pouring out of God’s spirit (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17–18, 33). Further, the description in Proverbs 8 of a divine woman as *the* source of regal power, knowledge, justice, and creation—with no reference to motherhood or domesticity—places this text in sharp contrast with the more famous misogynistic biblical passages and hints at a struggle for female agency playing out on the cosmic level even within an entrenched patriarchy.⁷⁴ When compared with an LDS notion of priesthood as the supreme active force in the cosmos, this text troubles the interpretations that otherwise associate such force with male actors and, arguably, male being.⁷⁵ Wisdom is a nearly perfect analogue to the LDS definitions of priesthood discussed above: the power by which the universe was created and ordered and the proximate source of knowledge and understanding. She is, as the figure of Jesus in much of Christian theology, both supremely powerful and immediately approachable, participating in the creation and the quotidian. While Proverbs sometimes hints at her subordination to God and is written from an

unabashedly male perspective to a male audience, it also suggests the possibility that she was “outside of God, not merely a divine attribute,”⁷⁶ the means he “acquired” (8:22) to bring the world into being.⁷⁷ Notwithstanding some mitigating forces of subordination even present in these texts,⁷⁸ Proverbs 1–9 (and especially ch. 8) give voice to an active, speaking Goddess and manifests a female order and power in (non-reproductive) creation. If the Mormon basis of priesthood is a power prepared from before the foundation of the world (Alma 13:1–3), and the primary function of its wielders is teaching, Lady Wisdom is exactly coterminous with LDS priesthood and could form a basis of new understandings of this power and its gendered qualities.⁷⁹

Biblical Conceptions of Priesthood

Joseph Smith’s close engagement with biblical text may provide a model for a contemporary LDS engagement with the Bible on the topic of priesthood. As discussed above, Latter-day Saints and non-LDS biblical scholars use the term “priesthood” differently, especially since, as Richard Bushman and Mark Ashurst-McGee have pointed out, Joseph Smith’s revelations uniquely blended the Reformation notion of a “priesthood of all believers” with the Old Testament framework of offices and ritual power.⁸⁰ The previous work of Anthony Hutchinson, Melodie Moench Charles, and Todd Compton has clearly laid out the terminological problems when it comes to discussing LDS priesthood and the Bible.⁸¹ Paramount is the fact that “priesthood” is a term never used in the Bible in the way that Latter-day Saints understand it, even though the concept of an institution of priests certainly was operative.⁸² Further complicating the issue, what came to be understood as the major division in LDS priesthood orders, Melchizedek and Aaronic, is nowhere visible in the Bible. To be sure, it was out of a combination of revelations based on close reading of the Bible and social developments in the early LDS church that the division evolved, but no biblical scholar concludes from biblical evidence that anciently there were two priesthood orders as Latter-day Saints understand them. The Hebrew Bible tells many stories directly and indirectly about strife between different priestly lines (see below), and at times (non-Aaronid) Levites were apparently subordinated to Aaronid

priests, but they are never understood in qualitatively higher and lower general orders, and never explicitly connected to the figure of Melchizedek, who is only mentioned in two enigmatic texts in the Hebrew Bible.⁸³ Furthermore, different texts show different views of priestly hierarchies, and some seem to assume that at certain times in Israel's past it was not necessary to hail from a priestly lineage to perform priestly duties such as sacrifice.⁸⁴

What LDS priesthood shares with the Bible, however, is the basic notion that priests stand at the often-dangerous intersection between God and his people, life and death, sacred and profane. In terms more familiar to Latter-day Saints, priests not only represented the people to Yahweh, they also represented Yahweh to the people,⁸⁵ "identifying and clarifying the purpose of a given ritual, reifying tradition by the recitation of laws or the record of legal precedent, and preserving the catalogue of hymns and prayers that the deity would expect or even demand to be recited at specific occasions."⁸⁶ In some places they are described as judges of local disputes (Deut 17:8–13), scribes, and keepers of esoteric knowledge and religious history.⁸⁷ In the absence of Israelite kingship in the Second Temple period, they would become the highest native political authority. To stand at this threshold brought mortal risk along with power, as in the stories of the priests Nadav and Avihu (Lev 10), Dathan and Abiram (Num 16) and Uzzah (2 Sam 6). It is no surprise then that the origin accounts of the Levites, told no less than four times in the Bible, all depict the Levites as violently zealous for Yahweh, even against their fellow Israelites. Indeed, violence seems to be intimately bound up with priestly service.⁸⁸

One of the most influential (and often overlooked) roles of the priests was as the main keepers of the traditions and knowledge from which major portions of the (Hebrew) Bible would take shape. These traditions were passed down through institutions that, by the time the texts were assembled, had become more centralized and stratified along with the state to which they belonged.⁸⁹ Whereas in pre-monarchic Israel it was apparently possible for men (and possibly women, see below) outside designated lineages to act as priests, religious authority was restricted as political power became concentrated, especially in Jerusalem. In the process of centralization, the struggle between various priestly lineages became pitched

in a way that is manifest in several stories of conflict among priestly houses.⁹⁰ The most famous are those in the Pentateuch that depict the disloyalty of prominent priestly figures, such as the golden calf episode (Exod 32) or the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram (Num 16). Most scholars see these as having been told in much later times to justify or attack the ascendancy of one lineage over another.⁹¹ Indeed, perhaps the most significant change in Old Testament priesthood when David moved the capital from Hebron to Jerusalem (previously a non-Israelite city; 2 Sam 5–6) and installed the ark there, which resulted in the appointment of *two* chief priests, Abiathar and Zadok. Later Solomon banished Abiathar to Anathoth (1 Kgs 2) for having supported his half-brother Adonijah's claim to David's throne. Thus the Zadokites came to control the newly built temple in Jerusalem and maintained control for centuries, but the rivalries between these priestly families continued at least through Jeremiah's time.⁹² It is clear that priests used their power as custodians of knowledge and history to employ older traditions to influence and to make sense of the social changes underway in monarchic and post-monarchic Israel. There is also strong evidence, discussed below, of the deliberate manipulation of texts by their later custodians to remove and downplay priestly agency in narratives about women.⁹³

As with nearly all public institutions and bureaucracies (and stories) in the Bible, the text as we have it gives the impression that men always dominated Israelite priesthood. Such was not always the case in the ancient Near East, where there is significant evidence for a wide variety of priestly and other official roles available to women within the cult and society.⁹⁴ The most famous example is the third-millennium Akkadian *entu*-priest Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon of Agade, to whom are attributed many hymns and prayers and who is depicted in at least one stone relief, making her the first named author known to history and one of the earliest women to be depicted visually.⁹⁵ Almost two millennia later we find Nabonidus consulting earlier textual and visual records ostensibly because the office of high priestess had been forgotten in his day and he wanted to install his daughter therein. While there is no direct prohibition of female priestly service in the Bible (or in LDS scripture), most texts assume male exclusivity along with other non-gender criteria, such as a restriction to the proper lineage. However, it is difficult to

hold up the assumption of gender exclusivity as normative evidence, since not only were the authors and curators of these texts men, but they were also priests or male functionaries with vested and conflicted interests in the way the story was told. As power became concentrated during the monarchy in fewer and fewer lines, the doors that appear to have been more open to women in earlier periods were shut firmly, and, crucially, *were made to look as if they had always been*.⁹⁶ Biblical scholars have pointed out that in the Bible, even though women were never priests, neither were the vast majority of men,⁹⁷ and even the strongly androcentric priestly narrators in the Hebrew Bible show an enhanced (though still unequal) status of women connected to priestly lineages.⁹⁸ The picture becomes even more complex, however, when we turn to the cases of women who arguably acted as priests, mostly ignored in LDS treatments of women and authority: Hannah, Jael, and Zipporah.⁹⁹

Hannah

The case of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1–3 is remarkable for the way the story juxtaposes Hannah with the male authorities around her (sons of Eli, her husband Elkanah), especially in the way she acts against their misunderstandings or doubt. The text presents Elkanah as concerned but not fully on board with her efforts to have a son; Hannah takes the initiative to approach the Lord in the temple at Shiloh herself. In 1 Sam 1:9 Hannah “presented herself before Yahweh” in the courtyard of the temple, observed by the priest Eli from his seat beside the doorpost, making a silent vow that she would dedicate her son to the Lord if he would lift her barrenness.¹⁰⁰ Eli dismissively misunderstands her prayer as drunkenness, but upon her explanation he expresses hope that her desire will be granted. When it is, she names the child, which is a practice that likely conveyed social authority, as the position of name-giver signaled influence over the thing named.¹⁰¹ Hannah breaks company with her husband on his next journeys to Shiloh until the child is weaned, at which point the Bible says without comment that *she* brings the boy, a three-year-old bull, and other offerings to the temple, and *they* (Hannah and Elkanah) slaughter the bull and take the child to Eli.¹⁰² Upon Samuel’s consecration as a lifelong nazirite, Hannah then sings a song (1 Sam 2) that reflects an ancient Near Eastern and

biblical tradition of women as composers of cultic hymns.¹⁰³ Thus Hannah wields considerable cultic power. While it would go beyond the evidence to say that she served as a priest as did Eli, it is clear that her service exceeded that which apparently was allowed to women as the cult became centralized, and certainly that of the Second Temple, where women could not approach even the courtyard of the temple building itself. In any case, Hannah had authoritative agency: naming, vowing, sacrificing, dedicating, composing. Rather than circumscribing Hannah's power, maternity leads her to exercise authority in reference to her existence as a woman.¹⁰⁴ Her example provides a foundation for imagining female priesthood power in a way that does not collapse gender difference.

Hannah's role as a cultic agent is probably most strongly confirmed by the deliberate manipulation of the Hebrew texts concerning her activity. The Hebrew text of the books of Samuel is notoriously corrupt, with the witnesses of the Septuagint (LXX) and Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q51=4QSamuel^a) providing strong evidence of such. Some of the textual corruption is clearly accidental, but some appears to be the result of one or more scribes taking strong issue with the implication that Hannah exercised priestly agency.¹⁰⁵ In the Masoretic (Hebrew) text (MT), on which virtually all modern translations are based, the line in 1 Sam 1:23 that originally read, "Only, may the LORD establish that which goes out of your [Hannah's] mouth," as it is in LXX and 4QSam^a, the text was changed to "Only, may the Lord establish his word." Further, MT has removed three notices about Hannah in the presence of the Lord (1 Sam 1:9, 14, 18) and added the clause to verse 9 that she had been drinking. In verse 18 LXX, Hannah leaves Eli and goes to her quarters connected to the Temple to have a ritual meal with Elkanah. Donald Parry points out that these quarters (*lišká* in Hebrew) are otherwise only connected to males, including priests and Levites; this was probably omitted deliberately from MT.¹⁰⁶ Hannah probably originally also said in 1:8, "here am I" (so LXX), as only males do elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (including, famously, her son), and overwhelmingly in contexts of divine apparition. Hannah's final pilgrimage to Shiloh in LXX has her explicitly entering the temple (1:24a) and presenting her son before Eli. In 4QSam^a, it is Hannah, not Elkanah, who worships in 1:28b. Thus MT exhibits a

marked discomfort and deliberate textual manipulation specifically connected with the cultic activity of Hannah. This discomfort also explains the addition, only in MT, of the note that the sons of Eli slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (2:22): not only does it further implicate the sons of Eli, it also diminishes the status of female cultic activity exhibited in LXX and 4QSam^a.¹⁰⁷ This tampering shows the difficulty in making historical claims from the Bible about exclusively male priesthood activity not just because of the authors' androcentric blinders, but also because of deliberate manipulation of the text, likely undertaken to make an earlier time conform to the norms of the scribe's contemporary situation or to his more strongly gendered notions of acceptable practice. For the MT scribes, it seems, even Hannah's limited priestly activity is too strongly put, and makes this impossible to rule out an explicit striking of female priesthood from the scriptural record before the text was finalized.

Jael

The story of Jael, told at the beginning of Judges, has also been connected to priestly traditions. Her introduction in Judges 4:17 is traditionally translated "Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite," but others read "woman of the Kenite clan" because *heber* can also mean "community" or "group."¹⁰⁸ The Kenites were a clan well known for their priestly service, Moses's father-in-law Jethro, priest of Midian, being the most famous.¹⁰⁹ Even if her status as Heber's "woman" holds, it is only mentioned in the text to show how *she* ended up at a sacred site far from Kenite territory, since Heber (or this Kenite group) left the heartland of Moses's father-in-law (here called Hobab) and encamped "by the terebinth of Zaananim" near Kedesh, which is a city of refuge managed by priests (Judg 4:11).¹¹⁰ "Heber" as an individual has no role in the story other than to explain Jael's location. Jael is keeper of her own tent, to which the Canaanite general Sisera flees for sanctuary, probably indicating her tent was more than her private dwelling. No impropriety is marked in the way he, or the Israelite general Barak later, enters her tent. As Sisera rests, Jael drives a spike through his temple and then goes out to invite Barak back to her tent to show him the vanquished foe. In Judges 5, the ancient poem known as the Song of Deborah, Jael is

presented alongside Shamgar ben Anat, one of the judges who also delivered Israel through violence (Judg 3:31).¹¹¹ Interpreters have frequently read the narrative about Jael as one of seduction, but this is beyond the evidence and reflects more on the interpreters' assumptions than on the biblical characterization of Jael.¹¹² Rather, her priestly lineage, her tent-sanctuary pitched at a sacred site, and possibly even the emphasis on her decisive violence in the service of the community suggest she was understood as a priest at one point.

Zipporah

It is no accident that our final example also concerns a Kenite. Zipporah, Moses's wife, is the daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian, and is almost entirely absent from the narrative in Exodus, with the exception of an enigmatic passage in Exodus 4. While in Midian (i.e., Kenite territory), Yahweh tells Moses to go back to Egypt to demand the Israelites' release from Pharaoh. Moses asks leave of Jethro, who grants it, and he and Zipporah and their sons set off. Then, apparently on the way,¹¹³ Moses receives further instructions from Yahweh to tell Pharaoh that Yahweh will kill Pharaoh's firstborn son if Pharaoh does not let Israel (Yahweh's "firstborn son") go. Almost as if this part of the story reminds the narrator that Moses grew up in the Egyptian court and was probably therefore uncircumcised, Yahweh shows up as the family stops for the night and, without explanation, attempts to kill Moses. "But Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched [Moses's] 'feet' with it and said, 'Truly you are a spouse of blood to me!' So he let him alone. It was then she said, 'a spouse of blood by circumcision'" (Exod 4:25–26).¹¹⁴ Not only is Zipporah daughter of a chief priest, she literally stands between Yahweh and his people and saves their lives through her ritual mediation, establishing precedent for a cultic practice now lost to us. In Exodus and elsewhere, circumcision and sacrifice are closely associated (Exod 12:1–28, 43–49; Josh 5:2–12). Zipporah clearly performs a ritual of substitution that, in later times, would be the exclusive domain of men. Though brief, this remarkable text hints at a deeper tradition of female priesthood in the earliest days of Israel.

These women are cultic agents whose roles are priestly even within ostensibly male-dominated cultic frameworks, such that they

acted in priestly roles. Hannah and Zipporah perform ritual acts reserved for males in other texts, and they and Jael engage in types of violence that also characterize Levites' behavior: ritual slaughter (Hannah), homicide (Jael), and circumcision (Zipporah).¹¹⁵ That the priestly character of each of these examples must be teased out speaks to the likely discomfort the storyteller/editor had with indicating a female office directly, a discomfort in evidence in the transmission of the story of Hannah. Whereas we saw earlier that stories about eponymous priests such as Aaron were told as a way of challenging claims to priesthood, we see another aspect of textual manipulation with regard to women in the cult. The priests and other male functionaries who curated these texts would have likely been uncomfortable with the depiction of a system at odds with their own, but nevertheless were not at complete liberty to deviate from the collective memory of their culture. Still, set within the larger framework of LDS use of biblical texts to understand priesthood, the fact that biblical evidence is infrequent does not need to be a major cause for concern, since some of the most central notions of LDS priesthood were developed out of obscure textual adumbrations.¹¹⁶ Those discussed here that raise the possibility of female priests in ancient Israel provide ample means for LDS theological inquiry, especially given the fact that Joseph Smith promised to make the women's Relief Society organization "move according to the ancient Priesthood . . . that he was going to make of this Society a kingdom of priests a[s] in Enoch's day—as in Paul's day."¹¹⁷

Prophets Male and Female

The struggle for female prophetic authority is much more visible than the case of female priestly authority. The LDS conception of prophecy is more closely aligned with that of the Bible than is the case with priesthood, although in both LDS and biblical contexts priesthood and prophecy exhibit considerable overlap. Prophets in the ancient Near East generally acted as mouthpieces for a god, and in the Hebrew Bible they have the additional role of intermediaries. Thus priests and prophets both mediated between God and people, and it is not surprising to find the same person, for instance, Samuel and Elijah, performing both roles at times.¹¹⁸ As Mark Leuchter puts it, "The 'priests' of Jerusalem oversaw ritual

and divine instruction while the ‘prophets’ of Jerusalem delivered fresh oracles from the divine, but the differences between the two roles are more a matter of the emphasis of their activity than a strict separation between types.”¹¹⁹ Such is also the case in the LDS priesthood hierarchy, in which the heads of the priesthood are sustained as “prophets, seers and revelators” even though the title “prophet” in LDS hierarchy does not technically constitute an office in the way that “priest” and even “apostle” do. Still, the connection is so close that the LDS manual *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood* states, “all the prophets of the Lord in each dispensation since Adam have held this [priesthood] authority.”¹²⁰

The Old Testament specifically mentions five female prophets: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, the wife of Isaiah, and Noadiah, while the New Testament names Anna.¹²¹ The first three exhibit agency within their roles as prophet. Miriam composes victory hymns and alludes to Yahweh speaking through her, though she is on the losing end of a confrontation with Moses, after which her voice is never heard from again; Deborah judges all Israel, prophesies regularly, leads armies, composes victory hymns; Huldah is the prophet whose testimony is required to determine the authenticity of the scroll of the law found by Josiah’s officials, and she prophesies concerning the death of Josiah; Noadiah is grouped with those prophets who opposed Nehemiah, and Isaiah’s wife’s activity as prophet is not described, unless it be the conception of a child. Thus the possibility of women acting within their roles as prophets, undifferentiated from their male counterparts, is well established. Even in the cases of the opposition of Miriam and Noadiah, they are not singled out for their gender, but are included with at least one other male in their contention.¹²²

The cases of Huldah and Deborah require further scrutiny. Huldah appears in 2 Kings 23 as the prophet to whom the king turns for divine authorization of the newly discovered book of the law, the crucial development in the narrative about Josiah’s reform. She thus functions in the same way as Isaiah during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis of Isaiah 7 and Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem in Isaiah 36–38. Upon learning of the discovery of the scroll in the temple, Josiah sends his emissaries to Huldah for divine verification. In responding, she speaks for God: “Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Tell the

man who sent you to me, ‘Thus says Yahweh, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read’” (2 Kgs 22:15–16). Some have contended that the fact that Huldah goes on to wrongly predict Josiah’s peaceful death suggests the author meant to cast her as a false prophet on the basis of Deut 18:21–22, but this is not explicit in the text. Moreover, as Thomas Römer argues, Josiah’s death “in peace” means not that he would not die in battle, but that he would be spared “the spectacle of Jerusalem’s destruction,” as opposed, for example, to the fate of Jehoiakim (cf. Jer 36:30–31).¹²³ In any case, Josiah inaugurates his famous sweeping reforms on the basis of her confirmation, hardly a condemnation of a false prophet. Huldah thus authorizes the ideas not just at the center of Josiah’s reform but also of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history (Joshua–2 Kings). It would be more than a little perplexing to entrust the prophetic validity of the newly discovered scripture and of the royal agenda to a prophet the author ultimately considered illegitimate.

Deborah

Finally, and most prominent, Deborah has long energized and troubled biblical interpreters¹²⁴ precisely because of her sex, but the text of Judges finds no trouble therewith. She is described as the “wife of Lappidoth,” but scholars recognize, that because of anomalies in the way her putative husband is presented, the phrase should rather be rendered “woman of flames,” or even “wielder of torches,”¹²⁵ possibly in reference to her prophetic specialty but certainly evocative elsewhere of theophany (Gen 15:17; Exod 20:18). Not only is she a prophet, she is Israel’s judge, as were Tola and Samson in the book of Judges and also Eli and Samuel in the beginning of Samuel (1 Sam 4:18; 7:16–17). The text says more about her judicial activity than that of any other judge: that she would sit under the “palm of Deborah” and the Israelites would come to her for judgment. She also possessed power by virtue of her prophetic authority to muster armies: she speaks for Yahweh and summons the general Barak, who only agrees to go into battle if she is with him. She is known for her compositions (Judg 5:5), including the victory song of Judges 5. There she is also curiously called a “mother in Israel,” which appears to be used as

a title, something she “arose as.” Scholars have suggested this as a counterpart to the appellation of prophets as “fathers” (2 Kgs 2:12; 6:21). If this is the case, it may hint at the existence of her “children,” which would be prophetic apprentices analogous to those of Elijah, called “sons of the prophets” (1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7), and therefore possibly an order of female prophets. The concentration of cultic, political and military leadership in the person of Deborah makes her only peers in biblical history Moses or possibly Melchizedek. Translated into LDS terms, Deborah functioned as did Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, or Brigham Young in Utah; there are no other comparable analogues.

On the question of female prophetic authority it is thus established that women were authorized at the highest levels to receive revelation from, and to speak to, the people on behalf of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible. As Melodie Moench Charles notes, though, the treatment of Deborah and Huldah in LDS reference materials exhibits a discomfort similar to that which we saw with Hannah in the Masoretic Hebrew text. The editors of the LDS Bible Dictionary, working from a non-LDS base text, changed the wording of the entry on Deborah from a “prophetess” to “a famous woman who judged Israel,” while Huldah was excised altogether (whereas she had been present in the base text).¹²⁶ In the new online “Guide to the Scriptures,” however, the entry “Deborah” has been corrected to read “prophetess” in place of “famous woman.”¹²⁷ Huldah is not treated alone, but the Guide has included a new entry, “prophetess,” that names Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna as women who were called prophetesses in the Bible, but cautions “a prophetess does not hold the priesthood or its keys,” without further explanation.¹²⁸ This assertion merits more detailed exploration, especially given Paul’s expectation that women regularly prophesy (1 Cor 11:5). As with priests and goddesses, the cases of the female prophets clearly demonstrate legitimacy in the struggle for (and brief triumph of) female authority that has characterized our discussion thus far.

The Book of Judges and the Evaluation of Women’s Authority

The evidence above shows women operating in roles Latter-day Saints would designate as priesthood offices if men occupied them. Equally important here, however, is the prominent struggle for

authority manifest in all of these texts, a struggle which repeatedly shows women as actors, and even as agents of priesthood power as understood in LDS terms, that is then removed, rejected, or lost as power is concentrated in the hands of men. The loss of female authority and opportunity as institutions grow and societies “stabilize” is not a sociological surprise. Jo Ann Hackett has called attention to the pattern in which the development of institutions pushes women to the margins, even when they had enjoyed prior dominance in a given arena, such as medicine. It is a pattern that is manifest at many points in the Bible, especially in the Book of Judges.

One can detect in Judges an *evaluation* of the relation between the status of women and the health of the covenant community. The loss of female authority is not only outlined in the Book of Judges, it is assigned an overtly negative value and may be read as a litmus test for the health of Israelite society. The text shows the Israelites careening toward disintegration in the days when “there was no king in Israel, every man did what was right in his own eyes” (e.g., Judg 17:6). This disintegration is perhaps most apparent in the way women are treated with disproportionate frequency (relative to other books) and on a declining trajectory. At the beginning we find Deborah prophesying and judging Israel and Jael coming to the rescue in her capacity as priest, but as the narrative progresses women diminish in power and are stripped of authority, of agency, and even of name. Abimelech gives ominous voice to the fate of women under kings after an unnamed woman saves the temple refugees from his tyranny by dropping a stone on his head and crushing his skull. He says to his armor-bearer: “Draw your sword and kill me, so people will not say about me, ‘A woman killed him’” (Judg 9:54). As Judges continues, we find the sacrifice of a young female firstborn (Jephthah’s daughter, Judg 11), the death of the most (in)famous judge, Samson, by Delilah’s treachery, and, in the final chapters, the unnamed concubine of a Levite casually turned over to fellow Israelite men for a brutal gang-rape following which her husband dismembered her as a way of calling the tribes of Israel to war against one of their own. Judges is bookended on the one hand by Deborah and Jael, who use their agency to muster the armies and defeat the enemies of Israel, and on the other by the Levite’s concubine, whose passive body is used not only by her assailants

but also by her Levite husband to rally the Israelites. Judges can be read as intentionally equating the declining treatment, agency, and status of women with the declining health of Israelite society.¹²⁹ Continuing into the book of Samuel, the results of this declining health lead toward kingship, which is ambivalently characterized both as a solution to the decline and as a rejection of Yahweh (1 Sam 8).¹³⁰ One is tempted to say that a major loss in the bargain of kingship is female cultic agency. Even though it is ultimately unclear whether the author considered the advent of kingship as a boon to women, it is clear that the earlier, “healthier” situation at the beginning of Judges shows women holding status equal and even superior to men, triumphing over their male oppressors within and outside Israel. The book of Judges can therefore be read to condemn the decline of female authority and to idealize the situation in which women were judges—presidents, in LDS terms—and prophets. This text, furthermore, opens the way to the deployment of LDS discourses of apostasy that allow an evaluation based on canonical texts not just in the case of early Israel, but of the continual rejection of female authority in postbiblical contexts, to which we will return below. It now remains to treat the struggle for female authority in New Testament texts.

Priesthood and New Testament Women

The New Testament arose in a period for which there is better contemporary documentation than in the case of most of the Old Testament, which contributes to the fact that studies of women and gender in the New Testament and its context are disproportionately more voluminous than that of similar studies of the world of the Hebrew Bible. The discussion here will thus be necessarily summative and incomplete but will attempt to point to those instances most important for an LDS understanding of the struggle for female authority. The New Testament evidence complicates the discussion of priesthood in Mormonism because it is intertwined textually with the Hebrew Bible, and, at the same time, developed in a vastly different socio-political and religious landscape from it. As is frequently noted by scholars, the Temple was not a central focus of Jesus’s teachings, and he certainly did not describe the community

of disciples, or its leadership, in priesthood terminology.¹³¹ For the first hundred years of Christianity, the records of Jesus's earliest followers show a similar lack of interest in cultic institutions, whose force was diluted in texts such as 1 Peter 2:9, which applies the "royal priesthood" of Exodus 19:6 to the whole Christian community. Nevertheless, as Christian communities grew and ecclesiastical roles developed, the pattern of greater female leadership preceding institutional centralization holds again. There is early evidence of women occupying roles of apostle and deacon, followed by an effort to deny women such offices (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:9–15).¹³²

Gospels

On the surface the Gospels seem less concerned with issues of institutional authority, probably because the Jesus movement arose largely outside elite sacerdotal contexts. Further, Jesus's sometimes radical social critique of existing power structures seems to hold out greater opportunities for historically oppressed groups, including women, and subsequently these groups often appealed to the Gospels to support their claims.¹³³ Thus, studies of gender in the gospels often focus on the notion of discipleship as presented in the text, rather than on ecclesiastical hierarchy. These studies have revealed strong evidence that the authors promoted, in harmony with their understanding of Jesus, a "discipleship of equals," a term coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.¹³⁴ Given the charge in LDS discussions of ecclesiastical equality that advocates of female ordination are unduly preoccupied with "sameness" rather than equality, it is important to note that Schüssler Fiorenza has emphasized that equality in her view does not imply the collapse of all distinction, including gender, but rather seeks equality *in* difference, an equality of "status, dignity, and rights" rather than an equality of maleness and femaleness.¹³⁵ Especially relevant here are the gospels of Luke and John, both of which exhibit a tendency to add women to their source material to balance the depiction of discipleship,¹³⁶ although this is not necessarily an unqualified gain for women, as a closer look reveals.

Many have noted that there are more passages about women in the Gospel of Luke than in the other gospels, about half of which are unique to Luke.¹³⁷ A careful analysis of these passages, though,

demonstrates Luke's concern for women maintaining their proper position and a suppression or recasting of stories in which women challenge Jesus (cf. Mark 7:24–30) or are commissioned to spread the gospel among gentiles (cf. John 4). This is less surprising when we take the companion volume to Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, into account. There the author shows a proclivity toward establishing Peter's primacy and a general harmony and structure among the male apostles.¹³⁸ The Gospel of John, on the other hand, has arguably the highest view of women in the earliest community. Women are responsible for the initiation of signs, for revealing Jesus's identity through discourse with him, and for supervising all aspects of his death.¹³⁹ Margaret M. Beirne takes this evidence as revealing John's view of a "genuine discipleship of equals" given his unique structural juxtaposition of male and female disciples.¹⁴⁰

Especially important for an LDS framework is the way apostolic authority is portrayed. The fusion of "the twelve" with apostleship was a development that postdated Paul and not a concept or office uniformly understood throughout the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3, 5–8).¹⁴¹ Most ancient notions of apostleship require both the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to the person in question and his divine commission to spread the message.¹⁴² The work of Ann Graham Brock reveals that Luke and John represent canonical poles in their view of apostolic authority, especially with regard to Peter and Mary Magdalene, and therefore demonstrate a very early battle for apostolic authority.¹⁴³ Luke systematically removes Mary's privileged place among the disciples as well as any potentially poor light that may be cast on Peter. For example, he deletes the reciprocal rebukes of Peter and Jesus (Mk 8:32–33//Matt 16:22–23) and is the only one to add the exclusive resurrection appearance to Peter (Luke 24:33–34). At the same time, Luke breaks with the other canonical gospels in denying both Jesus's appearance to Mary Magdalene and his commission to her to testify to his resurrection, the two crucial components of apostleship.¹⁴⁴

John does not share Luke's elevated view of Peter. Rather, for John, Peter is not even specifically called by Jesus, and he is certainly not the first.¹⁴⁵ Where Matthew, Mark, and Luke have Peter revealing Jesus's identity as the son of God (Mk 8:29; Matt 16:16; Luke 9:20), in John this confession is done by Martha (11:27), and

Peter's recognition and confession are less forceful, as he calls Jesus the "holy one of God" (6:69), a phrase that could signify a divinely-sanctioned human, such as a prophet. In John, Jesus does not call the twelve, and even though the author knows about such traditions, he de-emphasizes their significance (6:70).¹⁴⁶ John also only uses the term "apostle" once in a passage "that conveys a warning about status,"¹⁴⁷ which, given that the author of John is writing after the other evangelists, is likely a deliberate omission. At the same time, the gospel of John generally portrays stronger women than does Luke,¹⁴⁸ and this applies especially to Mary Magdalene. Mary and Peter are explicitly juxtaposed at the tomb when, finding it empty, she calls Peter and the beloved disciple, who come and witness its emptiness. Upon their departure Jesus appears exclusively to Mary and commissions her to bear witness to the disciples. Thus the gospel of John reverses the picture we find in Luke; now Mary is championed at the expense of Peter. Between these two poles, Mark and Matthew skew toward the portrayal of John, a point Brock notes as significant in light of the usual agreement of the synoptic gospels against John.¹⁴⁹

The struggle evidenced in Luke and John plays out in other texts both inside and outside the canon(s). Brock sets the conflict seen in the New Testament within the broader context of the first several centuries of Christianity and thus adds to the mounting evidence of female authority in the early Church. This includes the later, non-biblical traditions that she was a prostitute,¹⁵⁰ as well as the title *apostola apostolorum*, "apostle to the apostles" and Bishop Hippolytus's third-century assertion that "Christ showed himself to the (male) apostles and said to them: . . . 'It is I who appeared to these women and I who wanted to send them to you as apostles.'"¹⁵¹ That the tradition endured is suggested by Gregory of Antioch's sixth-century citation of Jesus's words at the tomb to the two Marys: "Be the first teachers of the teachers, so that Peter who denied me learns that I can also choose women as apostles."¹⁵²

Besides the adumbration in Luke and John of a pitched battle for apostolic preeminence between Peter and Mary, these texts are most remarkable for their witness to tradition—to *narratives*—as one of the grounds on which the contest was fought. Both drew on earlier material at the same time as they innovated and adjusted in order to

convey their vision of how the contemporary church should look. This is both a common theme and an indication about the power of narrative for reshaping priesthood traditions and theologies in the face of social change.

