A Conversation on God’s Corporeality
“O My Father”: Snow’s Text, Hafen’s Art, Musical Settings
The Pearl and the Soul’s Journey
Devotion throughout the Life Cycle
Cultural Ideology of Pioneer Day
BYU STUDIES
A MULTIDISCIPLINARY LATTER-DAY SAINT JOURNAL
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Printed in the U.S.A. on acid-free paper
4-90-46359-3.3M ISSN 0007-0106
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ARTICLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversation in Nauvoo about the Corporeality of God</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Neusner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;O My Father&quot;: The Musical Settings</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Hicks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimony in Art: John Hafen's Illustrations for &quot;O My Father&quot;</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn Pheysey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Significance of &quot;O My Father&quot; in the Personal Journey</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Eliza R. Snow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill Mulvay Derr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the Religious Devotion of Latter-day Saints throughout the Life Cycle</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James T. Duke and Barry L. Johnson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating Cultural Identity: Pioneer Day in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven L. Olsen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Land and Records Center in Nauvoo</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Easton Black</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## THE DOCUMENT CORNER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The &quot;Hymn of the Pearl&quot;: An Ancient Counterpart to &quot;O My Father&quot;</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John W. Welch and James V. Garrison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## POETRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cast on the Lord</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Henry King</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Too Soon</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Bolin Hawkins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU Nursery</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Darley Williams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hymn: Every Kindred, Tongue, and People
Arthur Henry King

All Tucked In
Trenton L. Hickman

BOOK REVIEWS

Three Frontiers: Family, Land, and Society in the American West, 1850–1900 by Dean L. May
Walter Nugent

The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher
Sherilyn Cox Bennion

Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants by Rebecca Bartholomew
Paula Harline

Church History in Black and White: George Edward Anderson's Photographic Mission to Latter-day Saint Historical Sites: 1907 Diary, 1907–8 Photographs by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, T. Jeffery Cottle, and Ted D. Stoddard
Nelson B. Wadsworth

BRIEF NOTICES

Spencer W. Kimball
Boyd K. Packer

The Legacy of Mormon Furniture
Beyond the River

Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History

Nurturing Faith through the Book of Mormon

Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited
Conversation in Nauvoo about the Corporeality of God

The formative documents of Judaism's dual Torah reveal God as a corporeal being with whom we may relate—one cannot pray to a philosophical principle.

Jacob Neusner

Imagine, if you will, the age, in the middle of the nineteenth century, when seekers after truth wandered the world. Part of that renaissance of the religious quest for truth encompassed the prophet who brought forth the Book of Mormon. It was a time of quest everywhere, with Westerners off to India and China to seek the wisdom of the East, Jews in Germany founding Reform Judaism, and those in Poland and Russia reinventing the very foundations of the sacred sciences in Talmud study. One of the marks of the age was a quest for truth beyond the limits of one's own circumstance. Leaving home for distant lands, a generation of searchers thought to find somewhere else what they could not locate at home: truths others had discovered, insights in alien tongues.

The return to Jerusalem in the Land of Israel on the part of Latter-day Saints marked one such wandering: a purposeful mission called by the highest authorities of the LDS Church itself. That is why it is easy for Latter-day Saints to imagine such people, since the early generations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sent not only missionaries, but also apostles bearing the task simply to pray, even in Jerusalem, for the return of Israel to Zion. To the merit attained by the dreaming of that dream and the saying of that prayer, we of holy Israel have to respond. And I take it as my task on this occasion to do so.

Accordingly, the moving story of that initial Mormon mission to Zion provokes me to wonder, what would have happened had a
great rabbi in Poland in the same period heard rumors of a new revelation, a Torah vouchsafed to a young American born in Vermont. His curiosity aroused, he might have sent to the new land a disciple who by chance had learned the English language. There, in the burnt-over lands of upstate New York, the new revelation was taking place. But by the time our disciple of the sages of blessed memory reached the area, the locus of revelation and prophetic teaching had moved westward, and he could catch up only when the hegira to Illinois had taken place. So the disciple would have found his way to Nauvoo, where, he heard, quite remarkable events in the realm of religion were to be witnessed. Were I the man, what would I have found striking, what news would I have wanted to bring back to my rabbi and teacher in Poland? A single point of acute interest, one that I think would have been worthy of long and serious discussion in a Polish yeshiva of the nineteenth century, would have been Joseph Smith’s doctrines about God and godhood.

In reviewing the possibilities—the occasions, the revealed scriptures, the public teaching—that might have defined a nascent-Mormon encounter with Judaism as a counterpart to the prayer mission to Zion—my attention comes to rest upon a particular day and a particular teaching, and the reason is important. The day is April 7, 1844, the place is Nauvoo, and the subject is critical to both Mormonism and Judaism: how do we conceive God? That is not an abstract doctrine, but a concrete encounter, one engaging our power of vision and hearing and much of our capacity of thought and contemplation. The single most important truth that religions have to share with one another is what each claims to know about God, and that is particularly critical in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. For all three maintain that there is only one God. The three monotheisms therefore must concur that that one and only God is the one and the same God whom all of us aspire to worship and serve. Hence if we wish to learn from another religion or about it, the starting point should be, how do we conceive of God?

That is why the King Follett Sermon, delivered on that April in 1844, would have found me off at one side, listening carefully, trying to find in the resources of my religion the foundations for
understanding this religion that even now was coming to full expression and realization. Here I would have heard one of the final statements of Joseph Smith, shortly before his death, about what must be for people outside of the LDS Church one of its most striking doctrines.

Now the Joseph Smith I should have met that day was not one to mince words. He spoke to the point and without ambiguity, writing what we might call “a punch in the nose prose,” that is, in unadorned and powerful language. So let me remind you of the language he used to set forth his doctrine of God—the exact words I should have brought back to my Yeshiva for study concerning news from the new world. Among the many things that he said on that day, I would have grasped only a few. His doctrine of how God in council undertook creation would have made me think of the reading of Genesis in the Midrash-compilation, Genesis Rabbah, which goes over much the same ground. Indeed, were my mission merely one of scholarship, I would have gone home and written a long footnote about parallels between Joseph Smith’s reading of Genesis and that of our Jewish sages of blessed memory. But I would have had a more important focus of interest, and that is the one defined by Joseph Smith’s quite remarkable insistence on the corporeality of God, a view of matters that, for Christianity as for Judaism, did not survive the philosophical movement of the Middle Ages and their encounter with Aristotle. This is what Joseph Smith said:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another.1

Much that he said that day would have left me puzzled, but the main point—the doctrine of the corporeality of God—“we may converse with Him as one man converses with another”—would have firmly stuck on my mind.
I should have found his doctrine important for two reasons. First of all, as I said, it ran counter to the received wisdom of philosophers, including philosophers of Judaism, that God must be conceived as not physical, not corporeal. We had long been taught that all references to God as a person like us, with physical traits and qualities analogous to ours, were to be treated as metaphors. The entire heritage of philosophy, entering into Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in medieval times, had insisted that God is not to be represented in human form, despite the explicit scriptural statement—which Joseph Smith cited that day in Nauvoo—"let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

But there is a second reason that the doctrine would have made a mark upon my memory and would have won my attention. It is that, in the formative documents of the Torah in its oral version, that same conviction of God's corporeality—a being we can see and know as we know one another—governs. Since an encounter between religions commences with the like and progresses to the unlike, that is the point at which, as a curious onlooker, I should have paid closest attention. In the doctrine taught by Joseph Smith, I should have found a remarkable reversion to teachings of the oral Torah, the documents written down in the early centuries of the Common Era out of the unwritten tradition of Sinai. So anthropomorphism in the teaching of Joseph Smith would have represented to a learned Talmudist from Poland a conception not to be dismissed, but to be carefully considered.

To wander from this narrative setting to a more propositional one: here I want to demonstrate that precisely the same conception of God comes to expression in the King Follett Sermon and in the oral Torah that came to written form in the first six centuries of the Common Era, namely, the conception of God "with whom we may converse as one man converses with another." I claim, and I shall try to prove, that important stories in the Talmud and related writings make the same point that Joseph Smith made in Nauvoo, and that his language there, properly mediated into the language and thought of our sages of blessed memory, will have found a ready hearing among the sages of the oral Torah. These are considerable claims. Therefore, before I proceed, let me cite a single source that shows I do not exaggerate.
It concerns a meeting between Abraham and God in the Temple just after the ninth of Ab—corresponding to early August—in the year 70 C.E., when the Temple was destroyed. Seeing the ruin and witnessing the exile, Abraham reproached God for what he had done, and a conversation ensured, “just as one man converses with another”:

Said R. Isaac, “When the temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed be he, found Abraham standing in the Temple. He said to him, ‘What is my beloved doing in my house?’”

“He said to him, ‘I have come because of what is going on with my children.’”

“He said to him, ‘Your children sinned and have been sent into exile.’”

“He said to him, ‘But wasn’t it by mistake that they sinned?’”

“He said to him, ‘She has wrought lewdness’ (Jer. 11:15).”

“He said to him, ‘But wasn’t it just a minority of them that did it?’”

“He said to him, ‘It was a majority’ (Jer. 11:15).”

“He said to him, ‘You should at least have taken account of the covenant of circumcision [which should have secured forgiveness despite their sin]!’”

“He said to him, ‘The holy flesh is passed from you’ (Jer. 11:15).”

“And if you had waited for them, they might have repented!”

“He said to him, ‘When you do evil, then you are happy’ (Jer. 11:15).”

“He put his hands on his head, crying out and weeping, saying to them, ‘God forbid! Perhaps they have no remedy at all!’”

“A heavenly voice came forth and said, ‘The Lord called you “a leafy olive tree, fair with excellent fruit”’ (Jer. 11:16).”

“Just as in the case of an olive tree, its future comes only at the end [that is, it is only after a long while that it attains its best fruit], so in the case of Israel, their future comes at the end of their time.’”

Another version of the same story is explicit in assigning to God a hand:

[“Why should my beloved be in my house, who executes so many vile designs? The sacral flesh will pass away from you, for you exult while performing your evil deeds” (Jer. 11:15):] Said R. Uqba, “On the night of the ninth of Ab Abraham, our father, went into the Holy
The emphasized language seems to state precisely the position outlined in Nauvoo in 1844. It is, then, no exaggeration to maintain, as I do, that to readers of the documents of the oral Torah—the Mishnah, the Talmuds, the Midrash compilations—the doctrine of the corporeality of God presents no surprise. To the contrary, had I brought back such an account from Nauvoo to my yeshiva in Białystok, my rabbi would have approved and found satisfaction with the lessons I had heard in Illinois. In fact, as I shall try to show, the belief in the incarnation of God, the corporeality of God, characterized Judaism in its authoritative documents beyond scripture. We address two issues, anthropomorphism in general, incarnation or corporeality in particular.

The Issue of Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism forms the genus, of which incarnation or corporeality constitutes a species. Anthropomorphism denotes forming religious concepts and ideas in human terms, in accord with the shapes and metaphors of this world and the human experience of it. Essential to anthropomorphism is the appeal to a God in human form, as R. J. Z. Werblowski maintains, “since otherwise one would have to deal with representations and manifestations of the divine in all possible material forms.” Anthropomorphism may appeal to physical or corporeal traits or may refer to what is called “mental or psychological anthropomorphism,” also called anthropopathism, encompassing not human form or shape, but human feelings such as love, hate, desire, anger, and the like. But as Werblowski further argues, “The ultimate residual anthropomorphism . . . is the theistic notion of God as personal, in contrast to an impersonal conception of the divine. Also, verbal imagery, no matter how metaphorical it is supposed to be, preserves this basic anthropomorphism.” So much for the genus.

A subdivision of anthropomorphism, the incarnation of God, in general entails the representation of God as consubstantial with the human person in, first, corporeal form; second, traits of emotions and other virtues; and, third, action. God is represented in incarnate
form when God looks like a human being (in the case of Judaism as in the King Follett Sermon, a man), exhibits virtues and expresses emotions like those of mortals, and does concrete deeds in a corporeal manner, pretty much as do human beings. The conception of God as a human being in the history of the Judaisms of antiquity is standard and conventional. The representation of God incarnate will not have surprised the authors of a variety of Judaic documents, beginning with the compilers of the Pentateuch. Some speaking explicitly, others in subtle allusions, prophets and apocalyptic writers, exegetes and sages, mystics and lawyers, all maintained that notion. No single genre of writing—law, prophecy, wisdom, history—ever exercised a monopoly over the presentation of God as a man. The authorities who made decisions about canonical writings—it is commonly held—took the view that the Song of Songs spoke of God’s love for Israel, and, it follows, the view that God took the form of a young man, stated as we shall see in Pesiqta deRab Kahana, will have proved entirely acceptable in those many circles that received the Song in their canon of Scripture.

The Talmud of Babylonia, or Bavli, the final statement of the formative period of the Judaism of the written and oral Torah, represented God in the flesh in the analogy of the human person, hence accomplished for that Judaism, from antiquity to modern times, the incarnation of God. In that Judaism, prior to the Bavli, the faithful encountered God as an abstract premise, as unseen presence, as a “you” without richly defined traits of soul, body, spirit, mind, or feeling. The Bavli’s authorship for the first time in the formation of Judaism presented God as a fully formed personality, like a human being in corporeal traits, attitudes, emotions, and other virtues, in actions and the means of carrying out actions. God then looked the way human beings look, felt and responded the way they do, and did the actions that they do in the ways in which they do them. And yet—I hasten to add—in that portrayal of the character of divinity, God always remained God. The insistent comparison of God with humanity “in our image and likeness” comes to its conclusion in one sentence that draws humanity upward and does not bring God downward. But that is the point of Joseph Smith as well: the exaltation of man, by reason of Him whom we resemble, in his image, after his likeness.
But even before the Bavli, the verse in Genesis that states, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," prompted our sages of blessed memory to come close to the same conception of the corporeality of God, of God and man looking much alike, as Joseph Smith said in Nauvoo. That verse yielded an explicit statement of the matter for the Judaism of the dual Torah in its later stages, which we find in the following passage from the Genesis Rabbah:

Said R. Hoshiaiah, "When the Holy One, blessed be he, came to create the first man, the ministering angels mistook him [for God, since man was in God's image.] and wanted to say before him, 'Holy, [holy, holy is the Lord of hosts].'

"To what may the matter be compared? To the case of a king and a governor who were set in a chariot, and the provincials wanted to greet the king, 'Sovereign!' But they did not know which one of them was which. What did the king do? He turned the governor out and put him away from the chariot, so that people would know who was king."

"So too when the Holy One, blessed be he, created the first man, the angels mistook him [for God]. What did the Holy One, blessed be he, do? He put him to sleep, so everyone knew that he was a mere man. That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: 'Cease you from man, in whose nostrils is a breath, for how little is he to be accounted' (Isa. 2:22)."8

In light of this reading of Genesis 1:9, we may hardly find surprising the power of diverse heirs of scripture, framers of various Judaic religious systems, to present portraits of the incarnation of God, corporeal, in affects and virtues consubstantial with humanity, doing things human beings do in the ways in which they do them.

The incarnation of God—corporeality in the most concrete form—forms a commonplace for Judaisms from the formation of scripture forward. All biblical writers invited precisely that exercise of remarkable imagination. Not only so, but given the exegesis of the Song of Songs as a love song between God and Israel, on which basis that book found its way into the canon of Judaism, we must suppose many accepted the invitation. That reading of the Song of Songs goes to extremes in formulating the doctrine of corporeality that represent God's and Israel's relationship as that of teenage lovers (in the formulation of Andrew M. Greeley).9 Nonetheless,
however routine for ancient Israel the conception of the incarnation of God may have been, it did not come to full literary expression in every document of every Judaism. The history of how diverse Judaisms imagined God contains more than a single, uniform chapter about God portrayed as a human being (ordinarily, a man).

Let us move on to clear instances of anthropomorphism, in which God is portrayed in the model or paradigm of a human being. In the following, I see an explicit comparison of God’s traits to those of a human being. The premise of comparison is that both exist within the same continuum of attitudes and emotions, but the one is superior to the other. On that basis I invoke the conception of consubstantiality and allege that God and human beings are treated as emotionally comparable or—more to the point—consubstantial. God is now not wholly-other but the same, even if better:

Take note of how the trait of the Holy One, blessed be he, is different from that of mortals. In the case of a mortal, when he is conquered, he is unhappy. But when the Holy One, blessed be he, is conquered, he rejoices, as it is said, “Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses chosen one stood before him in the breath to turn back his wrath.” (Ps. 106:23)\(^{10}\)

Here the contrast between the human and the divine trait in response to defeat treats the two as opposites, but within the same continuum. God is not wholly other, for example, without emotions or with emotions altogether different from those displayed by a human being. God and a mortal share the same emotional framework, which is why we may draw a contrast between how each one responds to the same thing. But while anthropomorphific in the strict sense, the passage may hardly be held to accomplish the incarnation of God. Whether or not God is represented as forming the corporeal image and likeness in accord with which humanity has been shaped is not a question to be settled by a passage such as the foregoing.

But what about the concrete representation of God? The general notion of the incarnation of God reaches quite specific formulation in yet another document of the same general time, namely, the middle of the fifth century. The passage derives from a document that came to closure in the later stages of the formation of
the canon of the Judaism of the dual Torah, around 450–500 C.E. Here again, were Joseph Smith to have come to a Polish Yeshiva and learned this passage, he would have found himself right at home:

Because the Holy One, blessed be he, had appeared to them at the sea like a heroic soldier, doing battle, appeared to them at Sinai like a teacher, teaching the repetition [of traditions], appeared to them in the time of Daniel like a sage, teaching Torah, appeared to them in the time of Solomon like a lover.

The passage opens with an allusion to the incarnate forms taken by God. True, we have no detailed account of the feelings and actions of God incarnate. Such concrete accounts of the incarnation of God, as we shall see, first make their appearance in the Bavli. But for the present purpose of definition, it suffices to point to the statement at hand as an illustration of the precise meaning of incarnation when it comes to God: the representation of God as teacher, warrior, lover (of the congregation of Israel, it is, of course, understood).

[Because of those appearances, it was necessary for] the Holy One, blessed be He, to say to them, “You see me in many forms. But I am the same one who was at the sea, I am the same one who was at Sinai, I [anokbi] am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt (Ex. 20:2).”

The qualification of the foregoing yields no difficulty. God appears in diverse models of incarnation. It is one and the same God. The document then goes on to restate the same matter:

Said R. Hiyya the Elder, “It is because through every manner of deed and every condition he had appeared to them [that he made that statement, namely:] he had appeared to them at the sea as a heroic soldier, carrying out battles in behalf of Israel, he had appeared to them at Sinai in the form of a teacher who was teaching Torah and standing in awe, he had appeared to them in the time of Daniel as an elder, teaching Torah, for it is appropriate for Torah to go forth from the mouth of sages, he had appeared to them in the time of Solomon as a youth, in accord with the practices of that generation: His aspect is like Lebanon, young as the cedars (Song 5:15), so at Sinai he appeared to them as a teacher, teaching Torah: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt (Ex. 20:2).”

When portrayed as a warrior, teacher, sage, and lover, God is represented in incarnate form. Incarnation now is fully exposed, and
an explicit and intentional statement of God in human form is set before us. Let me now generalize on the foregoing examples to state what I conceive our sages' conception to yield: *it is the description of God, whether in allusion or narrative, as corporeal; it is the account of God's exhibiting traits of emotions like those of human beings; doing deeds that women and men do, in the way in which they do them.* That is why I claim that we deal with the incarnation of God, just as in the King Follett Sermon, Joseph Smith represents the matter. It is for the oral Torah and the King Follett sermon alike the representation of God as a human being who walks and talks, cares and acts, a God who not only makes general rules, but also by personal choice transcends them and who therefore exhibits a particular personality.

**The Issue of Incarnation**

The broad definition of the genus of anthropomorphism leaves ample space for speciation. And that is what carries us from anthropomorphism to incarnation, for the God of the oral Torah is incarnate, as corporeal in conception as the God of the King Follett sermon is corporeal. And that point is important to my argument here, for God may be given personal traits of definition without emerging within the representation of a human being “in our image and likeness.” But that phrase does require us to speak of incarnation in particular, that is, the representation of the human being as in the image of God, hence the conception of God in incarnate form.

As to the species, by incarnation I mean the representation of God in the flesh, as corporeal, consubstantial in emotion and virtue with human beings, and sharing in the modes and means of action carried out by mortals. Defined by Manabu Waidea as “the act or state of assuming a physical body... by a nonphysical entity such as the soul, the spirit, the self, or the divine being,” here incarnation refers specifically to God. When—to review—God is represented in corporeal form, with arms, legs, cheeks, and the like, or is assigned emotions out of the repertoire of human feelings, attitudes, and virtues, or is portrayed as doing things human beings do in exactly the ways in which mortals do these deeds,
such as kick, butt, laugh, clap hands, and the like, then we have a case of the incarnation of God.

The issue of incarnation in the formative centuries of the Judaism of the dual Torah concerns not the invention of an essentially new conception of God, but the recovery of what was among other Judaisms an entirely conventional one. What we find is numerous stories that represent God's emotional structure and other virtues. Showing that it is a virtue to be humble, the storyteller provides a narrative of how God showed humility:

Said R. Joshua b. Levi, "When Moses came down from before the Holy One, blessed be he, Satan came and asked [God], 'Lord of the world, Where is the Torah?'

"He said to him, 'I have given it to the earth... ' [Satan ultimately was told by God to look for the Torah by finding the son of Amram.]"

"He went to Moses and asked him, 'Where is the Torah which the Holy One, blessed be he, gave you?'"

"He said to him, 'Who am I that the Holy One, blessed be he, should give me the Torah?'"

"Said the Holy One, blessed be he, to Moses, 'Moses, you are a liar!'"

"He said to him, 'Lord of the world, you have a treasure in store which you have enjoyed every day. Shall I keep it to myself?'"

"He said to him, 'Moses, since you have acted with humility, it will bear your name: 'Remember the Torah of Moses, my servant' (Mal. 3:22).""13

God is represented by our sages of blessed memory as a sage, a man who participates like other sages in the study of the Torah. And in that study, God takes a back seat and acknowledges the superior powers of reasoning that sages possess in the Torah (a view that, properly translated into his idiom, Joseph Smith explicitly adopts):

In the session in the firmament, people were debating this question: if the bright spot came before the white hair, the person is unclean. If the white hair came before the bright spot, he is clean. What about as case of doubt?

The Holy One, blessed be he, said, "Clean."
And the rest of the fellowship of the firmament said, "Unclean."
They said, "Who will settle the matter?"
It should be Rabbah b. Nahmani, for he is the one who said, "I am an expert in the laws of plagues and in the effects of contamina-
tion through the overshadowing of a corpse."

. . . A letter fell down from the sky to Pumbedita: “Rabbah b.
Nahmani has been called up by the academy of the firmament."14

God plays a role here as an ordinary sage. But God’s part in the
story is minimal and even the representation of God as incarnate is
tangential. It is a story about the sage in the heavenly academy; the
sage is like God, doing the things that (by the way) God is repre-
tended as doing. God is not the hero, nor even part of the detail;
God is a mere backdrop.

Other descriptions of things God says and does follow suit.
People refer to God, but God does not emerge richly characterized
as the centerpiece of narrative. One last example of the numerous
allusions to God, whether in the form of narrative or in other
forms altogether:

Said R. Isaac bar Samuel in the name of Rab, “The night is divided
into three watches, and over each watch, the Holy One, blessed be
he, sits and roars like a lion. He says, ‘Woe to the children, on
account of whose sins I have wiped out my house and burned my
palace, and whom I have exiled among the nations of the world.’”15

“I said to him, ‘I heard the sound of an echo moaning like a
pigeon and saying, ‘Woe to the children, on account of whose sins I
have wiped out my house and burned my palace and whom I have exiled
among the nations of the world. . . .’ ‘And not only so, but
when Israelites go into synagogues and schoolhouses and respond,
“May the great name be blessed,” the Holy One shakes his head and
says, “Happy is the king, whom they praise in his house in such a
way! What does a father have, who has exiled his children? And woe
to the children who are exiled from their father’s table!’”16

While represented as a fully formed personality in these stories,
God nonetheless does not enter into the narrative as an actor, a
person who walks and talks among human beings. We may say
very simply that when the authorships at hand wished to make
their points about God as a personality, they found no strong rea-
son to tell stories about God as they told stories about sages.

When God is represented in negotiations with mortals,
engaged in exchanges and gaining his wishes through give and
take, God enjoys a more active role in the narrative. Unlike the
The pericope is a story, not merely an allusion to a fact or a syllogistic proposition or an exegesis. Taking its own course, the narrative commences with a crisis, the problem of the Israelites at the sea. God intervenes as the hero to solve the crisis. The tension in the story derives from the response of the Lord to the angelic prince and is worked out in the exchanges that follow. We have a beginning, middle, and end. There is a point of tension and conflict, ending in a resolution. But there is a very considerable point of difference between this narrative and the sage-story, and it is in the critical role, beginning and end, of verses of scripture. The story is spun out to explain Psalms 106:7. Its climactic moment is Judges 3:23, then Exodus 14:30.

The following story represents God as a critical actor, that unfolds from beginning to middle and end, that involves action,
that sets up a point of tension and then resolves that tension, and that does not invoke a verse of scripture or provide a proposition concerning the meaning of such a verse. In all its indicative traits, this story treats the incarnation of God in accord with conventions characteristic of sage-stories in *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan:*

Said R. Judah said Rab. "When Moses went up to the height, he found the Holy One, blessed be he, sitting and tying crowns to the letters [of the Torah]."

"He said to him, 'Lord of the universe, why is this necessary?'"

"He said to him, 'There is a certain man who is going to come into being at the end of some generations, by the name of Aqiba b. Joseph. He is going to find expositions to attach mounds and mounds of laws to each point [of a crown].'"

"He said to him, 'Lord of the universe, show him to me.'"

"He said to him, 'Turn around.'"

"[Moses] went and took his seat at the end of eight rows, but he could not understand what the people were saying. He felt weak. When discourse came to a certain matter, one of [Aqiba's] disciples said to him, 'My lord, how do you know this?'"

"He said to him, 'It is a law revealed by God to Moses at Mount Sinai.'"

"Moses' spirits were restored. He turned back and returned to the Holy One, blessed be he. He said to him, 'Lord of the universe, now if you have such a man available, how can you give the Torah through me?"

"He said to him, 'Be silent. That is how I have decided matters.'"

"He said to him, 'Lord of the universe, you have now shown me his mastery of the Torah. Now show me his reward.'"

"He said to him, 'Turn around.'"

"He turned around and saw people weighing out his flesh in the butcher shop. He said to him, 'Lord of the universe, such is his mastery of Torah, and such is his reward?"

"He said to him, 'Be silent. That is how I have decided matters.'"18

Here God is the protagonist of the story; Moses the straight man. The story unfolds with a marked beginning, the tension created by Moses' question about the details of the letters in which the Torah is written. The middle is worked out initially when Moses' spirits
were restored. But then there is then a second point of tension—Moses cannot understand the message—and then comes a final resolution. Everything Aqiba says begins with Moses. But that produces the third and most intense point of tension, leading to the story’s real point, which unfolds at the end. So we move in stages, conflict, resolution, then to a higher level of conflict.

What we lack is the resolution of the final point of conflict; it is open-ended: Be silent. That is how I have decided matters. That statement hardly marks a happy ending, and it assuredly does not answer the question with which the passage commences. The story merely restates the question in a more profound way. So the one truly striking story about God in the form of not a human being in general but a sage in particular, a sage engaged in debate and argument, turns out to make precisely the opposite of the point of every other sage-story. All other such stories tell us how sages resolve points of tension and sort out conflict, bringing to a happy resolution whatever problem has generated the action of the story. But this story tells us the precise opposite, which is that God decrees and even the sage—even our rabbi, Moses, the sage of all sages—must maintain humble silence and accept the divine decree. Turning matters around in a secular direction, we may state the proposition in this way: the sage is like God, but, like all other human beings, subject to God’s ultimately autocephalic decree.