Pauline Letters

The letters attributed to Paul have the distinction of providing both the strongest evidence for female authority and the strongest rejection thereof. In Romans 16, for example, Paul names a female deacon (Phoebe) and apostle (Junia) among several other prominent women. In 1 Timothy 2:12, however, women are not permitted to have authority over men or teach in church services. The Pauline letters have therefore received a great deal of attention in studies of the role of women in Christian leadership. Although these contradictions have been the focus of many studies, including an LDS context, they are worth exploring once again here in detail.

In addition to the verses in 1 Corinthians 11 that say husbands are the head of their wives as Christ is the head of the Church, two other letters urge wives to be submissive and subordinate to their husbands (Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–4:1). These passages do not explicitly comment on the significance of this hierarchy for gender relations outside of marriage or for the way this might constrain leadership roles in the ecclesiastical community. The normative value of these texts for modern practice is troubled by the fact that few denominations, Mormonism included, follow the rules for which the hierarchical order was invoked in these texts as a justification.¹⁵³ Women are not required to wear head coverings in public worship, as Paul strongly contends is a practice based on the created order (1 Cor 11:3–15), nor are the rules governing relations between slaves and masters in Col 3:22–4:1 understood to support the modern practice of slavery. As Hutchinson notes, this disconnect “demonstrates the cultural contingency of the rule.”¹⁵⁴

Some letters in the Pauline corpus speak more directly to the question of ecclesiastical leadership, however. The strongest of these is 1 Tim 2:8–15, which treats women’s behavior in the churches generally: “Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not

deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (vv. 11–15 NRSV). Here the order of creation is explicitly linked to gendered leadership, which supports not only male exclusivity but also radical receptivity on the part of the woman: no teaching, no speaking while learning, completely submissive. These verses bear close resemblance to 1 Cor 14:34–38, which appear in the middle of instructions about the management of spiritual gifts, such as prophecy, in gatherings: “As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church” (NRSV).

Although it would seem that these texts clearly indicate a generalized division of administrative labor between men and women, there are many reasons to reject their normative bearing on modern practice. First, current LDS practice already ignores much in these verses. Women do not learn in silence with full submission, and women speak and pray publicly and are not required to veil their heads. As Hutchinson notes, “the fact that women *do* teach in the modern LDS Church casts doubt upon any attempt to use this text to establish an exclusionary ordination policy.”¹⁵⁵ Second, there are strong reasons to think someone besides Paul wrote these verses. It is a consensus among New Testament scholars that the pastoral epistles (1–2 Timothy; Titus) were forged in Paul’s name after his death to gain an authoritative voice for endorsement of the author’s contemporary agenda. This is supported by differences in style, language, and theology as well as anachronistic use of terminology. The fact that 1 Timothy forbids women access to offices such as bishop is an anachronism that gives away the author’s context and ecclesiastical environment. In the case of 1 Cor 14:34–38, the verses are intrusive in theme and bear strong resemblance to 1 Timothy 2, which indicates their secondary insertion into the chapter. There are also very good reasons to doubt the authenticity of Ephesians and Colossians as letters authored by Paul.

The third and perhaps strongest reason to reject these texts as normative for modern Church practice, however, is that they do not

appear to have been normative even for Paul and even assuming he wrote them. A few chapters before his apparent pronouncement that women everywhere are to be silent in meetings (1 Cor 14:34–38), Paul assumes that women prophesy in these same meetings (1 Cor 11) and in Acts 18:26 Priscilla teaches the convert Apollos alongside her husband Aquila in Ephesus, a congregation Paul established. She is also mentioned in Romans 16, a chapter that merits a closer look because it undercuts the idea of an ecclesiastical hierarchy based on gender and, more important, gives positive evidence of female leadership in some of the earliest Christian communities.

Romans 16 has for decades been at the heart of this discussion because in it, Paul mentions as a matter of course several prominent women described as fellow ministers active in the church community.¹⁵⁶ He refers to Prisc[ill]a alongside her husband (Rom 16:3–4) as a co-worker with Paul in Christ who was apparently willing to endure death for Paul’s sake and whose home was a meetinghouse. A certain Mary is also mentioned (v. 6) as one who worked hard (*ekopiasen*) among the community. In this chapter the verb *kopiaō* is only used for women, including Mary, Persis, and Tryphaena and Tryphosa (v. 12). The latter two are also named in other undisputed letters of Paul (1 Cor 16:16; 1 Thess 5:12) in which Paul tells the communities to be subject to these women. This seems at odds with the prohibition in 1 Timothy on women having authority over men, not to mention the injunction against speaking or teaching.

The women most famously discussed in Romans 16 are, however, the deacon Phoebe and the apostle Junia. Paul introduces Phoebe as “a deacon (*diakonos*) of the church at Cencreae,” and instructs his audience to “welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well” (Rom 16:1–2 NRSV). The KJV translates the Greek *diakonos* here as “servant” while in other texts, such as Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12, it renders “deacon,” apparently based solely on the sex of the referent. While the term can indeed mean “minister” or “servant,” justifying the difference between understanding “servant” or “deacon” in Romans versus Philemon or Timothy without a tautology is difficult.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, Paul’s further specification of Phoebe as a deacon *of the church*, and also a benefactor (*prostatis*), speaks to her leadership and to the

possible point of emergence of the office of deacon in Christianity.¹⁵⁸ Little wonder she is the first person named in the chapter.

The double standard of avoiding official terms for Phoebe solely based on gender concerns finds a twentieth-century parallel in the case of Junia. In Romans 16:7 Paul enjoins the church in Rome to “greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me. They are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was” (NRSV). Although the name has been understood as feminine in gender since antiquity, in the twentieth century some began to argue that the Greek *Iouinian* should be understood as “Junias,” a masculine name. Eldon Epp has recently thoroughly discredited this argument, which was clearly driven by the supposition that women could not be apostles.¹⁵⁹ Another point of contention concerns whether the phrase rendered “prominent among the apostles” should be translated instead as “of note among the apostles,” i.e., that apostles knew this (non-apostolic) couple well. Though this is in the realm of possibility, two pieces of evidence militate against it. First, the fact that Paul notes the couple’s earlier entrance into the Christian community relative to his own bolsters the claim of apostleship. Some argue that “apostle” here need not indicate an office in the Church, but that it existed as a general term alongside the capital-A “Apostle” synonymous with the Twelve. This line of reasoning, however, would also undercut Paul’s own apostolic claim, even in the same letter (cf. Rom 1:1). Second, as Hutchinson notes, “in Paul the preposition *en* in this kind of locution normally means ‘among.’ Had he meant ‘to’ he probably would have used the dative *apostolois* without the preposition. What we have is reference to a woman Paul considered not only an apostle, but an outstanding one.”¹⁶⁰

Romans 16 presents more than a collection of unflinching notices about women in early Christian communities. Rather, it presumes women played an active role in the center of leadership, preaching, and ministry alongside men. None of the anxiety about women’s status in the hierarchy, so prominent in 1 Timothy, is in evidence in Romans 16. Not only does this chapter contradict multiple times the statements in the androcentric texts above, it does so by naming women and their titles. As we saw with Mary Magdalene, the major obstacles to understanding Junia as an apostle come

from interpreters' assumptions about women's opportunities for leadership rather than from the texts themselves.

To summarize the complex evidence about gender and authority in the Pauline letters, the texts do not speak with a unified voice, nor does modern LDS worship find uniform normativity in them. We can attribute some antiphony—perhaps the most dissonant—to other authors writing in Paul's name (1 Timothy, Ephesians, Colossians) and to interpolation (1 Cor 14:34–38). The other apparent contradictions involving the submissiveness of wives to husbands (1 Cor 11) as compared with the apparent erasure of gender (Gal 3:28) in Christ may be in fact the result of Paul's differentiation between created order and eternal order discussed above. He makes room for, and even endorses, certain cultural contingencies of subordination, such as slavery and marriage, in favor of not disrupting preparations for the coming kingdom of God. In Christ Jesus, however, Paul seems to hold out the possibility of adopting the non-hierarchical eternal structure promised in the baptismal pronouncement in Galatians 3. At the very least, one cannot easily negate the positive evidence from the Pauline letters of women serving in leadership roles that in the LDS Church are priesthood offices.

In the Pauline letters—disputed and otherwise—as in nearly every other text we have encountered to this point, we also find in evidence the struggle for authority at many levels, beginning in the New Testament itself and continuing to modern efforts to interpret it. The disputed letters bear witness to the struggle for gendered authority in a second-century context. The bare fact of the injunction of 1 Timothy against female participation in church settings witnesses to the reality of women's ecclesiastical activity at the same time that its inclusion in the canon demonstrates the success of the exclusionary process. The modern struggle for authority is seen in the gendered hermeneutics whereby Phoebe is denied status as deacon and Junia is rendered masculine, both solely on the basis of prevailing assumptions about female authority. That these hints of a more egalitarian early Christian arrangement survived at all—and among the very earliest textual witnesses to Christian practice—once again urges careful attention to the implications of female priesthood authority. As with the many other texts we have seen, these pseudepigraphic writings both appeal to and transform

tradition through text, this time by assuming the authoritative voice of Paul and extending themes of gender adumbrated in the undisputed letters. The skepticism of inerrancy claims endemic to LDS theology allows and perhaps even requires an interrogation of the authorial bases of the texts in question here, thus avoiding many of the obstacles confronting other denominations. Mormonism potentially makes room for disentangling contradictory threads and, in doing so, for the theological neutralization of the most misogynistic texts in the Pauline corpus.

Women in Early Christianity

Questions about the reliability of texts like Romans 16 that depict women in leadership roles at the center of the earliest Christian formation have led scholars to look with greater intensity at gender in the first Christian centuries. Studies of women and gender in early Christianity have burgeoned since the 1970s such that even a full sketch of the contours of the area of study is impossible here. For our purposes it is important to note the increasingly high resolution of the picture of women in Greco-Roman and Levantine contexts in the first centuries A.D. Some of the older positive explanations for a presumed higher rate of female conversion—such as that the liberating message of Jesus attracted people from segments of society oppressed under Judaism—have been replaced by models that combine sociology, anthropology, archaeology as well as literary criticism and philology.¹⁶¹ The notion discussed above that women found greater opportunities for leadership and public agency during times of change has been alternatively championed and resisted and continues to be at the center of discussion.¹⁶²

Crucial to this question is the recognition of the primary social locus of Christian communities not in an entirely public sphere as it would be in the third century and later, but rather in “house churches,” which seems automatically to suggest greater leadership opportunities for women since, some argue, their primary domain in Greco-Roman society was domestic, and, as we argued was the case in ancient Israel, the move to the public sphere and subsequent welding of centralized public and religious authority pushed women to the margins.¹⁶³ Scholars point out, however, that the evidence is considerably more complex, and that the homes in

which Christians would have met were themselves situated at the juncture between public and private. Indeed, the domestic location can be seen either as a means to greater female power and agency or, as in the case of 1 Timothy 3, a way of enshrining the patriarchy of the home in the church organization. That upper-class homes were also semi-public venues in which men and women ran their businesses calls into question the assumption that they were entirely the domain of women. Evidence does point, however, to women as responsible for hospitality; Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald argue that the female leaders of houses mentioned in the New Testament—Mary mother of John, Mark (Acts 2:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14, 40), Nympha (Col 4:15), and possibly Chloe (1 Cor 11:1)—likely “hosted formal dinners and presided at them, including the assembly of the *ekklesia*.”¹⁶⁴ These spaces were also centers of teaching and communication, and as such also place women in the center of developing Christian practice. If these women did preside at the regular meetings of Christian congregations, they were acting analogously to bishops in Mormon terms.

Although the process of institutionalization and centralization firmly pushed women to the margins of ecclesiastical hierarchy, this move obviously did not end the struggle. Some women found alternative means to authority and status in self-authorization and in the renunciation of sex, as portrayed in the *Acts of Thekla*, a document contemporary (perhaps not coincidentally) with the Pastoral Epistles.¹⁶⁵ Others challenged the male-dominated hierarchy more directly. Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek provide substantial documentary evidence from literary texts as well as inscriptions indicating that women did hold the offices of Deaconess (well-known especially in the Eastern Church but attested also in the West) and Presbyter (elder).¹⁶⁶ Though the nature of the evidence—comprising mostly either screeds against women in the clergy or terse inscriptions indicating little more than names and titles—prevents a clear view of duties, roles, and relation to male counterparts, it is sufficient to establish the struggle for female authority well after the merging of political and ecclesiastical power.

Letter to the Hebrews and LDS Priesthood

The final New Testament text crucial for discussion is the Letter to the Hebrews, in which the link forged between Jesus and Melchizedek

had profound influence on Joseph Smith's articulation of priesthood, visible especially in the dominant quotation of Hebrews in Smith's revision of Genesis 14. The anonymous author of Hebrews, which was ostensibly composed as a letter but reads more like a sermon than an address to a specific Christian community, draws creatively on various traditions in the Hebrew Bible to solve a socio-religious problem, namely the relationship between Judaism and the Christian community emerging from it. The Hebrew scriptures and Jewish tradition could not simply be jettisoned, because it was within that framework that Jesus and his disciples operated and understood their roles, but at the same time, with the expansion of the message of the resurrected Jesus into non-Jewish areas, the question of religious practice naturally arose. It was a problem that famously exercised Paul, who also turned to biblical exegesis to answer the same question, using, for example, the note in Galatians 3 about Abra[ha]m's belief and Yahweh's declaration of his righteousness in Gen 15:6 to show that one could be justified by faith outside the law.

Hebrews appeals to a different set of texts to explain the necessity of Jewish heritage as well as its supersession in the figure of Jesus. At the core is the author's mapping of Jesus onto the Jewish sacrificial cult, especially the Day of Atonement ceremonies described in Leviticus 16. The major historical hurdle to be overcome was that Jesus was not a priest or from a priestly lineage. For this reason the author invoked the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, who is found in only four verses in two passages in the Hebrew Bible: once as the king of Salem to whom Abraham pays tithes in Genesis 14:18–20 and again in Psalm 110:4 as having something to do with an enduring priesthood and kingship.¹⁶⁷ As with most such enigmatic passages, the tantalizing brevity and provocative silences caused many interpreters to rush into the breach to flesh out the biography and purpose of this figure. James Kugel discusses how interpreters both before and after the New Testament teased out of the suggestive scraps of these two texts a figure more exalted than the one portrayed in the Bible.¹⁶⁸ Some of these interpretive traditions were apparently influential in the composition of Hebrews, the most notable being the notion found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (predating Hebrews) that Melchizedek was a priest in the heavenly temple, because of the opening verses of Psalm 110: "take your throne at my right hand," and "the lord sends out from Zion your mighty scepter," as well as

“a priest forever.” Also of concern to interpreters was Melchizedek’s parentage. Since he was not of the family of Abraham and was apparently Abraham’s superior, exegetes were at pains to explain this relationship in terms of chosen lineage since Jerusalem was known to be a non-Israelite town until the time of David. Thus the notion developed especially in Jewish circles that Melchizedek was the same person as Shem.¹⁶⁹ For the author of Hebrews, however, the silence surrounding Melchizedek’s genealogy indicated *that he had none*; he was “without father, without mother, without genealogy” (Heb 7:3). These two concepts—(a) an eternal high priest (b) without lineage—allowed Jesus, a non-Levite, access to a higher, eternal priesthood. It allowed Hebrews to show Jesus, by virtue of the eternal priesthood and his offering of (his own eternal) blood, as simultaneously fulfilling and making obsolete the core of Jewish worship. Like Paul in Galatians 3, then, the author’s appeal to a difficult passage regarding a pre-Mosaic figure uses Jewish tradition precisely to make an end-run around it.

For Joseph Smith, however, Hebrews was not simply about Jesus; it also held the key to understanding an eternal order of non-hereditary priesthood superior to that of the Levites that was held not just by Jesus, as the author of Hebrews has it, but by all the central male figures of the Old and New Testaments. Smith combined Hebrews with the narration in Exodus 34 of Moses re-ascending the mountain to retrieve two new tablets after he had smashed the first set in the Golden Calf incident two chapters earlier, seeing in this text an aborted attempt to give all Israelites (males?) the higher priesthood.¹⁷⁰ It was almost certainly his revision of Exodus 34 that provided the structure for the articulation in D&C 84 (esp. vv. 24–26) of higher and lower priesthoods and, tellingly, the covenant that attended the receipt of the higher priesthood (D&C 84:39–41).¹⁷¹ Thus Joseph Smith does with Hebrews and Exodus what the author of Hebrews had done with Genesis and Psalm 110: he put the biblical texts into conversation with each other to establish new understandings of priesthood in response to contemporary social and theological concerns.¹⁷² This precedent of interpretation might open space for new LDS readings of priesthood on the question of gender and authority.

Rites of Ordination

The act of ordination seems to be the standard by which recent Church statements have dismissed biblical evidence, and it is vital in contemporary Mormon affirmations of authority. Article of Faith 5 says “a man must be called of God by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority.” Thus the official church statement that there is no record of Jesus ordaining women requires an unpacking of what scriptural ordination looks like, especially since most scholars agree that Jesus did not ordain anyone, woman or man, to ecclesiastical office in the Bible. The most explicit scriptural evidence for ordination as the ritual transfer of authority comes from Exodus and Leviticus, which speak of the consecration, ordination, and anointing of priests. If this is the standard the Otterson statement has in mind, it is one that cannot be met almost anywhere else for any office besides the priestly legal texts in the Pentateuch, and especially not in the New Testament.

If one broadens the definition of ordination to an expression of divine commission, there are many ways the Bible signals the commission. In KJV John 15:16, Jesus refers to his having chosen and “ordained” disciples, but (a) the Greek *tithemi* need not convey ordination to an office but rather a generic appointment, and (b) it remains unclear, even if the word “ordained” is kept, to what the disciples were ordained. Priesthood is certainly not directly in view here unless in a very generic (non-biblical) sense. Acts 6 depicts the twelve choosing and laying hands on seven subordinates chosen to look after logistics, though it is unclear here too whether this indicates a permanent office.

Other means of declaring intentional divine selection and commission vary widely and include: personal visions (Micaiah in 1 Kgs 22; Paul in Acts 9), Yahweh touching the mouth (Jeremiah 1), winged serpents touching the mouth with a coal (Isa 6), eating a scroll (Ezekiel 1), and casting lots to decide on the new apostle (Acts 1:23–26). Even more important, the charge, commission, or ordination of most of the male religious authorities in the Bible (even for individual priests) is not described; to list their title was enough, especially if their actions could be assumed to affirm their status. Thus Deborah gives oracles of Yahweh and successfully routs the

Canaanites—is her commission in doubt? The same goes for most of the other women treated here. Furthermore, if Paul’s criteria for apostleship include both a vision of the resurrected Jesus and the charge to bear witness of it, Mary Magdalene and the other female witnesses can be considered apostles, “ordained” in the same way Paul was. On the other hand, we have many prominent male figures considered prophets who not only do not describe their ordination (e.g., Elijah, Abinadi), but who are not even specifically called prophets: Amos, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Malachi, Daniel. Further, the LDS understanding of important male figures in the Bible as priesthood holders, such as Adam and Abraham in D&C 84, is arrived at by a revelatory process that has not yet dealt with their female counterparts. Even to cite examples of priesthood and ordination from the Book of Mormon is to ignore the substantial differences in offices and priesthood structure between the Book of Mormon and the current LDS church. There is therefore not only lack of precedent for female ordination in scripture, but much of modern LDS practice of male ordination similarly either lacks precedent entirely or is only weakly attested. In other words, the Bible does not speak unequivocally about either male or female ordination practices as understood or performed by Latter-day Saints.

Finally, the case of the priesthood ordinations of Joseph Smith and associates at the (literal) hands of angelic messengers complicates any facile claim about priesthood ordination in scripture. The significant gap in time and characterization between the priesthood restoration events and their description reflects an evolution in the understanding of these events.¹⁷³ While multiple documents confirm Joseph Smith’s claim to authorization by angelic authority in 1829, the specific link between John the Baptist and the Aaronic priesthood was not forged until after the concept of Aaronic priesthood had itself developed, after 1835. Even more complicated is the question of Melchizedek priesthood restoration, understood today to have taken place at an uncertain date and place by the laying on of hands from Peter, James, and John. Not only is this event murky in origin, but, as Michael MacKay shows, Joseph Smith never cited it during his lifetime as the moment of restoration of, and ordination to, the highest priesthood. Rather, MacKay points to a

less widely cited event in the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in which Smith and Oliver Cowdery apparently were authorized *by voice* to perform ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood and to ordain each other Elders.¹⁷⁴ He also points to the Book of Mormon for evidence of authorization to the highest authority solely by divine speech-acts (Helaman 10:6–12). Not only does the history of the LDS church reflect a gradual process of understanding priesthood and restoring it, but it also attests that ordination is possible through pure perception and not exclusively through physical conferral. In any case, all of these examples show different ways of indicating ordination such that ordination of the female authorities discussed earlier is impossible to rule out, even within an LDS framework.

Conclusion: Precedent, Narrative, and Native Resolutions

All things had under the Authority of the Priesthood at any former period shall be had again—bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets.

—Joseph Smith, 5 October 1840¹⁷⁵

I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

—Joel 2:28 // Acts 2:17

The scriptural evidence presented here makes as compelling a case for female precedent in most LDS priesthood offices as for males, including the highest: Deacon (Phoebe), Priest (Zipporah, Jael, Hannah), Bishop (Deborah and perhaps Mary mother of John, Mark, Lydia, Nympha, and Chloe),¹⁷⁶ Apostle (Mary Magdalene, Junia), as well as Prophet (Deborah, Huldah, Miriam, Isaiah's wife, Noadiah), and president of the Church (Deborah). This is a remarkable number given the strongly androcentric production and social setting of the texts. These women make difficult any LDS claim that there were no ordained women in the Bible, especially given the problems with the definition of ordination described above. The simple presence of these figures creates tensions in the particular Mormon constellation of ecclesiastical authority, a tension demonstrated in, for example, the excision of Huldah from the LDS Bible

Dictionary and the manipulation of the entry on Deborah. Another source of tension we have seen is the way LDS priesthood hierarchy is not the province of a narrow cultic institution but extends into potentially every home, which intensifies gender relations and fuses priesthood with an eternal gender identity that is at odds with some biblical notions of gender equality. This tension is replicated in the strong dual commitment of the Church to gender equality and to a gendered restriction of priesthood agency. Yet the particular LDS framework also yields unique possibilities for an endemic resolution of these tensions, because although the extension of the concept of priesthood supports the gender hierarchy by marking sex as the most important distinction, it also encompasses roles such as prophet and apostle that were clearly held by biblical women.

The object of this study has been not so much to draw back the curtain to reveal a pristine egalitarian state in which women held priesthood, but rather to point to a cyclical process of empowerment and denial playing out on divine and human levels and in every era important to Mormon theology. What is revealed time and again is precedent followed by restriction and asymmetrically gendered interpretations. Seen thusly, the question becomes whether this cycle can be understood and accommodated in LDS theology.

One can begin to address this question by attention to the importance of narrative in establishing and understanding authority. At many points we saw ancient and modern authors not simply appealing to tradition but shaping, tailoring, and reconfiguring even (and perhaps especially) very thin textual evidence to address contemporary concerns and produce new knowledge in the face of significant social development. We see it at work in the disappearance and diminishing of women in the wake of the centralization of cultic power in Exodus, Judges, and Samuel; in the way the Deuteronomists excised Asherah worship and non-Jerusalem shrines using Moses's voice; in the way stories were told about priestly progenitors such as Moses and Aaron and their descendants in order to justify the contemporary preeminence of one line over another; in the way Luke and John tweaked their source material so as to promote or demote the apostolic claims of Mary Magdalene and Peter; in the way the author of the Pastoral Epistles adopted Paul's voice in order to combat the appearance of women in the church

hierarchy; in the way the author of Hebrews drew on many biblical and non-biblical texts and traditions to understand Jesus as a priest, and in the way Joseph Smith extended Hebrews.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, the turning points in Joseph Smith's revelatory career were rarely fully understood even by him from the start. One thinks especially of the multiple and divergent accounts of the first vision and the gradual articulation of the angelic conferral of both Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods as well as the development of priesthood structure and organization itself, which happened in step with scriptural inquiry and social exigency.

More important than the weight of precedent is the ability to assemble from it a new picture that is in recognizable harmony with the tradition. In keeping with the biblical pattern of reshaping tradition, a new but familiar picture of women's relation to priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could be assembled from canonical materials. The scriptural evidence of the repeated struggle for the wielding of female authority provides a solid basis for new approaches to the question of power, authority, and gender in the LDS tradition, not just in establishing precedent for authoritative women but also for establishing divine female power, for the exercise of agency, and for the negative evaluation of subordinating gender relations. Future theological reflection might draw, therefore, on the description in Proverbs 8 of a divine, female-gendered creative power overseen by an active and accessible goddess; the equation of female agency and authority with the health of the community of God in the book of Judges; and the patterns of Deborah, Jael, Zipporah, and Mary Magdalene as survivals of the female priesthood Joseph Smith said existed "in the days of Enoch . . . [and] in the days of Paul."

This material might also explain the present lack of female authority in relation to the past and potentially the future. The decline pictured in the Book of Judges was rooted in a cyclical pattern of oppression and deliverance that evokes the unique LDS way of relating to the past, a relation mediated by the term "apostasy," which is also understood to be historically cyclical on scales from dispensational to individual.¹⁷⁸ The concepts of apostasy and restoration have been at the heart of LDS self-understanding from the beginning. Terryl Givens recently pointed out that Joseph Smith's

definition of corruption from the primitive church as a justification for the radical reshaping of Christian tradition was exactly the opposite of the prevailing Protestant notions.¹⁷⁹ According to Givens, for Smith and for the subsequent church, restoration was not a *removal* of accretions like the restoration of a painting darkened by the patina of time (as other Protestants saw it) but a *replacement* of that which was lost, primarily of original authority.¹⁸⁰ It is in precisely this respect that Mormonism stands in a uniquely advantageous position when it comes to understanding the history of biblical authority: it is able to acknowledge not just the content of scripture but the particular (even the particularly misogynistic) conditions under which scripture developed. Apostasy as a cyclical loss of authority makes it possible to explain the struggle visible in all the texts above, not just in their basic narrative content but also in the ways texts were edited and selected and alternative narratives excluded. It can explain, for example, the inclusion of the Pastoral Epistles in the canon and the exclusion of the *Acts of Thekla*. In what President Dieter F. Uchtdorf described as an “ongoing Restoration,”¹⁸¹ it seems that few concepts would be as consonant with the LDS notion of lost authority as the loss of female authority. It is a loss adumbrated in the partial restitution of priesthood authority to women in the last years of Joseph Smith’s life.¹⁸²

Seen this way, the loss of female authority is entirely congruent with Joseph Smith’s view, as Givens describes it, of “restoration as an untidy and imperfect process involving many sources, varying degrees of inspiration, and stops and starts.”¹⁸³ If the project of Restoration is a replacement of things lost, the repeated denial of genuine female authority can be seen in LDS terms as a fundamental human tendency of apostasy replicated in virtually every generation: a tendency so ingrained, so part of the fabric of human existence as to make female authority one of the last principles to be restored, because it was one of the first to go.

To return to the opening comparison of the gendered priesthood ban to the racial priesthood ban, it seems the Bible presents stronger evidence for women holding priesthood—especially as Latter-day Saints understand the term—than does early Mormon history for black men ordained during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. In the comparison, however, we find a kind of reversal of sources: in

the case of the racial ban, there were clear modern indications of ordinations of black men but only indirect scriptural justification; in the case of the gendered ban, there is clear biblical evidence of women holding the highest offices, while the modern evidence stops just short of ordination in Joseph Smith's lifetime. Latter-day Saint women have no modern Elijah Abels; they instead have Deborah and Jael, Phoebe and Junia. Maybe more important than precedent of personnel is the clear and repeated scriptural evidence of the assertion and removal of female authority on many levels, from biblical events to text composition to transmission to interpretation. More important still, in my view, is the richness of the Bible and Mormon scripture, treated preliminarily here, for uncovering and exploring narratives of female authority within an LDS framework. It is in precisely this area that much theological and interpretative work remains to be done.

Notes

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1. After Victor A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*, JSOTSup 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 170.

2. "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority: The Case of the *Gospel of Mary* (Magdalene)," in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, edited by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 21–41, 335–43; here 21.

3. Official Declaration 2.

4. Especially Lester Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue* 8 (1973): 11–86; Armand Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

5. The "Gospel Topics" essay on lds.org (<https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>) draws more extensively on careful academic

research to help make sense of the ban in the history of the Church. At the time of writing, no official Church publication has attempted to deal in a similar way with the gender ban.

6. Ibid.

7. BBC World Service, “Sister Saints—Women and the Mormons” broadcast, August 23, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p024wttp>. Transcript and emphasis mine. He made a similar statement in an earlier open letter released to several LDS blogs: “I suppose we do not know all the reasons why Christ did not ordain women as apostles, either in the New Testament of the Book of Mormon, or when the Church was restored in modern times. We only know that he did not” (“Context Missing from Discussion about Women,” May 29, 2014, <http://bycommonconsent.com/2014/05/29/an-open-letter-from-otterson-context-missing-from-discussion-about-women/>). LDS Apostles have made similar comments: Elder Oaks called the gender division “a divinely decreed pattern” (“The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” April 5, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/the-keys-and-authority-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng>); Elder Neil Andersen (“Power in the Priesthood,” October 6, 2013, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/power-in-the-priesthood?lang=eng>) cites 1 Nephi 11:16–17 (“I do not know the meaning of all things”) in response to why only men hold the priesthood; Elder David Bednar voiced similar agnosis in the Europe Area Sisters’ Meeting in Frankfurt on September 9, 2014.

8. Compare the new heading to Official Declaration 2: “Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice [of prohibiting blacks from priesthood ordination].”

9. See “Women in the Church,” <https://www.lds.org/topics/women-in-the-church?lang=eng>.

10. Exemplary evidence for this will be discussed below. On the androcentrism of LDS scripture, see Melodie Moench Charles, “Precedents for Mormon Women” in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 37–63; Lynn Matthews Anderson, “Toward a Feminist Interpretation of Latter-day Saint Scripture,” *Dialogue* 27 no. 2 (1994): 185–203.

11. See the discussion of Carol Meyers’s work below.

12. The classic critique of even feminist contributions to androcentric power structures is Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

13. Which is often itself motivated by androcentrism and even anti-semitism.

14. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Re-Visioning Christian Origins: *In Memory of Her Revisited*,” in *Christian Origins: Worship, Belief and Society*, JSNTSup 241, edited by Kieran J. O’Mahony (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 225–50, esp. 243.

15. Carol A. Newsom, “Women as Biblical Interpreters Before the Twentieth Century,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 3rd. ed., edited by Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Rindge, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 11–26.

16. On LDS attitudes toward the Bible, see Philip A. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

17. Schüssler Fiorenza, “Re-Visioning Christian Origins,” 236.

18. Major scholarly discussions of gendered authority and LDS scripture include: Moench Charles, “Precedents for Mormon Women;” idem, “Scriptural Precedents for Priesthood,” *Dialogue* 18, no. 3 (1985): 15–20; Margaret and Paul Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 154–78; Anthony A. Hutchinson, “Women and Ordination: An Introduction to the Biblical Context,” *Dialogue* 14 (1981): 58–74; Todd Compton, “Was Jesus a Feminist?” *Dialogue* 32, no. 4 (1999): 1–17; idem, “Kingdom of Priests: Priesthood, Temple, and Women in the Old Testament and in the Restoration,” *Dialogue* 36, no. 3 (2003): 41–59.

19. Described in, for example, the 2014 Priesthood/Relief Society curriculum, *Teachings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, p. 166. This definition is repeated in the 2014 talk of Elder Dallin Oaks (“Keys and Authority of the Priesthood”). For a fuller discussion of historical priesthood definitions, see Toscano and Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox*, 143–53.

20. See *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, s.v. “Priesthood.”

21. History of the Church 4:207–12.

22. HC 3:385–92.

23. “The Power of the Priesthood,” April 3, 2010, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/04/the-power-of-the-priesthood>.

24. Ibid., quoting Joseph F. Smith in *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 287.

25. “Priesthood Authority in the Family and in the Church,” October 1, 2005, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2005/10/priesthood-authority-in-the-family-and-the-church?lang=eng>

26. *Handbook 2* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), §2.1 (<https://www.lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/title-page?lang=eng>).

27. *Ibid.*, §15.4

28. This sense has been downplayed in recent statements and discussions, which emphasize being acted upon, or *receiving* the blessings of the priesthood. For example, Sheri L. Dew plainly stated “it is more blessed to receive” and that “power would be available to men and women through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement, through the gift of the Holy Ghost and the ministering of angels, and it would also be available to men and women alike through the restoration of the priesthood. Both men and women would have full access to this power, though in different ways” (*Women and the Priesthood: What One Mormon Woman Believes* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013], ch. 4 [Kindle edition]). As Elder Neal L. Anderson phrased it on October 6, 2013, “We sometimes overly associate the power of the priesthood with men in the Church. The priesthood is the power and authority of God given for the salvation and blessing of all—men, women, and children.” He compared the priesthood power to sunlight entering a room through a window: “A man may open the drapes so the warm sunlight comes into the room, but the man does not own the sun or the light or the warmth it brings. The blessings of the priesthood are infinitely greater than the one who is asked to administer the gift” (“Power in the Priesthood”). This can only be true if the phrase “blessings of the priesthood” excludes the possibility that the ability to “direct, control, and govern” is a blessing. In this line of reasoning, the passive role of reception is equated with the divine while the existence of agents who are actively able to bless is elided. The agent’s role of active service is underplayed in an attempt to create a more egalitarian rendering of the interaction. Thus the “power to act” aspect in the current definition of LDS priesthood is downplayed in favor of the “salvation of mankind” component. It is seen perhaps most clearly in Elder Oaks’s 2014 statement: “Priesthood power blesses all of us. Priesthood keys direct women as well as men, and priesthood ordinances and priesthood authority pertain to women as well as men” (“Keys and Authority”). Here agency rests with keys and ordinances instead of with the social actors who turn the keys and perform the ordinances.

29. Mary Keller rethinks the role of female agency in religion by locating the power of some ecstatic performers in their radical receptivity, their “instrumental agency,” being wielded as a hammer or played as a flute: *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power, and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Jonathan Stökl discusses and ultimately rejects the relevance of this model to the ancient Near Eastern evidence: “The Role of Women in the Prophetic Process at Mari: A Critique of Mary Keller’s Theory of Agency,” in *Thinking Towards New Horizons: Collected Communications to the XIXth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament Ljubljana 2007*, edited by Hermann Michael Niemann and Matthias Augustin, *Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums* 55 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2008), 173–88.

30. For a summary of the recent LDS turbulence and discourse surrounding this issue, see Neylan McBaine, *Women at Church: Magnifying LDS Women's Local Impact* (Draper, Utah: Kofford Books, 2014), 7–15. For examples of these non-scriptural approaches and justifications, see Dew, *Women and the Priesthood*; Oaks, “Keys and Authority”; Julie B. Beck, “Mothers Who Know,” October 7, 2007, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2007/10/mothers-who-know?lang=eng>; Andersen, “Power in the Priesthood.” For earlier analysis of non-scriptural LDS rhetoric, see Sonja Farnsworth, “Mormonism’s Odd Couple: The Motherhood-Priesthood Connection,” in *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 299–314. Available online at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/?p=975>.

31. On the problems of using the label “patriarchy,” see Carol L. Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?” *JBL* 133 (2014): 8–27. Pace Meyers, I use the term here not to indicate that men had all power over women in every sphere (as was once claimed for ancient Greece and continues to be claimed for ancient Israel), but to indicate the male-dominated hierarchy articulated in terms of kinship and not simply gender.

32. The New Testament comes slightly closer in 1 Cor 11 and 1 Tim 3, but there the reason for subordination is tied to order of creation and to behavior, not to innate qualities. Again, while hierarchy is assumed, philosophical reasons for such are absent. See also discussion of Gen 3:16, below.

33. “The Ideology of Gender in the Bible and the Ancient Near East,” in *Studies in the Bible and Feminist Criticism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 188.

34. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), esp. 72–143; Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987), 104–30; Carol L. Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), *passim*.

35. S. S. Lanser, “(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden: Inferring Genesis 2–3,” *Semeia* 41 (1988): 67–84; but against this see Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*.

36. As virtually every commentator notes, the Hebrew word *ʾādām* is not used as a personal name until chapter 5 and thus many translate it as “earthling,” since the folk etymology given in the text connects “*ʾādām*” with “earth” (*ʾādāmā*). While maintaining the nuance is important, this should not be read as evidence of early egalitarianism, since the fact that the word for “human” becomes the male human’s personal name is another clear link between maleness and normative humanness. See discussion in Ronald A. Simkins, “Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth,” in *Genesis, Feminist Companion to the Bible, Second Series*, edited by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 32–52, esp. 44–46.

37. See Michael Coogan, *God and Sex: What the Bible Really Says* (New York: Twelve, 2010), 176; David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23. My thanks to David Bokovoy for pointing out these references.

38. While it may be unlikely that, given the narrative context, female gods were implied here, neither the text nor LDS theology explicitly precludes the possibility. On the differences in the creation narratives, see the detailed treatment of Anthony A. Hutchinson, "A Mormon Midrash? LDS Creation Narratives Reconsidered," *Dialogue* 21, no. 4 (1988), 11–74.

39. That is not to say that the priestly author of Genesis 1 was an egalitarian himself. It is important, however, in the comparative relation between Genesis 1 and 2–3.

40. Technically speaking, the creation account of Gen 1 continues through Gen 2:4a, meaning that the second creation account spans Gen 2:4b–3:24. I use "Gen 1" and "Gen 2–3" therefore as an easy shorthand.

41. Compare Gen 1:11–12 with 2:5–7.

42. The myriad treatments of the Hebrew phrase "עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ" have demonstrated that no kind of menial assistant is envisioned; עֶזֶר is elsewhere only applied to divinity. For LDS implications, see Jolene Edmunds Rockwood, "The Redemption of Eve," in *Sisters in Spirit*, 3–36.

43. Daniel Boyarin, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 117–35; cf. idem, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," *Representations* 41 (1993): 1–33 (repr. in *A Feminist Companion to Paul*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 13–41).

44. See Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender" for a thorough discussion of the seeming contradictions in Paul.

45. Boyarin, "Gender," 124.

46. Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religions* 13, no. 1 (1974): 165–208; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

47. Boyarin puts it succinctly: "If Paul took 'no Jew or Greek' as seriously as all of Galatians attests that he clearly did, how could he possibly—unless he is a hypocrite or incoherent—not have taken 'no male or female' with equal seriousness?" ("Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," 22).

48. On this see also Richard B. Hays, "Paul on the Relation of Men and Women," in *A Feminist Companion to Paul*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 137–47 (repr. of idem, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*:

Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], 46–59).

49. Boyarin, “Gender,” 118.

50. *Ibid.*, 128.

51. *Ibid.*, 129.

52. Seen in the work of Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray. See Boyarin, “Gender,” 128–33. On the relevance of Irigaray’s work to Mormon thought, see Taylor Petrey’s forthcoming article, “Rethinking Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother,” *Harvard Theological Review* (forthcoming).

53. Boyarin, “Gender,” 132.

54. The problems of relating Gen 1 and 2–3 across the “P-J seam” in LDS creation narratives are thoroughly treated in Hutchinson, “LDS Creation Narratives,” esp. 31ff.

55. See Taylor Petrey, “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” *Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (2011): 106–41; *idem*, “Rethinking Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother.”

56. Brent A. Barlow, “Strengthening the Patriarchal Order in the Home,” *Ensign* (Feb. 1973): <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1973/02/strengthening-the-patriarchal-order-in-the-home?lang=eng>.

57. President Spencer W. Kimball, “The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign* (March 1976) The address was originally given in the Relief Society General Conference session, October 1–2, 1975, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1976/03/the-blessings-and-responsibilities-of-womanhood?lang=eng>; “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” <https://www.lds.org/topics/family-proclamation?lang=eng>.

58. Rockwood, “The Redemption of Eve,” 21.

59. Boyd Jay Petersen, “Redeemed from the Curse Placed upon Her: Dialogic Discourse on Eve in *The Woman’s Exponent*,” *Journal of Mormon History* 40 (2014): 135–74, especially 162–65. Cf. D&C 61:17, in which the effects of the curse on the land are reversed for the saints.

60. Bruce C. and Marie K. Hafen, “Crossing Thresholds and Becoming Equal Partners,” *Ensign* (Aug. 2007): 27.

61. <http://squaretwo.org/Sq2AddCommentarySherlock.html>; <http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2010-fair-conference/2010-the-two-trees>; <http://mormonscholarstestify.org/1718/valerie-hudson-cassler>; Valerie M. Hudson and Richard B. Miller, “Equal Partnership in Marriage,” *Ensign* (April 2013): <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2013/04/equal-partnership-in-marriage?lang=eng>.

62. However, biblical commentators have for almost a millennium found other ways to neutralize the passage. See examples in Newsom, “Women as Biblical Interpreters,” 11–26; see also Meyers’s intriguing analysis (*Rediscovering Eve*, 81–102), in which she limits the “ruling” to an etiology of sexual (rather than holistic) relations. She renders the verse as “I will make great your toil and many your pregnancies; / with hardship shall you have children. / Your turning is to your man/husband, / and he shall rule/control you (sexually)” (102).

63. If one ignores these difficulties, it might make for an interesting LDS midrash on the verse, especially if one then reads Gen 4:7 as Sin “ruling with” Cain.

64. See Moses 4:22 and, e.g., the statement of Brigham Young: “There is a curse upon the woman that is not upon the man, namely, that ‘her whole affections shall be towards her husband,’ and what is next? ‘He shall rule over you’” (*Journal of Discourses*, 4:57 [September 21, 1856]).

65. This is not to say that the plain sense of the text requires or justifies a totalizing gender hierarchy.

66. There is arguably a subtler side of this interpretation, too, which wants to find the tension felt in modern Mormon society also expressed in ancient Israel: in other words, if ancient Israel could maintain that men and women “ruled together” while still having an exclusively male priesthood, this would support the current structure in the LDS Church.

67. Barlow, “Patriarchal Order.”

68. “Any interpretation of this utterance—as a curse, aetiological statement of fact, blessing or otherwise—is largely dependent on the reader’s gender position and may vary considerably” (Athalya Brenner, *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and “Sexuality” in the Hebrew Bible* [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 53).

69. Archaeological and epigraphic records confirm the nontrivial existence of Asherah as female consort of Yahweh. Biblical scholars point out that Hosea, one of the earliest writing prophets, excoriates the Israelites for worship of Baal (or baals) but not of Asherah (or asherahs), reflecting a time in which such worship was legitimate. See the thorough treatment of Baruch Halpern, “The Baal (and the Asherah) in Seventh-Century Judah: YHWH’s Retainers Retired,” in *Konsequente Traditionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Klaus Baltzer zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by R. Bartelmus, *OBO* 126 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 115–54. For a basic outline of the parameters and recent discussion, see Sung Jin Park, “The Cultic Identity of Asherah in the Deuteronomistic Ideology of Israel,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 123 (2011): 553–64. Noteworthy in this regard are the multiple inscriptions at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud which bless individuals by Yahweh and “by his Asherah.” The debate as to whether Asherah refers to a cult object or to a personal name seems decided by the male and female

bes-figures over which the words are inscribed. In any case, the unproblematic worship of Asherah is confirmed here. For evidence of the “disappearing goddess,” see Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998); Mark S. Smith, “The Blessing God and Goddess: A Longitudinal View from Ugarit to ‘Yahweh and his asherah’ at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,” in *Enigmas and Images: Studies in Honor of Tryggve N. D. Mettinger*, edited by Göran Eidevall and Blaženka Scheuer, CBOTS 58 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 213–26 (esp. 224–25).

70. On the limitations of Heavenly Mother in Mormon theology, see Moench Charles, “New Mormon Heaven”; Petrey, “Rethinking Mormonism’s Heavenly Mother.”

71. Not, as in the KJV, “as one brought up with him.”

72. On Wisdom as a Canaanite goddess, see Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim, 1986). On the Egyptian connections, see C. Bauer-Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1–9: Eine Form- und Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung ägyptischen Vergleichsmaterial*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 22 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, West Germany: Neukirchener, 1966); Michael V. Fox, “World Order and Ma’at: A Crooked Parallel,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 23 (1995): 37–48. Gustav Boström argued for a Mesopotamian connection: *Proverbienstudien: Die Weisheit und das fremde Weib in Sprüche 1–9*, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift 30 (Lund, Sweden: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1935). Cf. Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and his Asherah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9 (2000): 16–25, 80–81; esp. 22–25.

73. For LDS precedent see David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, “A Mother There’: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven,” *BYU Studies* 50 (2011): 70–97, here 80.

74. The Sophia traditions in Gnostic texts show a similar figure; see Deirdre Good, *Reconstructing the Tradition of Sophia in Gnostic Literature* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987).

75. One might associate her with Joseph Smith’s statement that the Melchizedek Priesthood “is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time” (HC 4:207).

76. Roland E. Murphy, “Wisdom and Creation,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 3–11, here 9. He also points to Gerhard von Rad’s identification of Wisdom as the matrix in which the earth was created, the “self-revelation” of creation.

77. The verb rendered “acquire” [*qnh*] can also be translated “create” and even “procreate,” and it takes its place as one of the many strongly ambivalent

terms surrounding the figure of Wisdom, which might itself be a hallmark of Wisdom literature but also speaks to the rich potential of this figure for LDS theology. See discussion in David Bokovoy, “Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh? A Grammatical and Contextual Reassessment of *qnh* in Genesis 4:1,” *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2012): 1–17.

78. Carol A. Newsom, “Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1–9” in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, edited by Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress, 1989), 142–60; Athalya Brenner and F. van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), esp. 54, 127. See, finally, the nuanced approach of Gerlinde Baumann, “The Figure with Many Facets: The Literary and Theological Functions of Personified Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9,” in *Wisdom and Psalms*, Feminist Companion to the Bible, Second Series, edited by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 44–78.

79. See, for example, Baumann, “The Figure with Many Facets”; Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985); see also Susan Cady, Marian Ronan, and Hal Taussig, *Sophia: The Future of Feminist Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

80. Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 153, 251–69; Mark Ashurst McGee, “Zion Rising: Joseph Smith’s Early Social and Political Thought,” PhD Diss., Arizona State University, 2008, 310. On the Reformation notion itself, see Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *Royal Priesthood in the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

81. Moench Charles, “Precedents for Mormon Women,” and “Scriptural Precedents for Priesthood;” Hutchinson, “Women and Ordination;” Compton, “Was Jesus a Feminist?” and “Kingdom of Priests.”

82. For an excellent overview of priesthood in the Hebrew Bible, see Mark A. Leuchter, “The Priesthood in Ancient Israel,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40 no. 2 (2010): 100–10.

83. During the lifetime of Joseph Smith and until the twentieth century, the term “high priesthood” referred not to the general Melchizedek Priesthood but to the office of high priest. See extensive discussion in Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995) and, recently, in William V. Smith, “Early Mormon Priesthood Revelations: Text, Impact, and Evolution,” *Dialogue* 46, no. 4 (2013): 1–84 (here 39–46).

84. For example, Micah (Judg 17–18); cf. also discussion of Hannah and Elkanah below.

85. “When priesthood authority is exercised properly, priesthood bearers do what He would do if He were present” (Packer, “Power in the Priesthood”).

86. Leuchter, “Priesthood,” 101.

87. For example, Shaphanides (see Leuchter, "Priesthood," 105), Ezra (Ezra 7:1–5).

88. The four main texts are: Gen 49:5–7; Deut 33:8–11; Gen 34:25–26, 31; Exod 32:26–29. See Joel S. Baden, "The Violent Origins of the Levites: Text and Tradition," in *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, edited by Mark Leuchter and Jeremy Hutton (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 103–16. Phineas's violent zeal, moreover, in Num 25 results in Yahweh's promise to Phineas of perpetual priesthood. It seems no accident, then, that the spectacular violence done to the concubine in Judg 19 came at the hands of a Levite. Other texts hint at the nexus of priesthood and violence: the Kenites/Midianites, connected both to the first homicide (Cain, in Gen 4) and to the priestly clan in whose territory Moses first encountered Yahweh and who provided him with a priestly wife (see below). It was, of course, to the Kenite/Midianite territory that Moses fled after having killed an Egyptian. See full summary in Baruch Halpern, "Kenites," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:17–22.

89. Not that such processes were without significant tension, especially with the monarchy. See Jeremy Hutton, "All the King's Men: The Families of the Priests in Cross-Cultural Perspective," in "*Seitenblicke*": *Literarische und historische Studien zu Nebenfiguren im zweiten Samuelbuch*, edited by Walter Dietrich, OBO 249 (Fribourg and Göttingen: Academic Press and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 121–51; and Stephen L. Cook, "Those Stubborn Levites: Overcoming Levitical Disenfranchisement," in *Levites and Priests*, 155–70.

90. The classic and still-informative study of these conflict stories is that of Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 195–215. For a summary of problems these stories present, as well as scholarly solutions, see George W. Ramsey, "Zadok," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1035–36.

91. Compare the language describing Jeroboam's installation of the calves in Dan and Bethel (1 Kgs 12:28) with Aaron's making of the Golden Calf (Exod 32:4).

92. Some scholars see the figure of Zadok as originally a Jebusite priest native to (pre-Israelite) Jerusalem, owing to his problematic genealogy and to the similarity of his name to other prominent Canaanite Jerusalemites, Melchizedek and Adonizedek, among other details. Others, however, argue that this is not necessary, especially since the explicit connection to Melchizedek is never made in the text, and argue instead for a northern priesthood that traced its lineage to Moses (Abiathar and the Elides) locked in a power struggle with a southern line deriving from Aaron (Zadok).

93. Cory D. Crawford, "Between Shadow and Substance: The Historical Relationship of Tabernacle and Temple in Light of Architecture and Iconography," in *Levites and Priests*, 117–33.

94. For an excellent collection and discussion of the major ancient Near Eastern primary sources, see Mark W. Chavalas, *Women in the Ancient Near East: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2014). See also the detailed work of Hennie J. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

95. See discussion in, for example, Zainab Bahrani, *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Ancient Mesopotamia* (London: Routledge, 2001), 113–17.

96. See examples below for discussion of the textual evidence in the stories of Hannah, Junia, and Mary Magdalene.

97. See, for example, Hannah K. Harrington, “Leviticus,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 70–78 (here 77); and the discussion and examples in Compton, “Kingdom of Priests,” 49.

98. See Sarah Shechtman’s excellent treatments: “Women in the Priestly Narrative,” in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*, edited by Sarah Shechtman and Joel S. Baden, *Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 95 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2009), 175–86; idem, “The Social Status of Priestly and Levite Women,” in *Levites and Priests*, 83–99; idem, *Women in the Pentateuch: A Feminist and Source-Critical Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009).

99. One could also include here Tamar in Genesis 38, whose actions and those of her accusers presuppose a connection to a (poorly documented) sexual cultic service.

100. For discussion of “before Yahweh” in architectural context, see Michael B. Hundley, “Before YHWH at the Tent of Meeting,” *ZA* 123 (2011): 15–26.

101. See discussion in Carol L. Meyers, “Hannah and Her Sacrifice: Reclaiming Female Agency,” in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*, edited by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 93–104, here 97–99.

102. Women also are said to offer sacrifice in connection with vows in Prov 7:14.

103. Miriam, as prophet, in Exod 15; Deborah, also prophet, in Judg 5; more generally Judg 11:34; 1 Sam 18:7; 21:11; 29:5; 2 Sam 1:20. See also Julie Smith, “‘I Will Sing to the Lord’: Women’s Songs in the Scriptures,” *Dialogue* 45, no. 3 (2012): 56–69.

104. See discussion and references below, in the New Testament section on discipleship.

105. What follows is only, necessarily, a brief overview of much careful text-critical work. It is well established that the Massoretic text in the cases discussed is the inferior text. See, among the many treatments, Anneli Aejmelaeus, “Corruption or Correction? Textual Development in the MT of 1 Samuel 1,” in

Textual Criticism and Dead Sea Scrolls Studies in Honor of Julio Trebolle Barrera (JSJSup 158, edited by A. Piquer Otero and P. A. Torrijano Morales (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–17; idem, “Hannah’s Psalm in 4QSam^a,” in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel: The Entangling of the Textual and Literary History*, VTSup 132, edited by P. Hugo and A. Schenker (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 23–37; Donald W. Parry, “Hannah in the Presence of the Lord,” in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel*, 53–73; Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3d ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), esp. 254–56. On the general ability to discern textual manipulation in MT without the contrary evidence of LXX or other versions, see Alexander Rofé, “The History of Israelite Religion and the Biblical Text: Corrections Due to the Unification of Worship,” in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, edited by S. Paul, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 759–93.

106. “Hannah in the Presence of the Lord,” 63.

107. Cf. Exod 38:8, where women serve at the entrance unproblematically. Alexander Rofé argues persuasively that this phrase in 1 Sam 2:22 is an addition in MT because the scribe wants to further implicate the sons of Eli, but he does not connect it specifically with the crucial discomfort of ch. 1 (“Israelite Religion and Biblical Text,” 772–73).

108. Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 97–98.

109. See Halpern, “Kenites.”

110. Benjamin Mazar points out that a terebinth with a place-name following (e.g., Gen 12:6–7; 13:38) is always a holy site elsewhere (“The Sanctuary of Arad and the Family of Hobab the Kenite,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24 [1965]: 297–303). On Kedesh as a city of refuge (Josh 20:7), see Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, 98.

111. His name means “son of (the Goddess) Anat” (on whose proclivity toward violence see above). It is entirely appropriate for a man said to have slain 600 Philistines with an oxgoad.

112. The note about Sisera falling “between her feet” in Judg 5:27 has been taken together with the tent-setting as evidence of Ja’el using her sexuality to entice and distract him. As Jack Sasson notes in his recent Judges commentary, to assume they were in a copulative embrace does not accord with the mechanics of her fatal blow (*Judges 1–12*, AB 6D [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014] 317), and instead is likely the well-known biblical (and ancient Near Eastern) trope of the vanquished lying at the feet of the victor. See, however, Ackerman’s proposal that Jael, like Anat, is cast as a kind of erotic assassin, whose sexuality is not far from violence (*Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, 61).

113. Originally the instructions in 4:21–23 were part of a different narrative from the rest of the story, but have been placed there by the compiler of Penta-

teuchal documents. It is no accident that they are placed immediately before the following narrative, which describes a threat to another firstborn (Moses) and his redemption by the blood of his own firstborn son.

114. As noted for centuries, “feet” here and in many other places in the Bible is a euphemism for male genitalia. Thus the foreskin of the son substitutes for that of the father, evoking the common biblical ideal of sacrificing the firstborn or substituting something in his place. See Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) for a full discussion of the theme and its examples in scripture. On the JST and attendant issues for Latter-day Saints, see Kevin Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” *Dialogue* 33, no. 1 (2000): 57–99, here 92–94.

115. See Smith’s excellent discussion of the scriptural praise for these violent acts in “Women’s Songs,” 58–59.

116. Mention should also be made of the revelations developing from the barest of textual support, such as baptism for the dead, on the basis of 1 Cor 15:29.

117. See the entry March 31, 1842, in the “Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book,” available at <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book?p=19&highlight=ancient%20priesthood> (accessed Oct. 22, 2014).

118. This mediatory role is, however, unique in the ancient Near East and may not have been part of the earliest stages of prophecy during the monarchy.

119. Leuchter, “Priesthood,” 103.

120. *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood*, Part A (2000), 9.

121. Prophecy outside the Bible has also been of scholarly concern, especially in the past three decades. Among ancient Near Eastern cultures, prophecy as a phenomenon detectable in writing so far has shown up almost exclusively in Mari in the second millennium BC, in Neo-Assyria in the first, and in the Hebrew Bible. In all three contexts, there is clear evidence of female prophets, and in the case of Neo-Assyria, as Corrine Carvalho and Jonathan Stökl point out: “If our evidence is to be trusted, the vast majority of Neo-Assyrian prophets were female” (“Introduction,” in *Prophets Male and Female: Gender and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East*, edited by Jonathan Stökl [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013], 1–8, here 3). Lester Grabbe, further, has argued that it is difficult to find evidence anywhere for a specifically female-gendered office, that is, for “prophetess” as distinct from a “prophet” who happens to be female; male and female prophets occupied the same role and not separate gendered (hierarchical) versions (“‘Her Outdoors’: An Anthropological Perspective on Female Prophets and Prophecy,” in *Prophets Male and Female*, 11–26). Stökl’s comprehensive survey of all three ancient Near Eastern contexts

shows the Hebrew Bible's apparent overwhelming preference for male prophets to be somewhat anomalous, possibly owing to the tendency (though not a rule) of prophets speaking for deities of the same sex (*Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, CHANE 56 [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 216–17; idem, "Ishtar's Women, YHWH's Men? A Curious Gender Bias in Neo-Assyrian and Biblical Prophecy," *ZAW* 121 [2009]: 87–100). It is possible furthermore that the grammar of Hebrew, which allows groups of mixed gender to be referred to by masculine pronouns and verb conjugations, skews the numbers to make the disparity seem all the greater (See Stökl, *Prophecy*, 217).

122. For Miriam it was Aaron, and for Noadiah it was "the rest of the prophets" (Neh 6:14).

123. Thomas Römer, "From Prophet to Scribe: Jeremiah, Huldah, and the Invention of the Book," in *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism and Script*, edited by Philip R. Davies and Thomas Römer (Durham, England: Acumen, 2013), 86–96, here 93.

124. See Joy A. Schroeder, *Deborah's Daughters: Gender Politics and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) on text and interpretational history of Deborah, as well as the summary "Deborah, Jael and their Interpreters," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 128–32.

125. See Sasson, *Judges 1–12*, 255–56.

126. See Charles, "Precedents," 43.

127. See <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/gs/deborah?lang=eng&letter=d> (accessed Nov. 1, 2014).

128. Online at <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/gs/prophetess> (accessed Nov. 24, 2014).

129. On the sociological pattern of women's marginalization as institutions are centralized, see Jo Ann Hackett, "In the Days of Jael: Reclaiming the History of Women in Ancient Israel," in *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality*, edited by C. W. Atkinson, C. H. Buchanan, and M. R. Miles (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 15–38; idem, "Women's Studies and the Hebrew Bible," in *The Future of Biblical Studies: The Hebrew Scriptures*, edited by R. E. Friedman and H. G. M. Williamson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 141–64.

130. An interesting correlation with the book of Judges's initial characterization of women's authority is visible in the beginning of Sameul, where Samuel is described as the last judge. It is perhaps no accident that in this last gasp of the ideal kingless arrangement, Hannah also evokes the authority that characterized Jael and Deborah.

131. See summary of A. E. Harvey, "Priesthood," in *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 565–67.

132. On the obstacle that this text continues to be for female authority, see, for example, the analysis in the House of Bishops' Working Party report "Women Bishops in the Church of England?" (London: Archbishops' Council, 2004), 228–35, esp. 231. Some however read 1 Tim 3:11 as indicating the possibility of women in the diaconate, though this seems a stretch given the surrounding verses and the general tenor of the epistle.

133. The Gospel narratives were important, for example, in Sarah Moore Grimké's 1837 stance against the pastors who wanted to curtail her public involvement with abolitionism: "The Lord Jesus defines the duties of his followers in his Sermon on the Mount. He lays down grand principles by which they should be governed, without any reference to sex or condition. . . . I follow him through all his precepts, and find him giving the same directions to women as to men, never even referring to the distinction now so strenuously insisted upon between masculine and feminine virtues" ("July 1837 Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman. Addressed to Mary S. Parker" [Boston: I. Knapp, 1838], 128). I am indebted to Rebekah Crawford for pointing me to this text.

134. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), xxiv.

135. See Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 113–14. See fuller discussion and slight correction in Margaret Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel: A Genuine Discipleship of Equals*, JSNTSup (London: Sheffield, 2003), 32–33. Valerie Hudson and Elder D. Todd Christofferson, for instance, have raised the specter of sameness in the LDS debate about women's authority: Hudson, "Rectifying the Names: Reflections on 'Womanhood and Language' by [Ralph] Hancock," *SquareTwo* 7, no. 3 (2014): <http://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleHudsonRectificationNames.html>; see also idem, "Equal Partnership in Marriage"; Christofferson, "The Moral Force of Women," October 5, 2013 (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/the-moral-force-of-women?lang=eng>): expresses a "concern . . . from those who, in the name of equality, want to erase all differences between the masculine and the feminine."

136. For this phenomenon in Luke, see, for example, Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Rindge, "Gospel of Luke," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 493–516.

137. Schaberg and Rindge, "Gospel of Luke," 498; see also Ann Graham Brock, *Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority*, HTS 51 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Theological Studies, 2003), 36–37.

138. Compare the treatment of the council of Jerusalem in Acts with that of Paul (Acts 15; Gal 1–2).

139. See Gail R. O'Day, "Gospel of John," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 517–30, esp 519.

140. Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, passim.

141. See Taylor Petrey, “Purity and Parallels: Constructing the Apostasy Narrative in Early Christianity,” in *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 174–95.

142. Luke also seems to require that the apostles have been a companion of Jesus during his earthly ministry; women also fit this criterion. See Hutchinson, “Women and Ordination,” 64.

143. Brock, *Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle*. This is not to say that she is the first to treat the subject; see, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 51–52.

144. Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 19–39.

145. John 21 casts Peter in a positive light uncharacteristic of the rest of John. It is no accident that this chapter comes after the apparent conclusion to the book in John 20, and has been regarded by many scholars as an appendix added by a later editor. See discussion in Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 51–52.