A story built on the premise of the incarnation of God, fully exposing God’s traits of personality and portraying God like a sage, engaged in argument with a man as master engages in argument with a disciple, serves a stunning purpose, which contradicts its academic form. It is to show that God, while like a sage, is more than a sage—much more. And, even in this deeply human context, that “more” is to be stated only in the submission expressed through silence. This I take to be the final statement of the incarnation of God of the Judaism of the dual Torah. God incarnate remains God ineffable. When the Judaism of the dual Torah wishes to portray the character of divinity, it invokes in the end the matter of relationship and not tactile quality and character. If we wish to know God, it is through our relationship to God, not through our (entirely legitimate and welcome) act of the incarnation of God in heart and mind and soul, deliberation and deed. And the way to
engage with, relate to, God, in the face of (in the suggestive instance at hand) the Torah and torture of Aqiba, is silence.

In an age struck dumb by horror and Holocaust, in anguish seeking God's face in a time of the hiding of the face, incarnation takes its unanticipated forms, just as at the Sea, just as at Sinai. In response to God's self-revelation, whether at the Sea, whether at Sinai, whether in sickness or in health, whether in moments of despair and disappointment or in an hour of exultation and ecstasy, what is to be said?

"He said to him, 'Be silent. That is how I have decided matters.'"

"And Abram put his faith in the Lord, and the Lord counted that faith in him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

**Going Home**

From Nauvoo I would have headed home to report on what I had learned. I would have told my teacher about a new religion, like traditional Christianity in many ways but also different in some. And one of those ways would have been the doctrine of God being “like ourselves”: “like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image, and likeness of God, and received instruction and walked, talked, and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another.” And, impressed but always skeptical, my rabbi would have replied, “Very good, very good—so what else is new?” What I reported from Nauvoo, my rabbi already knew in the Talmud.

But I would argue, what I have said is something new. My presentation of the facts of how the Judaism of the dual Torah accomplished the incarnation of God may possibly surprise two sorts of people. First, there are those who have long taken for granted the utterly aniconic and nonanthropomorphic character of “Judaism,” by which they meant the one at hand, the one of the dual Torah. Many theologians of Judaism have built their theological apologetic upon that single characterization of “Judaism,” meaning this kind, and I here show that that characterization is not valid. As we noted at the outset, an entire philosophical movement in medieval times within Judaism proposed to explain in other than concrete and corporeal terms the anthropomorphic representation of God
in the Hebrew scriptures, including rich accounts of the incarnation of God. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century apologists of Judaism, particularly in Reform Judaism and its associated scholarly circles, carried forward that same insistence upon the utter incorporeality of God in “Judaism,” by which they meant the Judaism represented in scripture and in the canon of the dual Torah. So there is ample reason to anticipate a measure of puzzle-
ment on the part of readers within contemporary Judaism.

Both Judaic and Christian believers and also historians of religion, form the second class of listeners apt to find my results puzzling. They are those who have deemed to be absolutely unique the Christian belief in humanity and divinity united in Jesus Christ, God incarnate. They have further held that conception of God to be utterly incompatible with that of Judaism—any kind of Judaism. Christians may find in the Israelite scriptures a rich legacy of anthropomorphism in general, and evidence for the conviction of the incarnation of God in particular. They may maintain that in Jesus Christ, humanity and divinity united and incarnate, the “Old Testament legacy” has reached its natural and necessary cli-
max. Hence finding in the Judaism that became normative, the one of the dual Torah, a continuation of that mode of meeting God—
the mode of the incarnation of God—may prove jarring for Christ-
ian as much as for Judaic readers.

To both classes of readers, I say very simply that I mean no disrespect in treating the incarnation of God as profoundly character-
istic of the scriptural representation of God, on the one side, and the Judaism of the written and oral Torah, on the other. The conception of the incarnation of God I offer was idiomatic to a variety of Judaic authorships (though here I treat only the one I have specified). That Joseph Smith set forth the same revelation seems to me beyond argument. That the particular framing of that conception in reference to Jesus Christ, God become man, is unique to Christianity I in no way call into question. I cannot imagine a more self-evident fact of the history of religion than that one. We all recognize that one powerful modern theological apologetic for Judaism has contrasted Christian-pagan anthropomorphism with the “more spiritual” conception of God provided by Judaism. Those who lay a heavy burden of faith upon the structure of theological
apologetics will simply have to judge for themselves whether the evidence I set forth justifies my claim that, in the Bavli in particular, God is portrayed as incarnate, in body and soul, attitude and deed.

The Judaism of the dual Torah was, and is, a religion of the here and now—and so was, and is, its God. And, I should maintain, on that basis we are able to pray—but only on that basis. We cannot—and we do not—pray to philosophical principles, theological doctrines, but to the Person who (speaking out of the Torah, that is, the religion that the world calls “Judaism”) made himself manifest in the Torah. And, as the Midrash says, “When the Holy One, blessed be he, created the first man, the angels mistook him [for God].” At the end of the twentieth century, in which no angel would confuse man with God but only with Satan, it is important to contemplate divine images of Man, just as Joseph Smith did on April 7, 1844—just a century before the very height of the Holocaust.

Questions from the Audience and Answers by Professor Neusner

Q: What factors, motives, or reasons drive mainline Christian and Jewish theologians to interpret anthropomorphic scriptural passages metaphorically?

A: The Greek philosophical tradition reaching Christianity in late antiquity and Judaism in the Middle Ages found difficult the representation of God with positive attributes, let alone physical and emotional points of congruity with man. To trace the rejection of the Rabbinic understanding of God as person, one would best follow the history of the exegesis of the pertinent verse about man’s being made “in our image, after our likeness.”

Q: Given man’s demonstrated propensities for pride, sin, and horrifying evil, as in the Holocaust, why isn’t it blasphemous to conceive of God being humanlike?

A: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou thinkest of him?” (Ps. 8:4). That verse captures the paradox of man. It would be blasphemous to think of man not in God’s image, which would represent surrender to pure evil.

Q: What is the conception of man within the Judaism of the dual Torah? What is his purpose in relationship with God?
A: Rabbinic anthropology is a subject that requires study in its own terms, and I do not know any systematic theological work on the subject. But as to the purpose of man in relationship with God, the Torah is explicit about the purpose of man: “It has been told you, O Man, what is good, and what the Lord wants from you, which is to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.” The Babylonian Talmud, tractate Makkot 13B, puts matters this way:

R. Simelai expounded, “Six hundred and thirteen commandments were given to Moses, three hundred and sixty-five negative ones, corresponding to the number of the days of the solar year, and two hundred forty-eight positive commandments, corresponding to the parts of man’s body. . . .”

“Isaiah came and reduced them to six: ‘He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, shakes his hand from holding bribes, stops his ear from hearing of blood and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil, he shall dwell on high’ (Isa. 33:25–26). . . .”

“Micah came and reduced them to three: ‘It has been told you, man, what is good, and what the Lord demands from you, only to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God’ (Micah 6:8). . . .”

“Habakkuk further came and based them on one, as it is said, ‘But the righteous shall live by his faith’ (Hab. 2:4).”

Q: What implications does the corporeality of God have for ethics?
A: We come closer to God when we can think of God in human terms, which provides for us an accessible model for behavior and values.

Q: Are the two tasks of knowing God through reason and of knowing him by means of personal relationship forever irreconcilable?
A: We as Judaic believers know God because God is made manifest in the Torah. That represents an act of grace, God’s self-revelation at Sinai. The Torah spells out the media by which we work out personal relationships with God; these come about through study of the Torah, through obedience to the commandments, and through undertaking our own acts of grace, in imitation of God’s. That answer does not deal with the conflict
that some perceive between knowing God through reason and knowing God through worship and devotion, because I do not understand the source of such a conflict. Reason unaided by revelation can tell us that there is a God, but it cannot tell us any of the truths that come to us through revelation (the Torah). The “personal relationship” to which the question refers corresponds to acts of prayer and service that obedience to the commandments makes possible.

Q: Are the sages reacting to possible inroads of Christian incarnational theology by one-upping Christians by claiming a corporeal God was both a sage and lawgiver at Sinai? Wouldn’t this serve to validate Torah and Rabbinic Judaism?

A: The fourth century marks the first point at which we may posit response on the part of our sages of blessed memory to the claim of Christianity to a share in the blessing of God to Israel. It was with the triumph of Christianity in Constantine’s conversion that sages formulated doctrines remarkably suited to the coming struggle with Christianity; prior to that time, Christianity received little attention from them. But the corporeal God, whom we may know and love—the God represented as walking and talking with Abraham in the ruins of the Temple, the God at the Sea and at Sinai, the God in whose image and after whose likeness we are made—comes to us through both the written Torah (“Old Testament”) and the oral Torah as well, and none of the doctrines outlined in my presentation originate only in the documents of the fifth and later centuries by any means.

Q: Given your claim that the God of the Judaism of the dual Torah is corporeal in nature and “human-like” in his interactions with humanity, how might you respond to the argument that God appears in human form and acts in human ways with humanity in general so that we can understand Him when, in fact, he is not like us at all. After all, Isaiah said God’s ways are not our ways, and his thoughts are not our thoughts.

A: I am sure that to make himself manifest to us, God presented his teachings to Moses and the prophets in language that they could grasp and convey to us. I am equally sure that God transcends
us. That underscores my conviction that the very knowledge of God that we possess represents an act of grace on God's part, an act of love, such as giving the Torah through Israel represents an act of grace and love. The "in fact" part of the hypothetical question is impenetrable to me. The only facts we have about God come to us through revelation, in the Torah, or are to be read through the prism of revelation or the Torah.

Q: Hasn't the danger been perceived as fashioning a likeness of God after our image? If you're a sage, perhaps that would not be threatening. But if you are a king, a soldier, a dictator, a madman?

A: We always err, committing an act of idolatry, by representing God in our likeness and after our image. The enduring challenge of faith for Judaic and Christian believers is to remember that we are like God but God is not like us. But as everyone knows, the cardinal sin in the religious heritage of Judaism and Christianity is to turn matters upside down.

Q: How is the concept of an anthropomorphic God received generally among a society so steeped in Western philosophical metaphysics? It would seem to be a radical religious view.

A: Philosophically people reject what in active piety they take for granted. No one prays to the Unmoved Mover, and no one loves and worships the God lacking all positive attributes with whom philosophy makes its peace. The God of the philosophers responds to certain problems of philosophy. The God who speaks to us through revelation and the Torah and whom we know through prayer and service vastly transcends the conceptions of philosophy. God is not merely an idea, a conception that serves to resolve dilemmas. I am sure that the God who is made manifest, who reveals himself in the Torah, made heaven and earth, called Abraham, and at Sinai brought Israel, the Holy People, into being for his service, watches over us in the here and now, and will send his messiah to redeem us all at the end of time. To Western philosophical metaphysics, that God is alien, but it is that same God, unknown to philosophy, whose very presence, for the faithful, makes life possible.
Q: It seems obvious that Philo of Alexandria has little influence on early Talmudic literature. This picture seems to have changed by the time of Maimonides. What happened?

A: The greatest scholar of Judaism of our century, Harry A. Wolfson, argues in his *Philo* that the Judaic religious system of our sages of blessed memory and that of Philo cohere and are congruent. But I am sure he would concur that it was with the advent of Aristotelianism that philosophy entered into scientific modes of thinking about God. And it was through the rise of Islam and with the Judaic, Christian, and Muslim appropriation of Aristotle's challenge to religious faith that critical thought elicited the response of a philosophical theology from Maimonides and Aquinas in turn.


NOTES


2Bavli Menahot 53b; see also Jacob Neusner, trans., *Tractate Menahot*, vol. 29, pt. B. of *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984), 72. This article contains original translations by Jacob Neusner. References to other Neusner translations are given here for the ease of the reader.
Lamentations Rabbah 35:1.1; see also Jacob Neusner, Lamentations Rabbah: An Analytical Translation (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 125; italics added.


See Andrew M. Greeley’s chapter “The Lovers in the Song—Creation,” in Andrew M. Greeley and Jacob Neusner, The Bible and Us (New York: Warner, 1990), 31–48; or in Andrew M. Greeley and Jacob Neusner, Common Ground: A Priest and a Rabbi Read Scripture Together (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1985), 30–43.

Bavli Pesahim 119A.


Bavli Shabbat 89A; see also Neusner, Shabbat, vol. 2, pt. C, of Talmud of Babylonia, 86.

Bavli Baba Mesia 86A; see also Neusner, Tractate Baba Mesia, vol. 21, pt. D, of Talmud of Babylonia, 36.

Bavli Berakhot 3A, 7; see also Neusner, Tractate Berakhot, vol. 1 of Talmud of Babylonia, 38.

Bavli Berakhot 3A, 8; see also Neusner, Tractate Berakhot, vol. 1 of Talmud of Babylonia, 38–39.

Bavli Arakhin 15A–B; see also Neusner, Tractate Arakhin, vol. 32 of Talmud of Babylonia, 126.

Bavli Menahot 29B; see also Neusner, Tractate Menahot, vol. 29, pt. A, of Talmud of Babylonia, 148.

Bavli Makkot 13B; see also Neusner, Tractate Makkot, vol. 24 of Talmud of Babylonia, 114, 115.

Cast on the Lord

Cast on the Lord your burden of love. He will give you his love in a breath of air, a crust, a draught of water, a tide of new blood.

—Arthur Henry King
O My Father

O my Fa-ther thou that dwellest in the high and glo-rious place, When shall

I re-gain thy presence And a-gain be-hold thy face? In thy ho-ly ha-bi-

tax-tion did my spirit once re-side? In my first pri-me-val child-hood was I nur-tured near thy side?

Fig. 1. “O My Father” was given several settings during Brigham Young’s lifetime, none of which are in use now. Here the poem is set to the tune Brigham Young preferred, Stephen Foster’s “Gentle Annie” (1856).
“O My Father”: The Musical Settings

Saints sang this hymn to musical settings ranging from a Stephen Foster tune to a melody played by a Nephite in a dream. But eventually they canonized a tune from the genre of “gospel hymns.”

Michael Hicks

“O My Father” began public life as a poem on the back page of an obscure newspaper. It is now a lilting, pastoral hymn instantly recognizable throughout the world, sung in dozens of languages by millions of people. The transformation was convoluted. Latter-day Saints always wanted to sing Eliza R. Snow’s poem. But as they sought for the best way to do so, they found a bewildering set of options, all complicated by inconsistencies of publication, competing musical tastes, visionary experiences, political happenstance, and quirks in Snow’s text itself.