146. On this see *ibid.*, 43–45.

147. *Ibid.*, 45; see John 13:16.

148. See, for example, the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4; the contrast between Martha’s belief and Thomas’s doubt (John 11:27 vs. 20:29); and Mary’s anointing of Jesus and his rebuke of Judas when he complains (11:54–12:11). For a full discussion of these and other examples, see *ibid.*, 55–60.

149. Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 41–60. As Brock notes, they both are eclipsed by the mysterious Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John, however.

150. This is an interpretation stemming, not coincidentally, from the story of the female sinner (not prostitute) at the end of Luke 7 and the introduction of Mary Magdalene in the beginning of Luke 8.

151. Hippolytus, *De Cantico*, 24–26; CSCO, 264: 43–49; cited in Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 1–2.

152. Cited in Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 172.

153. See Hutchinson, “Women and Ordination,” 66–68.

154. *Ibid.*, 66.

155. *Ibid.*, 67; emphasis Hutchinson’s.

156. The classic study is that of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Missionaries, Apostles, Co-Workers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women’s Early Christian History,” *Word and World* 6 (1986): 420–33. Moench Charles treats the chapter in the context of the LDS canon (“Precedents for Mormon Women,” 54–56), as does Hutchinson, “Women and Ordination,” 65–66.

157. See discussion in, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 47–48. For LDS context, see Hutchinson, “Women and Ordination,” 65.

158. The author of Acts cites what he may understand to be the origin of the office of deacon in entirely male terms (Acts 6:1–6), which probably accounts for the reluctance of the KJV translators to call Phoebe a deacon. It should not surprise us, however, to find contradiction in the development of church organization between Acts and the undisputed letters of Paul, nor the characterization of the development of offices as orderly and androcentric. See discussion of Luke-Acts above.

159. Clare K. Rothschild (Review of Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, *Journal of Religion* 87 [2007]: 270) summarizes nicely the evidence Epp presents: “(1) Junia was a common Roman name; (2) ancient writers without exception read *Ἰουνίαν* as Junia; (3) *Ἰουνίαν* was the reading of the Greek New Testament from Erasmus (1517) to Nestle (1927); (4) all early translations transcribe the name as feminine; (5) ‘Junia’ was understood in all English translations of the New Testament from Tyndale (1526/1534) until the late nineteenth century; (6) neither of the masculine forms is attested in ancient texts anywhere; and (7) the contraction hypothesis (i.e., Lat. Junianus) is flawed (23–24).”

160. “Women and Ordination,” 66.

161. On this see Judith M. Lieu, “The ‘Attraction of Women’ in/to Early Judaism and Christianity: Gender and the Politics of Conversion,” *JST* 72 (1998): 5–22. Scholars have also raised important objections to the characterization of Judaism as oppressive and Christianity as liberating as the unfounded reinscription of anti-Semitic dogmas. The seminal works on this are Bernadette J. Brooten, “Jewish Women’s History in the Roman Period: A Task for Christian Theology,” *HTR* 79 (1986): 22–30; and especially Judith Plaskow, “Christian Feminism and Anti-Judaism,” *Cross Currents* 28 (1978): 306–09.

162. Sociologist Rodney Stark (*The Rise of Christianity* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996]) has engendered strong reaction for his claims that women joined the early Christian movement and his narrative of how it took hold and grew before the fourth century. His comparison with (and especially his projections about the future of) Mormonism makes his work especially interesting for the study of women in the early LDS Church. See discussion in Lieu, “Attraction of Women,” 6–8.

163. A strong expression of this view is that of Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women’s Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993); also Anne Jensen, *God’s Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women*, translated by O. C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

164. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 12.

165. On *Thekla*, see Francine Cardman, “Women, Ministry, and Church Order” in *Women and Christian Origins*, edited by Ross S. Kraemer and Mary R. D’Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 301–02. On alternative means to authority and the renunciation of sex, see the seminal work of Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

166. Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Women’s Ordination: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

167. What may not be exactly clear is that some translators are not sure that in this text “Melchizedek” is referenced simply as the phrase “righteous king.”

168. James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 276–93.

169. This is, incidentally, an interpretation probably picked up by Joseph F. Smith in D&C 138:41: “Shem, the great high priest,” sandwiched between Noah and Abraham. Cf. the language of D&C 107:2, where Melchizedek is called the “great high priest.”

170. A careful reading of Exodus 34 shows, however, that three traditions are being brought together here, none of which understands the covenant to have been altered because of the Golden Calf incident. In one, Moses is simply retrieving an exact copy of the earlier tablets, and in another he is writing down (for the first time!) the instructions the Lord gave him. See discussion in Joel S. Baden, “The Deuteronomic Evidence for the Documentary Theory,” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, FAT 78, edited by Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 327–44.

171. Kent Jackson (personal communication) kindly provided crucial information on this sequencing: At the end of July 1832, Joseph Smith and Frederick G. Williams returned to the Old Testament translation in Gen 24:58, page 60 of the 119-page JST manuscript. Exodus 34 comes ten manuscript pages later. On July 31, 1832, Smith indicated that he and Williams were “making rapid strides” in the Old Testament. Doctrine and Covenants 84 was received about two months later on September 22–23, 1832, making it likely that Exod 34 was reworked not long before D&C 84.

172. That is not to say that there were not other significant influences in Hebrews or in D&C 84; only that these provided the key ideas.

173. See Prince, *Power from on High*, 1–45; Quinn “Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843,” in *Women and Authority*, 365–85; Michael H. MacKay, “Endowed with Power: Prophets, Angels, and the Restoration of the Priesthood,” (unpublished ms. under review).

174. See HC 1:62: “We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the angel that conferred upon us the Aaronic Priesthood had given

us, viz., that provided we continued faithful, we should also have the Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer; and at length we got together in the chamber of Mr. Whitmer's house, in order more particularly to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired; and here, to our unspeakable satisfaction, did we realize the truth of the Savior's promise—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"—for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the *word of the Lord* came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that *I should ordain* Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office" (emphasis added). See also MacKay, *Endowed with Power*, passim.

175. HC 4:211.

176. Deborah is included here in her capacity as "judge in Israel," cf. D&C 58:17–18, which specifically links modern bishops to ancient judges. The New Testament women are conjectures based on their likely oversight of Christian house churches (Acts 20:28; the polemic stance in 1 Timothy clearly prefers that bishops be male, but the stringency bespeaks an underlying struggle in which such was probably not the case; This is of course in addition to its spurious authorship). Aside from this possibility, no bishops, male or female, are named in the New Testament.

177. For a broader view of the reshaping of history in the Bible and Latter-day Saint scriptures, including a fuller discussion of the case of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history, see Cory D. Crawford, "Competing Histories in the Bible and in Latter-day Saint Tradition," in *Standing Apart*, 129–46.

178. On apostasy narratives, see the collection of essays in *Standing Apart*.

179. *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23–41.

180. *Ibid.*, 41.

181. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Are You Sleeping Through the Restoration?" April 5, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/are-you-sleeping-through-the-restoration?lang=eng>.

182. I agree here with Gregory Prince (*Power from on High*, 207, n.25), challenging D. Michael Quinn's assertion that LDS women have had the priesthood since 1843 ("Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in *Women and Authority*, 365–409), that early Church documents do not support a full granting of priesthood authority to women since those documents show an ultimate subordination to male authority, as well with the sense that the foundation for female authority will have to be sought elsewhere. I propose it may be found in the biblical texts discussed here.

183. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 38–39.

On Virtue: What Bathsheba Taught Me about My Maligned Sisters

Mel Henderson

*Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.
—Proverbs 31:10*

It is early evening in ancient Jerusalem, and a beautiful young Jewish woman, recently wed, carries a small bundle of clean clothing and a linen towel. Her sandals pad against the limestone pathway that borders the synagogue. She is on her way to the community *mikvah*, a font-like, open-air, recessed pool designed for ritual bathing, where a few other women may or may not already be waiting their turn. This is a devotion the women of her faith observe once a month, seven days after their menstrual cycle ends, in order to be “purified from [their] uncleanness,” to use the words from 2 Samuel, chapter 11. While the *mikvah* is enclosed for the privacy and protection of the women, it’s still possible for someone with a particular vantage point—say, someone on the roof of the king’s palace, perhaps—to illicitly watch a woman complete her ritual, to watch her disrobe and completely immerse herself in the sanctified waters of the *mikvah* before she emerges to dress herself in fresh clothing. Thus, according to her obedience to the law, the young wife Bathsheba is restored to purity.

Of all the fascinating things I learned when I undertook a study of Bathsheba, this came as a true surprise: When David saw Bathsheba, she was not bathing on the roof. He saw her bathing *from* the roof—his roof. How could this be? Is it possible

that we've told and retold this story so incorrectly for so long? I checked and re-checked, and the scriptural account in 2 Samuel, chapter 11 never places Bathsheba on the roof—even though almost all artists and storytellers put her there. But the scriptural account does indicate that her bath was the *mikvah* ritual—and a *mikvah* was always built into the ground, or on the ground, to very particular specifications. Such a structure would never be found on any roof. It seems when David was watching Bathsheba, she was where she was supposed to be and doing what she was supposed to be doing.

This is a detail that matters because Bathsheba's story still informs the ways that we talk about sex, sexual intent, and feminine virtue today. For generations, her story has been retold in the most basic reduction: Bathsheba was either a calculating seductress, or, a little less harshly, she was indiscreet and immodest about where she chose to take her bath. And thus, she caused David—the good shepherd boy, the loving son, the poet, the musician, the slayer of giants, and our good king—to lust first in heart, then in body: “and the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child” (2 Samuel 11:5).

Even some respected sources claim that it was all calculated, that it was always Bathsheba's intent to find a way into the palace to generate an heir, no matter the cost—though even the most sinister and illicit plan couldn't have worked without David's willingness to be seduced. The website WomenInTheBible.org confidently declares that Bathsheba was a “clever and unscrupulous woman.” By my own reading, this statement can only stand on inventive extrapolation, but it's not an uncommon stance. People are easiest to deal with when we can simplify or dismiss them as one-beat caricatures—in this case, “the dangerous woman.” There is no shortage of visual art, music, mythology, fiction, or tales out of Hollywood that depict the femme fatale: Delilah, Cleopatra, Jezebel, the Sirens, most of the “Bond girls” in 007 movies, and even Jessica Rabbit—women who are seductively one-beat, one-dimensional, cautionary tales for the potentially tempted. Faced with the complicated things that

make us human, things like respect for unsolved questions, we prefer to cosset ourselves with simplifications—even if we must trade the truth for it.

Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie once spoke about the danger of a single story. The problem with stereotypes, with these one-beat reductions, she said, “is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story the only story.”¹ A woman who has a morally troubling episode in her life is most easily handled by dismissing the woman herself as morally compromised.

David and Bathsheba are one chapter in a relatively concise chronicle of a large kingdom; the record couldn’t have accommodated a detailed biography of all the secondary historical figures, or even all the primary male ones. But some of the most fascinating and important information we have is buried or hidden in the wallpaper behind the main players—in the stories of the women.

Discovering that Bathsheba was never on the roof was a big surprise. But discovering that she likely authored a chapter in the book of Proverbs: *that’s* the detail that blew the top right off my head. But I’m getting ahead of myself.



The first time I heard the David and Bathsheba story, I was in Sunday school, seven or eight years old. The soft-spoken, elderly woman who taught my class held up an art print of Bathsheba, beautifully adorned in flowing red cloth. She was barefoot, she wore lots of gold jewelry, and she gazed directly back at her observer. David was nowhere in sight.

“This is Bathsheba,” the teacher announced. I said I loved her flowy red dress, but the teacher declared the dress inappropriate, and I decided to be quiet until I knew what she wanted to say about the lady in the flowy red dress. She continued, “Bathsheba was a beautiful and selfish woman. It was very wrong of her to tempt King David.” Then she added an odd additional detail: “She kept her selfishness a secret.”

Being seven or eight, I had no idea what she meant or what Bathsheba did wrong, but I did begin to wonder if this meant that being beautiful and being selfish went hand in hand, as if selfishness were somehow intrinsic to beauty. I remember scanning my church congregation for beautiful women—or probably just beautiful dresses, since at seven or eight years old, my aesthetic was more about adornment than essence—and I wondered if the beautiful ladies—the ones in pretty dresses—were really secretly selfish. Should I be afraid of them? When I grew up, would I be beautiful and selfish, too? How many things can a woman secretly be?



Bathsheba, for me, has become a symbol of maligned women everywhere—or rather, she is an image of a healed woman after being a broken and shamed one. And I mean “maligned women” in whatever forms that takes: women who made a mistake, were raped, or were subject to some other moral or social or cultural code that declared judgment and somehow made them matter less than other people, or made them matter less than even other women. Shame as a way to control and teach features prominently in the history of the feminine.

Last year, I had lunch with a high school friend whom I hadn’t seen in years. Over avocado salad and raspberry lemonade, she told me a story she’d never told before: She had an uncle who had molested her until she was fourteen, when she finally found the courage to tell her mother about it. Luckily, her mother believed her. It helped that she was aware of another niece who had quietly made the same claim. My friend’s mother took pains to protect her from future abuse—letting her stay at a friend’s for the weekend whenever the uncle visited, for example—but she was so fearful of the potential disruption to the family that she never pursued the matter. She never told her husband about it. The uncle was never told he was unwelcome in her home. He was never reported or even confronted. Mother and daughter

quietly kept the uncle's secret for him. The uncle grew old and died, never having answered for his actions.

My friend's story was hard for me to hear. I thought of Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel and what he said about our responsibility to victims: "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."² Because a mother protected the oppressor, the burden of shame fell to the child.

My friend was sure she was ruined. Her virtue, she believed, had been taken. No one would ever want to be with her. But before she graduated high school, she struck on a half-solution: She would sleep with a boy, on purpose, and this would "overwrite" her damaged sexual history. She was sure no one would want to marry the cast-off of a pedophile, but if she could honestly say that she'd only had one boyfriend with whom she "did stuff," and she'd confessed and repented of it, then maybe someone would find her acceptable.

She was deeply (but needlessly) embarrassed to tell me that this is what she did, twenty-five years after she did it. Both of her parents and the uncle have since passed away. I asked if she believes that her mother should have handled the situation differently. She didn't think so. Her dad would have handled it differently, she's sure, and she could have told him herself, but she didn't, so she can't blame her mom. Besides, she said, it was probably good that her mother didn't turn it into a "whole big thing," because, as she said, "I'm managing just fine." Then she joked that her decision to start smoking and drinking in the ninth grade had turned out to be a lifesaver.

I wished there were more to the story. I told her I wanted to invent a fat slice of essential, unfathomable missing information here—anything that might somehow redeem her mother's inaction. But that's it, she said. Her mother was embarrassed, scrambling to stay calm and figure out the right thing to do. She felt almost as powerless as the girl herself. She was most afraid of making a bad situation worse—and like a Greek tragedy, her choices brought about the very end she feared the most.



Bathsheba must have been very afraid, at some point, that she would be stoned—or maybe she was most afraid that she would never have God’s forgiveness. She was a very young, newly married, observant Jewish woman carrying another man’s child.

When David first summoned her to the palace, Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah (a military commander and one of David’s good friends), had been away at war for months. Everyone she regularly associated with knew that she’d bathed at the *mikvah* each month, so they knew she was not pregnant when Uriah left. There were only two ways to explain a pregnancy now: adultery or rape.

According to the law, both parties to adultery must be put to death. The king, however, could excuse himself from the law, so if David chose not to protect Bathsheba, she would be on her own to deal with the consequences. If she claimed she was raped, the law required that she name her attacker, and if the law were upheld, her attacker would be put to death. The kingdom would lose its king. But this was never a likely outcome. Even if she had named David, and even if they had believed her, once again, the king would be exempt.

I don’t believe Bathsheba sought David’s attentions. We hear it explained with phrasing such as “the adultery may have been involuntary”—which is really just a sanitized way of saying she may have been, by definition, raped. This doesn’t mean David held a knife to her throat and assaulted her in a violent Hollywood-style struggle. The king would need no such theatrics to accomplish his will. This was not the first time a mature or intimidating man would insist that a young, frightened woman do something she did not want to do. *That* sort of thing happens every day.



The weight of needless shame, like the shame suffered by my high school friend, can wear a person down to a nub, and entire families can be changed for generations. One of my favorite

stories belongs to someone I don't even remember—but I'll thank her here, in the unlikely event she ever reads these lines, for sharing this story in a car stuffed with women en route to some event that I no longer recall. I'll call her Jennifer.

Jennifer's family had always been embarrassed about one great-grandmother in their family tree who had done jail time for pretending to be a man. No other information was ever offered. All Jennifer knew was that her great-grandmother was crazy, though not in a dangerous way, that she'd pretended to be a man, and that she was punished for it. Almost 150 years later, her posterity still dismissed her with an eye roll and quickly changed the subject.

When Jennifer undertook a study of family history, she indulged her curiosity about this mysterious relative. Diligent searching turned up court records, journal pages, correspondence between a judge and a doctor, and a letter from the head master of a prestigious medical school in her country, which appeared, at first, to be addressed to her father. Strangely, this letter praised Mr. So-and-So's academic achievement, though the man had never attended a day of medical school.

Only by patiently assembling all the pieces of the puzzle was Jennifer able to discover the truth: Her great-grandmother was an exceptionally bright girl in a time and place when educational opportunities for girls were severely limited. This girl wanted nothing more than to go to medical school and become a doctor, but this was not an available option. When she was old enough and tall enough, she boldly fabricated a male identity after her father's name, disguised herself as a man, and enrolled herself in medical school.

When she was found out, she was arrested and jailed. The doctor who examined her declared her insane and recommended to the judge that she be moved to a sanitarium. At her parents' pleading, the judge agreed to entrust her to the care of her father if he gave his word to keep her safely contained at home and take responsibility for all her future behavior. She went on to live a normal life. She married and had several children. She never exhibited any signs of insanity.

For Jennifer, all at once, the woman who had been a family's shame became a family hero. Jennifer was distraught that there was no further evidence that her great-grandmother was able to add to her education after that. She fears her grandmother was shamed into submission. But for that moment—for that window on that part of her life—she became a burning beacon. Sometimes, an entire landscape is changed by just a little new light.



When Bathsheba told David that she was with child, he scrambled to cover his sins. He summoned Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, back from battle. By all reports, Uriah was an honorable man who cherished his wife. David hosted Uriah at supper and flattered him by asking his opinion of the commanding officer's military skill. To thank him for his service and as a token of friendship, David told Uriah he deserved to go home and spend a night with his wife. Of course this was calculated. If Uriah slept with his wife, her pregnancy could pass as legitimate.

But in the morning, David's servants reported that Uriah had not gone home at all; he had slept outside the palace walls with his men, according to his personal code of honor. If his men could not go home to their wives, then neither would he.

So David tried again. The next night he hosted Uriah at supper, but this time he made sure to get him drunk before sending him home. But even drunk, Uriah did not go home. He would not leave his men. And now Uriah and his men were due back at the front. Desperate, David wrote a letter to his nephew Joab, Uriah's commanding officer, instructing him to put Uriah in a dangerous battle position and then order the rest of the men to withdraw. Uriah was left vulnerable. He was easily killed, not directly by David's hand but indirectly so—and as the prophet Nathan reported, “The thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”



2 Samuel, chapter 11, verse 26: “And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.”

Bathsheba's mourning period could have been as short as one week or much longer. We don't know. What we do know is that it was highly ritualized and involved many family members, but I imagine she must have still felt profoundly alone. Could she have dared to tell anyone about the double tragedy that was breaking her heart? We don't know what she knew about David's intentions at this point, or if she had disclosed her pregnancy to anyone else. The law said that a widowed woman with no children could not remarry except to her deceased husband's brother or, in very rare cases, to someone else with the brother's consent. David's choice to bring her into the palace and make her one of his wives was ultimately a blessing to Bathsheba, but it was likely another violation of the law.



The intrigues of David's court occurred 3,000 years ago, but the way he responded to a crisis feels as fresh as today's news: people have always tried to create a new narrative when we feel the original one is unacceptable. I know a family of avid lay-genealogists where one family member keeps changing a certain grandfather's birth date to match a birth certificate that was proven to be false. The false certificate places the child's birth within the bonds of wedlock, and this family historian doesn't want to ruin what he believes is his family's perfect record of chaste and covenant births. Each time he changes the birth date, another relative goes online to change it back to the truth. It seems that fear, shame, and pride are all just varied flavors of the same bitter ash. They can give us a very low tolerance for truth-telling.

While my father was serving in Vietnam, my mother and older brother, who was just a toddler at the time, went to live with my paternal grandparents in their rural, religiously conservative community. One day, in the spirit of trust created when two women share a small living space and work with their hands, my grandmother told my mother that she wanted to set the record straight about something. She confided in my mother that she and Grandpa were already expecting their firstborn when they

got married. Then she shared one of her dearest sorrows: When her own teenage daughters discovered the disparity between their parents' wedding date and the baby's birth date, they accused their mother of being promiscuous. For reasons I don't understand, the interpretation they landed on was that their good father nobly married a cheap girl who was carrying another man's child, and then he nobly raised the child as his own.

Grandma said this was simply not true. She and Grandpa had slept together before they married, the baby was his, and she had never been with any other man. But her daughters were unconvinced. They wanted a narrative that said their father was superhuman, instead of one that acknowledged that both their mother and their father are human.

There's no way to prove it anymore, but I believe my grandmother, not just because she was an honest and hardworking woman, but because it's easily the most likely explanation. Somehow, even 3,000 years after Bathsheba, we struggle to connect our ideas of virtue with anything but very uncomplicated femininity. And we pass that struggle on to our posterity. Less than a decade ago at a family reunion, a cousin who thought he was enlightening me very discreetly opened a binder to show me this discrepancy in my grandparents' wedding date and my oldest uncle's birthday. I told him I knew, and I love Grandma and Grandpa anyway. He closed the book with a benevolent smile and said, "Me too. Grandpa did a noble thing."

I wanted to punch him, but instead I told him what I've just told you. It's experiences like this that make me believe that there's an immutable correlation between a person's tolerance for the truth and their capacity for compassion.



The son that Bathsheba carried was born right on schedule, but he did not survive. For seven days after he was born, this young mother held, rocked, and tried to feed her infant son while he withered in her arms. There was nothing she could do to save him.

David had been told that his son would die. After he married Bathsheba and took her into the palace, but before the baby came, the prophet Nathan came to tell David a short story:

There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and [the rich man] spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but [the rich man] took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. (2 Samuel 12:1–4)

David was filled with righteous indignation. He so disapproved of this man's behavior that he declared that the offender should be punished by death for his lack of compassion—but first, he must give the poor man at least four ewes to compensate him for his loss.

Then Nathan made the parable clear: Bathsheba was the poor man's beloved ewe that the rich man stole from him, and "Thou art the man." David was sobered and humbled. He feared for his life. He said unto Nathan, *I have sinned against the Lord*. Nathan assured David that God would preserve him despite his sins but that the child Bathsheba carried would die.



Proverbs, chapter 31, is recognized as the seminal Judeo-Christian treatise on feminine virtue—the measure and standard of a godly woman. But this passage never interested me until it was brought to my attention by a speaker at a women's conference. It begins, "The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him," and every verse after that is counsel from a mother to her son, as if spoken in her own voice. But I'd never heard of King Lemuel.

Lemuel, scholars say, is a poetic name for *Solomon*, a term of endearment that a mother might use, or a pseudonym Solomon might use to refer to himself. So Proverbs 31 is, in all likelihood, King Solomon's mother's advice—a queen counseling her son before he becomes the king. And who was King Solomon's mother? Bathsheba. She addresses him, "What, my son? . . . the son of my womb . . . the son of my vows." She uses this form address because Solomon was Bathsheba's first child born within the covenant of marriage. Some scholars also say that one of the proofs that the counsel for choosing a wife found in chapter 31 is authored by an intelligent woman is its emphasis on a woman's character. It contains no mention whatsoever of choosing a wife by her charm or by her pomegranate-like breasts—even though the beauty and grace of the king's wives were a reflection of his perceived power. Rather, Bathsheba counseled Solomon to consider the sort of woman a woman chooses to be. This is wealth: a woman who knows who she is in the eyes of God and knows that she matters to him. This is the price that is far above rubies.

If it's true that we reveal much about our own lives by the counsel we give our children, then Proverbs 31 is record of not just emotional survival but emotional beauty, faith, individual power, self-awareness, hope, and wisdom. In the Old Testament, wisdom is often compared to the preciousness of rubies and is even characterized as female. King Solomon himself counsels, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom . . . She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her" (Proverbs 3:13, 15). Bathsheba was a vessel of feminine wisdom.

The words of Bathsheba in verse 20 describe the sort of queen Solomon should choose: "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." This is a strange standard for a queen in a palace, who has no responsibility to prepare food for the poor or to deliver it to them herself. If a queen concerns herself with the poor at all, she has people

to do these things for her. Bathsheba wanted her son to look for a woman who chooses to be kind and compassionate.

Look for a woman who chooses to be a fair judge of herself and her own work, who won't indulge in false modesty. Look for a woman who chooses to work with her hands so that she may contribute as well as consume. Look for a woman who is not afraid to conduct a business transaction or learn new skills, a woman who speaks well of others, opening her mouth with both wisdom and kindness. Look for a woman who can be trusted because she is truthful. And most of all, remember that virtue is a power of truth and wisdom. Virtue is not a component of flesh.



Bathsheba's story particularly speaks to the troubled and broken hearts of women who want to know God but are afraid that, for one reason or another, God is not particularly interested in them. She taught her son that a woman can judge herself fairly even if no one else is doing so. She taught him that a woman's heart matters to God, and her heart matters to herself, so her heart should matter to him. I wonder if she knew that her counsel to her son would also inform women thousands of years after she passed out of this life. At the end of the day, Bathsheba's story shows me that a woman can limit the amount of damage another person can do in her life. No one can make her less than she is. She gets to keep who she is no matter what.

Solomon's respect for his mother's wisdom was so great that he had another throne installed for her in his counsel room, and Bathsheba became the wisest king's most trusted advisor. Three thousand years later, I hope we may be starting to understand what is meant by feminine virtue, feminine wisdom, and a price far greater than rubies.

Her children arise up, and call her blessed . . . Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

—Proverbs 31:28, 31

Notes

1. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story." TED Talks, Ted Global, July 2009.

2. Wiesel, Elie. Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech. Oslo, Norway, Dec. 10, 1986.

The Provo Tabernacle: My Strange and Lonely Place

Kim Abunuwara

My grandmother knew where people went when they died. I feel less certain, though my continual return to her faith is a necessary part of me, and the humility at the core of Christianity argues for a return. The recent fire, destruction, and transformation of the Provo Tabernacle as a temple have been both a personal allegory as well as a symbol for the growing LDS Church. For this Provo girl, the tabernacle is a historic and paradoxical representation of the tension that exists between the past and the present, between orthodoxy and belief.

Truthfully, the Provo Tabernacle was an old building, falling apart. It was uncomfortable to sit and look sideways in the slanting balcony seats with no legroom, and it was never the right temperature in the summer or the winter. But it was also beautiful. The choice to preserve the exterior architecture and its place as the center of Provo is wise and admirable. To make it into a sacred structure after the tragic fire and not tear it down honors its history. But it is also a loss. Something is gained, but something very important is lost.

The tabernacle was built in 1883 next to another building, built in 1861 that was too small for its purpose of holding large church meetings. This type of building was somewhat typical of early Utah pioneer communities. It was paid for and built by the few Mormons who had only begun building a community in Provo some fifteen years earlier. This group of outliers, radical religious refugees from the established American territory, was incredibly poor, faithful, and interested in gaining respectability both for themselves and their religion. When they hardly had a school or an established public building, they spent \$100,000 on the tabernacle.

It was meant not only as a gesture of devotion but also as a bid for legitimacy. A tabernacle does not have the sacred nature of a temple and indeed, at that time, the role of the temple was very different than it is today. Temples were not attended regularly as a form of worship but were meant for sacred events throughout a lifetime. Ideas of “faithfulness” and “activity” and “belief” were vastly different than they are today. The tabernacle reflected those differences in its use and construction.

The tabernacle was the proud and beautiful statement of a generation gone but still speaking, and its message was Mormon. It anchored the 1970s Provo where I wandered. The death of my mother in early life left me with a tendency to look backward. Maybe I was attracted to old buildings to get a glimpse of her. The tabernacle’s anachronism excited me—Gothic windows and black conical roofs. Climbing its strangely narrow, winding staircases and smelling its aging plaster and wooden pews was time travel. It accompanied me when I walked to the post office or to the Paramount or to the corner drugstore and when I cut across its picnic grass to Woolworth’s for something I’d saved up for. The same faithful sycamores that lined the path from my grandma’s house were there. *Because* it was out of its time, I loved it.

Before the grounds of the new temple could be built, the foundation of the older, smaller tabernacle to the north was excavated. The enthusiasm for this project illustrates our interest in traces of those who have gone before. I visited the Brigham Young University Office of Public Archeology and took photos of the objects they had found: a ring, toy trinkets, bobby pins, nails, bottles, coins, and the rusted skeleton of a tricycle pulled out of a well. The materiality of archeology is deceptive. On the one hand, it produces objects that are present. LDS preservation specialist Dr. Benjamin Pykles describes it this way: “The tangibility of the object is so appealing. [It] connects us. The real and the authentic lend credence to our stories.”¹ On the other hand, these objects are taken out of a grave and, like the trike I photographed, refer starkly to their owner’s absence.

Similarly, the few objects that I have from my mother provide precious traces of her. They are a green and blue tulle dance cos-

tume sewn by her, a clay plate she made for her parents with the words “Love Mary Le” written on the back, and a fabric quiet-book, also sewn by her, for my brother and me; “Tracy” is stitched in a red diagonal on the front and “Kimberly” on the back. Each page has an ingenious activity for our little hands; there is an orange and black shoe with a lace for tying on the first page, multicolored buckles on the next, a little green coat with wooden buttons, and an orange gingerbread man with a zipper. Finally, there is a tiny red mitten open at the bottom into which we could slip a hand. More than a material object, the book is evidence of her love.

Excavators at the site of the old tabernacle used brushes to carefully remove the last bits of dirt from the remains of an adjacent baptismal font built around 1875. It is framed by the foundation of the tiny baptistry, the smallest building pictured in old photographs of the complex. It stood very near the back of the old tabernacle where there was a vestry for changing clothes. If the excavation site was not already hallowed, the discovery of the font made it so. Baptism ritualizes one’s commitment to live God’s commandments. You walk down into water wearing white clothes that float and sway oddly against you. A short prayer is spoken and you are gently put under the water; time is suspended when you realize there is no sound and you are looking up at the surface from underneath. Then you are pulled up; a lot of quiet smiling follows, and a difficult exit with soaking clothes clinging. I don’t remember my baptism at all, but it was documented with a white-bordered photo marked with the year “’71.” My Uncle Kent baptized me; I lived with him for the two years before I was adopted at age nine by a BYU professor. There is quite a bit of plaid in the photo. I look pretty happy. I do remember the weight of hands on my head when my Grandpa Means confirmed me, and his deep voice. I haven’t given much thought to what it must have felt like to him to be confirming this little girl who remained after his daughter had died. He was probably watching when I was lifted up out of the water to symbolize coming up out of the grave. Most of the time in the nineteenth century, people who got baptized did it in a river or a lake; this new baptistry would have offered more privacy and ceremony. Its discovery is significant because baptism is the first

in a series of ordinances that help a person move closer to God; the others are sacrament and temple marriage. Since two of the three ordinances have been performed on this piece of ground, the addition of a temple consummates the narrative. This is why Dr. Pykles referred to the area as “a cosmology of Mormon worship.”² Paradoxically, for me, that infinite cosmology is comprehended in stone and soil.

Something unique about the tabernacle was that it was open to anyone who wished to attend. It accommodated all of us as, over the course of the twentieth century, the population changed, and it was subsequently claimed by all Provoans, Mormon or not. In the Historic Downtown Provo Oral History Project sponsored by BYU’s Charles Redd Center, several participants express regret that the tabernacle could not have been saved; they reminisce about its many important public functions that brought disparate members of the community together. Stephen Allan Hales remembers fondly Catholic and interfaith services held in the old building; in 1996, when the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church building was deemed unsafe, Father Flegge led Christmas Eve services there. Community Arts coordinator Kathryn Allen speculates that many unprofitable programs such as the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus will cease to exist without the free venue that the tabernacle provided. Allen originated extremely popular events like *Messiah* sing-alongs, Monday night concerts, community music series, and early New Year’s Eve concerts for older patrons that were all held in the tabernacle. Kelly McConkie Henriod writes, “[T]he Provo Tabernacle was also a place where school children sang, community members were honored in funerals, and people of various faiths met to pray. The Tabernacle was not only a grand building to behold, it was a grand place to come together.”³ John Bonnett says, “Since I’m not a participating Mormon, it made me sad that they decided to turn it into a temple. But I’m sure it will be beautiful.”⁴ I feel like Mr. Bonnett. I’m sad it will no longer be a place for all of us, regardless of faith. Such a place is needed.

It wasn’t until the tabernacle was being changed into a temple that I realized how strongly I identified with its ability to bring all of us together: those of strong faith, those of broken faith, and

those with no faith. The Mormon/non-Mormon boundary is a large part of my world. My grandparents cherished and helped build the LDS faith and bequeathed it to their children as their most valuable possession. I was given a golden gift as a child. I was taught that I could know God for myself, that prayer and revelation were the means through which I could communicate with a higher being. This shaped me, and I have been seeking to communicate with God ever since. I felt regularly inclined to reach for God. The promise “and by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” resonated with me so completely that it is difficult to tell if it came from without or within. When I was fourteen years old, I left my Oak Hills home in the middle of the night and walked to the Provo Temple, where I slept for a while on a bench around the back, then got cold and headed home. The impression left on my soul by Joseph’s quest for answers from God—“for how to act I did not know”—was indelible. This inclination, however, remained a searching; I never settled in and took God for granted. For me, to know God was usually to wrestle with the conditions of my existence. Once I stood in the predawn light near Dixon Jr. High and shouted an angry monologue at Cascade Mountain. I was demanding answers. I don’t remember what I was angry about, but it was between God and me. As a young college student, I crossed out certain words in the Book of Mormon as I tried to reconcile them with Jungian thought, but I didn’t stop reading it. I believe I came by both my faith and my questioning honestly; both grow right out of the circumstances of my upbringing. My family, like many, is an accidental conglomerate leaving me inherently divided and seeking reconciliation. Because some of their children couldn’t or wouldn’t receive the gift, the faith of my grandparents seems to have failed. But the faith of our fathers wasn’t just a set of beliefs—it was a way of ordering the world, visible in the art they produced, the histories they wrote, their monuments, their trails, their songs, and their buildings. To separate myself from their faith seems impossible. I will miss the tabernacle because it gathered people from all sides, but its universal accessibility couldn’t (and didn’t try to) mend the division within me.

When I was just starting college at BYU, the mother, father, and two brothers of a friend of mine were killed in a car accident on the way to Vale, Colorado. Three coffins made a line in the tabernacle when I went to the funeral; her father was still fighting for his life in a hospital. I went by myself because I was terrified by what had happened. I didn't want to talk to anyone because there were no words for this. The image of the three coffins stretching the breadth of the tabernacle is unforgettable; it represented half of her family. My mother also died in a car accident. Seven years before her accident, she married my dad when she discovered she was pregnant. She later miscarried, but her determination kept them together. They had my brother and me before she died, and the family didn't survive without her. Months after the funeral for my friend's family when I saw her in a clothing store, I hid. A woman had spoken at the funeral about having seen my friend's mother in a singular way before her death; she felt she had been blessed with a heightened awareness of this person who was about to die. I still remember that elevated vision she spoke of; I remember her impressive confidence in the face of those three coffins. I remained caught between her great faith on the one hand and staggering loss on the other.

My mom spent her teenage years in the neighborhood east of downtown Provo. Her dad worked on the railroad. He carried a black, metal, round-topped lunch box and drove an oil-smelling truck I loved to ride in as long as I could keep out of the way of the long gear-shift. Deep gutters surrounded their lot that he dammed once a month to flood his lawn. Our bare feet slapped the water as we ran through it. His family had come to Utah from Texas years before. As Texans, they had been an important part of a small Mormon colony that was emptied out by the Great Depression. One day they piled themselves and their belongings into a big truck, *Grapes of Wrath*-style, and headed to Zion. My great-grandmother's disillusionment at being greeted by shining neon bar signs when they arrived in Salt Lake City is legendary. Grandpa joined the army and sent his \$21 paycheck to his poor family each month. They were deeply hurt by the way they were treated as outsiders in Utah. As a teenager, I became aware of

a hierarchical tension between these different families of which I was a part; the tensions seemed to result from religion, money, and education. I was told my mother's strong will clashed with her father's: she, a progressive supporter of civil rights, and he, with the racial sensitivity of Archie Bunker. It's unfair, however, to judge him out of context. He had also been the victim of discrimination in Utah because of his poverty. His goal to be an officer in the service was frustrated because of his crooked teeth. He was an intelligent young man unable to get the education and opportunity he wanted. My grandmother was a nurse, and he was hurt by her enthusiastic admiration of doctors. I sense my mother was similarly driven to make good; as children, we were always immaculately dressed in photos, and she sewed most of our clothing. My dad joined the U.S. Air Force and I'm told my mother used a wool blanket she'd found in a barrack to tailor my older brother a very handsome little suit. Her social ambition was the reason she was on her way to a cotillion meeting in Salt Lake when she was killed.

I understand she and her mother-in-law didn't get along too well. Someone told me my mom wouldn't enter my grandma's house (or wasn't invited?); she stood on the porch, not crossing the threshold, and talked through the screen door. My father's parents were dyed-in-the-wool children of Mormon pioneers, and the consequences of disobedience were a matter of spiritual life and death. An unplanned pregnancy isn't part of a bishop's hopes for his son; it prevents a temple marriage. Before my Grandpa Dunford died early, leaving my grandma with their five sons, he had been the beloved LDS bishop of the Rivergrove 1st Ward from 1948–1956. He and his congregation built, with their own money and their own hands, the second oldest chapel in Utah Valley on 7th West and 8th North—I've seen silent super-8 footage. My grandma and her neighbors had bake sales to raise money for the building fund, and she regularly fed hungry workers on the construction site. They put in a glass-enclosed balcony at the back of the chapel that was a soundproof crying room. I liked standing there looking over the congregation's heads. There aren't any balconies in Mormon meetinghouses anymore—out of necessity these features have been eliminated, but I remember those original buildings. They had nooks

and crannies where I hid with friends. My grandma was utterly lost when her husband died; she didn't even know how to drive a car, but she pulled herself together, and it was by clinging steadfastly to the faith of her fathers that she was able to finish raising five boys by herself. Her faith was how she survived.

Grandma's religious devotion came from her parents. Ike's great-great-grandfather George Osmond and his young wife, Georgina, sailed on a ship to Louisiana, then up the Mississippi, then boarded wagons to Utah, where they built a log cabin. They were incredibly hard-working and faithful English immigrants and instrumental in building the Star Valley, Wyoming, community. They had overcome tribulation and finished their dream home when George was called to take a second wife and then sent to England on a proselyting mission. Apparently, none of them *wanted* plural marriage, but it was what they were asked to do. Here I feel a wide gulf open between my ancestors and me. In his history, George doesn't talk about what he wants, what he hopes for in his life, or how he understands himself. My journals are full of introspection and thoughts of how my life will be shaped by my choices and efforts. Even generations later, my Grandma Dunford's worldview wasn't much different from George's. When I lived with her during my young adulthood, our personalities often clashed on matters of faith. Occasionally, she answered my questions with "Because the Lord says so." Once, standing in her kitchen, she told me she'd never been depressed—unhappy, yes, but not depressed. She was emphasizing her inability to understand my point of view, and she succeeded in that. Her world had gradually disappeared as the twentieth century advanced, and she often remarked on this new world's strangeness. Her alienation was her essence, and her stubborn loyalty to the past counter-balanced my position in the present.

As the tabernacle is painstakingly restored in Victorian detail, its message will be clearer than ever, and the way that message contrasts with modern Mormonism will add to an ongoing discussion about contemporary Mormon architecture. Why aren't our modern buildings the product of our most gifted artists as our ancestors' were? The growth of the LDS population has resulted in a consolidation of artistic and financial decisions that ensure

architectural uniformity. In her article *The Cloning of Mormon Architecture*, Martha Sonntag Bradley writes, “In its exuberant pursuit of the efficient, economical and functional building, the Church appears to have lost sight of the value of buildings as more than structure.”⁵ And in 1968, when a single design was used for both the Ogden and Provo temples, University of Utah architecture professor Donald Bergsma responded:

The very fact that one design was created for two separate temples *suggests* mass production is playing a role in contemporary Mormonism. The mercantilistic quality of the design *suggests* that modern Mormonism is more concerned with commercialism than with spiritual matters. The “newness” and “prettiness” of the design *suggests* a denial of the resolve of the early Church. . . . A wealthy church, in one of the world’s most affluent societies, owes its faithful more than what they have been offered in these designs of the Church architect. The early pioneers would not have been so callous in their approach to housing the activities of their faith.⁶

In 1973, Mark Leone accused modern Mormons of tearing down old tabernacles because they remind us of what we no longer are.⁷ Bergsma’s assertion that modern Mormons are more commercial than their ancestors is probably true but it might also be an oversimplification. It is not only temples but temple *attendance* that has become much more common, which would suggest not less but more interest in spiritual matters. The sacrifices of early Utah Mormons were impressive; they seem more personal than my monthly tithing check. Architecture does make visible the difference between generations, and I am both attracted to and alienated by that difference. If nothing else, the difference captures our attention. Provo citizens venerated this building; virtually everyone is thrilled its exterior has been saved. However, I am grateful for the LDS Church’s significant investment in the building not just because it makes me feel good when I look at it; it also makes me sad and strange, and a little inferior. I love the old parts of Provo because they bear the trace of generations past. I am sad its new function will be exclusive because, like the

equalizing practice of wearing white in the temple, it was an equalizing space for those with differing religious views. I have come to associate my faith struggle with this place that welcomed those of all faiths. It took on a function that its builders never would have anticipated: a place for a fragmented community to gather. And since faith is no longer a given, the tabernacle provided a particularly important place where we came together in a variety of faith's manifestations.

When I was a young adult, I crossed the Mormon boundary and explored new territory. I spent a lot of time by myself, driving to new places, taking long walks, smoking cigarettes on the train tracks, reading D.H. Lawrence. I ordered coffee at Joe's Spic and Span and hoped I'd run into one of my uncles—my mother's younger brothers. I was in their territory. I considered carefully and fully the possibility that the faith of my fathers might not be true. I exposed myself to the full blast of existential emptiness, ironically, while I lived in Bishop Dunford's steadfast and faithful house. I discovered that while these different worlds—those of "believer" and "nonbeliever"—were geographically interspersed, the divisions weren't just religious but also socio-economic. The railroad where my grandpa had worked was not physically far from the home of my new adopted family, but socially and culturally it might as well have been another country. I realized I could travel very far metaphorically just by stepping into the right building. The old train depot was a favorite; its women's bathroom was enormous with a large sitting area and a window for weeping and watching the train go. Another beckoning ghost building was the deserted motel on 5th West; when I went inside, I found each individual room key in its own separate dusty box as untouched as if I were in an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. I had to pull off a nailed board to get inside the old Brigham Young Academy. I stepped lightly up its expansive staircase and explored massive rooms until a guard dog chased me out. I wanted to know why people from the same background came to such different conclusions. In order to really understand, I needed to see things from their points of view, from their territories, so I explored. I wanted to reconcile these differences but I couldn't.

Grandma Dunford told me that once when I was a little girl staying with her after my mother's death, she went out to collect the wash from the line, and when she came back I was hysterical. I hadn't been able to find her. It is a singular sensation to be lost at home. If aliens had snatched her when she was collecting the wash and she had never returned, I would have kept searching and found her everywhere but nowhere. It was her house, her lamps, her curtains, her toaster oven; I would have kept finding her in all these items but losing her afresh with each "discovery." This embedded loss may be what William Luce refers to when he writes, "Hold your parents tenderly, for the world will seem a strange and lonely place when they're gone"⁸: strange because they are there and lonely because they're not. I was middle-aged when grandma died. The night before her funeral, I called the mortuary to ask if I could see her. They warned me when I arrived that she wasn't prepared for viewing. She was on a stretcher with a sheet over her; her shoulders were bare and her hair was wet from having just been washed. Her nose was thin, which confused me because her nose had never been thin in life. I looked and looked at her, trying to understand her body without her in it. It made no more sense to me than the world without her in it.

My grandmother knew where people went when they died. I don't know much about my mother's beliefs; apparently she didn't write them down. I don't know if faith was part of how she made meaning. Grandma Means told me she and my dad were taking temple prep classes when she was killed. Grandma told me my mom once said, "This can't be all there is." As testimonies go, that is actually more powerful than it might sound. It's a frank and humble expression of hope that any human, regardless of religious inclination, might embrace. Another elliptical testimony I treasure is a letter I received in the mission field from my adoptive father. He wrote, "I love you. I miss you. I can offer you no counsel." The significance of his gesture to trust me with his uncertainty was like an initiation. By going on a mission I made an investment in my belief, but I don't think belief is meant to resolve the pain of loss. That would be loss indeed. Instead, life feels truest when belief and loss co-exist. Throughout my youth, the open tabernacle brought

together a community of individuals with different views. Though the new Provo City Center Temple will house sacred rites, I believe we needed the tabernacle's common ground. I miss it even more because it seems to be there but is gone. Ironically, the fire imagery helps me advance; it sears a wound that kept me looking backward so I can move on.

Notes

1. Ben Pykles, transcript of interview conducted by author, January 30, 2014.
2. Ibid.
3. Kelly McConkie Henriod, "Memorable Events at the Provo Tabernacle," *Deseret News*, December 17, 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/top/57/0/Memorable-events-at-the-Provo-Tabernacle.html>.
4. Jon Bonnett, transcript of an oral history conducted in 2012, in *Historic Downtown Provo Oral History Project*, Charles Redd Center, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, 2015.
5. Martha Sonntag Bradley, "The Cloning of Mormon Architecture," *Dialogue* 14, no. 1 (1981): 28.
6. Donald Bergsma, "The Temple as a Symbol," *Dialogue* 3, no. 1 (1968): 28.
7. Mark Leone, "Why the Coalville Tabernacle had to be Razed: Principles Governing Mormon Architecture," *Dialogue* 8, no. 2 (1973): 30–39.
8. William Luce, *The Belle of Amherst* (New York: Samuel French, 1976).

Follow the Light, Lulie

Mary Lythgoe Bradford

Emma Lou Thayne, a giant in Mormon literature, passed away on December 6, 2014 at the age of 90. She was born Emma Lou Warner on October 22, 1924 in Salt Lake City. She received a BA in English from the U. of U. and taught there and in the Division of Continuing Education from 1946 to 1976. She also taught at the U. of U.'s Institute of Religion, was head coach for the University's Women's Collegiate Tennis Team. She received an MA in Creative writing in 1970 and was chosen by Thomas S Monson to be the first woman on the Board of the Deseret News. She also served on the Boards of the Utah Arts Council, Utah Endowment for the Humanities, the LDS YWMA and the Salt Lake City Citizen's Council. The Salt Lake Community Service Learning Center is named after her. She is survived by her husband Melvin E Thayne and by five daughters: Becky Markosian, Rinda Hayes, Shelley Rich, Dinny Trabert and Megan Heath; and by 19 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. (Andrew Hall, "In Memoriam: The Dawning of a Brighter Day," <http://associationmormonletters.org/blog/2014/12/in-memoriam-emma-lou-thayne/>)

Emma Lou Thayne may have been the most expansive person I have ever met. She managed to transform every event in her life into grist for her creative mill. Accidents and illnesses that would fell a normal person formed the sculpture that was her finest work of art—her own life. She once said: "I may never be a sculptor. But in my own realms of endeavor with my own limited abilities and training—and ridiculously wide-ranging inclinations—I know this: If I focus, let go and wait, holiness will visit. The muse will whisper, the thought will arrive."¹ She understood that her ability to focus was the secret of many of her amazing contributions.

Declaring "things happen," she transformed whatever happened to her into a poem, an essay, a cause. It was said of her mentor, Lowell Bennion, that Emma Lou never saw defeat. In the hospital

for a back operation that took thirty days' recovery, she accepted this as "time to lie and think."² She kept a diary and planned for a day in the week for herself to do with as she would—a plan that organized her life from then on. Forty-seven years old, mother of five girls, wife of a busy real estate broker and bishop, she was serving on the General Board of the Mutual Improvement Association with Lowell Bennion, who also hosted a trip to the Holy Land. This trip became a lodestar for Emma Lou, inspiring a book, and installing Lowell as exemplar and friend.

It was also during this period that I first met her. She recruited me as a writer of lessons for the Young Women's program. From that first meeting, I was welcome in her home, her cabin in Mill Creek Canyon, at luncheons and parties. Our shared interests included devotion to our professors and mentors, Lowell Bennion and William Mulder. When I began research on Bennion's life, she raised travel money for me and later proofed the manuscript and wrote its foreword.

As students of Dr. Mulder at the University of Utah's English department, we shared a friendship with his widow, Helen Mulder, who sent me her tribute to Emma Lou in which she lauded her generosity to her colleagues, especially to Dr. Clarice Short of the English department at the University of Utah: "After the death of our dear friend and mentor in the English Dept., Professor Clarice Short, Emma Lou [served] as her literary executor, collected Dr. Short's unpublished poetry, found a biographer and saw the book through publication. It was a tribute not only to Dr. Short but to Emma Lou as an example of her unwavering friendship. Dr. Short's book is a cherished volume we can place next to the fourteen books of poetry and reflections that Emma Lou has written herself."³

Lavina Fielding Anderson, writer, historian, and friend to us both, also described Emma Lou's powerful talent for friendship: "She could reach across any boundary to find a way to connect and celebrate. I think that her absolute fearlessness—particularly in times of harsh judgment, and line-drawing in the Church— . . . stemmed from her belief that the Church was hers, not the other way around." Anderson concludes that "she lives in a wonderful world . . . because she refuses to shut any doors or windows of enlightenment, and she welcomes everyone into that world."⁴

Lest we think of Emma Lou as a Pollyanna, I maintain that she, like Bennion, saw a tendency for Mormons to celebrate suffering rather than alleviate it. She knew exquisite suffering herself, but she found many routes to healing, always sharing her findings. When the first of her five daughters, Becky, developed bipolar disorder and eating disorders, she arranged to publish their account of this frightening disease. The proceeds financed a fund at the University of Utah for further research. Her famous hymn, "Where Can I Turn for Peace?," was inspired by this experience.

In her essays and autobiography she is straightforward, even intimate. For example, in recounting the birth of her last daughter, achieved after much pain and addictive medication, she describes her agony in deciding on a tubal ligation and the peace she found through the good offices of her doctor and nurse. She was always open to advice from new friends, even during chance meetings. Sustaining many injuries as an athlete, she always bounced back. Then in 1986 while driving down a canyon road with son-in-law Jim Hayes, a crowbar from a passing truck sliced through the windshield, into her head, and out the back window. Jim, a plastic surgeon, drove her to the hospital, where she underwent the first of eight surgeries to restore her eye socket and broken jaw. During that time she became despondent.

She had always been able to count on the restoration of sleep. "Plan and pray at night," her mother had taught her, and the morning would reveal poems and answers. Suddenly, Emma Lou admits, "I was someone else in my skin. I didn't laugh, cry, nothing."⁵ Sleep was full of monstrous dreams until two friends brought relief. One, a professor at Brigham Young University, reached Emma Lou "with her tender touch." Another friend, a professor at Notre Dame, said simply, "But of course I understand. You died."⁶

From then on almost every event would bring adventures from what she called "the place of knowing." She saw things others could not see and she heard music others could not hear. A mystic understanding was hers. She concluded that she had died when the crowbar hit her, bringing a vision of deceased family members gathered around her table. This motivated her to renew her already energetic contributions to the causes of peace, justice, and women's rights.

A year after her accident she spoke to the first international conference of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) at the University of Utah, where she read her poem "Women of a Different Tongue." Always a tireless speaker for worthy causes, she found herself the only woman speaker at the Test Ban Treaty Conference in Kazakhstan in 1990, where she read poems from her earlier visit to Russia and was told that hers was the only speech broadcast in its entirety on the local TV station.

Always a willing traveler to writers' and artists' retreats throughout the country, Emma Lou found renewed vigor in responding to the works of other poets and artists. Maxine Kumin, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, United States Poet Laureate, and New Hampshire farmer, became a fast friend, as did William Stafford from Oregon, whose habit of writing a poem a day inspired hers. In 1983 at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Paul Fini, an unusual painter from Chicago, introduced her to his partner, David. Thus began a powerful friendship that inspired Fini to leave his astounding paintings to Emma Lou when he died of AIDS. His paintings of the fourteen Stations of the Cross were so strong that Emma Lou was able to organize their display in the "City of the Saints" and then donate them to the national AIDS foundation, where they traveled across the country with the AIDS quilt. A year later, Emma Lou represented the LDS Church at World AIDS Day. If she had ever been fearful of joining unpopular causes, that fear left her. "With the privilege of a matriarch," she wrote, "I had once again been opened to possibility through exposure to the world, to the quality of people unlike me."⁷

Emma Lou claimed that her death experience opened her up to a deeper understanding of her life and the lives around her. She felt obligated to share it. At her first meeting after the accident with the board, she was disappointed in the response of her colleagues. "I even took the six-pound rusty iron rod that hit me—and the Brethren showed great concern . . . saying how grateful they were for my survival . . . but about death—not a word." She believed that she had a message that was not only personal but had been sent to her for a larger purpose. "My mentor, Lowell Bennion, taught me that what matters most is relationships, vertically to the divine and horizontally to the human."

How then to communicate this? So far, she admitted, she had talked only obliquely about what she had been given—and she had been reluctant to “acknowledge the light that had come into my soul.”⁸ What was it that she so devoutly wished to share? That light which had ushered her into “the place of knowing”—a light that wiped out fear, chasing goblins away, opening her to deeper poetry and wider love. How was she to communicate this? Through her poetry and other written words, yes, but more directly through personal involvement in worthy causes. She had always been involved, but now she vowed to pay attention to what had escaped her in the past.

As her friend, I wonder what could possibly have escaped her. Though she enjoyed a rich inner life, she was constantly facing outward. Her attention span was so deep that I can only compare it to that of her mentor, Lowell Bennion. As one of his students, I marveled at his open-door policy. How could such a busy man be constantly in touch with suffering students? I went to him one day with a question: “I have two proposals of marriage. Which one should I take?”

“You can choose not to choose,” was his response. I realized afterward that his answer came from the quality of the attention he applied to each of us. He knew that when asked by the “right man,” I would simply stop by to inform him.

Emma Lou developed the same inspired habit of paying intense attention. Whether greeting me on an unexpected visit or allowing me to host her at my home, she fixed her laser gaze on me and my problems as if I were her only friend. This ability certainly suffused all of her relationships.

Perhaps she was born into it? One daughter, Rinda Hayes, felt that her ancestry—pioneer Mormons on both sides—and her place in the family as the only girl with four brothers “grounded her in the rock-solid virtues of hard work, integrity and generosity.”⁹ Rinda believed that her mother had inherited leadership abilities that made her the “president of everything” and the “head of every committee.”

But she also knew the importance of finding refuge from busyness. She and Mel built a cabin on Mount Aire Peak that became

her sanctuary and the family hub, a space that cradled her daughters as they grew with a brood of cousins.

As I write this, I have before me an issue of *Exponent II* from summer 2000 with pages sixteen and seventeen facing each other: Emma Lou's poem about her Bench at Castle Craggs Rock facing two of my Irish poems, hers a courageous plan for her last moments on earth—a burial beside a stone bench from the mountain near her beloved cabin. Looking ahead—she still had years left—she paid tribute to the “green graph of my mountains / Holding up the sky / where I traveled without maps and never lost / Hearing the waters. . . . It will harbor the mulch of red leaves, the white of / Snow, the marvelous breath of spring / And this May knowing exactly where I will be.”¹⁰ A photo of the bench accompanies the poem.

On the facing page is a photo of the Ardgroom stone circle in Beara, Ireland, where I have spent many happy months at Anam Cara Writers' and Artists' Retreat, founded by Sue Booth-Forbes, née Susan Paxman. In the summer of 1997, Sue Booth-Forbes rented an Irish cottage on the shores of Galway Bay as a month-long writers' retreat for herself, Susan Howe, and me. Emma Lou joined us with Laurel Ulrich and Marie Cornwall. Sue later recalled this occasion as part of her inspiration for her Anam Cara Retreat, which she founded the next year. Sue writes that “Emma Lou has been my mentor, one of my *anam caras* (Celtic term for soul friend) since I began my term as editor of *Exponent II* in 1984. . . . In August 1997, she was part of the group of Mormon writers and poets who joined me in retreat in a cottage by Galway Bay on the Connemara peninsula in Ireland. During her stay she experienced life-changing moments in Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and St. Nicholas Cathedral in Galway that she describes so eloquently in her memoir.”

Sue recalls that very soon after she opened her retreat on the Beara Peninsula, “Emma Lou came with her five incredible daughters. They blessed Anam Cara with their creative and joyful spirits and helped form the ambience for those writers-and-artists-in-residence who have followed them.”¹¹ In her memoir Emma Lou calls her visit to Connemara “soul-retrieval work.” She continues, “From some ancient piece of Celtic lineage, I had absorbed truth Just thinking about it . . . I radiate and quiver, my temples relax

without instruction to the coming together of the earthly and the metaphysical. . . . I know now that it is possible to share the gift of the mystic with another of like intent, availability, openness to light.”¹²

“Openness to light” filled Emma Lou’s life. Her daughter Rinda offered this vivid image of Emma Lou finding light:

I was asked to speak at a women’s conference in St. George[,] Utah . . . probably because they figured they could not get my mother . . . I told them that I could probably bring my mother with me. . . . [T]hey asked if I could be the keynote speaker at 9:am[sic] with Mother as the closing speaker at 4:pm [sic]. A week before the conference, Mom called with a “bit of a situation”—she would never call anything a problem. . . . She had just realized that she had promised to speak at the same time at a stake conference in Salt Lake. . . . As my heart went into panic mode, she said, “Don’t worry—it’ll work out.” “Really Mom? You’re going to speak at eleven in Salt Lake and four in St. George?”

“Let me work on it—I’ll call back.” And she did. “My trusty friend”—she had many “trusty friends”—“will fly me down in his private plane.”¹³

Rinda described the darkening sky as she gave her talk. No Emma Lou. At 3 p.m. as Rinda prepared closing remarks, Emma Lou swooped in looking as fresh as a daisy, father Mel with her “looking like he’d just stepped out of a mixmaster.”

“Tell me what went on so I can pull it all together,” Emma Lou said, and she did just that in her closing speech. Later, she described the plane trip. As the skies darkened with the pilot advised to turn back, Emma Lou said, “Look at the tunnel of light. Let’s aim for that! Let’s go for it!”

“Few people have said no to Mom,” Rinda recalls. “There they went, zooming through the tunnel of light to land in St. George just in time.”

Emma Lou continued to speak and write until age ninety, when Rinda arrived “just in time” to hold her during her last breath. “I pictured her in that little plane bobbing through that tunnel of light. . . . She was going away with a smile on her face, heart open, ready for the next adventure.” At her funeral service, Rinda

declared, “Never believing in skittering on the surface of life, Mom wanted to experience it all—the exuberant joy, the wrenching sorrow. . . . She wanted everyone to experience the breadth and depth of real emotion.”

When Emma Lou departed this life, President Thomas S. Monson announced it and then sent Jeffrey Holland from the Quorum of the Twelve to speak at her service. All five of her daughters gave moving tributes, and she was buried near her bench in her beloved canyon.

It is difficult to assess the towering contributions of this buoyant spirit. I will not try. I can only offer a grateful prayer.

Notes

1. Lois M. Collins, “Alive Again: Emma Lou Thayne Finds Hope, Recovery and a Vibrant Life,” January 15, 2011. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700100745/Alive-again-2-Emma-Lou-Thayne-finds-hope-recovery-and-a-vibrant-life.html>.

2. Ibid.

3. E-mail from H. Mulder to author, December 7, 2014.

4. E-mail from LFA to author, December 8, 2014.

5. Collins, “Alive Again.”

6. Ibid.

7. Emma Lou Warner Thayne, *The Place of Knowing: A Spiritual Autobiography* (Bloomington, Ind.: iUniverse, 2012), 204.

8. Ibid, 61.

9. Rinda Hayes, from a talk delivered at Emma Lou Thayne’s funeral, December 12, 2014. Talk transcribed by Hayes and sent to author. All quotations by Hayes are from this transcript.

10. Emma Lou Thayne, “The Bench at Castle Crags Rock,” *Exponent II* 23 no.4 (2000): 16.

11. Sue Booth-Forbes, e-mail message to author, April 6, 2015.

12. Thayne, *The Place of Knowing*, 231.

13. Hayes transcript, here and following.

The Iron Rod on the Eightfold Path

Tracie A. Lamb

My brother died recently from complications after back surgery and a life of addiction. He was forty-nine. His death was hard enough, but the ensuing drama with my mother and sister—the last of my immediate family—widened the rift between us so much that I felt as if I’d lost them all.

My younger daughter broke up with her boyfriend of seven years, which felt much like a divorce for all of us. Then she came home to live and convalesce, had her wisdom teeth out (more convalescing), and decided to move to Hawaii. Plans for the house we were going to buy fell through, and the thermostat in the house we lived in broke and kept randomly getting stuck at ninety degrees.

I was experiencing that trite but true saying, “When it rains, it pours,” and I am here to attest to the first basic teaching of Buddhism: life is suffering.

Fortunately, I am also familiar with the Buddhist concepts of “calm abiding” and “neither craving nor aversion,” which helped mitigate some of my own suffering during that Really Hard Time.

How did I, a Mormon girl from a village in rural Utah, come to know anything at all about Buddhists?

My first encounter with a living, breathing Buddhist came when I moved away from home to attend a larger high school in Roy, Utah. Miss Koga, the assistant band teacher, was Asian and also Buddhist—information whispered in the halls. Her presence was as much an anomaly in predominantly Mormon Utah as the one black student or the exchange student from Germany. What she believed or what being Buddhist meant, I had no idea.

My senior year, the band and choir earned money to go on a trip to Hawaii. I had never even seen the ocean or flown in an airplane. And Hawaii! So different from Utah.