In tracing the history of “O My Father,” we should begin with the obvious question: Did Eliza R. Snow intend it to be sung? As first published in 1845, “O My Father” (then under the title “My Father in Heaven”) was clearly labeled as poetry, not as a hymn.1 But poetry and song lyrics were virtually interchangeable in early Mormon-dom; a great deal of verse was published under the heading of “poetry” with a notation of the tune to which it should be sung. So even if Snow did not originally intend her poem to be sung, she probably knew that it would be. Practically speaking, the Saints needed hymns to fill their meetings, not poems to fire their private meditations. (They had an abundance of new revelations to do that.) They craved hymn texts like “O My Father”—short, didactic, distinctively Mormon, and strict in the number of syllables per line. So it was not surprising that, six years after its publication as a poem, “O My Father” entered the LDS hymnbook.

At that time, the hymnbook contained no music, only words and metrical designations, which enabled singers to match texts to
existing tunes of the same meter. This situation posed a problem for "O My Father." Superficially, as a hymn text, the poem would have the meter known as 8787 Double. Such a hymn would normally feature a trochaic meter—the "long-short" pattern of accents that appears in some lines of "O My Father":

/ O / O / O / O

Truth is reason, truth eternal

But most of the lines in Snow's poem seem to begin not with a long-short pair of syllables, but with two short (unaccented) syllables, as in this line:

O O / O / O / O

In thy holy habitation

Moreover, the scan of some lines is ambiguous; for example, one can debate which way the following line should be scanned:

O O / O / O / O

Was I nurtured near thy side?

or

/ O / O / O / O

Was I nurtured near thy side?

The variability of accents at the beginning of lines made the text difficult to match with a typical trochaic tune. Insignificant words (such as "in") would sometimes receive undue emphasis. Moreover, the changeability of accents from verse to verse made it hard to find a tune that would work for all verses—and hymns were always sung strophically (that is, with the same music for every verse).

So on one hand, the text was irresistible: it virtually had to be sung. On the other hand, it was nearly impossible to find a tune to which "O My Father" could be comfortably sung. The difficulty of finding a suitable tune, together with the imperative to do so, drove a parade of musical settings for "O My Father" through the nineteenth-century Church.

One of the earliest musical settings of "O My Father" was Stephen Foster's 1856 parlor song "Gentle Annie." Although the tune was far from hymnlike—and one had to fudge it a little to make Snow's text fit—this setting was apt (see fig. 1). The tune was gently plaintive, enhancing the spirit of the words. And the
opening of the lines in “Gentle Annie” contained ambiguities of accent similar to those in Snow’s poem. As early as 1855, the Deseret News observed that “O My Father” was Brigham Young’s favorite hymn, which ensured that it would be sung often. According to Heber J. Grant, “Gentle Annie” was the tune that President Young came to prefer—a point confirmed by Augusta Joyce Crocheron, who wrote:

I once heard Pres. Brigham Young, in the St. George Temple, designate his preference thus: “Will the Parowan choir please sing ‘O My Father,’ to that sweet, gentle air I love so well?” The air was “Gentle Annie,” a strange choice it sounded, but the effect proved the correctness of his taste.

Nevertheless, during the pioneer period, “O My Father” was more commonly sung to a melody completely different in spirit: a bouncy, martial tune known as “Harwell” (see fig. 2). This tune was far easier to sing than “Gentle Annie”—three of the four phrases of “Harwell” were identical to one another. And if the music seemed at odds with the poem’s contemplative tone, “Harwell” was nonetheless catchy and memorable—something like a bugle call—traits that suited it to congregational singing. Eliza Snow apparently did not object. In 1880, as the editor of the Primary’s Tune Book, Snow included “O My Father” set to the tune of “Harwell.”

In 1857 the first setting composed by a Latter-day Saint appeared. For his Latter Day Saints’ Psalmody, British convert John Tullidge composed settings of thirty-seven hymns for keyboard and choir. His setting of “O My Father” (see fig. 3) is relatively elaborate, with a somewhat disjunct opening line and, near the end of the hymn, alternations between three- and four-part textures. However noble the effort, Tullidge’s Psalmody never sold enough copies to make this setting known widely.

In 1863 the well-respected music teacher David Calder published a unique setting of “O My Father;” this one primarily for the use of youth choirs throughout Utah. Notated in the curious “Tonic Sol-Fa” system, this version features dynamic markings and fermatas to ensure that choirs render it with the proper expression (see fig. 4). It also turns the first two lines of the poem into a chorus to be sung at the end of each verse, a chorus in which the
O, MY FATHER!

O, my Father, thou that dwellest In the high and glorious place,
When shall I regain Thy presence, And again behold Thy face?

In Thy holy habitation Did my spirit once reside?
In my first primeval childhood Was I nurtur'd near Thy side?

Fig. 2. One of the earliest and most common settings of Eliza R. Snow's text, Lowell Mason's tune “Harwell.” As editor of the Primary's 1880 Tune Book, Snow chose it as the “official” tune for children to sing. This setting later appeared in many LDS hymnbooks.
O, my Father, thou that dwellest in the high and glorious place;
Fig. 4. A page from David Calder's "Tonic Sol-Fa" singing manual that Calder used for teaching music to hundreds of Utah children in the early 1860s. The unusual notation purported to be an improvement on traditional notation. This setting of "O My Father" is of unknown origin and appears in no other LDS publication.
closing words “behold thy face” are to be sung three times. This setting may have been Calder’s own; it is unattributed but appears in no other known publication.

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, “Gentle Annie,” “Harwell,” and the “Tonic Sol-Fa” setting all had some claim to “official” status. “Gentle Annie” was the favorite of the prophet; “Harwell” was the favorite of the people; and the “Tonic Sol-Fa” tune was the one being taught to hundreds of children in Calder’s singing schools—which themselves were endorsed throughout the territory by Brigham Young. But the year of Young’s death, 1877, ushered in a new era of “O My Father” settings.

At Young’s funeral, popular choir director C. J. Thomas led the Union Glee Club in singing Young’s favorite hymn to a fittingly solemn tune: the “Austrian Hymn” composed by Franz Josef Haydn (see fig. 5). While this tune suited the spirit of the funeral, it served the words poorly, giving heavy downbeat accentuation to words like “in” and “and.” Nevertheless, this setting became somewhat “official”—at least among the youth of the Church—by its inclusion in The Improvement Association Song Book (1887).

In the same month as Young’s funeral, Tabernacle Choir director George Careless published his own new version of “O My Father.” It was a nonstrophic anthem comprising only two verses—a solo and duet on the first verse and full choir on the second (see fig. 6). By having different music for each verse, Careless not only could distribute the textual accents differently, but could subtly dramatize the words. Although a version such as this may have attracted choir directors in search of new material, the setting weakened the text: “O My Father” badly needed its latter two verses—the one declaring the existence of a heavenly mother, the other asking for the poet to return after death to both heavenly parents.

The Deseret Sunday School Union soon published two fresh settings, one for congregations, the other for choirs. In 1879 they issued the jaunty new “O My Father” written by a young Welsh emigrant, Evan Stephens (see fig. 7). Similar to “Harwell” in character, it was considerably harder to sing. But it had the social virtue of being composed by a Latter-day Saint. Not only did this version appear in the Sunday School magazine, the Juvenile Instructor, but it was also issued on the official Sunday School music cards.
No. 181. O My Father.
ELIZA R. SNOW. (Tune: “Austrian Hymn.”) JOSEPH HAYDN.
Prayerfully.

1. O my Fa-ther, Thou that dwell-est In the high and glo-rious place!
2. For a wise and glo-rious pur-pose Thou hast placed me here on earth,
3. I had learned to call Thee Fa-ther, Thro’ Thy Spir-it from on high;
4. When I leave this frail ex-ist-ence, When I lay this mor-tal by,

When shall I re-gain Thy pres-ence, And a-gain be-hold Thy face?
And with-held the reco-llec-tion Of my for-mer friends and birth;
But, un-til the Key of Knowl-edge Was re-stored, I knew not why.
Fa-ther, Moth-er, may I meet you In your roy-al court on high?

In Thy ho-ly hab-i-ta-tion, Did my spir-it once re-side;
Yet oft-times a se-cret some-thing Whispered, You’re a stran-ger here!
In the heav’ns are par-ents sin-gle? No! the tho’t makes rea-son stare!
Then, at length, when I’ve com-plet-ed All you sent me forth to do,

In my first pri-me-val child-hood, Was I nur-tured near Thy side.
And I felt that I had wan-dered From a more ex-alt-ed sphere.
Truth is rea-son; truth e-ter-nal Tells me I’ve a moth-er there.
With your mu-tual ap-pro-ba-tion Let me come and dwell with you.

Fig. 5. “O My Father” set to the tune of Haydn’s “Austrian Hymn.”
This setting was sung at Brigham Young’s funeral (1877) and was included in The Improvement Association Song Book (1887) and Deseret Sunday School Songs (1909), from which this page is taken.
Fig. 6. A page from George Careless’s choral anthem on the text of “O My Father” as published in his Utah Musical Times (1877).
O, MY FATHER!


Allegretto.

1. O my Father, thou that dwellest In the high and glorious place! When shall I regain thy presence, And again behold thy face? In thy holy habitation, Did my

2. For a wise and glorious purpose Thou hast placed me here on earth, And withheld the recol-

精神 once reside? In my first, primeval childhood, Was I nurtured near thy side?

You're a stranger here; And I felt that I had wandered From a more exalted sphere.

Fig. 7. Evan Stephens's first setting of "O My Father" as published in the Juvenile Instructor (1879). From 1889 through 1927, this version of the song appeared in the only "official" LDS sacrament meeting hymnbook (in English) that had musical notation, the Latter-day Saints' Psalmody.
Five years later, the *Instructor* published a markedly different setting by LDS composer A. C. Smyth (see fig. 8).\(^{18}\) Designed for a choir to sing, his “O My Father” was slow and sturdy, its phrases shaped by detailed dynamic markings. This setting was probably little used, although, under Ebenezer Beesley’s direction, the Tabernacle Choir copied it into their choirbooks.\(^{19}\)

Perhaps the most curious setting of “O My Father” to appear during these years was Thomas Durham’s so-called “Nephite Lamentation”—curious, at least, in its origins. A longtime choir director in Parowan, Utah, Durham claimed the tune came to him in a dream about the aftermath of the great battle at the Hill Cumorah; in that dream, a Nephite survivor played the tune on a horn as a lament. According to Durham, “he missed the two high notes in the latter part of the tune, but I seemed to know what he was trying to get.”\(^{20}\) The Nephite played the tune twice, and Durham awoke and wrote it down. He soon began to use it as a setting for “O My Father.” It gained renown in Utah not only for its heavenly origins, but also for the graceful way that it handled the text. The beginning of each line consists of a lilting three-note figure that suits either a long-short or short-short pair of syllables with relative ease (see fig. 9).\(^{21}\)

Although Evan Stephens’s “O My Father” was probably little sung, it became the only version of “O My Father” to appear in the first official LDS hymnbook for sacrament meetings, the *Latter-day Saints’ Psalmody* (1889; republished regularly until 1927).\(^{22}\) Stephens was a member of the five-man committee who compiled the *Psalmody*, a committee that included George Careless and Ebenezer Beesley, who probably would have preferred other settings. Stephens’s setting, however, had two advantages: it had the imprimatur of the Sunday School, and Stephens had personally taught it to thousands of children enrolled in his music classes and choruses.\(^{23}\)

Two funerals in 1893 brought new settings of “O My Father” to the Saints’ attention. One setting never caught on; the other proceeded to eclipse every previous one and become the standard throughout the world.

For the funeral of his first wife, Lucy, Heber J. Grant asked that a mixed quartet sing “O My Father” to a tune from the first act
O, MY FATHER.

Words by E. R. Snow.

Music by A. C. Smyth.

Andante. \( p \)

Cres. \( \)

Dim. \( p \)

O my Father Thou that dwell est In the high and glorious place! When shall

Cres. \( \)

Dim. \( \)

Gracious. \( mf \)

I regain Thy presence, And again behold Thy face? In Thy holy

p Cres. \( \)

Dim. \( \)

habitation Did my spirit once reside? In my first primeval

p \( mf \) \( f \)

Dim. \( \) e piu lento.

childhood Was I nurtured near Thy side? Was I nurtured near Thy side?

Fig. 8. A. C. Smyth’s 1884 choral setting of “O My Father” as it appeared in the Juvenile Instructor of that year. The Tabernacle Choir, under Ebenezer Beesley’s direction, hand copied this version into their choirbooks.
O MY FATHER.
Tune—Nephite Lamentation. THOMAS DURHAM.
Solo. Andante moderato. Arr. by H. E. GILES.

1. O my Father, Thou that dwellest in the
2. For a wise and glorious purpose Thou hast

CHORUS. Very distinct.
3. I had learned to call Thee Father, Through Thy
4. When I leave this frail existence, When I

high and glorious place! When shall I regain Thy
placed me here on earth, And withheld the recol-

Spirit from on high; But until the Key of
lay this mortal by, Father, Mother, may I

presence, And again behold Thy face?
recognition Of my former friends and birth,

Knowledge Was restored I knew not why.
meet you In your royal courts on high?

Fig. 9. In a dream, Thomas Durham heard a Nephite warrior playing a tune for his dead comrades. Known as the "Nephite Lamentation," the tune was put to the text of "O My Father" in several publications, including the Relief Society Magazine (1919), from which this page and the next are taken.
"O My Father" set to "Nebute Lamentation," cont.