Miss Koga had arranged for us to have lunch with a Buddhist community at their temple where there were a lot of Buddhist kids our age. We politely checked each other out without mingling much. The Buddhist leader welcomed our group and said something like, “We know you’ve probably never seen so many Buddhists before, but we’ve never seen so many Mormons before either.” That was my early encounter.

When I went to college at Weber State in Ogden, Utah, I finally got an introduction to some details of Buddhism. In a world literature class, we studied Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*.

I learned the story of how the Buddha became the Buddha—that Siddhartha was born into wealth and protected from all suffering and pain. That he one day escaped and saw the reality of how much of the world lived. Unable to endure his coddled life when so many others suffered, he left his home and his wife and child in search of the answer. Having lived a life of indulgence, he tried asceticism, but finally settled on the Middle Way of moderation. Meditating under the Bodhi tree, he achieved enlightenment and learned the way to be free from suffering, which he taught as the Four Noble Truths: Life is suffering. Craving is the origin of suffering. Craving, the origin of suffering, can be extinguished. And, finally, the eightfold middle path leads to the extinction of suffering. I tucked these details away with everything else I was learning at the time.

After college, I moved to South Korea with my friend Penny, who had served a mission there. I didn’t even know where South Korea was, but I wanted some adventure before I settled into real life. In Korea, though Christianity is prevalent, Buddhism is still a major religion. I arrived just before Buddha’s birthday. Thousands of paper lanterns hung overhead in the temples; little children bowed in the glow of candles. This festival of lights served as an introduction to some actual rituals and practices of Buddhism.

Then I met and married a Korean, my first husband, Young Hoon Kwon, whose grandmother was a Buddhist, and that reli-

gion became infinitely more real and personal to me. Young Hoon was a baptized Christian when I met him, as was his immediate family. He joined the LDS Church before we were married. He didn't know much about his grandmother's religion but told me one story he had heard from her. She explained eternity to him like this: If there were a high mountain made of granite, and an angel came once every thousand years and stood briefly on the mountain, eternity is how long it would take for the mountain to wear away from the sweep of the angel's robe.

Grandmother was my ally from the beginning when most of Young Hoon's family were against our relationship. He was the oldest grandson and had a special place in her heart, but she was our advocate because of a dream Grandfather had on Young Hoon's first birthday.

He saw Young Hoon as a grown man standing in a forest with the four directions of the compass clearly marked—north, south, east, and west. A wind began to blow and a great fire roared from the west. Instead of trying to escape from it, Young Hoon ran toward it. Grandfather told Grandmother about that dream many times before he died when Young Hoon was twelve. She didn't understand what it meant, but when Young Hoon told Grandmother about me, a woman from the West, she saw it as fulfillment of Grandfather's dream and supported our marriage.

Grandfather was buried in Pusan, in a plot perched close to the top of a hill with a long vista, appropriately elevated for such an honored man who had served his family so well, a forward-thinking, hard-working, generous patriarch. Over his headstone was a small, wire arch at the center of which was a left-facing swastika. By that time, I was aware it had been a Buddhist symbol for millennia, though I still felt a jolt when I saw it since, in my culture, swastikas only represent evil.

We had stopped at the foot of the hill and bought flowers from a vendor. Grandmother sat on her haunches next to the grave, took the dead flowers out of the vase at the base of the headstone and tossed them aside. She handed the vase to Young Hoon and told him to get some water at the nearby spigot. She pulled some weeds from around the grave, and when Young Hoon returned,

she took a cloth from her bag, dipped it in the water, and carefully washed the dust and dirt from the headstone. She placed the fresh flowers in the vase and returned it to its spot.

Then she spread out a blanket next to Grandfather's grave and we all sat down. She opened a jar and poured a little rice wine into a glass, said something quietly, and then gently flung the contents out onto the grass at the foot of the grave. She took some cakes she had brought, broke them into pieces, and tossed them as well onto the surrounding vegetation.

She motioned for the groundskeeper, who had been standing nearby, to come over and gave him something to eat and drink. He accepted with a bow, both hands extended. After Grandmother had made her offerings, she motioned for Young Hoon to take over. He served Grandmother, then me, then himself. As a newly married foreigner, I could be forgiven for not knowing *I* should have been the one doing the serving. But I have since learned—always eldest first, always two hands. And so we sat at his grave and had a picnic with Grandfather, sharing our food and drink with the living and the dead.

Just before we left, Young Hoon knelt and touched his head to the ground three times and said something softly. I was so moved by the gesture that when my own father died a few years later back in Utah, I waited until everyone had left the cemetery, knelt at my father's grave, touched my head to the ground three times, and told him goodbye.

My actual "practicing" of Buddhist teachings did not come until much later. A couple of years ago, Valea, a friend in my Mormon ward asked if I wanted to do a meditation course with her at a Thai Buddhist temple in Federal Way, Washington. Who knew there was such a thing?

I have heard the word "meditate" used from a Mormon pulpit but not very often. "Ponder" is the more usual expression. We have the scripture, "Be still and know that I am God." And our own temples are wonderful places of worship, not least because they are quiet and peaceful. Though being still is scriptural, it was not part of my own upbringing. My mother used to quote

my great-grandmother who said, if idle for too long, “I’d better go do something even if it’s wrong.”

I was not completely unfamiliar with meditation when Valea asked if I wanted to join her, but it was not something I had done in a long time. I had taken a yoga class at Weber State where we meditated at the end of an hour of strenuous exercise. I sometimes experienced the heightened awareness of the mind with the utter relaxation of the body then.

The Buddhist temple was a lovely edifice tucked away on several acres of land with a pond and trees. Everyone greeted us with a bow, palms pressed together at the heart. The community included a handful of saffron-robed, shaved-headed monks, and people who supported them. The temple had a kitchen and dining area, a large hall with a statue of Buddha, and an altar around it at one end. The rest of the hall was for activities, even sporting a big-screen TV that seemed incongruous in that otherwise quiet refuge. A large meditation room stood separate from the hall and also contained a statue of Buddha with an altar. Windows looking out onto the woods surrounded the room. A library and classroom were downstairs as were the monks’ quarters, off-limits to others.

For several weeks, a visiting monk presented a lecture after which we meditated for an hour. He discussed the monkey mind that jumps from thought to thought. That certainly described the way I felt much of the time. He taught us to focus on the breath, even to count our breaths—one hundred times in and out takes about ten minutes. We sat on pillows on the floor. I wiggled and squirmed trying to find a comfortable position. When I did, I often fell asleep. I never had an epiphany or got into a sublime state of consciousness, though I did find being in the temple calming, relaxing, and interesting.

Once I went by myself in the evening when the monks gathered to chant. The big hall was darkened. Candles lit the altar at one end; the monks surrounded it cross-legged on the floor. I sat away from them by the entrance to the hall. One of the monks noted my presence when he came in to sit down. Nothing more. They began to chant. I also sat cross-legged on a pillow, hands palm up

on my thighs, eyes closed, trying to let go of the concerns of the day, letting the low vibrations of chanting wash over me.

Then something brushed against my knee. Fortunately, I didn't shriek, jarred back from relaxation to reality by a furry touch. It was the resident cat I'd seen walking around. Since it chose to be with me, I simply closed my eyes again. I could feel the cat pressed against my knee as I tried to focus. I sneaked a look and the silly thing was fast asleep on its back, all four feet in the air. I did not myself ever touch nirvana while meditating at the temple, but I think I saw another being that night that did.

At the meditation workshop, I was taught about calm abiding—patiently, quietly being in the moment. I believe this is the first Buddhist concept I really tried to practice, though incorporating it has not been easy. At the time of our workshop, I made a note on calm abiding in the margins of a book. My note says, “This is great if you're a monk. How do you do this with a family? How does this work in real life?” More than once at the Buddhist temple, my friend said, “I could be calm and peaceful too if there were someone to cook for me.” During this recent Hard Time, however, I've actually experienced the benefit of this principle.

I know you've all been there. You get the Bad News, whatever it is, and you know you're in for a really hard time. You know that mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, it's going to take more than you have to give, but it's going to take it anyway. You just have to get through it, and you probably have to shore up someone else as well. You have to keep it together to make phone calls and reservations and arrangements. You can't sleep and you can't eat because your mind races and your gut's tied in knots. You know how it is.

I know because I'm still kind of there, more some days than others. And one thing that has helped get me through is trying to abide calmly. Even just thinking the words “calm abiding” helps settle my emotions and my thoughts. Our meditation instructor called it “monkey mind.” I've heard it called “puppy mind.” For me, it's more like a big flock of birds flapping around and then finally settling on a wire, maybe being startled again and scattering, but after a few big breaths, settling once more. Calm abiding.

And for a few moments at least, I'm relieved of everything—all the pressure and sadness and worry and hurt—and it's just me in the moment. And the moment is doable. It's not bad. It just is.

Why don't I use my own Mormon religion to find solace, to pray or read the scriptures, or rely on the Spirit? I do. I pray. I've received priesthood blessings and know they have helped sustain me. I relied heavily on the ward I grew up in where we had the funeral. For whatever reason, I have also found comfort and peace from attempting to practice Buddhist teachings I have been studying such as this one.

I wonder if it isn't somehow a matter of familiarity. Maybe I have become so accustomed to Mormon doctrine that I don't hear it anymore, like the tick of a clock that ceases to register. Perhaps it is also because Mormonism is the practical framework of my family's life, and thus also the background for the difficulties of intimate relationship. In any case, calm abiding has been a significant source of consolation for me.

Mourning the dead is one kind of grief. Dealing with the living is another.

It would seem that death should draw a family together. That was certainly not the case with mine. A big part of the problem was differing views on what constituted honoring the dead. My brother had not been a churchgoer for some time, and my mother's desire to pretend he was and put on the happy face of the happy Mormon family felt like an insult to his memory. My sister believed that services are for the living and those are the ones whose wishes should be honored. I felt like a lot was expected of me but nothing was given back in return. Of course, there were years and years of layers to that, and it came to a head when we were all hurt and fragile.

Family comes with so much baggage. I found myself longing for the idealized relationship encapsulated in loaded words of expectation and responsibility like Love, Family, Mother, Sister. I felt desperate for the warmth and closeness of family—those who have known me my whole life, those who had known my brother, those who had mutual experience and memories and blood. At the same time, I felt repelled by their demands to meet their needs,

to be the strong one and take care of things. When the turmoil of those emotions threatened to overwhelm me, I again found comfort in Buddhist teachings.

Thích Nhất Hạnh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and prolific author, wrote in *The Energy of Prayer*, “Mindfulness is above all the capacity simply to recognize the presence of an object without taking sides, without judging, and without craving or despising that object.”¹ Without craving or despising.

In Christianity, we’ve got the commandment “Thou shalt not covet.” I’ve always thought of it as not being jealous of your neighbors’ stuff. But in Buddhist teachings, wanting *anything* greatly brings suffering as does despising, or *not* wanting anything greatly. With my family, I feel both of those things—a lot. I crave their love and approval. I resent their demands and insensitivities. They are intrinsically intertwined with my life. I live far away from them for a reason. Desire, disappointment, craving, aversion. If I could just let go of those feelings and accept my family for who they are, I would feel better. I would be relieved of my suffering. I can choose to let go of the burden of family baggage.

Again, these concepts are not foreign to Mormonism, but for whatever reason, I have been able to hear them better recently in Buddhist language. If I can yield to who and what my mother and sister are, neither craving their love nor feeling aversion toward their frailties, I will cease to suffer. Of course, Buddhism and Mormonism also teach that I need to move from simply worrying about my own suffering to having forgiveness and compassion for all beings—even my own family members. I’m working on it.



I met my good friend Mary when I lived in Korea. Raised Catholic, she is a true cosmopolite, having traveled the world, first with her military family and then on her own. We hit it off right away and have remained friends all these years. Mary met an American working for the US military, married him, and stayed in Korea, where she began studying Buddhism. I don’t know when the curiosity became commitment, but as we visited her in Korea over

the years, she often took us to see a Buddhist temple or ceremony. Once when it was again Buddha's birthday, we went with "Aunt" Mary, as my girls call her, to a celebration where the girls helped wash a statue of the baby Buddha.

Mary has become more ardent in her beliefs. She and her husband now live in Bellingham, Washington. She goes on retreats each year and has a teacher who guides her. She tried to explain what she believes to me and recommended I read something by the Dalai Lama. I picked up a book of his, *How to See Yourself As You Really Are*, and it introduced me to the other Buddhist concept that has aided in my spiritual growth. I don't claim to fully understand it, but here is how he puts it:

When you see that all . . . problems arise from a basic misunderstanding, you will want to get rid of such ignorance. The means to accomplish this is to reflect on reasoning that reveals the superimposition of a belief in inherent existence to be totally unfounded, and then to concentrate on the emptiness of inherent existence through meditation.²

"The emptiness of inherent existence"? He uses another word that I found easier to grasp: selflessness. *That* word I had heard before in my own religion. Technically, I think it is different, but the goal, I believe, is the same. He also uses "no self," and explains, "[T]here are wholes but their existence is set up in dependence upon their parts—they do not exist independently."³

We do not exist independently. I could understand that. When I read something by Thích Nhất Hạnh in his book *Going Home*, it helped me even more:

Non-self does not mean non-person or non-existing. Even though you are non-self, you continue to be a person with a body, with feelings, with perceptions, with mental formations, with consciousness. You continue to be a person, but a person without a separate self.

Is there anything that has a separate self? No. A tree that stands in the front yard does not have a separate self. Without the sunshine, without the clouds, without the air, without the minerals, a tree

cannot be there. A tree is made of non-tree elements. Because a tree has no separate existence, we say a tree has no self.⁴

The way I understand it is, if I am a part of everything, then everything is a part of me—the separateness of each individual is a false perception. My interpretation for my own purposes is this: each person I meet is actually a part of myself. If I hurt that person, or ignore, or judge, or look down on someone or something, I am doing it to myself.

This idea reminds me of something I heard on a bus at the airport. The driver was alert and courteous, letting pedestrians and other buses go ahead of him. Other bus drivers were doing the same. When a passenger commented on the behavior, he replied, “It’s self-serving. It keeps everything running smoothly. Otherwise, it would be chaos.” By being polite to others, he was helping himself.

I don’t believe that I am not an individual entity. The Mormon doctrine of eternal individuality is one I find most glorious. I certainly don’t understand all that the Dalai Lama or Thích Nhất Hạnh teach. But somehow, the concept that a beggar on the street is a part of me resonates with me and helps me *feel* what I do believe—that we are all connected as children of God. That, though we may be individuals, his hurt *is* my hurt and his happiness *is* my happiness. Seeing the doctrines through a Buddhist lens, however blurry they are, has helped me open my heart to the beings of the world in a way that makes me feel I am living my own religion more truly.

The influence on my own spiritual journey is one reason I believe studying Buddhism has been beneficial. I also hold fast to the Thirteenth Article of Faith where it says, “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”

It seems to me that Mormonism and Buddhism resonate in many ways: perpetual transformation, esteem for and care of ancestors, cause and effect in relation to blessings. There’s so much more I want to learn.

Though I am just a beginner regarding Buddhism, what I have discovered has sustained me in a hard time and helped me live my own religion more fully. I am a better person because of it, and I intend to continue holding the iron rod on the Eightfold Path.

Notes

Presented at the Northwest Sunstone Symposium, Bellevue, WA, November 23, 2013.

1. Thích Nhất Hạnh, *The Energy of Prayer: How to Deepen Your Spiritual Practice*, edited by Rachel Neumann (Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax, 2006), 117.

2. Dalai Lama XIV, *How to See Yourself as You Really Are*, translated and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins (London: Rider, 2007), 41.

3. Dalai Lama XIV, *How to See Yourself*, 61.

4. Thích Nhất Hạnh, *Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 19–20.



Page Turner
A Key Was Turned in Latter Days (detail)
Mixed media sculpture

Plenty
A Morning Poem at 75

Emma Lou Thayne

You do not have to do it again
any of it. Only if you care to.

You do not have to hold onto being anyone, anywhere.
Enough is more than plenty.

Soft winds and harsh
have ripened you, sent your breath echoing

ecstasy and despair. You have only
to let your fingers

tell you what you love;

Tracing an idea across a page,
putting a ball in flight.

spanning the back of a new born,
touching a beloved cheek,

finding a fit,
eschewing an alarm,

knowing when to let go
as the pages tear away.

Ireland, young mothering, a first of much
will not come again.

Sun of morning visible or not,

your intimate acquaintance with the Night
says only this, this private arrival

bears forever repeating
until there is no repeating at all.



The Rose Jar

Emma Lou Thayne

Musky as the cedar drawer
in Grandma's standing metal trunk,

a genie scent, improbable and
distant as the sound of hooves on sand

in some Arabian tale read by Father
in the hall between bedrooms to say goodnight.

Rose petals, five generations of fragile crinkles
once supple, fresh, pressed on at a precious time

into the four-inch cloisonné on pointed golden legs
fat as a Buddha tummy, bottled in

by a cloisonné hat with wobbly lifter,
an ancient pine cone of blackened silver.

Lift it, raise the smooth bowl with its infinite expertise
laid with tweezers into a miniature mozaic:

flowers rusty orange, circles and shields aged before aging
curls of gold small smaller smallest and red,

edging a sapphire river spilled into dusky green.
Watch. See the centuries of Chinese have their way.

Feel the careful hands that plucked each piece in place.
Raise the lid, bring the smooth round closer. Tiny gusts

of history waft the gatherings of births, graduations,
weddings, funerals, celebrations—one petal each,

pink, red, yellow, orange, crisping, sinking into petals
then to holy mash, salted into decades collecting

but never filling to the top the space, mysterious
space, defying definition, only wafting life

like some subtle, still surprising breath of God.

After the Wind

Erika Anderson

In the early morning hours of June 7, 2008, many Vigo County residents awoke to raging floodwaters in their homes. Some escaped with their lives and little else. All suffered catastrophic loss. . . .—Jane E. Hunt, *Tribune Star* (Terre Haute, Indiana), August 6, 2008

God was not in the wind
and not in the earthquake.
God was not in the fire,
nor in the heavy rain
when levees breached as easily as living room walls.

But after the flood, came one thousand
yellow T-shirts, with two thousand
unskilled hands. They
raked the wreckage from our hair,
piece by unsalvageable piece,
carted soggy loads of memories to the curb.
Then they tore up the floor,
tore down the water-logged walls.
Beside the gutted skeleton:
an unbalanced, moldy pile of life as we knew it.

And God was in the trash heap.

Even Manna

S. P. Bailey

Even manna stops tasting sweet
after so many plates
I said to the Christmas ham,
endlessly succulent,
cold ceramic tile under my bare feet.
The ham stared back at me,
stark in refrigerator light,
oblivious to the lull between holidays
we both occupied.
To twist a carving knife
bathed in honey and salt
in my side,
the ham reminded me of
my famished ancestors crossing the plains.
A pack of gingham-clad
widows of Zarephath
carefully forming the last of their flour
into a simple cake.
Certainly, I said to nobody,
pioneer men proud of their kills
wished some buffalo were
not quite so big.
Certainly there were times
they said silent prayers of thanks
for the brevity of a duck.
For them,
I fix myself a plate of buffalo
for the fifth consecutive meal.
And I pray over my leftovers

but do not ask for fish and loaves
multiplication.
No, but for simple gratitude.
For the ability to appreciate this cup
that keeps spilling all over
my immaculate kitchen floor.



What Kind of Monster

S. P. Bailey

What kind of monster spits a wad of gum in a urinal?
Blue. Brain-folded.
Pregnant with identifying evidence.
DNA. Marks from teeth
that will long outlast the flesh.
Because a yellow rubber glove with a hand inside
with the hand of an eternal spirit inside of both
will have to fish that out of there.
And scrub the whole thing down,
porcelain and chrome,
with a green sponge and
the spray-bottle mist of
chemicals known to cause central nervous system defects
if used without proper ventilation.
My mom wasn't embarrassed by the thought of me,
sixteen, walking around in no-name shoes,
or denim with a counterfeit stitch-pattern
across the back pockets,
or working crappy jobs.
I located the origin, formerly a mystery to me,
of money. I mowed lawns and pulled weeds.

I harvested sweet corn and onions and radishes.
I washed dishes and operated a deli slicer.
I was a sad narcissus in a hairnet
contemplating my reflection
in a razor-sharp disk of stainless steel
between slices of black forest ham.
And I scrubbed countless elementary school toilets.
Chris, the head janitor, had some disabilities.
But he wasn't blind
to student mockery or teacher patronage or my half-assed work.
He taught me something.
He wasn't literally Jesus,
but he was meek and lowly
and he descended below a few things,
with a vacuum and a brown rag
and a set of keys on a retractable chain.
To make people feel safe and loved
by emptying the trash cans
and stocking the bathroom dispensers
—gritty pink powdered hand soap;
coarse brown paper towels—
and by fishing wads of gum out of urinals.

The Lost Chapters of Moroni

Clifton Holt Jolley

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go. . . . — Moroni 10:34

MORONI 11

Zarahemla, the eternal city, is dust; as is everything that was.
In vision I see the world that comes: polio, lupus, Holocaust.
Disaster and diaspora are at once preamble and epitaph
to the good and careless God who makes me to wander and to fast
on unleavened hope to bury this last burden and be done.
The miracle is my evidence of thee: Urim, Thummim, Liahona

and dream of understanding everything. My affliction: your silence.
My proof: the possible rushing of your robes as the sky fills
with your invisible passing—or wind among last winter's leaves—
and scent of roses as you leave. I reconsider all I've written.
You turn my memories to salt. I reach to Thee in each communion
of soon buried faith and forgetfulness of long vanished community.

Received from you: devastation and commandment to continue,
the vastness of your arbitrary will, too great for one to comprehend
who already was lost before the world began and soon will be again.
None of which I've written in your book, knowing you can blot me
as I would a word or scratch a sentence of me from these plates
were I to mention this consequence of my mission: to be gone.

None remain to stand between me and the end of time but you:
too far away, imaginary, a whisper. As God, to whom I now turn

ritually, disbelieving the silence of your reply, hopeless of Divinity who saved none of mine. Out of time or temper, now resigned, faithfully amanuensis to your last commandment of my last of life, I keep the faith, I write upon the golden pages of your book.

I trust thee, without whom none are left still not to be discovered.

MORONI 12

In ways too numerous to number
the ones we love encumber
us. You may think me unkind,
especially if you are blinded
by being young, as I was

and—not much having loved—
took up the stylus and employment,
covenanting to be your witness,
not knowing how long witnessing
and worry can go on. Once, I had a dog,

now decades past. He died. As have my
father, mother, and others I loved
as much, never again for me to touch
or see across a table in that narrow neck of sun
now darkened by the pit this work has dug.

So, don't speak to me of love enduring
when I have such examples otherwise inuring
with every chapter I transcribe
and woe and worry that before I die
I'll disbelieve in what The Book testifies.

I'm sick to heart of living long and lastly
to be your witness of such catastrophe

as you relentlessly repeat, regardlessly
as baking or latching up your shoes. No!
You, who think believing is simply saying so:

Thrust your hand into my side. Feel these prints.
Taste my blood and know: I no longer will atone.

Jesus Sakura

Sarah Page

It's only after *hanami*,
Season of cherry blossom-viewing,
That I meet Christ in Fukuoka
As all the petals are leaving,
He startles me in every spent sakura—

Castaway pink and star-flushed
Flowers spiraling freely faraway,
Frail slants trodden into cement
Puddled, soiled and rainless
Tears luminous without count.

These tossed leaps of hue grace drab
Ditch, grate, and trash-banked canal
With transient jewels whose after-image
Still glows behind my corneas
Long after remnant form has gone.

My Savior, my Sakura—
I would learn to let you
Grace me, too.



Page Turner
As Sisters in Zion (detail)
Mixed media sculpture

Fast Offering

William Morris

Welden Shumway wasn't so much scandalized when Brother B left his wife and took up with a young gentile woman as he was confused. Why would a priesthood holder ignore his covenants like that? Welden had asked his parents, but they had look embarrassed and said something about the seven-year itch and mid-life crisis and had quickly assured him that their marriage was as strong as the rock the wise man built his house upon, and that he needn't worry about them getting a divorce even though they sometimes fought. So Welden was left to puzzle out his own answer.

Brother B was what Grandpa Twitchell called a "dynamic individual." He was, or had been until taking up with the gentile woman, the most popular seminary teacher at the high school. He was always getting mentioned over the pulpit at missionary farewells and presenting at firesides. Welden had mainly avoided him. There was something about Brother B's personality that repelled him. He wasn't fake, but he also wasn't ever comfortable to be around. It's as if he were a magnet that needed to pull people to him. He seemed to enjoy having a crowd. Welden didn't much like crowds.

As Welden thought over the situation, he decided that Brother B's problem was that he was a man of charisma. King David had been a man of charisma and so had his son King Solomon. And look at what had happened to them. President Reagan was a man of charisma, so it wasn't always a bad thing to be. But Welden was pretty sure that Nancy was his second wife. He'd have to check his collection of *Time* magazines to be sure.

Charisma was a dangerous thing for a man. If not kept under control, it led to priestcraft and unrighteous dominion, and, Welden was now certain, adultery.

This realization came as a relief to Welden, who was now thirteen and, even more than a year after being ordained was still bound and determined to keep the oath and covenant of the priesthood. It was a relief because, even though he secretly thought that he cut a fine figure in the gray, pin-striped three-piece suit his mom had ordered for him, he knew that, like his dad, he was not a man of charisma. But he was still fascinated by those who were. And the women they attracted.



In fact, he was curious enough that when the first Sunday in May rolled around, he quickly volunteered to take over one of the fast offering routes that was open because several families in the ward had decided to go spring camping up on Cedar Mountain. So, while the other deacons grumbled about having to pick up the routes of vacationing quorum members, Welden snagged the one that would take him to where Brother B was now living. He shuffled through the collection envelopes quickly. Brother B's name wasn't on any of them. Welden thought about asking if one needed to be made for him, but thought better of it since he didn't want to specifically be told to stay away from the place. Instead, he took one of the worn envelopes from his normal route, asked for a fresh one, and then didn't toss the old one. When he got home from church, he crossed out the old name with a black marker and wrote "Brent Brinkerhoff" on the next line. He did his normal route and the one he was filling in for, returned those envelopes, and then informed his parents that he had forgotten about one and that they didn't need to worry about driving him—he'd take his bike.

He rode his purple banana seater slowly along the gravel to the side of the road, careful to not veer off into the soft pink sand, which was pocked with perfectly symmetrical, concave doodlebug traps. When he was younger, he had enjoyed faking out the doodlebugs by rolling a small pebble down the edge of

the crater, hoping to catch a peek of the bug that lurked at the bottom. But afterward, he had observed a red ant actually fall prey to the trap, wandering too close to the edge of the crater, which gave way. The more the ant struggled, the faster it slid, the fine grains of pink sand working their peculiar physics, the doodlebug's jaws snapping around the ant's thorax, almost slicing it in half. Well, after that Welden left the doodlebugs alone. Any enemies of the red ants were friends of his.

As he rode, Welden pondered why the town had been so fascinated by Brother B's actions. Saints shouldn't gossip, but today, while they had been waiting for their Sunday School teacher, Lindsey had said it wasn't gossip to talk about it because everybody already knew what had happened. The girls had then proceeded to condemn Brother B for leaving his wife, to sympathize with him because no one liked Sister Brinkerhoff very much, and to proclaim that the other woman was very pretty. They said all that in a way that Welden couldn't tell whose side they were on and if they scorned or envied the gentile woman.

Maybe the reason the girls wouldn't stop talking about it had something to do with that charisma again. Things like this didn't happen in Kanab. Maybe they did among the gentiles and Jack Mormons, but there weren't many of them and they tended to keep quiet about it. And sure, things like this probably happened all the time up north, even among active members. But all kinds of things happened up north: divorces, drugs, bankruptcies.

Welden stopped his bike for a moment and glanced up at the red canyon walls. When they hiked the canyon, his friend Brandon liked to pretend they were astronauts on Mars, but Welden could never see the landscape as anything but home. Mars was up in the sky; the red rocks and dirt, the olive sagebrush, the green cottonwoods surrounded him here. They were just as much a part of this corner of Zion as he and his family were. But, he had to admit, sometimes the people seemed alien to him. Brother B definitely fell into the alien category.

He turned into the short gravel cul-de-sac that jutted off 100 North. There were four shabby houses on the road. All small. All without big front yards. All crowded near the road. The house

he was looking for was at the very end. It was a downgrade from the well-maintained two-story Victorian Brother B had lived in with his wife. Welden found it strange that Brother B was living only eight blocks from where he had been. Welden had always imagined that people who shackled up together did so in the trailer park down by the creek if they didn't have money or in the development south of town if they did.

When he got off his bike, Welden noticed that the pant legs of his gray, pinstriped suit had gotten dusty. He brushed them off as best he could, but some of the fine pink sand had settled in. His mother was not going to be happy. He straightened his burgundy paisley tie and sprang up the steps. The penultimate step creaked so much he was afraid it was going to break under him, so he jumped up onto the porch and landed with a thud much louder than expected. He decided that since he had already announced himself, he should ring the doorbell. There wasn't one, so he rapped his knuckles on the frame of the worn aluminum screen door. The effect was more a rattle than a knock, but he figured he'd been loud enough that if someone were at home, they'd at least peek out the window and see him and maybe open the door. After all, who turned away a young man in a suit?

There were sounds within the far part of the house and then steps. He swallowed as they got closer, and then the inner door swung open, and he found himself almost face-to-face with Brother B's gentile woman, separated only by the torn and patched mesh of the screen door.

He wasn't sure what he'd been expecting, but she was less *People* magazine pretty than Sears catalog pretty. Definitely prettier than Sister Brinkerhoff, and she seemed to have a nice figure beneath the faded sweatshirt with the unicorn on it and the ripped jeans, which were tight enough that he could hear his mother clucking at them in the back of his head. Her hair was a loose tangle and she had wrinkles at the corner of her eyes. But she set his heart beating faster still the same—just like it did when he was around Lindsey and Kimberly and some of the other Beehives and Mia Maids in the stake. When she smiled and said in a soft voice, “Hello. Can I help you?” he stared at the door mat. It

said “Come In Or Stay Out!” and since he didn’t want either choice, he found the courage to get right to the point.

“Hello. My name is Welden Shumway. I’m from the ward. The Third Ward. I’m not the normal deacon who has this route. I’m filling in because Levi’s off camping and, anyway, I’m here with the fast offering envelope so that you can help out the poor of the ward and such.”

He looked up at her face in time to catch her raising her eyebrows and noticed that she had kind eyes, which he hadn’t expected. They were gray and brown and not really striking and vivid like a Brooke Shields or Marie Osmond, but they were exactly the right size for her face, and he smiled at her.

“If this is something for Brent, I’m afraid he’s not here right now,” she said.

He nodded. Seeing her was half of what he had planned; now he was uncertain how to proceed. It wouldn’t be right for her to invite him in, her being alone in the house. He could offer to come back, but that seemed complicated, and yet he didn’t particularly want to just ride away like a doofus. He had gone to the trouble of preparing the envelope, and it wouldn’t feel right to toss it.

“Would you mind giving this to him when he comes back?” He slipped the envelope through a gap in the screen door. Valerie took it from him.