In Thy holy habitation, Did my father set to nephite lamentation, Contbrt fe ft ft 1 as 9s

In the heav'n's are parents single? No; the Then, at length, when I've completed All you

Rit. spir - it once re - side; In my first primeval "You're a stranger here;" And I felt that I had

Rit. thought makes reason stare! Truth is reason, truth es - sent me forth to do, With your mutual ap - pro-

child - hood, Was I nurtured near Thy side. wan - dered From a more ex - alt - ed sphere.

ter - nal Tells me I've a moth - er there. ba - tion Let me come and dwell with you.
of Friedrich von Flotow’s opera Martha (see fig. 10). In 1908 the Deseret Evening News claimed that Snow’s text “beautifully fitted” the “Martha” tune. In 1913 the Improvement Era published “O My Father” in that form; the following year, President Grant indirectly promoted the von Flotow setting in his article “Favorite Hymns.” As late as 1939, in Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns, George Pyper extolled the effectiveness of this setting. But the melody was so plain and unsubtle in its handling of the textual accents that few would have been drawn to use it, especially given the enormous popularity of another 1893 setting.

By the 1890s, “gospel hymns” had become the favorite sacred music among Christians in the United States. Such hymns descended from the old camp-meeting and revival songs; they used dancelike rhythms, immediate repetitions of pitches, and infectious verse-chorus designs to make them instantly memorable. One popular gospel hymn was “My Redeemer” (1877) by James McGranahan. It featured a simple, swaying melody with male responsorials in the chorus (see fig. 11). In 1893, at a funeral in Logan, Utah, Robert Easton sang the words of “O My Father” to the tune of “My Redeemer.” The joining of the two produced something akin to the “Nephite Lamentation” setting but even more meditative: the slow, constant repetition of individual pitches or small groups of pitch gave this “O My Father” an almost hypnotic quality it had never before found (see fig. 12).

Easton was a tenor soloist with the Tabernacle Choir, whose director, Evan Stephens, was always looking for ways to showcase the skills of his soloists. Stephens decided to have Easton and the choir sing an arrangement of “O My Father” to the tune of “My Redeemer” at the Salt Lake Temple dedication services in April 1893. There, an estimated audience of 50,000 people heard the arrangement. The consensus was almost instantaneous: here was an excellent setting, one that was in an up-to-date style and served the text well. Buoyed by the success of the arrangement, the choir took it on their Midwestern tour that summer (their first major foray outside the Rocky Mountain region), apparently using it to introduce Mormon doctrine to the general public.

The “My Redeemer” tune spread rapidly throughout the Church. The Tabernacle Choir sang it virtually everywhere they
Fig. 10. “O My Father” set to a tune from Act I of Friedrich von Flotow’s opera *Martha*. For the funeral of his first wife (1893), Heber J. Grant asked a quartet to sing “O My Father” to this music. One of the members of that quartet, George Pyper, extolled the effectiveness of this setting in his hymnbook companion, *Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns* (1939).
No. 577.  

My Redeemer.

1. I will sing of my Redeemer, And His wondrous love to me;
2. I will tell the wondrous story, How my lost estate to save,
3. I will praise my dear Redeemer, His triumph I'll tell,
4. I will sing of my Redeemer, And His heavenly love to me.

On the cruel cross He suffered, From the curse to set me free.
In His boundless love and mercy, He the ransom freely gave.
How the viceroy He giveth over sin, and death, and hell.
He from death to life hath brought me, Son of God, with Him to be.

CHORUS.

Sing, oh! sing, of my Redeemer, With His blood purchased me;
Sing, oh! sing of my Redeemer, Sing, oh! sing of my Redeemer, With His blood purchased me;
On the cross He sealed my pardon, Paid the debt, and made me free.

Fig. 11. James McGranahan's Protestant gospel hymn "My Redeemer" (1877).
1. O my Fa- ther, Thou that dwell-est In the high and glo-rious place!
2. For a wise and glo-rious pur-pose Thou hast placed me here on earth,
3. I had learned to call Thee Fa- ther, Thro’ Thy Spir-it from on high;
4. When I leave this frail ex-ist-ence, When I lay this mor-tal by,

When shall I re-gain Thy pre-sence, And a-gain be-hold Thy face?
And with- held the rec-o-llec-tion Of my for-mer friends and birth.
But, un-till the Key of Knowl-edge Was re-stored, I knew not why.
Fa-ther, Moth-er, may I meet you In your roy-al courts on high?

Fig. 12. “O My Father” to the tune of McGranahan’s “My Redeemer.” This music was first joined to “O My Father” by tenor soloist Robert Easton at a funeral in 1893. The resultant setting of “O My Father” would quickly become the most popular one in the Church and the only one that now appears in all LDS hymnbooks. The setting appears here in the arrange-ment included with John Hafen’s illustrations in a 1909 pamphlet version of Eliza R. Snow’s text. (See the article by Dawn Phyesey in this issue.)
appeared. In 1895 the Church magazine the *Contributor* published it.\(^{31}\) In 1899 this treatment of “O My Father” showed up in a new edition of the Sunday School hymnal and in LDS hymnbooks for non-English-speaking Saints.\(^ {32}\) The popularity of the new setting dismayed Evan Stephens, who in that same year publicly repented of ever having used the “My Redeemer” tune, which he called the “‘Eastern’ tune.”\(^ {33}\) He thought that it was in poor taste to link a text so sublime to a gospel hymn, music he considered the equivalent of “cheese-cloth.” And he believed strongly that LDS composers should set LDS texts. Their settings, he insisted, should bespeak “optimism” (as his “O My Father” did) rather than “gloomy solemnity.”\(^ {34}\)

But the popularity of the “My Redeemer” tune could not be quelled by Stephens’s opinions. In 1908 the mission presidents of the Church jointly published a new hymnal in English, *The Songs of Zion*. It contained only one tune for “O My Father”—“My Redeemer.”\(^ {35}\) The following year, the Sunday School completely revamped its songbook; the new edition, *Deseret Sunday School Songs*, omitted Stephens’s setting altogether and included two other settings instead: “My Redeemer” and the “Austrian Hymn.”\(^ {36}\)

Meanwhile, the Tabernacle Choir made its first commercial recordings. Among the four songs it recorded in 1908 was “O My Father” in the arrangement that had become so popular. This recording suggests why the choir’s performances of this setting may have been so appealing to the tastes of the era.\(^ {37}\) The whole tenor section (not a soloist) sings the melody at a ponderous tempo—so slow that the nearly four-minute recording can contain only two verses (the first and last). And the entire choir sings with scooping *portamenti* that virtually overwhelm the listener with heartfelt sentiment.

In the 1920s, after stepping down as Tabernacle Choir director, Stephens continued to oppose the “My Redeemer” setting that he had popularized. When Victor Recordings asked to record the song for a collection of Mormon hymns in 1923, Stephens made the case to the Church Music Committee that to use the “My Redeemer” tune would be illegal on copyright grounds.\(^ {38}\) (But the recording was still made; it features the “Trinity Mixed Quartet” performing verses 1, 3, and 4 of “O My Father.”)\(^ {39}\) As a member of the same committee,
Stephens also voted to produce a new hymnbook to replace the *Psalmody*, the only book in the Church that still included his old setting of "O My Father." For the new hymnal, *Latter-day Saint Hymns* (1927), Stephens composed yet another setting of "O My Father," this one even more bombastic than his previous one (see fig. 13). The "My Redeemer" setting also appeared in this hymnbook, a comfortable 361 pages away from Stephens's—not in the form of a congregational hymn, but in Stephens's Tabernacle Choir arrangement.40

However, with Stephens no longer in charge, the Tabernacle Choir continued to sing the "My Redeemer" setting for concerts and national radio broadcasts. Most listeners adored it; "O My Father" became one of the choir's most requested songs.41 Still, not everyone admired it. At a concert in San Francisco in response to a request from President J. Reuben Clark, the Tabernacle Choir sang all four verses of "O My Father." As director Spencer Cornwall recalls, the local newspaper said, "We liked all the numbers except the interminable 'O My Father.'"42 And even the Church's president, Heber J. Grant, was quoted as saying that the "My Redeemer" tune is "not majestic enough" for "O My Father." "It is too sentimental," he is quoted as saying, "and it's too secular."43

In 1944 the First Presidency (under Grant's direction) directed the Church Music Committee to consolidate the three principal Church songbooks in English—*Songs of Zion, Deseret Sunday School Songs*, and *Latter-day Saint Hymns*—into one new volume. All three of those books had included the "My Redeemer" setting. But each of the latter two contained an additional setting: the "Austrian Hymn" version and Stephens's second setting, respectively. Although the committee was not yet ready to make McGranahan's tune the only official one for "O My Father," they voted to remove both of the others. No one sang Stephens's setting (and having died in 1930, he could not argue for its inclusion). The "Austrian Hymn" had become unusable because of its association with Nazi Germany; as "Deutschland über alles," it had become the veritable theme song of the Third Reich. So the new consolidated hymnbook, *Hymns: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1948), included the "My Redeemer" setting (which it subitled "Familiar
No. 34. O My Father, Thou that Dwellest.

Eliza R. Snow. (8's & 7's.)  

Evan Stephens.

mf Andante con moto. (d = 68.)

1. O my Father, Thou that dwellest In the high and glorious place!
2. For a wise and glorious purpose Thou hast placed me Here on earth,
3. I had learned to call Thee Father, Thro' Thy Spirit from on high;
4. When I leave this frail existence, When I lay this mortal by,

When shall I regain Thy presence, And again behold Thy face?
And withheld the recollection Of my former friends and birth,
But un-till the Key of Knowledge Was restored, I knew not why.
Father, Mother, may I meet you In your royal courts on high?

In Thy holy habitation, Did my spirit once reside;
Yet oft-times a secret something Whispered, "You're a stranger here;"
In the heavens are parents single? No; the thought makes reason stare!
Then, at length, when I've completed All you sent me forth to do.

In my first primeval childhood, Was I nurtured near Thy side?
And I felt that I had wandered From a more exalted sphere.
Truth is reason, truth eternal Tells me I've a mother there.
With your mutual approbation Let me come and dwell with you.

Fig. 13. Evan Stephens's second setting of "O My Father" as printed in 1927.
Tune") and "Harwell"—which, after all, President Grant had preferred to the other settings.  

By the 1970s, "My Redeemer" was the only setting of "O My Father" in most international hymnbooks of the Church. But in 1974, a new committee was appointed to consider revising the current English-language hymnbook and to make the others conform to it. The committee considered both of the then-current tunes for "O My Father" and wrote comments. Of the venerable "Harwell," it said, "This setting has not caught on with the Saints. The music might make a good priesthood hymn." Of the "My Redeemer" tune, the committee wrote: "Of course, this must stay." Although the hymnbook revision was shelved until the 1980s, subsequent committees concurred with the earlier recommendation and voted to make "My Redeemer" the only tune for "O My Father" in all LDS hymnbooks.

More or less, this setting of "O My Father" has been canonized. And in the canonization, one can learn something of the values that shape the Mormon musical experience. First, Mormons prize familiarity and ease of expression above sophistication and complexity; in Book of Mormon terms, they delight in "plainness" (2 Ne. 31:3). "My Redeemer" has endured not necessarily because it is the best setting, according to some aesthetic criterion, but because it works the best as a setting that people can sing. Second, when necessary, Latter-day Saints feel free to import plainness from other churches. Even though the pioneer virtue of self-reliance infuses Mormon life, members of the Church happily adopt from others whatever serves their particular religious needs. Third, sacred music—within certain limits—cannot be dictated to the Latter-day Saints but must be embraced by them. The efforts of certain Church musicians notwithstanding, Mormons at large reject any setting but the one they find most pleasing. They will sing only music that wins their hearts. The canonization of the tune for "O My Father" also demonstrates something about the processes of history itself—how, as time unfolds, the seemingly coincidental can lead to aptness, the serendipitous become the inevitable.

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NOTES


4The first verse of Foster’s text is:

Thou wilt come no more, gentle Annie,
Like a flow’r thy spirit did impart;
Thou art gone, alas! like the many
That have bloomed in the summer of my heart. (*Golden Wreath*, 57)

5*Deseret News*, June 20, 1855, 120.


7Heber J. Grant (b. 1856) recalled that in his “childhood days it was always sung” to this tune (“Favorite Hymns,” 777). The *Deseret Evening News* reported in 1908 that “during the early pioneer days . . . and up to a few years since, [‘O My Father’] has been most generally linked with the tune known as ‘Harwell’” (“The Origin of Some Famous Hymns,” *Deseret Evening News*, December 19, 1908, Art Section, 7). The tune had first appeared in Lowell Mason, *Carmina Sacra* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1841), 218, according to Bruce David Maxwell, “Source Book for *Hymns* (1950),” copy of unpublished typescript, 51, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

8Eliza R. Snow, *Tune Book for the Primary Associations of the Children of Zion* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1880), 45, LDS Church Archives.

9John Tullidge, *The Latter Day Saints’ Psalmody* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards [1857]), 13, LDS Church Archives.

10*Singing Lessons on the Tonic Sol-Fa Method* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Print, 1863), 10–11.


13See Minutes of the Union Glee Club (1876–1879), holograph, LDS Church Archives.

14*The Improvement Association Song Book* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1887), 77.

15*Utah Musical Times* 2 (August 1, 1877): 69–70.


17For more information about the Sunday School cards, see Hicks, *Mormonism and Music*, 118. Stephens’s “O My Father” appeared on the twenty-fourth card (the last one).

18*Juvenile Instructor* 19 (December 1, 1884): 368. Coincidentally, Smyth had been the editor of the *Improvement Association Song Book*, which used the “Austrian Hymn” setting of “O My Father.”
See the bass part book (1878), 70, Ebenezer Beesley Papers, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as BYU Archives). Beesley, however, also considered using yet another setting of “O My Father,” a choral arrangement of the song “See the Leaves around Us Falling.” See his marked copy of J. R. Thomas, Thomas' Sacred Music (New York: Wm. A. Pond, 1866), 40–41, Beesley Papers, BYU Archives.

Thomas Durham, quoted in “Some of Our Composers,” Juvenile Instructor 37 (July 15, 1902): 431.

Relief Society Magazine 6 (June 1919): 370–72.


George D. Pyper, Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1939), 7. Pyper was a member of the quartet that had sung the von Flotow setting at Lucy Grant’s funeral (see “Impressive Services,” Deseret Evening News, January 6, 1893, 8).


Pyper, Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns, 7.

Pyper, Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns, 7.


Contribution 16 (February 1895): 263–64.

See, for example, Hymnes a l’usage des branches Francaises de l’Eglise de Jésus-Christ des Saints des Derniers Jours (Berne: Bureau de la Mission suisse, 1899), which contains both the “Harwell” and “My Redeemer” settings.

Thomas C. Griggs, Diary, February 16, 1899, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

The reference to cheesecloth comes from Griggs, Diary, October 24, 1901: “At choir practice tonight Stephens warned us of the growing taste for wishey-washy [sic] ‘Cheese-cloth’ style of music such as the Moody-Sankey class.” For Stephens’s related views, see Evan Stephens, “Songs and Music of the Latter-day Saints,” Improvement Era 17 (June 1914): 760, 765.

The Songs of Zion (Chicago: Northern States Mission, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1908), 83.


Trinity Mixed Quartet Recordings, 1924, LDS Church Archives.

Church Music Committee Minutes, September 6, 1923, LDS Church Archives.

Tabernacle Choir Early Recordings, tapes in author’s possession.
In the index, Stephens’s setting is listed under the title “O My Father, Thou That [Dwellest]”; the “My Redeemer” setting is not listed beside it, but instead appears thirteen lines away, under the (incorrect) title “Oh, My Father.”


42J. Spencer Cornwall, Oral History (I), May 3, 1975, typescript of tape recording in LDS Church Archives.

43These quotations are taken from a reminiscence entitled “A Treasured Experience by Bernice J. Manwaring,” LDS Church Archives. Manwaring quotes President Grant as saying:

The text of [“O My Father”] is inspired, but I have never been satisfied with any of the musical settings. The familiar McGranahan one is not majestic enough. It is too sentimental and it’s too secular. The Lowell Mason is better, but I think it is too martial in spirit. I’ve heard it sung to other tunes, but none of them are just right. I’m hoping that some day some fine Latter-day Saint musician will write a melody that is as inspired as are Eliza Snow’s words.

44Pyper, *Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns*, 7. Pyper, referring to the “Harwell” tune, states, “This is President Grant’s favorite.”

45“Proposed Disposition of the Materials in the Present Hymnbook” (ca. 1977); photocopy of manuscript in author’s possession.
Testimony in Art: John Hafen’s Illustrations for “O My Father”

_Completed just a year before Hafen himself returned to his heavenly home, these illustrations express the truths that gave meaning to the artist’s lifelong battle with poverty._

Dawn Pheysey

The year 1890 was the beginning of John Hafen’s artistic alliance with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an association that would eventually culminate in his illustrations of the well-known Mormon hymn “O My Father.” Believing that art could be a powerful motivating factor in the advancement of religious ideas, Utah artists John Hafen and Lorus Pratt approached George Q. Cannon, first counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, requesting financial support to study art in France. In return, the artists would use their improved skills to paint murals for the temples.

As a result of this communication, Hafen and his fellow artists John B. Fairbanks, Lorus Pratt, and later, Edwin Evans were set apart as art missionaries to receive training in one of Europe’s finest art schools, the Julian Academy in Paris. Hafen’s desire to apply “[his] talent to the service of God and the beautifying of Zion”\(^1\) motivated him in Paris and throughout his life. Determined to learn all that he could in the time allotted him to study in France, he wrote, “I hope above all things God will give me devine assistance so I can make unusual progress.”\(^2\)

Instructors at the Julian Academy emphasized precise rendering, thereby providing the Utah artists with a strong foundation in drawing. The Utahn were equally inspired by the plein-air painters of the Barbizon school, whose idyllic paintings recorded unedited blends of man, animals, and landscape. The Utah artists also adapted
the expressive use of color, the visual effects of light, and the broken brushstrokes of the impressionists to achieve a fresh spontaneity in their paintings. Consequently, they spent a substantial time sketching outdoors. In a letter to his wife, Hafen wrote, "I feel like keeping my out of door acquaintance with nature on a par with my acquaintance of the human figure inasmuch as both are studies and likewise cultivate drawing abilities." Integrating the various influences of the Paris art experience, Hafen developed a style that was uniquely his own. The combination of these artistic conventions would be seen in his future landscape and portrait paintings, as well as the "O My Father" illustrations.

In 1891, a year after his return from Paris, Hafen and other Utah artists quickly executed the mural for the garden room in the Salt Lake Temple, thus fulfilling the major purpose of the art mission. The contribution of the Utah art missionaries was also seen in the strengthening of the state’s art organizations and in the enhancement of art instruction.

In the years that followed, Hafen was plagued by financial difficulties as he struggled for recognition as a viable artist. With his artwork finding few sales in his home state of Utah, he found it necessary to travel to Washington, California, the East Coast, and later, the Midwest to pursue his artistic career. Sustained by his faith in God, Hafen was determined to paint. He longed to use his God-given talents to provide for his large family and to further the message of the gospel, but fame and financial stability eluded him throughout his life. While he was living in Nashville, Indiana, he received a letter from his wife, Thora, expressing the sentiment felt by both of them: "The reason you are not permitted to do for your family as you would like, is that the Lord wants to teach us all the lesson of faith. He has His own way of doing it, and it sometimes seems hard to us." In order to support his growing family adequately, he approached the Church for financial assistance several times beginning in 1901. In exchange, he completed a number of paintings for the Church, including the familiar Girl among the Hollybocks and a series of portraits of the General Authorities.

In the spring of 1908, Hafen again left his family behind and went east to paint and market his work. While working in Chicago,
he was invited to exhibit his paintings in a one-man show at Marshall Field's Gallery. He received much praise and recognition, but, unfortunately, art sales were few and brought in only enough money to pay his expenses. Although monetary circumstances became dire, Hafen retained his sense of humor and was later to write, "I believe some times the Lord would kill a man or make him awful sick and full of trouble if he intended to buy some of my pictures." As he was always on the brink of financial despair, the trial of his faith continued.

During this period, Hafen met with the president of the Eastern States Mission, Ben E. Rich, and they discussed a plan to illustrate and publish "O My Father," the great Latter-day Saint poem written by Eliza R. Snow. This was not an official Church commission, but merely a suggestion from President Rich as a means of teaching the gospel. A short time later, German E. Ellsworth, president of the Northern States Mission, also became involved in the project. He led Hafen to believe that thousands of the illustrated booklets would be sold and the venture would be profitable for him, providing him with a source of income. Both mission presidents were to finance the project and put it on the market, taking only a small portion of the profit for their trouble in getting it published. All the rest of the proceeds were to go to the artist. President Ellsworth thought he could sell five or six thousand before Christmas 1908 if Hafen could finish them.

Although Hafen was financially desperate, his profound faith was the main motivation behind the paintings of the "O My Father" series. The opportunity to share gospel principles through this medium prompted Hafen to write, "I have thought about it almost constantly ever since brother Rich suggested it to me. I am impressed with the means that the pictorial art might be of spreading the grand truths which are in that poem."

In a subsequent letter to President Rich, Hafen expressed his great interest and enthusiasm for the project. He indicated that he had spent considerable time reading and studying the poem before making the proposal for the illustrations. Outlining his initial ideas, he wrote:

First the poem impresses me as a prayer. Hence my imagination opens up the group of pictures with a figure in the attitude of prayer.
Then succeeding pictures deal with visionary subjects chiefly. In a general way I am also inclined to think the commencement of the inspired principles set forth or suggested in the poem, begin in childhood. For instance, in the second and third theme, is childhood. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth themes, youth and early manhood; and more matured thoughts and reflections contained in the 4th verse which I have made into two themes, for the meridian or afternoon of life. The last verse represents ripe old age, when we are about ready to meet our Maker again.

I believe that the 1st and 2nd themes, also the 11th and 12th, might be made into one each, making in all 10 themes instead of 12.9

Feeling the magnitude and potential influence of this commission, Hafen asked President Rich for his sympathy, faith, and prayers to help him in this cause. In a meeting, Hafen and President Ellsworth determined that the purpose of the illustrations should be to "make plain the meaning of the song to common people, so they could better comprehend the meaning of the grand principles set forth in the verses."10

That summer Hafen went to Indiana at the invitation of Adolph Shulz, a friend from his Paris days. Under the direction of Shulz, Hafen and a group of Chicago artists established an art colony in rural Brown County.11 The quaint, wooded landscape of Nashville provided the artists with undefiled views of nature for their paintings. In this peaceful setting, Hafen worked on the illustrations for the "O My Father" series.

As the work progressed, Hafen felt that the Lord was "directing and opening up the way for this work and therefore there must be something in it."12 By using family members and local Church leaders as models,13 he gave added emphasis to the family relationships conveyed in the poem.

By December 1908, he had completed four of the illustrations and said he expected to have the remaining paintings done early in January 1909. A few months after the paintings were completed, Hafen received a postcard from President Ellsworth saying there was a delay in producing the booklet and he would do what he could to clear up the problem.14 Church authorities were concerned about the distribution of the illustrated poem. In response, Ellsworth traveled to Salt Lake City and spoke with the First Presidency, arguing "away the objections and got the authorities' consent
to go ahead with the sale of the booklets, President [Joseph F.] Smith offering to buy the first one.\textsuperscript{15} Hafen sent 475 booklets to Thora to sell, assuring her that the "illustrations [were] done just right, they were not only done in the best possible way but that they were done under the inspiration of the Lord."\textsuperscript{16}

It is unclear what happened regarding the "O My Father" booklet in the next two months, but some difficulty or misunderstanding prompted Hafen to write to the Church authorities. At the root of the problem appeared to be concern about publishing the booklet under the name of the Church and the complications that would follow from such an action. From all indications, the Church authorities gave permission for the booklet to be sold privately but denied approval for distribution by the missionaries as such an action would imply endorsement.

Frustrated by the reticence of the First Presidency to endorse the "O My Father" booklet and interpreting their reluctance as criticism of his artistic interpretation of the poem, Hafen wrote a lengthy letter to them expressing his disappointment. Because he believed they did not comprehend the specific mission of art and the rationale for his illustrations, Hafen was anxious for them to understand why he had illustrated the poem as he had. In defense of his approach, he expounded on the relationship between his art and his deeply held beliefs. For Hafen the mission of art was not

to ape or imitate anything, but primarily to interpret or reveal beauty in line and color. It is also within the province of an artist's calling to express beauty in philosophy and principle so far as it lies in the power of the pigments that he uses. . . . I am . . . convinced that anything in the eternal world is not illustratable by reason of materialistic limitations, and also by reason that what we cannot see we cannot interpret by form language. So far as this view goes I am in perfect harmony with those who believe that the poem in question is not illustratable. But, I do believe, for the best of reasons, that the philosophy and the principles involved in the poem "O My Father" are illustratable and afford good material for artistic themes. This is as far as I dared to venture in dealing with the material of this poem. This is one reason why I used common-place subjects. Another reason is that there is already too much speculation and mystery in the world regarding conditions in the eternal world.\textsuperscript{17}

The doctrine espoused in the "O My Father" hymn was at the core of Hafen's religious convictions. He saw the celestial family
relationship as a progressive continuation of his earthly family associations:

I well remember how a certain minister at a religious convention in Salt Lake City ridiculed the mormon idea of fatherhood and motherhood as expressed in their hymn and how degenerating it was &c. I really have rejoiced in this privilege of . . . illustrating and thereby asserting the reality and tangibility of our eternal existence. I have felt, all along, that I could not be too realistic in the treatment of this matter.

To me heaven, God, eternity, is a living materialistic reality. I have business with my Heavenly Father every day of my life; I love Him; I am well acquainted with Him. I also have friends in the other world and brothers and sisters; also a father and mother . . . I expect to meet them all and have a joyful time in talking over experiences. These feelings have had much to do with the manner in which I have illustrated this beautiful consistent and truthful poem. 18

Believing that the First Presidency's objections were based on his interpretations of the poem's doctrine, Hafen questioned their supposed reactions to the illustrations. He saw these earthly manifestations of divine love as a concept to which the humblest of people could relate. It was his intention that all who saw the illustrations would be able to identify with the truths contained therein.

I will ask [are] there any principles or features in the eight illustrations which take from or belittle any truth or philosophy in the poem? Is the fact, as illustrated for instance, of a father having a child by his side or a child having a father as a companion in walking out in nature? Is there anything but a good and an elevating thought in this? How about the mother clasping her child to her bosom in love, or an innocent babe sitting on the ground? What could there be in the sentiment of these subjects that would detract a single point from the grand poetic flow in the imaginative element in the poem? Brethren I have listened to this song when picture after picture was exposed to view as the words of the song flowed from the lips of the singers and I testify that these pictures added very much to the grandure of the sentiments in the poem. . . .

In conclusion I wish to bear my testimony that I have sought the Lord for help and inspiration in composing and executing those pictures, and that this trust has not been in vain. I feel that good will result from the spread of these illustrations with accompanying poem: and that even souls will be brought to a knowledge of the true and living God through their instrumentality. 19
Plate 1. *O My Father*. Courtesy MOA.
Plate 2. Was I nurtured near Thy side. Courtesy MOA.
Plate 3. *Thou hast placed me here on earth.* Courtesy MOA.
Plate 4. You’re a stranger here. Courtesy MOA.
Plate 5. *I had learned to call Thee Father.* Courtesy MOA.
Plate 6. *I've a MOTHER there*. Courtesy MOA.
Plate 7. When I leave this frail existence. Courtesy MOA.
Plate 8. *Let me come and dwell with you.* Courtesy MOA.
Although Hafen believed that the First Presidency was dissatisfied with his artistic treatment of the poem, they, in actuality, were only concerned about the ramifications of Church endorsement. In a letter, the First Presidency praised the pictures, "especially some of them which [they] thought really beautiful." They explained that if the business venture had been carried out as planned,

the sale of the work would naturally carry with it the idea, that this was being done on Church authority, and the agents would naturally emphasize this idea in their endeavors to make sales; and if this were done, it could only be a question of time when the Church would be called upon to explain its position in relation to it; ... and it was to avoid this that we withheld our consent to their publishing it.20

They had no objection, however, to someone other than an officer of the Church producing and selling the work. Consequently, friends and family members were enlisted to sell the "Illustrated Poem,"21 thus helping to defray the costs of publication. Originally, the booklets were to sell for about one dollar each,22 but later the price was reduced to fifty cents. Hafen made twenty cents commission on each booklet sold.23

Hafen's lifetime of experiences equipped him with the wisdom necessary to illustrate the gospel truths from this prophetic poem. Because of the deep faith that sustained him through difficult trials, he was able to portray not only the hope, but also the surety of a heavenly home. At Hafen's death, B. H. Roberts gave the following tribute:

[His life] was successful and I cannot help but believe it was all the more successful because it was sorrowful. This struggle of his had something to do with the success in his calling. ... When God will give great poems to the world, he takes some great soul and gives it great sorrow and out of that sorrow the poet sings. It is as true of artists as of poets and some of that has come into the life of John Hafen.24

The eight illustrations (two watercolors and six oils) and accompanying poem not only cultivated the love of art and poetry, but also fulfilled the booklet's function to teach gospel truths. Each painting in the series allows us to see and understand the eternal plan of salvation. At the same time, it gives us a glimpse into the soul of John Hafen.
“O My Father” Illustrations

O My Father, Thou that dwellest In the high and glorious place When shall I regain Thy presence, and again behold Thy face?25 Oil on paper, 1908. 18 5/8" x 10 3/4", sight size. (See plate 1.)