Valerie hadn’t wanted to take it, but it seemed the easiest thing to do. She had a vague sense of what it was, equated it in her mind with the passing of the basket in a normal Christian church, but she was unclear on why it was personally delivered by the young man currently standing on her porch in a cheap polyester suit, sweating in the warm May sun, although she liked his funky tie and the shy-but-wry smile he was willing to give her through the screen door. She thought about inviting him in but had nothing nice to serve but bourbon or Coke, and she knew neither of those would go over well. Her mom, overdue for a sponge bath, was groaning in the back bedroom, and there was

no telling when Brent would be back from Glendale. So she took it and said, “Thanks.”

He stood there staring at her through the battered screen door as if he was expecting something else. She couldn’t imagine what, yet a familiar feeling began to build inside. Mormons were always pretending to walk on eggshells around you, always silently expecting something of you. At first it seemed like they were being respectful and nice, but before long it just became annoying because they seemed to think that their stepping lightly was some real obvious signal. But you never knew exactly what they meant, and they never had the balls to just up and tell you what they wanted from you so you could either get with the program or tell them to go to hell—come in or stay out. She didn’t want to turn all those old feelings on the boy, so she smiled, wished him a great day, and walked away from the door. She didn’t close it because that would have been rude, so she heard his muttered, “Thank you, ma’am. Have a good one yourself!” and then heard him shamble down the steps.

She watched the boy ride away on his ridiculous purple bike and couldn’t help but admire the fact that he was riding a bike in a suit and had done his duty and delivered the envelope thing. After all, they had both braced themselves for intrusion after intrusion. Brent had been such a pillar of the community that it seemed likely that the campaign to pry him back would be intense. But none had come. Only the boy. Maybe the adults thought adultery was catching. She laughed, wished Brent was there to share the joke.

Her mom moaned again. She glanced down at the envelope. Brent’s name was written in pencil on it below what looked like a different name crossed out with a sharpie. Apparently the Mormons were thrifty even when they asked for money. She tossed it onto her dresser on her way to fill the bucket so she could bathe her mom.



Brent didn’t get back until the following Saturday. He called once from a supply run to Glendale but couldn’t talk long. More

crews had been brought in as the forest fire had spread, but it was early in the season and since no other caterers had arrived, his team was cooking for everybody on site. He arrived smoky and sunburned. She made him shower, although he insisted on saying hello to her mom first and telling her about how the fire had finally been brought under control, then she fed him french fries and a pork chop. He was grateful, said he was sick of all his meals being leftover eggs and pancakes. She apologized for the lack of a salad, but he said that once he got paid, there'd be plenty of money for salad and fresh food. She wanted to say that she wasn't sorry that they didn't have money to buy salad, only that she was sorry that she hadn't thought to buy at least a head of iceberg because she knew he liked salad with his dinner. She didn't say it because she knew he wouldn't hear it right. He was so worried about money, even though between her mom's disability and what she made cleaning motels part-time, they would be okay. But she knew that he wanted more for them and worried what would happen if he wasn't able to find a permanent job soon, since that was the main thing she was scared would come between them. Not so much some wounded manly pride not like the boyfriends that straggled through during her time in Vegas, cute guys who didn't contribute much but you didn't need to make much of an effort for. God, what a disappointment and relief it had been when her mom had needed her to move back to Kanab even if it was hard taking care of her while also working at the motel.

But she knew that even if he had said that they would be just fine and had reiterated that leaving his house and savings to his wife was the right thing to do, she was very aware that he wasn't used to living poorly like she did—seriously poor, not teacher poor. She worried that might wear away at him and damage the intense connection they had. Yet he was a smart, charming, hardworking guy, and though teaching religion to teenagers didn't exactly suit you for any other type of career, she had to believe that there would be something for him out there even though times were tough. And then her mind wandered to the envelope on the dresser.

She'd wait to mention it to him. She'd talked it over with Mom just to be clear. But the envelope had triggered memories from her childhood. A knock at the door. Strangers on the porch. Cans that always had a beehive on them but never contained honey. A turkey. Sometimes a chicken. Fresh rolls. And sometimes some sort of sheet cake. She couldn't remember when that all had started or when and why it had stopped, and Mom didn't want to talk about it, but she was happy to remember the food itself. Mom was like that now, wanting only to talk about food in vivid detail and the political situation in bland generalities and sports in grand pronouncements. But the details from her mom were enough to bring the vague memory into slightly more focus.



She brought it up later as they lay naked in bed, legs intertwined. He had backed his upper half away from her so that he could better gaze at her nudity. She loved his fascination with all of her parts. And that it went beyond her breasts, which were still pretty great, drooped just a bit, but did not yet sag, and then she had that familiar mini-panic attack: what if he only wanted her for her body? What if in the end he was no different from the guys she had met in Vegas. But no. The sex was just a bonus. They had come together because they were both broken in ways that complemented each other. Both lonely people who had been silently crying out for someone who understood that loneliness. Someone to join forces with. Someone you could be yourself with. Someone to stand hand-in-hand with, backs turned against the prying, judgmental eyes of the rest of the world.

And maybe that had been the problem with that wife of his. She was too self-contained. Brent had said that he had never felt like she had really needed him, and with no children, they hadn't had something to need together. He admitted it had been a mistake to turn that wish to be needed onto his students. He'd done good work, of course, but his heart had only been in it because he hadn't yet known that what he had been looking for was her.

Of course, maybe Carol was cracked open and broken now. That thought hurt a bit but was nothing compared to how right it was being with him—how right they were together.

“A young man stopped by last Sunday,” she said.

“Oh?”

“He had an envelope for you. He said it was for an offering.”

Brent rolled his eyes and shifted in the bed causing the sheets to brush across her butt and thighs. The high thread count sheets were the one luxury they had. She wasn’t sure where Brent had bought them. She had always been fine with plain old cotton sheets from Wards, but now she’d only be satisfied with the high thread count kind.

“I put a twenty in,” she said. “But I didn’t know how to fill out the form or what to do with it. Does the boy come back the next Sunday and pick it up?”

He sighed and rubbed his face. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I told them not to bother us. I’ll find out what happened and repeat my request in a more forceful way.”

“No,” she said. He looked surprised at that. “I mean, yeah, tell them not to bother us, but I want you to give them the money. Your people helped me and Mom out a few times.”

“You don’t have to pay that back. There’s no debt there,” he said. “I recommend just letting it go. It was nice that you got the help, but it was freely offered, and you don’t need to give it a second thought.”

She bit her lower lip. She hadn’t thought about it in that way. It bothered her that he had said that she thought it was a debt. But maybe that’s how she felt deep inside. That there was a debt and that paying it back would create even more separation. Rid themselves of any ties at all to the Mormons. Of course, that wasn’t really possible. Not in a town like Kanab. And she didn’t think that there was any hidden motivation. She just wanted to acknowledge their help and give them something with which to help someone else. It was just an offering. No need to make it more complicated than that. She said as much. He nodded. One thing she liked about him was that he really listened to her.

Heard what she was saying and seemed to actually process it. “That makes sense,” he said, “and is very thoughtful. We can’t really afford it, but then again, we could be a lot worse off, and the Glendale gig helped a lot.”

He kissed her on the forehead.

She tweaked his nose.

“Okay,” he said. “Where is it?”



Brent had never expected he’d be holding a fast offering envelope while standing naked in front of a dresser in the bedroom of his girlfriend. He was irritated that the ward had found a way to worm itself into their space. Not that he had turned his back on Mormonism. Or: he had, but only because he had found something better. Or maybe not better, but what he needed. He just hadn’t known that he had needed it even though he and Carol hadn’t needed each other for years. Not really. Being the childless couple always willing to show up and pitch in at every meeting, activity, service project, crisis—always there with a hand, a shoulder, a smile, a word, a sympathetic ear—it had seemed fine for awhile. A noble way of accepting God’s will. Their family would form in the next life. For now their family was their ward and stake. But he had grown weary of their only intimacy being the sharing of intimate moments they had had with others. Young Sister Mason had another miscarriage. Michelle’s father had taken her out of school. The Chamberlains were behind on their rent. Jason got caught drinking a beer. Sister Gibbs was found wandering the streets again. And he had grown frustrated that their only plans had become what they were going to do to help remedy the situations they became privy to. He had his kids; she had her widows and young mothers. That kept them busy.

And it’s not as if he had started out with intent in his heart. He had heard about Valerie and her mom’s struggles once or twice, but his formal calling and job had always been with the youth of the church, and he had always assumed the Relief Society sisters would have seen to their needs if they had been

dire and help had been welcome. Carol had never mentioned them, but she'd always had so many other people to talk about. That was the thing, wasn't it? You took care of your own first, and there was always so much need just among the members that the non-members only got attention at the holidays and in extreme cases.

And then he and Val had run into each other at Ace Hardware. There was no way she was going to be able to install the grab bars herself, not with tile involved. And so he had offered to help. And her weary, hesitant, perfect smile had peeled away all the crud his soul had accumulated. He had seen his and Carol's frantic good works for what they really were: wonderful, Christ-like actions to be sure, but they had thought they had been patching all the holes in people's lives when they had actually been trying to fill the deep canyon between the two of them. From there, it had all been inevitable. Not the grace he had been looking for, but it was the grace that had been given him.

He knew they all thought him a hypocrite. He didn't feel that way, though he missed the young people. He missed their awkward yearnings, fumbling grasping to hold on to the dreams of their parents, things said in baby blessings and ordinations and family home evenings, while still reaching out for what they wanted. Or thought they wanted, what their bodies wanted, not so much carnal satiation (although there was always that) as a sense of their own self, of some autonomy. He missed them, but everything he had told them was still true, and he was still true to it even if the way he lived that truth had turned unorthodox.

And who knew what the future held? They were in a holding pattern at least until the divorce went through and likely until her mom died. But after that, a change of location might change things for them financially and maybe even spiritually. For now, though, he had no interest in re-engaging with the Third Ward and the people in it—to be expected to wither beneath their self-righteousness—and so he changed his mind. He decided that it wasn't strange to hold a fast offering envelope while standing naked in the room of his girlfriend. It was awesome. And to

return it with her name on it? Awesomer. Not because he wanted to tweak Bishop Gibbs, but because this act of kindness was so in character for Valerie. Made him love her even more.

“Brent,” she said. “Do you need a pen?”

“Yes,” he said. “I do.”



They talked about how to return the offering. Brent figured he'd just put it in an envelope and mail it, but Valerie insisted on returning it to the boy who had dropped it off. She said that he was the only one who had had the courage to darken their doorway so he should be the one to take the money. Her description of the deacon, or possibly teacher, in question didn't match up with either of the Rasmussen boys, who usually took the southern part of the ward. But then Brent figured out that it must be Lawrence's boy Welden pinch-hitting. This made him hesitate. Welden was a good kid. A little too shy, a little too smart for his own good, but a good kid. His dad was a good man. But he and Lawrence had never gotten along. He had always had the feeling that Lawrence didn't approve of the way Brent had been so involved in the lives of the youth. Once after a stake youth fireside, Brent had helped Shonna Russo and Vance Pugh with some relationship difficulties they were having. A few minutes later, while they were putting away chairs in the cultural hall, he had told Lawrence of the evening's near-miss drama, and Lawrence had said that it would have been better if they had broken up since they were only sophomores.

“There's no reason that kind of thing needs to be encouraged,” Lawrence had said.

Brent had explained that he hadn't encouraged anything that hadn't already existed and that it was healthier for Shonna and Vance to work things out, that the last thing they needed was to be disapproved of because that just led to them either seeking out unhealthier relationships or taking their own in an unhealthy direction.

Lawrence had replied that you can't expect children to have healthy romantic relationships. And Brent had said that a lot

of people don't have healthy romantic relationships so that if there's the possibility that this could grow into one, it shouldn't be discouraged as long as the two keep themselves temple worthy. Lawrence hadn't said anything after that. He'd just kept on folding and stacking chairs.

Brent saw that conversation in a different light now. Maybe Lawrence did too.

So was that why there was a fast offering envelope for him? He'd made it quite clear that he wanted no contact with the Church for the moment. Maybe it was a passive-aggressive message from Lawrence or even Bishop Gibbs. . . . But whatever. Val wanted it returned. He would swallow his pride to make his woman happy.

He called Sunday morning when he knew the Shumways would be at church and left a message telling Welden that Valerie had decided she wanted to make a fast offering donation. He could pick it up anytime that afternoon.



They were watching football in the back room with Mom when they heard banging on the screen door.

Val made him grab the envelope from the dresser and go answer the door, although once Welden and his father were inside, she glided out from the hallway and hovered just behind him. Brent wanted to reach out a hand and pull her forward, but he and Lawrence were already standing in classic showdown stance, alert, wary, waiting for the other to make a move.

"Well," he said. "Thanks for coming."

"Yes," Valerie said. "Thanks, Welden. You stopping buy with the envelope reminded me that my mom and I received some help from the church back when I was a teenager, and I decided that I wanted other people to get some help just like we did."

"Yep, it was all her idea," Brent said, making sure he looked Lawrence in the eyes as he said the last two words. "Okay. Here's the envelope." He held out the hand with the envelope in it to Welden.

Welden stepped forward to take it, but then withdrew after a look from his father. "First, Welden has something to say," Lawrence said.

Welden glanced at Lawrence and then at Brent and then at Val. He kept his eyes on her as he said, "I'm sorry to have bothered you. I shouldn't have done it, and I know it wasn't a nice thing to do."

"Wait a second," Brent said, even though he had promised Val that he would not make things awkward. "The boy doesn't need to apologize for being bold and extending an opportunity to help the poor and needy."

"He shouldn't have done it," Lawrence replied, his lips thin with anger or annoyance.

Brent wanted to ask Welden why he had brought the envelope, but he knew young teenage boys and knew that even with Welden he'd get a shrug of the shoulders and a "dunno."

"Maybe so. Maybe so," Brent said. "But he did. And Valerie just explained why that turned out to be a good thing." He glanced back at her. She was smiling, her eyes bright.

Brent held out the envelope to Welden again.

Lawrence angled in front of his son, his hand extended. "I'll handle it for you," he said. "This offering is a special case, and so it's not in Welden's priesthood stewardship."

Brent felt Valerie tense up behind him. He felt a twinge of desire to object, blow up the whole scene, but he knew that feeling was just because he hadn't been around adolescent drama in awhile. Back when he had been Brother B, he'd always been the one the drama got directed to. The other seminary teachers and youth leaders had always looked to him to smooth down ruffled feathers, balm hurt feelings, reprimand misbehavior and discourtesy. There was part of him that knew that he was good at it, that was proud of how he could help the youth through all their tempestuous flare-ups, and there was a part of him that was happy to be free of it all, that yearned for something different. And there was a part of him, the deepest part of him, that missed it all in a way that wasn't healthy, that missed being the center of the maelstrom of hormones and hurt. He missed it but was so grateful that Valerie had saved him from it, and he hoped Carol would find her way to whatever it was she needed to get to a healthier place in her life.

Valerie stepped up next to Brent and took his empty hand in hers. “Welden was kind enough to drop it off,” she said. “I’d like it if he could take it to your bishop himself.”

Lawrence looked at Welden. It was a look Brent had seen many times before. The ever-shifting calculus of parental authority and teenage agency.

“Go ahead, Welden,” Lawrence said, nodding in the direction of his own outstretched hand. Brent fought off a smile. Valerie leaned into him.

The envelope edged from his hand into Welden’s.



On the car ride over to Bishop Gibbs’s house, Welden unwound and rewound the tie that held the fast offering envelope closed. He still thought Brother B was wrong to have done what he did, but he was confused by the fact that something in Brother B had changed. Something that made Welden like him more. He had turned his charisma magnet down or something.

The car came to a stop along the side of the road.

“We’re here, Welden,” his dad said.

Welden looked up. Bishop Gibbs’s driveway was full of cars.

“Be quick about it, Welden. It looks like Bishop has company. You just need to give it to him. I already called and talked to him about the situation before we picked it up.”

Welden nodded. “Dad,” he said, “I was just thinking about Brother B and his—the woman he is living with now. It was nice of her to want to give a fast offering.”

“It was.”

“That’s the principle of the harvest in action.”

“What’s that?”

“She and her mom received help from the Church even though they weren’t members. Then years later she is given the opportunity to help others, and she chooses to do so. The seeds that were planted with her were finally ready to be harvested.”

“That’s a good point, Welden.”

“Well, it’s a start.” Welden had his hand on the door handle now, cracked it open just a bit. “I know you’re mad that I did

that, and you're right that I should have said something to you and Mom first, but I just felt like I should do something, especially since all the girls are very upset about Brother B. Plus I was curious to see them. But I'm glad I did because even though she is an adulteress, she obviously has a good heart. She just wasn't raised with the light of the gospel."

"Welden," he put a hand on his shoulder. "Please don't call her that. Her name is Miss Adams."

Welden bit his lip. "Yeah, I guess that's not a good thing to call her, even if it's true. But if I see her around, I'm going to call her Sister Adams. Even if she hasn't been baptized yet, she's still our sister, right, Dad?"

"Yes, Welden. That's true."

"Good."

Welden hopped out the car. Stepping carefully around the doodlebug traps, he made his way along the pink sand and up the driveway to the bishop's house to deliver Valerie's offering.



Page Turner
Beautiful Zion, Built Above (detail)
Mixed media sculpture



Page Turner
Spirit of God like a Fire is Burning (detail)
Mixed media sculpture

Liberalism and the American Mormon: Three Takes

David E. Campbell, John C. Green, and J. Quin Monson. *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics*. New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 294 pp. Paperback: \$29.99. ISBN: 978-1-107-66267-4.

Richard Davis. *The Liberal Soul: Applying the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Politics*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014. 198 pp. Paperback: \$22.95. ISBN: 978-1-58958-583-6.

Terryl and Fiona Givens. *The Crucible of Doubt: Reflections on the Quest for Faith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014. 168 pp. Hardback: \$19.99. ISBN: 978-1-60907-942-0.

Reviewed by Russell Arben Fox

The term “liberalism” with all its rhetorical permutations—self-identifying as a “liberal,” defending principles of “liberty,” showing “liberality” in one’s interactions with others, etc.—is a contested concept in America. It’s both an adjective and a noun. It has been associated with a philosophical claim, a mental condition, an epithet, and more. Arguments over liberalism’s meaning and implications have a long history: President Herbert Hoover and his challenger, Franklin D. Roosevelt, argued over which of them advocated “true”—as opposed to “false”—liberalism during the presidential election of 1932, over eighty years ago. In the years since the civil rights heyday of the 1950s and ’60s, and particularly ever since the rise of cultural conflicts over class, sexuality, and religion in the 1970s and ’80s, a term that once primarily referenced individual rights, liberties, and tolerance has gotten tied up with claims about truth, morality, welfare, government, race, gender, social norms, citizenship, and much more. It makes, to say the least, for a pretty complicated intellectual package.

This complication, though, is perhaps of even more concern for Mormons in America, at least for those who feel obliged to pay special attention to statements made by General Authorities of the LDS Church. The fact that Church presidents Harold B. Lee and Ezra Taft Benson, among other leaders, publicly insisted that there was no possible overlap between being a faithful member of the Church and holding to “liberal” ideas keeps the term in contested territory. True, those statements are almost all more than thirty years old, and it might be easy to attribute them to a generation of leaders who spoke in reference to social conditions within and without the American church that no longer exists. But any lifelong member of the Church knows better than that, I think. Probably the simplest functional definition of modern American liberalism is that it is a set of ideas that both embraces and seeks to extend individual choice, diversity, and equality—and consequently, those who agree with those ideas may face serious challenges when their church officially adopts, as it has in many recent political and cultural arguments, a stance in defense of “tradition,” “authority,” “community,” “morality,” and other positions often easily interpreted as anti-liberal. For all these reasons and more, being a Mormon liberal can be hard.

The three books discussed in this review all have something to say about that hardness. They do so through very different methodological approaches and have very different audiences in mind. *Seeking the Promised Land* is a work of social science exploring political perceptions of Mormons and about Mormonism in modern liberal America; it is designed to speak to scholars and students of America’s pluralistic religious and political landscape, whether Mormon or not. *The Liberal Soul* is a book of popular advocacy, harnessing arguments of both social science and scripture to make a case for the moral legitimacy of liberal political positions, and clearly aims to persuade intelligent lay Mormon readers (especially those living in overwhelmingly Republican Utah) to give liberal political ideas a chance. And *The Crucible of Doubt* is a work of scriptural exploration and pastoral advice that hardly ever even mentions the word “liberal,” yet comes

to conclusions that echo the writings of such great (or perhaps notorious) twentieth-century Mormon liberals as Hugh B. Brown, Lowell Bennion, and Eugene England. Despite all these differences, there *is* an important overlap between them in the way they help us better understand just what liberalism can mean for American Mormons today. Given how thoroughly liberalism—whether thought of in terms of one’s political priorities, philosophical perspective, or simply personality—dominates life in twenty-first-century America, that composite understanding is both valuable and very much needed.



Seeking the Promised Land is a superb and engaging work of social science. David Campbell, John Green, and Quin Monson use numerous recent surveys conducted by themselves and by such organizations as the Pew Research Center and Gallup to produce a detailed and revealing look at the political preferences and peculiarities of American members of the LDS Church. While some of the information the authors make use of has already been covered in *American Grace* (a blockbuster in the sociology of religion in America that Campbell co-authored with Robert Putnam), here that information is packaged alongside numerous historical observations and other scholarly insights, resulting in something that stands entirely on its own. Of course, as with any academic study that depends largely upon survey research and the self-reporting of those interviewed, the compiled results need to be recognized for what they are: namely, the best conclusions that correlational and regression analysis allow. Still, it’s fair to say that this book by Campbell and Monson (who are both LDS) and Green (who is not) will become a starting point for all serious conversations about American Mormons and politics from here on out.

The primary claim of the research reported in the book is that American Mormons have, to a significant if not an absolute degree, resisted the ideological sorting that has characterized the political journey taken by other white Christians in America’s

liberal democracy. (By way of contrast, the voting patterns of African-American Christians have followed a very distinct partisan path.) Mormons thus maintain a level of “subcultural” political distinctiveness of the sort that was once typical of white Christians in the United States—Irish Catholics voting Democratic, for instance—but which is nearly non-existent now. The liberalizing and homogenizing tendencies of American democracy are well understood and have been since at least the time of Alexis de Tocqueville: the opportunities America’s mostly classless and mostly non-denominational political culture afforded to white Christian males through the nineteenth century resulted in intermarriage, social mixing, and ultimately the shaping of identities more around public opinion than around ethnicity or religion. Thus, American freedom offered liberty to individuals but also pressured distinct cultural groups to politically conform. Most eventually did—and certainly Mormons have as well. (The LDS Church is surely not Amish!) Yet Mormonism’s accommodation to America’s liberal pluralism is not entirely complete, and the authors of this book suggest why.

Survey data of the specific elements of the political ideologies affirmed by voters show that, while obviously the huge majority of LDS voters in America consistently support the Republican Party, that practice is not entirely the result of the same regional or socio-economic or historical trends that, for example, brought about a cultural alliance between evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics. American Mormons, by and large, follow a separate ethno-religious logic when it comes to their political beliefs and actions rather than wholly responding to the “culture wars” that have defined so much public argument over the past four decades. The authors describe Mormon discourse as creating a “sacred tabernacle” within which a few rather unique moral and political distinctions are developed, even as the nation as a whole is shaped by larger trends.

What are the details of this tabernacle? The authors look, in particular, at two “politically inflected religious views”: American Mormon views about the US Constitution and about gender roles.

In regard to the first, the authors review both official and folk doctrines within the Church and note that “Mormons are the ‘most exceptionalist’ of any religious tradition in the country,” with 94 percent of American Mormons agreeing with the statement “the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights are divinely inspired” and 72 percent believing that “the United States has a special role to play in world affairs and should behave differently than other nations.” They conclude that it is “only a short step from Mormons’ reverence for the Constitution . . . to an originalist interpretation,” which is an article of faith among most political conservatives in America (109–12). In regard to the second, nearly three-fourths of American Mormons maintain that “[i]t is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family,” far outscoring the next most conservative Republican-voting religious group in America, evangelical Protestants, of whom fewer than 40 percent agree with the above statement. The authors, observing some movement in American Mormon attitudes toward mothers who work outside the home (today, only a little more than half agree that mothers harm their children by taking a job, down from 70 percent thirty years ago), rather tartly observe that “we would expect Mormon attitudes toward working mothers in 2020 to be roughly the same as what the rest of the population thought in the 1980s” (114–15).

In summary, the data suggest that while such hot-button topics as abortion and same-sex marriage clearly played a role in shaping American Mormonism’s variety of conservatism, what has been most firmly and decisively communicated within the Mormon political tabernacle is the supposed uniqueness of America’s culture and history, and the vital place that a kind of 1950s heterosexual domesticity is assumed to have played in that culture and history. The obvious conclusion is that while conservative American Mormons may appear entirely similar to other “Christian right” supporters of the Republican Party, that assumption isn’t exactly correct.

How this set of relatively unique teachings will endure and/or change over the next couple of generations and what that will

mean for American Mormon voting habits and perceptions are the questions that haunt the final section of the book. However much those who self-identify as Mormons in America continue to exhibit ethno-religious voting habits, the pluralizing—and, thus, collectively homogenizing—trends that have already broken down other old categories show no sign of receding. With every step, however resisted or inconsistent, toward the legal and economic equalization of men and women, blacks and whites, and gays and straights, ideological groupings along philosophically liberal lines will continue to replace ethnic, cultural, and religious communal associations. The politically relevant questions will continually return to taxes vs. welfare, property rights vs. egalitarianism, social libertarianism vs. civil rights, leaving those who orient their political worldview around communitarian or essentialist claims decisively marginalized. To refer directly to the Mormon context, this means that those who maintain, however lightly, a political subculture significantly built out of an attachment to a supposedly God-blessed nation-state or a uniquely normative type of family unit will increasingly feel the stigma of being outside the national conversation.

Campbell, Green, and Monson are quantitative political scientists, not political historians or theorists, so the deeper ramifications of voters' feeling motivated to maintain an even partial tabernacle in the midst of liberal pluralism is not something they focus on. Still, some of the above-mentioned realities and the partisan skewing and suspicions they result in do poke through in their analysis. They point out that the "strong intrareligious bonds of the sacred tabernacle mean fewer inter-religious bridges," and thus "Mormons are viewed with greater suspicion than members of most other religious traditions" (184). After exhaustively reviewing the different strategies of all the major Mormon candidates for president, the authors observe that while "the heyday of [white] ethno-religious alliances, [in which] denominations and parties were intertwined" has mostly passed, the fact that today "it is entirely rational for a voter who leans Democratic to oppose a Mormon candidate, *even in the absence of any other information*" [italics added], is striking. Again employing their characteristically sharp

understatement, the authors observe that “the blurry lines in the public eye between their church and the Republican party should give Mormons pause” (251). In short, American Mormons are playing a political game that stands at least somewhat opposed to the liberal order in which the game is set—and given the way the informal rules and incentives of the political game in America continue to change, the consequent feelings of estrangement (and attempts by everyone from the conservative Mormon leadership to the liberal Mormon minority to respond to that feeling) are likely to continue.

The communitarian roots of the Mormon religious vision are occasionally referenced by the authors of *Seeking the Promised Land* but are not particularly evident in the survey data. Instead, both statistical and anecdotal reports suggest that the great majority of American Mormons—just like the huge majority of American Catholics, American evangelical Protestants, and almost every other variety of American Christians—are fundamentally modern and thus essentially content with a way of voting and governing oriented around questions of individual diversity and personal choice. Hence the authors’ somewhat sad, but surely accurate, conclusion that the “promised land” of American Mormons is a clumsily divided one: the aspiration to be “in the world, not of the world—yet also accepted by the world” (253). That is, to say the least, a peculiar desire and perhaps an unavoidable one—but not, I think, one to be especially proud of all the same.



The Liberal Soul is not a complex work of political theology or theory nor a nuanced discussion of political ideology or interpretation; it is not a book written to advance a new political philosophy of Mormonism. In truth, Richard Davis’s book is profoundly “liberal” in the most simple, open-minded sense: rather than engaging in an immanent critique of Mormon practices or beliefs, he merely wants Mormons to see that what are usually labeled in America as “liberal” political choices are legitimate ones that faithful Mormons can make.

For Davis, the “liberal soul” spoken of in Proverbs 11:25 (KJV) presents to us all a divine ideal of generosity, open-mindedness, and collective concern for individuals in all their diverse needs. He does not claim that such scriptural language (which he sees similarly reflected in Isaiah 32:5; James 1:5; and Alma 1:30 and 6:5) mandates any specific set of public policies, but he aims to convince his readers that the reverse is also true. As he writes near his conclusion: “The marriage of LDS faith and right-wing or libertarian politics is not the sole perspective for understanding the relationship between the gospel and the role of government. . . . There are multiple interpretations of the gospel’s intersection with government, not just one” (162). Thus, *The Liberal Soul* puts forward a reading of Christianity’s call to generosity—a generosity that suggests collective political action toward greater economic and social equality and welfare (classic American-style progressive and egalitarian goals that Davis uncomplicatedly presents as representing “liberalism”) is as legitimate a response as any other.

The first and, I think, most important chapter in the book, “Government Is Ordained of God,” lays a strong foundation for this reading. Davis carefully makes the point that there is no non-disputable reason people cannot or should not democratically organize themselves around the governmental provision of public—as opposed to merely personal or familial—goods, and even more carefully criticizes the embarrassing anti-communist obsessions of Benson and other Mormon General Authorities who tended to see any defense of public resources as gospel-threatening socialism. For many, the kind of painstaking and deliberate arguments Davis lays out here may seem pointless, but given his real target audience of ordinary, conservative Utah Mormons, the first chapter does necessary and important work.

As Davis builds on that foundation in later chapters, his moderate Democratic, state-centric, institution-heavy, traditional liberalism is demonstrated repeatedly. He shows little interest in making direct use of Mormonism’s radical legacy of consecration (which he at one point clumsily refers to as “communitarianism”); while he speaks highly of economic equality as a goal closely tied

to the Christian respect for persons, and at one point, subtly (yet snarkily) remarks that this goal “may not be possible today given the broad acceptability of seeking personal gain over community good,” he mostly strikes a note that should be familiar to any reader of liberal political philosopher John Rawls, presenting redistributive taxation and minimum wage laws as examples of government actions that can reflect the generosity and public concerns of citizens (29–39). Rather than contemplating the collective or class responsibility of oppressors to the oppressed in the form of reparations, he presents Joseph Smith’s appeal to the federal government for restitution from the mobs in Missouri as an early ancestor of affirmative action (45–50). Rather than proposing radical alternatives to the welfare state, he defends entitlement benefits, noting in response to criticism about waste and fraud that the LDS Church’s welfare program, like any “large bureaucratic organization,” suffers from waste and fraud as well, only since “the Church’s system is not transparent to the public or even to the Church’s membership,” almost no one knows about it (67–68). Ultimately, there are almost no traces of social democracy or socialism in Davis’s arguments; his liberal Zion is a pluralistic one of generosity and charity where arguments against capitalism are rare and entrenched inequalities are to be addressed through humane appeals, Church assistance, and governmental amelioration.