In this first illustration, Hafen depicts a young man26 kneeling in prayer on a jutting rock formation, addressing his Heavenly Father in all sincerity and humility. His lone figure against a cold, bleak landscape gives emphasis to the man’s desire to return to the heavenly realm of peace, safety, and love. Hafen knew what it meant to be alone in an impersonal world. Forced by economic circumstances to be away from his family for prolonged periods of time, he, too, felt an intense longing for home, to be reunited with his wife and children. While in Indiana, Hafen wrote to Thora expressing the same heartrending sentiments that he had expressed so many times before: “I am desperately wanting to have you with me. I need your encouraging counsel and love by me continually. I want to enjoy my children that God has given me.”27 Hafen’s artistic interpretation of this segment of the poem reflects the yearning for familial companionship that enabled him to paint with empathetic conviction.

In Thy holy habitation Did my spirit once reside; In my first primeval childhood, Was I nurtured near Thy side. Oil on paper, 1909. 19 1/8" x 10 3/4", sight size. (See plate 2.)

The first verse of “O My Father” culminates in a powerful commentary on the doctrine of premortality. Although the poem refers to habitation with our Heavenly Father, Hafen chose an earthly father and his daughter to represent that celestial family relationship. The young girl holds her father’s hand in both of hers as they pause along a path in a lush, green setting. Soon she must leave the father’s presence and his kind and gentle tutoring. The trust with which she looks at him and his respondent tenderness is a manifestation of that heavenly relationship we have with our Father in Heaven and He with us. Even the unbuttoned jacket and the openness created by the angle of the father’s feet suggest that Heavenly Father is approachable, open to our inquiries and petitions.
With a tropical palm tree incorporated into a landscape of pine trees and colorful wildflowers, the scenery is reminiscent of Hafen’s *Garden of Eden* study for the Salt Lake City Temple garden room. He infused his paintings with the essence of nature and encouraged his viewers to cease looking “for mechanical effect or minute finish, . . . or aped imitation of things, but look for smell, for soul, for feeling, for the beautiful in line and color.” Here the visual sensations of nature elevate our thoughts and sentiments to the divine principle of the premortality taught in “O My Father.” In contrast to the cold, stark landscape of the previous painting, warmth, light, and color infiltrate this work, creating an ambiance of affection and familiarity between the two figures. Using his daughter Rachel and his friend George Edward Anderson, the photographer, as models, Hafen achieved an expression of parental love, underscoring it with the radiant glow of the landscape.

*For a wise and glorious purpose Thou hast placed me here on earth, And withheld the recollection Of my former friends and birth.*

Oil on paper, 1908. 18 5/8" x 10 3/4", sight size. (See plate 3.)

The doctrine of premortality in the first verse of the poem is followed by the principle of our earthly probation. An angelic image of a young child with her finger in her mouth, dressed in white and sitting on the grass, speaks of a baby’s total innocence. Having forgotten the premortal existence and unaware of the joys and challenges that lie ahead, the young baby begins her mortal journey. Hafen uses artistic conventions to define the passage from a pre-earth life to a temporal experience. The hazy edge on the left suggests the blurred remembrance of a former life. The background progresses across the painting from light to shadow to dark signifying a transition from premortality to mortality. The light and dark contrast implies the vast difference between the two realms—one filled with light and truth, the other with opposition and uncertainties. With the memory of an earlier life suspended, each individual is left to choose between the forces of good and evil in fulfilling his or her potential. The artist reinforces this concept by the effective use of contrasting values.
During his early days in Paris, Hafen affirmed his understanding of humanity's responsibility to progress and learn while in this earthly state. "I believe," he wrote, "a person should be diligent in improving his faculties all his life time; for what else is this probation except a link in the great eternal link of progression. Thus it is; no matter in what position we are in in life, if we contemplate upon the plan of salvation we receive encouragement and assurances."29 As emphasis to his words, Hafen approached life with an enthusiastic desire to pursue and amplify his talents, confident that God would assist him in all his worthwhile endeavors.

Hafen was also very much aware that life would have its trials and disappointments. Believing there was a purpose behind all mortal difficulties, the Hafens put their trust in the Lord:

The trying adversity which has beset our path and troubled and tried us so severely all our married life ... has undoubtedly been the making of us. This condition has been the greatest blessing ... that God our eternal Father could have bestowed upon us. ... [M]y heart swelled with gratitude to my Heavenly Father for His mindfulness of us: for placing us in circumstances where we would be led to develop faith in our Heavenly Father and in the gospel.30

In spite of discouraging circumstances, Hafen never doubted his value as an artist, nor did he doubt that God would provide a way for him to achieve success.

According to family members, the baby in the painting is Anna Larson, Hafen's granddaughter. He probably painted her from one of the two photographs he carried of her in his pocketbook.31

Yet oft-times a secret something Whispered, "You're a stranger here"; And I felt that I had wandered from a more exalted sphere. Oil on paper, 1908. 19 1/2" x 11 15/16", sight size. (See plate 4.)

Hafen places a young woman52 in the intimate setting of an aspen grove. In this autumn scene, a blanket of fallen leaves covers the ground. The path, originating beyond the borders of the painting, pulls the viewer from one sphere into another and into that wooded landscape. The subtle color scheme heightens the contemplative mood of the scene.

Utah's mountain landscapes with their quaking-aspen groves provided Hafen with the material he needed for painting. He rejoiced
at the “ever-varying woodland paths . . . darting through dense forests”\textsuperscript{33} that filled him with exhilaration.

To Hafen, nature was a spiritual manifestation of God's love. In a letter to a friend, he wrote, “We could do without the flowers in the fields and mountains or by the wayside. We could do without the various colors which adorn the face of nature; but an all-wise and generous Creator has placed them there for the welfare of his children.”\textsuperscript{34} In this letter, Hafen’s description of nature’s changing moods takes on a human quality, paralleling life’s “storms and sunshines” while in this probationary state.

In his association with God’s creations, Hafen discovered sacred truths and sentiments. This painting's mood-filled landscape conveys the delicate feelings of one who is in but not of the world. Writing on the subject of nature, he quoted: “It stands for a natural expression of what is outside and beyond ourselves, and . . . it helps us to look up and out, to see beauty and charm in everything about us; to broaden our mental horizon, to elevate our feelings, to double our capacity for enjoyment, to feel the poetry and harmony of life.”\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{I had learned to call Thee Father Thro' Thy Spirit from on high;}
\textit{But until the KEY of KNOWLEDGE was restored, I knew not why.}

Oil on paper, 1909. 19 \textfrac{1}{8} " x 10 \textfrac{3}{4} " , sight size. (See plate 5.)

The only immortal being illustrated in the poem is the angel Moroni, who here stands slightly above the ground with his right hand raised. He is dressed in an open white robe surrounded by an emanating light. Joseph Smith leans forward in eager anticipation as he listens to the words of the heavenly being. To his left is the open stone box containing the gold plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. A large stone, thick and rounded in the middle, partially covers the box. Depicting the moment when the angel Moroni revealed the box and its contents to Joseph Smith, Hafen represented the restoration of gospel knowledge.

Hafen himself fervently embraced the restored gospel. He appreciated “beyond expression the daily reading from the Testament and Book of Mormon.” He wrote, “The Lord has given these writings for a purpose and He wants us to use them and make ourselves acquainted with them.”\textsuperscript{36}
It is likely that Hafen's son Virgil was the model for Joseph Smith. During young manhood, Virgil struggled with his testimony. It seems probable that Hafen chose his son as the model in the hope that he would experience an affinity with the young prophet and thus strengthen his own testimony. At the time this illustration was done, Virgil lived with his father in Indiana. Later he attended the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis, where he studied painting and drawing.

_In the heav'n's are parents single? No; the tho't makes reason stare! Truth is reason, truth eternal, Tells me I've a MOTHER there._ Watercolor, 1908. 18 5/8" x 10 3/4", sight size. (See plate 6.)

This monochromatic painting of two figures against the sky is a tender and sensitive portrayal of a mother's love. The mother encircles the girl in the comfort of her arms and rests her head on that of her daughter. Again Hafen uses a mortal mother to represent our Heavenly Mother. What more appropriate models for Hafen to use than those of his beloved wife, Thora, and their daughter Delia.

The painting prophetically defines the real-life relationship between this mother and daughter, as described by Hafen in a letter several months after the painting was completed. In that letter, Hafen praises the love that Thora has for her children and offers loving counsel to Delia:

> Love mama confide and trust in her; she is full of love for you and wishes to do all she can for you just the same as when she cradled you in her arms and hugged you to her bosom and showered those loving kisses upon your sweet baby face. A mother's love never dies, or even diminishes! There is no friend or protector on earth that can possibly excell a mother's love. . . . Remember darling daughter that a mother will stand by her child when all the world will scorn it.  

_When I leave this frail existence, When I lay this mortal by, Father, Mother, may I meet you In your royal courts on high?_ Oil on paper, 1909. 19 1/4" x 11 3/16", sight size. (See plate 7.)

In this painting, the waning hours in the sunset of life are emphasized by a soft, hazy glow on the horizon that obscures all
surrounding details. The old man’s profile is highlighted by the setting sun as he turns toward the light. Influenced by his previous association with the Barbizon school of painters, Hafen uses a subtle color scheme with dominant halftones to produce a strong pictorial effect.

Here, as in other illustrations of the series, the use of a path signifies the road we all must travel as we make that sacred pilgrimage back to our heavenly home. Perhaps Hafen saw something of himself in this elderly gentleman with head bent and shoulders stooped with age. Although he was only in his early fifties at this time, the difficulty of his life’s journey had aged him but also endowed him with the wisdom, maturity, and experience of an older man. Writing to a friend in Salt Lake City, Hafen said:

Now that my hairs have turned white with time and a diligent, long, hard fight for what there is good in my grand profession, I can take a glance over the field of the world’s accomplishment, at least from a high eminence, and can see better now than ever before what the Lord has and is doing for me, in reward for my trust and faith in him.58

Then, at length, When I’ve completed All you sent me forth to do, With your mutual approbation Let me come and dwell with you. Watercolor, 1909. 18 1/4" x 9 7/16", sight size. (See plate 8.)

Again we see the aged gentleman from the previous painting—who was modeled after the patriarch John Lowry. The soft, sienna tone of the painting suggests another realm into which this weary traveler has journeyed. Hafen himself had so few earthly possessions, one wonders what he envisioned in the lumpy knapsack hoisted over the old man’s shoulders. The open gate and pathway leading to the multispired mansion seem to welcome him back to his celestial abode.

Conclusion

One year after the completion of these eight illustrations, John Hafen himself returned to his heavenly home. On the verge of financial success, he died of pneumonia June 3, 1910, only two weeks after his family had joined him in Indianapolis. Alice Merrill
Horne beautifully and succinctly captured the essence of John Hafen’s life:

Though Hafen’s beginnings were humble; though others have commenced the ascent of the roadway of fame with seemingly larger assets; though he has groped on a lonely way; though obstacles were continuously thrust before him; though poverty has struggled to defeat him, yet he has believed in his gift. He has never loosened the grip of his stubborn hold, for at each crisis through which he passed, his consciousness of his soul’s inspiration has overwhelmed the power of destructive agents about him; therefore he has won the battles.39

He was tenacious in the conviction that his calling in life was to be an artist and was determined “to be instrumental in exalting the beautiful art to a high position among the people of God so that the world may know what power there is in the gospel.”40 As a result, he attained the ultimate success as one who brought “great honor to the church and people of God.”41

The “O My Father” paintings represent one of the finest unions of poetry and art ever produced. These were not merely illustrations of a poem; they were sincere portrayals of truths that the artist embraced. Hafen believed that “good art is . . . much dependent on truth.” He wrote, “A man or woman who has wrong ideas of his or her . . . religion, of God, and of duty, cannot become a great artist, be they ever so gifted.”42 This illustrated narrative of fundamental Latter-day Saint concepts sprang from his very soul and fulfilled a longing for visual expression of his beliefs. As an art student in Paris, he wrote, “All the noble accomplishments in the arts and sciences only implant the truth deeper in the human heart.”43

It has long been a common practice to promulgate religious beliefs through the visual arts. This means of representation was revitalized by early Latter-day Saint artists who painted scenes from Church history and emphasized gospel tenets as testimonials to their faith. As one of early Utah’s greatest artists, John Hafen combined art and illustration in a powerful fusion of vision and spirit to fortify the gospel principles he espoused.

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The author expresses appreciation to Carol Hafen Jones, granddaughter of John Hafen, for sharing not only her Hafen family files, but also her personal knowledge and insight. Other members of the Hafen family, Joseph Hafen and Norma Hafen Henrie, also contributed valuable information about the “O My Father” series. Finally, she thanks Robert Davis, Senior Curator at the Museum of Church History and Art, for his review and suggestions.

NOTES

1John Hafen to George Q. Cannon, Springville, Utah, March 25, 1890. Unless otherwise indicated, all letters quoted are in the John Hafen correspondence file, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.


4Thora Hafen to John Hafen, Provo, Utah, October 25, 1908.

5John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 10, 1909.

6John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Chicago, Illinois, July 16, 1908.

7John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Nashville, Indiana, July 30, 1908.