That isn’t necessarily a criticism. In the same way that *Seeking the Promised Land* chooses to explore options and perspectives for American Mormons as political actors within the parameters of twenty-first-century America’s liberal democracy, it is perhaps reasonable for Davis to have chosen *The Liberal Soul* to advocate on behalf of options and perspectives that downplay or simply ignore the more radical possibilities of Mormonism’s history. Instead, he focuses on Christian fundamentals, which he hopes might lead a politically-interested Mormon living in the American West to question the idolization of the individual actor in the marketplace that permeates his local political culture (given that Davis—again, likely knowing his audience—only rarely associates

liberalism with women's rights, the individual in mind is almost certainly male) and thereby perhaps become more open-minded about the legitimacy of collective generosity. One down side of this, though, is that in defending a rather standard progressive liberalism—rather than some “Mormonized” left-leaning position—as a possible alternative to Utah's dominant libertarian and constitutionalist conservatism, Davis is confronted with the reality of the Democratic Party in America today and the suspicion most American Mormons feel toward it simply on the basis of its support for legal abortion and LGBT rights. Davis's book does little to aid liberal-minded Mormons, however defined, in philosophical arguments with those who are convinced that contemporary liberalism's egalitarian aims have been transformed into a “liberationist” movement, especially in regard to sexual matters. Davis instead mostly ducks those issues and suggests—wisely!—that the political culture of American Mormonism needs “balance” and would be better served by a “holistic approach” that rejects an obsessive focus on avoiding particular evils and embraces the “positive role” that America's larger, liberal, and pluralistic society should play in our lives (xx, xxiv, xxvii).

The concluding chapter of Davis's book, “If Ye Are Not One Ye Are Not Mine,” is explicitly pastoral, aiming to bring his discussions of liberal political possibilities into unity with what he strongly affirms as a genuinely “liberal” moral attitude. He acknowledges the dominance of Republican voters at every level of the American church and presents no comprehensive critique of that state of affairs; rather, he hopefully points out the disconnect between voting habits and ideological self-sorting among Mormons and encourages his fellow members to develop the possibilities of that disconnect by showing greater open-mindedness, more tolerance of diversity, and a firmer commitment to seek compromise with one another, adding as a demographic warning that “time is not on the side of . . . narrow-minded Church members” anyway (153). Ultimately, *The Liberal Soul* seeks to help American Mormons bring the liberalism that—however comfortable with, or bothered by, it they may be—defines the social world through which they

operate into their hearts and minds. If *Seeking the Promised Land* is about the travails and travels of American Mormons seeking to gain some political purchase on contemporary pluralism, Davis's fine book urges them to allow the broader presumptions of contemporary pluralism (to which the great majority of American Mormons have long since accommodated themselves anyway) to gain a great purchase on their political beliefs as well.



Which leads us to Terryl and Fiona Givens's *The Crucible of Doubt*. The connection between the foregoing two books and this one isn't obvious or direct, to be sure; the Givenses aren't writing about liberalism as a social phenomenon or a set of ideas at all; on my reading, the word "liberal" barely makes so much as a single appearance in the whole text. Still, the connection is, I think—at least when one looks at this graceful, thoughtful, and profoundly rewarding book with a certain interpretive lens—undeniable. The Givenses, in their effort to lay out for their fellow Mormons some basic ideas about the nature of belief and doubt in a pastoral way, have also written as fine a defense of being both faithfully and "liberally" Mormon as anything that has been published by Deseret Book in decades.

This connection with liberalism is sufficiently subtle that smart, serious readers of the book can bypass it entirely, focusing instead on processing the suggestions the book makes for addressing the problem of doubt in the contemporary LDS Church. But notice the tenor of those suggestions! Again and again, the Givenses want to suggest that the doctrinal notions Mormon believers may have thought themselves to have received could be wrong, or at least incomplete, and that the only way to resolve—or even just to achieve a degree of peace in regard to—any doubts they have about those notions is to develop greater "openness." Openness in regard to what? Well, to the moral incompleteness of tidy cultural explanations for suffering (chapter 2), or to the lack of spiritual reward that too often characterizes church attendance (chapter 3), or to the genuine inconsistencies the faithful will

encounter in trying to reconcile contradictory scriptures (chapter 4), or to the frustrating reality that Mormon leaders are not infrequently chosen for other than genuinely meritocratic or revelatory reasons (chapter 5), or to the plain fact that popular Mormonism's overly casual claims to holding a monopoly on truth are simply incoherent (chapter 7). What is the point of all that openness? The point is, the Givenses make clear, that it is exactly in conditions of "incertitude," when we are open to the "indeterminacy of it all," that we become able to "act most authentically, calling upon intuition, spiritual intimations, or simply yearning" (32).

Now, a question: exactly how much distance is there between the above statement and, say, the *bête noire* of many religious (including Mormon!) conservatives, the statement made by Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy in his opinion in the abortion-rights-defending case *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life"? True, the Givenses might respond by claiming that any truly "authentic" choice will be one that responds to "spiritual intimations," which will, of course, because they come from the same God who stands as the center of the doctrinal claims of the restored Church, greatly limit just what kind of self-definitions any particular person might be able to righteously—and therefore legitimately—come up with. This is a good—and arguably anti-liberal—response. The problem, though, is that such a response potentially undermines one of the basic themes of the Givenses's beautiful, poetic, evocative book: that the individual choosers must work out what they believe for themselves.

The Givenses fall back on either an implied or an explicit assumption of individualism and diversity in the search for belief and the Christian need to respond to such—as a church, as family members, and as individual Mormons ourselves—with generosity (see 79–80, 106–07, and 138 for a start). Nowhere do they do so more persuasively than in the pastoral heart of the book, chapter 8, "Spirituality and Self-Sufficiency," which

begins with Proverbs 5:15: “Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.” That chapter is a ringing defense of seeking truth and solace wherever we can find it and of, as the Givenses put it, “drinking liberally” when we do. It acknowledges the importance of “shared discipleship . . . with a larger community,” but also insists that we are ultimately “responsible for . . . finding spiritual nourishment in our own sacred spaces” (101–02). It uses what, I think, we have to recognize as deeply liberal—in the sense of placing a priority on those relationships we choose to make—stories to make its point: Bishop Edwin D. Woolley’s being rebuked by President Brigham Young and responding with quiet defiance, “[T]his is just as much my church as it is yours”; and an unnamed and doubting young woman who finds the courage to speak in church about her lack of belief and her bare longings for her family and, as a result, “feel[s] free” (103–06). In these stories, and in many others spread throughout the book, there is a bedrock assumption that all faithful voices within the Church, whatever their distinctly individual approaches or paths to belief, stand as equals and that the Church as a body needs the confidence to respect and embrace that diversity.

Obviously, none of that necessarily points toward “liberal” approaches to government or civil rights or economic equality. But to the extent to which Terryl and Fiona Givens want us to fully respect and enlist into the common project of building Zion *all* baptized individuals in their diverse paths toward God’s grace, their arguments are, for example, complementary to Richard Davis’s call for American Mormons to take seriously the possibility of exhibiting in our choices the qualities of a “liberal soul.” Moreover, their claims also speak strongly to the reality Campbell, Green, and Monson document in *Seeking the Promised Land*, showing how our collectively divided commitment to modern pluralism—that is, the American Mormon tendency to both imitate the strategic means of success within our liberal world while insulating ourselves from the implications of being part of it—lessens our potential contributions overall. The

Givens's book is thus, in a sense, the heart of a shared project of all three thoughtful works: before finding a place within (and thus, perhaps, helping to extend) liberal pluralism and before recognizing the value (as well as the limitations) of liberal and pluralistic approaches to political life, American Mormons must accept the liberality and plurality incumbent within the persons, both as individuals and as a church, that they hope to become.



These are wise books. They make the case, either implicitly or explicitly, for an appreciation of certain liberal virtues like tolerance and diversity and generosity (both individually and collectively, both politically and personally) in terms that any curious Mormon can understand and relate to. Also, they provide perspectives and real data on a genuine question: namely, how and why the full extent of contemporary liberal democratic practices (including those that are, from the faithful Mormon perspective, likely viewed as positive, such as a greater attention to the basic rights and needs of all individuals of all stripes, as well those probably seen as negative, such as increased secularism and religious indifference) have challenged American Mormon life. All together, they remind us that liberality and individuality and varieties of self-articulated participation really are deeply entwined in what it means to be a Christian in modern America. They even suggest, I think, that should the law of consecration, led by politically triumphant and genuinely pious Mormons, ever actually replace the liberal capitalist order some day, the responsibilities of—and the need to show respect for—the individual as a chooser, a voter, and a thinker must abide and remain central to Mormon doctrine. We should all wish to approach faith and politics, I think, in terms of the real beating heart at the core of liberal Mormon or liberal Christian belief: a trust in God's grace, that he really does love us as individuals and really will unfold himself to us in all our diverse contexts, and really is attending to us as we seek and we share that which we have, both as individuals and, ultimately, together. In ways both subtle and obvious, direct and implied, Campbell, Green, Monson, Davis, and the Givenses are all talking about exactly those deep religious possibilities. For reminding us of them, they deserve our thanks.

Complicated Womanhood

Julie Debra Neuffer. *Helen Andelin and the Fascinating Womanhood Movement*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014. 240 pp. Paperback: \$19.95. ISBN: 978-1-60781-327-9.

Reviewed by Jessica Jensen

I somehow lived my first twenty-nine years never having heard of *Fascinating Womanhood*, a how-to-save-your-marriage manual-cum-lifestyle popularized by a Mormon housewife in the early 1960s. Thanks to historian and author Julie Debra Neuffer, that situation has now been rectified. Neuffer's new book, *Helen Andelin and the Fascinating Womanhood Movement*, gives an unprecedented look into the personal experiences and sociopolitical climate that spurred Andelin's pursuit of an antidote for divorce, the growth of her idea into an international enterprise, and the supposed enemies she made along the way: "the feminists, the abortionists, the liberals, the BYU Family Relations Department, and the General Presidency of the Relief Society" (120–21).

Concerned by rising malaise among housewives, Andelin considered it a calling from God to find the cure. Concurrently, Betty Friedan made the same observation and famously published her perceived solution in *The Feminine Mystique*, the book widely credited as the catalyst for second-wave feminism in America. After years of obsessing over the issue, Andelin, however, had come to a much different conclusion than Friedan: To experience happiness in marriage, women should be utterly submissive, defer to their husbands in all things, change their personalities, maintain trim figures, deny themselves of all optional activities, ball their fists and stamp their feet like petulant children when angry, wear ribbons in their hair, and act helpless and dumb. This, according to Andelin, was the only way to a happy, adultery-proof marriage. She even took it a step further—if you fail to take these measures, not only will your marriage fail, but your children will become delinquents, too!

These were not original ideas. Much of *Fascinating Womanhood* was lifted word-for-word from self-improvement pamphlets

commercially produced in the 1920s under a nearly identical title. Andelin's close friend Verna Johnson introduced her to the booklets after Andelin confided some marriage woes. Though Johnson was already teaching classes based on the booklets, Andelin took them home with her, and that was that. This was the beginning of a pattern of broken friendships in Andelin's life.

Neuffer dances around the P word throughout the book, never personally calling Andelin a plagiarist but rather proving that point by quoting others and making observations like "she felt justified in taking possession of [the pamphlets], adding some of her own ideas, and then copyrighting the finished product in her name" (x). Throughout her life, Andelin explained away these accusations by repeating her belief that she was the rightful owner of the pamphlets: God had given them to her for the benefit of the world.

A devout Mormon, Andelin spent years trying to secure the endorsement of the LDS Church. Despite obtaining audience with several apostles and appealing to at least four different prophets by mail (and one—Joseph Fielding Smith—in person!), she never succeeded. The Church, though embroiled in ERA opposition, distanced itself from her particular philosophy. Julie's description of Andelin's intense, physical anguish as a result of these failed opportunities—feeling that leadership was uninspired, lamenting the red tape that separated her from her spiritual leaders, struggling to remain in the Church—was one of the few moments when I ached for her.

But then I reminded myself of the downright harmful ideas she promoted to millions of women all across the globe (three million copies sold to date, people) and my sympathy waned. To name just a few of the quotes that made my eyeballs bug out of my head:

Happy wives are helpless wives. (58)

Women's needs are the same the whole world over—to make men happy, to understand the masculine nature, and to be loved. (31)

Love, she said, "will never blossom forth until we surrender to a man." (33)

A husband didn't want to see a depressed wife, taught Andelin, so a wife who was depressed should not be surprised if her husband left her. (35)

God, believed Andelin, measured a woman's worth not by her relationship with him but by her relationship with her husband. (54) (Though unexplored by Neuffer, I can't help but wonder if this is a conclusion Andelin drew from the temple experience.)

[Bottle-feeding] makes it all too easy for a mother to leave her baby for long periods of time to pursue her own self-interests. (64)

When a man was cross, said Andelin, whose own husband was often cross with her, he was usually justified. (36)

One fan said, "Looking back I can see that my husband's problem with alcohol was a very convenient scapegoat for my own shortcomings." (47)

With the amount of nonsense emanating from some of Andelin's quotes, it shouldn't have hurt my feelings when she said that women who aren't good homemakers are failures in life, but it sort of did.

Unsurprisingly, Andelin clashed with feminists. At first she attempted a benevolent approach, calling them her sisters (albeit misguided ones in need of her help). As tensions between the two groups mounted, however, Andelin began taunting them: She attacked Betty Friedan's looks, accused feminists of being man-hating lesbians, and even had some nasty things to say about Susan B. Anthony before ultimately going full zealot and calling all feminists to repentance. With hostility increasing on both sides, Andelin grew paranoid, even once implying that her detractors were under a satanic influence.

It didn't go unnoticed by Andelin's critics that she was becoming a very savvy (and very rich) businesswoman from preaching her "domestic goddess" ideal. She was often accused of hypocrisy—after all, she was out-earning her husband and had hired full-time help at home while growing an international empire built on the premise that women ought to stay at home, act helpless, and

stroke their husbands' egos. Neuffer, as measured as ever, doesn't outrightly agree with the hypocrisy claims, but she does take an unflinching look at them.

This book is a quick yet illuminating read. Some might be left wishing for a bit more in-depth analysis, but that's a testament to this gem of Mormon history in Julie Neuffer's talented hands. I only have a smattering of minor complaints: I found the organization of the content into six non-chronological chapters a bit of a misfire. It resulted in bouncing all over the timeline with several bits of information playing on repeat throughout the book (at one point I said aloud, "We get it! Women were teaching the courses without official certification!"), and certain pages felt crammed into an unrelated chapter just because there was no better place for them. Also, Harold B. Lee is described as the president of the Church in the spring of 1971 (he became prophet in summer of 1972). Lastly, I was confused by Neuffer's statement in the book's conclusion that women today "are marrying younger and having more children." Record scratch?

That's me being hyper-critical, though. I definitely recommend the book. Above all else, it made me want to troll Andelin's *Fascinating Womanhood* book on Amazon, recruit Gloria Steinem to do dramatic readings of the more ridiculous passages, and go express several opinions to my husband just because I can.

Of Cups and Councils

Charlotte Johnson Willian

Talk given at the Saturday evening session of the Bloomington, Indiana Stake Conference, 28 February 2015.

My mother died recently from complications of Alzheimer's. Because four of my siblings live near my parents and were helping my dad with arrangements, my sister Carol and I decided to fly on Sunday for the Tuesday morning service and then stay longer after the funeral. We arrived at my dad's apartment Sunday afternoon, anticipating some quiet hours of reminiscing or just relaxing.

Instead, as Dad reviewed the funeral service with us, it quickly became apparent that many loose ends remained. No one had been asked to play the piano at the funeral, lead the music, give prayers, or sing "Lara's Theme" from the movie *Dr. Zhivago* that my dad fervently wanted sung to my mother from him (and that is not quite as simple as asking someone to sing a familiar hymn). Numerous texts and phone calls later, we had several necessary commitments and we met the Monday morning deadline to provide final funeral details to the mortuary.

As Carol and I talked late that night in our hotel room, we concluded that the situation resulted largely from the lack of involvement of a church ward in the funeral. Because of my mother's deteriorating health, my parents had moved to a nursing facility two months earlier, where their ward had a bishopric called from outside the facility. The members all required nursing care (except my dad). Due to such a recent move and the location of the funeral, there was no Church assistance. My dad and my siblings were on their own for all the planning, assignments, flowers,

programs, and other decisions and had simply been overwhelmed by the many details, as well as by illness.

Between us, Carol and I have served as ward Relief Society president three times. We have attended funeral planning meetings with families, dressed the deceased, arranged for flowers, ensured timely church cleaning, organized family meals, and found house sitters available during services. Carol and I noted to each other all of the unfinished details that an observant bishop or Relief Society president would have noticed earlier in the planning and all of the aspects of the service that loving ward members might have lifted from us, allowing us to mourn our mother's passing with fewer organizational intrusions.

In every way, my mother's funeral was beautiful and comforting. I do not share this experience to complain but rather because it was a powerful reminder to me of the blessings of the structure of a ward. The organization of the Church can facilitate personal growth and blessings and ease burdens when it functions properly. A quiet but powerful feature of Church governance is the ward council.

In April 1994, Elder M. Russell Ballard stated that we have an urgent need in the Church for leaders to harness and channel spiritual power through ward councils.¹ Harnessing and channeling spiritual power might seem like a stretch for a meeting that occasionally feels like it's more about comparing calendars or assigning whoever is absent to be in charge of the ward Christmas party. While these tasks must be accomplished, they should not be the heart of a ward council. The Church handbook states that the purpose of ward council is to help individuals build testimonies, receive saving ordinances, keep covenants, and become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ.² In other words, everything that happens at ward council should have the goal of helping individuals become better disciples.

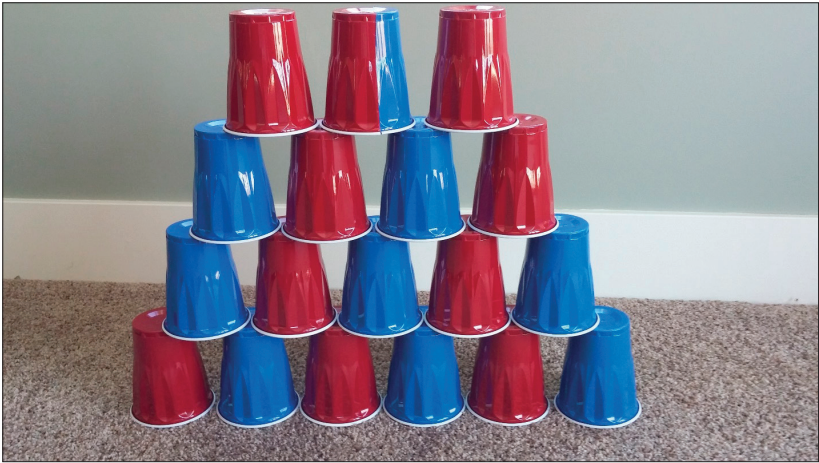
Ward council is unique in the Church because of its membership. Bishopric meeting and PEC, or priesthood executive committee, meeting are ward-level Church councils to which all invited members are male. At the bishop's discretion, the Relief Society president *may* be invited to *some* PEC meetings,

according to the handbook (emphasis added).³ Those invited to ward council, however, include the bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, high priests group leader, elders quorum president, ward mission leader, and presidents of the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School organizations.⁴ Currently, our ward also includes our full-time elders and often a high councilor is in attendance, so our ward council looks like this: 15 men and 3 women.



The Church handbook explains more fully the role of women in ward council: “The bishop seeks input from Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary leaders in all matters considered by the ward council. The viewpoint of women is sometimes different from that of men, and it adds essential perspective to understanding and responding to members’ needs.”⁵ Women are not included in ward councils to make them feel valuable, they are included because they are necessary for the functioning of a successful ward council. Why have we heard so many admonitions during the past few years that women’s voices in particular be heard in councils?

The population of my ward, if shrunk to eighteen people, would look like this: 8½ men and 9½ women.



These two representations clearly illustrate a disparity. In my ward, women comprise over 50% of the members but only 17% of the ward council. I believe this disparity is one main reason that the voices of women in ward councils should be expressed clearly and frequently and heard with sincere, intent listening. This implies responsibility on all sides—the leaders of Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society must be willing to formulate and express their viewpoints, and all other leaders should consider those ideas carefully. Under current Church structure, we have few ways to overcome this disparity, but fully involving female leaders in ward council is one of them.

How does a ward council help individuals become better disciples of Jesus Christ? My husband and I are parents of four daughters and one son, all adults now. For several weeks, I pondered the question of what specific inspirations, ideas, or actions of various ward councils have assisted my family members along their paths of discipleship. Here are a few examples:

Approval for a full program, with ward members invited, for girls earning their Young Womanhood Recognition award

Approval for a fair and equitable distribution of ward funds to the Cub Scouts and Activity Days programs, as well as to the Young Women and Young Men programs

Institution and support of an annual high adventure activity for Laurel-aged young women

Recognition of the importance of diversity in Church organizations—Primaries with male choristers, male nursery leaders, and male and female teachers of all ages; Young Women leaders of all ages and life experiences; Relief Society teachers from different stages of life

Support and sponsorship of local interfaith evenings of conversation

Official encouragement for ward members to participate in everything from a 5K fundraising run/walk for a local cancer center to the local interfaith winter shelter to the Habitat for Humanity's Women Build program

Approval to schedule Young Women programs such as New Beginnings and Young Women in Excellence on Sunday evenings, even though such scheduling was discouraged in the handbook, in a ward in which most of the girls had a parent who traveled all week for work

Recognition of the value in utilizing members who could easily lead a ward or lead a stake to guide young men through Scouting and the Young Men program

Plans for ward activities ranging from lakeside barbecues to park picnics to Santa visits to *Messiah* sing-alongs to talent nights to cultural evenings

Support of sports opportunities for young men, young women, and adult men and women—basketball, volleyball, ultimate Frisbee, and others (one of the longest running Relief Society midweek activities of our ward, close to twelve years, is women's basketball)

Food drives

Genealogy fairs or preparedness fairs

Community nativity displays

I hope you are not yet exhausted by the scope of building the kingdom of God. Please remember that my list does not reflect one ward at one time but several wards over many years. The most vital efforts of ward councils that I have witnessed have been in outreach and service. I could share dozens of stories, as I'm sure all of you could, of missionary efforts, new member fellowshiping, reactivation, assisting those in need of meals or groceries or childcare or rides or a friend to listen or a home repair, of mourning with those that mourn in a great variety of ways, and of sustaining individuals and families through long-term difficulties. I will share one instance from a ward where we formerly lived.

Early one year, Susan, as I will call her, was diagnosed with late-stage liver cancer. She and her family had little time to process their immense grief and fear as they suddenly faced numerous medical appointments and chemotherapy treatments and, at the same time, worked to prepare the family for life without a wife and mother. By May, Susan was too weak to work. The family had planned for their youngest child to attend a full-time summer day camp while the father was at work, and their two teenagers would stay home with Susan. Her husband called me one Saturday just as school had ended for the year and said that after much family discussion, it was clear that Susan would prefer that her teenagers enjoy their regular summer routines rather than stay home with her. This would require the Relief Society to find two women daily, Monday through Friday, to be with Susan for four-hour shifts each for eight weeks, starting in one week.

I took their request to the other Relief Society presidency members that day and spoke with the bishop as well. The next day, in ward council meeting, we prayerfully discussed this family and their overwhelming challenges. We knew it could prove difficult to support them in this way because many student families in our ward left for the summer. However, the ward council felt that it was an important service and we should move ahead with it.

After church, I discussed the service schedule with one of Susan's visiting teachers. Despite the fact that this visiting teacher and her large family were leaving early the next morning for six

weeks, she was eager to make a few phone calls and start filling the calendar. She called me back that evening to report that the entire eight-week schedule was full. I was grateful I had added my name in two time slots before she took over.

One time when I stayed with Susan, she slept and I completed a few small tasks around the home. Another time she wanted to talk and I was enriched by stories from her past as well as her reflections on life as death approached. Near the end of the eight weeks, our family left for a vacation. Several days after our return, I dropped by to visit Susan and found her preparing to leave for the hospital after a very uncomfortable night. While her husband packed a few things, I assisted Susan slowly and carefully down the stairs and out to their car. She died without ever seeing her home again. I never heard anyone who helped that summer complain about sacrificing their time, but many who helped expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk with Susan and be of service to her and her family. Wards simply cannot fill every need, but I give thanks to a ward council that followed inspiration that day.

I am grateful for the organization of wards and ward councils. I am grateful for ward councils that consult and give careful consideration to the viewpoints of the female leaders. I am most grateful for ward councils that harness and channel spiritual power, making decisions and taking actions that assist me, my family, and all of us along our paths of discipleship.

Notes

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Counseling with Our Councils,” <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1994/04/counseling-with-our-councils?lang=eng> (accessed February 14, 2015).

2. *Handbook 2*, section 4.4 “Ward Council,” <https://www.lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/the-ward-council?lang=eng#44> (accessed February 14, 2015).

3. *Handbook 2*, section 4.3 “Priesthood Executive Committee,” last updated March 18, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/the-ward-council?lang=eng#43> (accessed February 14, 2015).

4. *Handbook 2*, section 4.4 “Ward Council.”

5. *Handbook 2*, section 4.6 “Ward Council Meetings,” last updated March 18, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/the-ward-council?lang=eng#4.6> (accessed February 14, 2015).

CONTRIBUTORS

KIM ABUNUWARA {kim@abunuwara.com} is an assistant professor of humanities and integrated studies at Utah Valley University and an actress. At present, she is researching local attitudes about the transformation of the Provo Tabernacle into an LDS temple. She can be heard as the Widow of Nain and Mary Magdalene in *The Light of Men* on the Mormon Channel (2012), and is currently contributing to an audio version of the standard works for lds.org.

ERIKA ANDERSON {erika3080@gmail.com} is a PhD candidate in molecular and cell biology at the University of California, Berkeley. She holds a BS in biology and a certificate in African studies from Indiana University. Her first published poem was in the *Friend* in third grade, and more recently her writing has appeared in *Exponent II*.

S. P. BAILEY {spbailey@gmail.com} watched a game show called “Double Dare” back in the ’80s. Rather than answer difficult questions, contestants could declare: “I’ll take the physical challenge!” Physical challenges generally involved taking a pie in the face or having copious amounts of green slime poured over one’s head. S. P. Bailey wishes life had a “I’ll take the physical challenge!” option. Boss giving you a hard time? Don’t want to take that test? Need to discipline a difficult child? Spouse reasonably concerned about something? Just take the physical challenge! S. P. Bailey resides in Utah with his wife and kids. He practices law in Utah and Idaho. He is the author of *Millstone City* and *The Mission Rules*, and his works have also appeared in *Fire in the Pasture* and *Monsters & Mormons*. His homemade author vanity website: spbailey.net

MARY LYTHGOE BRADFORD {marylbradford@gmail.com} is a past editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and the author of *Leaving Home*, a collection of personal essays. Her biography of Lowell Bennion, *Lowell L. Bennion: Teacher, Counselor, Humanitarian*, published by the Dialogue Foundation, received the David W. and Beatrice C. Evans Biography Award for 1995 and the Ella Larsen Turner Biography Award from the Mormon History Association.

CORY CRAWFORD {crawfoc1@ohio.edu} is assistant professor of biblical studies in the Department of Classics and World Religions at Ohio University. He earned a PhD and AM in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University and a BA in Linguistics at BYU. He is currently finishing a Volkswagen Fellowship in the Humanities at the Biblisch-Archäologisches Institut at Eberhard-Karls Universität, Tübingen, Germany.

RUSSELL ARBEN FOX {foxr@friends.edu} is the book review editor for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and a professor of political science at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas.

MEL HENDERSON {MelHenderson@byu.edu} has taught writing as a graduate student at Brigham Young University since 2012, and will earn her MFA in Creative Nonfiction in 2015. Her Master's thesis is a collection of essays entitled *Animal Mothers: On the Primitive, Fierce, Humanizing Practice of Nurture*. Her current projects include writing the memoir of an Iranian fugitive and immigrant, co-writing an independent film, and writing a children's book commissioned to feature in the film. Mel lives in Provo with her husband, three sons, four cats, and one small, socially maladjusted dog.

JESSICA JENSEN {jjensen024@gmail.com} manages an engineering firm in Mesa, Arizona and blogs at *By Common Consent*. This is her first time appearing in print. She has been married to Jon for ten years, and together they've raised a beautiful albeit cock-eyed cockapoo named Penny.

CLIFTON HOLT JOLLEY {clifton@adventcommunications.com} and his wife Avigail Weinflash recently purchased a home in Ogden, Utah, "to be nearer trees and horizon, and to trade the ruthless craziness of Texas politics for the kinder craziness of Zion."

TRACIE A. LAMB {tracielamb@mac.com} is a recorder of people's lives, both her own and others'. She compiled and edited the biog-

raphy of her mission president, F. Enzo Busche, in *Yearning for the Living God* (Deseret Book, 2004). She has helped family members and friends chronicle their personal histories and has published a number of her own personal essays. She is currently researching the lives of her great-grandfather and his two wives, a Shoshone woman and a Mormon pioneer. She is able to pursue her interests with the support and encouragement of her dear husband, Bruce Smith.

WILLIAM MORRIS {william@motleyvision.org} is the founder of the Mormon literature and culture blog *A Motley Vision* {www.motleyvision.org}, author of *Dark Watch and Other Mormon-American Stories*, and co-editor of the *Monsters & Mormons* anthology. His work has appeared or will soon appear in *Dialogue*, *Irreantum*, *BYU Studies*, and *A Book of Mormons: Latter-day Saints on a Modern-Day Zion*. He lives in Minnesota with his wife and daughter.

SARAH PAGE {tinuviell3@gmail.com} graduated from Southern Connecticut State University with an MS and certification in Secondary English in 2013. She is a 2013 recipient of *Dialogue's* New Voices award for poetry. Her poems have been published in various journals, including *Connecticut River Review*, *Fresh Ink*, *Star*Line*, *Apeiron Review*, *NonBinary Review*, *Noctua Review*, *Glint Literary Journal*, and in the anthology *Fire in the Pasture*. She is the co-editor of *Young Ravens Literary Review*.

EMMA LOU THAYNE, poet and author, passed away on December 6, 2014.

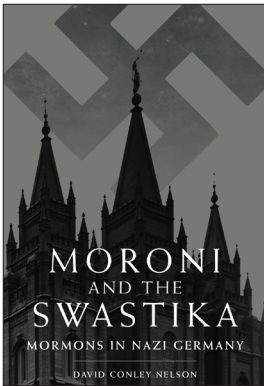
Roanoke, Virginia, artist PAGE TURNER collects items of deep personal meaning to painstakingly create delicate objects that honor the feminine, and the desires, experiences, and roles of women. Raised as a devout Mormon, she looks to the Church and its complex history for inspiration. Her works are informed by the traditional hand-working skills passed down through Mormon generations. In this body of work, Turner explores the division between righteousness within the faith and women's

personal power; with deep reverence, she pays homage to the original pioneer women of the Mormon Church, as well as the contemporary sisterhood.

Turner has exhibited widely in the Roanoke area, in Washington, DC, Los Angeles, New York, Kentucky, and North Carolina. She was the cover artist for *Exponent II* (Winter 2014), and has been featured six times since 2011 in *Studio Visit Magazine*, blogs, and other media.

Turner's *Power & Restraint: A Feminist Perspective on Mormon Sisterhood* was commissioned and exhibited by the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum at Hollins University.

CHARLOTTE JOHNSON WILLIAN {willian@aol.com} is the last remaining user of AOL for email, earned a double MA in English and Linguistics, favors any hazelnut/chocolate combo, adores her seven grandlittles, and enjoys writing and editing nestled in the wooded hills of southern Indiana.



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