8John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Chicago, Illinois, June 24, 1908.


10John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Nashville, Indiana, July 30, 1908.


12John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Nashville, Indiana, November 2, 1908.


14John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 15, 1909.

15John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 9, 1909. This letter is in a typescript compilation of excerpts prepared by the Hafen family. Copy in curatorial files, Museum of Art, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

16John Hafen to Thora Hafen, June 9, 1909.

17[John Hafen to President Joseph F. Smith, Nashville, Indiana, August 4, 1909.] This is a rough draft of the letter sent to President Smith.

18[John Hafen to President Joseph F. Smith.]

19[John Hafen to President Joseph F. Smith.]

20The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to John Hafen, Salt Lake City, Utah, October 5, 1909.

21Armeda to My Dear Friend [John Hafen], Salt Lake City, Utah, December 21, 1909.
This original price is supported by Armada to My Dear Friend, December 21, 1909. Armada wrote “sold 45 books, gave away 5 my expenses were $6.00. I now with pleasure send you a check of $40.00.”

22John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 22, 1909.
24In the illustration titles, capitalization and punctuation are Hafen’s.
20Hafen’s son Virgil was the model for the young man in this painting. Virgil traveled to Minneapolis and then on to Nashville, Indiana, with his father in the spring of 1909.
25John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Indianapolis, Indiana, December 31, 1909.
26John Hafen, “Mountains from an Art Standpoint,” Young Woman’s Journal 16 (September 1905): 404.
29John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Paris, France, October 19, 1890.
28John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Nashville, Indiana, November 2, 1908; underlining in original.
22Hafen’s daughter Lezetta (called Zetta) was used as the model.
23Hafen, “Mountains from an Art Standpoint,” 405.
24John Hafen to an unidentified friend, undated, curatorial files, Museum of Art, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. This letter is also known as John Hafen’s essay on the mission of art.
29Hafen, “Mountains from an Art Standpoint,” 403.
26John Hafen to Thora Hafen, New York, New York, March 12, 1902.
27John Hafen to Thora Hafen, Nashville, Indiana, July 31, 1909.
28Quoted in “The Gospel in Art,” Editor’s Table, Improvement Era 13 (December 1909): 177.
29Alice Merrill Horne, “John Hafen, the Utah Landscapist,” Young Woman’s Journal 21 (February 1910): 88; italics in original.
41John Hafen to President Joseph F. Smith and the Brethren, July 5, 1903, research files, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City, Utah, quoted in Gibbs, Harvesting the Light, 49.
Leaving Too Soon

Startled awake, I grope the ringing phone—
Rush my eager “Yes?” past raspy voice—
Dial tone. You hung up? It was a dream?

Nightmare figures, we watched you decide.
All developmentally correct;
All the crying choked behind weak smiles;
Held each other while we searched our faults;
Watched you drive away.
Only daughter. Gone.

It feels like death—
Family portrait’s static now: we age;
Your picture will forever be sixteen,
The picture of a girl we thought we knew.
I want those years.

I reach a bare foot, shaky, for each stair,
Then cold, smooth entry tile. Forgot your key?
How long have you been ringing the doorbell?
Empty moonlight. I step out and search
The shadows under trees. Are you out there?
Come back! I want to call to you, Come home!
I speak your name as token: you’ll return.
But it echoes, fades to whispered mother-dreams.

—Lisa Bolin Hawkins
Eliza Roxcy Snow (1804–1887). Daguerreotype taken about 1856. Courtesy Photographic Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
The Significance of “O My Father” in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow

When Eliza articulated her attachment to the eternal household where she had resided and would yet dwell, she defined the polestar by which she would orient herself the rest of her life.

Jill Mulvay Derr

On January 21, 1910, the Relief Society General Presidency and board gathered for the first time in their rooms in the imposing four-story Bishop’s Building directly east of the Salt Lake Temple. Formal dedication of the structure—erected to house the Presiding Bishopric and general officers of the Relief Society, Primary Association, and Young Men’s and Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Associations—would take place six days later on January 27. But the women could not wait.

January 21 is the anniversary of Eliza R. Snow’s birthday. Her friends had celebrated the event during Eliza’s lifetime, and since her death in 1887, it had been customary for a circle of her sisters to “recognize in some way” the occasion. At this “first social gathering in the Relief Society rooms,” the sisters exchanged reminiscences of “Aunt” Eliza, whom some of the women had known intimately. She was more widely remembered, however, as the celebrated Sister Eliza R. Snow, a woman who “was a legend before half her effective life was done, and lived that legend for the rest of it.” Known for her poetry, her ministrations in latter-day temples, and her authoritative counsel as general head of all three Latter-day Saint women’s organizations, she was greeted by one sister in 1881 as “President of all the feminine portion of the human race.” The unique place granted her by nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints is evident in the Juvenile Instructor’s admonition to Primary teachers in 1890 to cultivate in

*BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996-97)
Mormon children “a reverence for the Prophet Joseph Smith, Sister Eliza R. Snow and the Holy Priesthood.”

The Woman’s Exponent, in featuring news of the 1910 birthday celebration, praised her work and hymns and noted simply: “The one hymn, ‘O My Father,’ would, if she had written no other, keep her memory green in the hearts of the Saints.” The sisters assembled in their new rooms commenced the anniversary program by singing “O My Father.” It was a fitting invocation, perhaps even extraordinarily appropriate under the circumstances. The singing of the familiar words not only honored the remarkable woman who penned them, but also served to locate the cluster of sisters within the divine expanse of time and space. “O My Father” is primarily a hymn of orientation. It speaks of place, habitation, sphere, wandering, residing, and dwelling. Eliza R. Snow’s first-person declaration of her relationship to God through primeval past, earthly present, and eternal future becomes the personal affirmation of each one who sings the hymn. Thus, the invocation sung by the sisters confirmed their place not only within the Bishop’s Building, but also within the cosmos.

For the past 150 years, prophets and Saints have prized the simple eloquence with which “O My Father” captures some of the most profound truths of the eternal gospel. Eliza R. Snow’s journey to a personal integration of those truths led to her writing of the hymn and later to her discovery that those truths could be drawn upon to lift up herself and her sisters. Written in 1845, at the virtual midpoint of her eighty-three-year lifetime, “O My Father” marks a critical confluence in Eliza’s life. Her faith and reason, her Nauvoo experience, and Joseph Smith’s most expansive teachings fused with a new and profound spiritual witness of her connectedness to God. The poem represents the deep sense of harmony and wholeness that became Eliza’s wellspring.

Journey to Wholeness and Connection

Titled “My Father in Heaven,” the poem appeared in the November 15, 1845, issue of the Nauvoo Times and Seasons under the signature of “Miss Eliza R. Snow.” The four stanzas are followed by the subscript “City of Joseph, Oct. 1845.” If Nauvoo was the
City of Joseph for Latter-day Saints generally, it was particularly so for Eliza Snow. "To narrate what transpired within the seven years, in which we built and occupied Nauvoo, the beautiful, would fill many volumes," she wrote in the life sketch she copied for historian Hubert Howe Bancroft in the early 1880s. "Some of the most important events of my life transpired within that brief term, in which I was married, and in which my husband, Joseph Smith, the Prophet of God, sealed his testimony with his blood!"8

Eliza's close relationship to Joseph Smith as one of his plural wives was the center of her Nauvoo experience, as Nauvoo was the pivot point of her life. After Joseph's death, Eliza became a plural wife of Brigham Young, but her relationship to Joseph—"my beloved husband, the choice of my heart and the crown of my life"9—remained at the core of her personal identity. Beginning in 1880, following the deaths of Brigham Young (1877) and Emma Smith (1879), she chose to be known as Eliza R. Snow Smith, the name that appears on her gravestone in Brigham Young's private cemetery.10

Eliza Snow's prayerful decision to enter into plural marriage at the time it was being first introduced intensified the sense of displacement that characterized much of her life in Nauvoo. A thirty-five-year-old "maiden lady" when she arrived there in 1839, she, like other single women of the era, either remained with her family's household or resided with another family. In 1838, Eliza had moved with her father and mother, Oliver and Rosetta Pettibone Snow, from Ohio, where they had lived for more than three decades, to Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri. The Snow household included Eliza's three younger brothers, Lorenzo, Lucius, and Samuel; her older sister, Leonora; and Leonora's two daughters.11 After the Saints evacuated Missouri, Eliza began a series of moves: to Quincy and then Lima, Illinois, where she lived with Leonora, then on to Commerce (Nauvoo) to teach the family school of long-time family friend Sidney Rigdon, then to rejoin her parents and brothers through three moves in and around Nauvoo until June 1842. When her family decided to settle some ninety miles north of Nauvoo, she reported, "I lived with the Prophet's first wife, and taught a school of 65 scholars. Before its close, I went and boarded with brother and sister Holmes for a short time, and previous to
the exodus of the Saints from Ill. I lived in the family of Col. Stephen Markham.”

Her upstairs room in the home of Stephen and Hannah Markham is where Eliza Snow composed “O My Father.”

In contrast to the displacement Eliza felt as she moved from one household to another is the position of prominence she was achieving within the Nauvoo community. In March 1842, she was elected secretary of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, and four months later, she accompanied Emma Smith and Amanda Barnes Smith to Quincy to present Illinois Governor Thomas Carlin with an ultimately unavailing Relief Society petition for protection of Joseph Smith. By then Eliza’s poetry had already made her a figure of considerable renown. Exactly when the Prophet Joseph appointed her “Zion’s Poetess” is not clear, but between 1839 and 1846, she seriously assumed that role, speaking to and on behalf of the Saints through her poetry.

Eliza, who previous to her baptism in April 1835 had published numerous poems in the Ohio Star; published two hymns in the Messenger and Advocate during 1835 and 1836. Then she fell silent for three years—until April 1839, when stopping at Quincy, Illinois, with other refugee Saints she published eighteen poems in the Quincy Whig, mostly on general topics (friendship, home, nature), although a few of her poems address the plight of the Mormon refugees.

Publication of a Mormon periodical recommenced in Commerce (Nauvoo), Illinois, in November 1839 with the first issue of the biweekly Times and Seasons. The second issue, filled with the history of the Missouri persecutions, carried Eliza Snow’s poem on the Haun’s Mill Massacre, “The Slaughter on Shoal Creek, Caldwell County, Missouri.” The many historical and occasional poems she began composing in Nauvoo made her “a lyrical commentator on the struggles of the Mormons in the Midwest,” as historian John Hallwas observed. Her poetry forms a compelling, if incomplete, chronicle of her people’s experience, whose epic significance she hoped to convey. For example, her “Two Chapters of the Life of Joseph Smith,” written mostly in blank verse, describes the religious world in the nineteenth century and Joseph’s childhood and first vision. An even more ambitious work was “Time and Change,” a 638-line poem summarized by Eliza as “A Historical Sketch,
commencing with the Creation, and extending to the year 1841, the time the Poem was written." The poem attempts to set the work of the Saints within the context of the world’s history, ultimately looking forward to the return of Adam, the Ancient of Days, and the millennial reign and the coming of "the great Messiah and his glorious train."\(^\text{17}\)

Eliza filled the Nauvoo papers—the *Times and Seasons*, the *Wasp*, and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*—with poetry that reflected a growing sense of community identity and intimacy. There were poems on the temple, the Relief Society, the Nauvoo Legion, and even a poem for Orson Pratt’s nascent Nauvoo University. In addition to her epics, psalms, and hymns (including “The Word of Wisdom,” “Though Deep’ning Trials,” “Awake! Ye Saints of God, Awake!” and “Celestial Glory”), she began publishing lines addressed to or in memory of specific individuals. Most were friends, but some were local or national figures. There is even a poem for Queen Victoria, to whom Eliza’s missionary brother Lorenzo anticipated presenting a Book of Mormon.

And yet, behind the well-positioned public poetess speaking with increasing regularity and new authority was a woman struggling to find her place in private life. Eliza’s plural marriage to Joseph Smith on June 29, 1842, unsettled her, despite the personal spiritual witness she had received that the marriage was according to God’s will. “If I had understood *Plural Marriage* when I embraced it as I do to-day, it would have been no trial to me; but I am thankful to God that his grace was sufficient for me,” she explained forty years later.\(^\text{18}\) It is doubtful that even Eliza’s parents knew of her forthcoming marriage when they decided to leave Nauvoo in June 1842, but they were well aware of John C. Bennett’s scandalous tales of “spiritual wifery.” From their new home in Walnut Grove, Eliza’s father, Oliver Snow, wrote his brother Franklin, “Eliza cannot leave our Prophet. Mother did not like to. For my part I am very glad, at present, to be away. Turmoil and confusion, these stalk abroad at noon day.”\(^\text{19}\)

Eliza’s Nauvoo journal commences on her wedding day—“a day of much interest to my feelings”—with heavily veiled references to her marriage and sealing, as all participants were under covenantal obligations of secrecy. The June 29 entry is disconnected and
obscure, but she is clear about "the removal of my father's family," indicating with precision that "one week and two days have transpired since the family left." She was to be part of Joseph Smith's family now, although his wife Emma almost certainly had not been informed of Eliza's inclusion.

It seems the marriage simultaneously brought Eliza a sense of connectedness and isolation, deep assurance and confusion. Her poems for this period both convey her deep admiration, concern, and affection for Joseph Smith and reveal her frustration and disorientation in trying to be part of a secret marriage.

Eliza prized the Prophet's soaring understanding of divine truth. One of her Nauvoo poems referred to Joseph's mind as a "rich jewel." Another prayerfully praised the man and the prophet from whose lips have flow'd

The words of life thy Spirit has bestow'd—
A depth of thought no human art could reach,
From time to time roll'd in sublimest speech
From the celestial fountain through his mind.22

Eliza feasted upon the precious doctrines Joseph introduced in Nauvoo as the Saints focused their efforts on building a temple where the Lord promised to reveal sacred ordinances and "things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times" (D&C 124:40-41). She listened to Joseph's sermons, conversed with him, and carefully kept the official record of his addresses to the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. The Prophet personally instructed the sisters in their callings and the exercise of spiritual gifts, invited them to "move according to the ancient Priesthood," and prepared them for the forthcoming introduction of the temple endowment.

The profusion of expansive doctrines Joseph taught in Nauvoo shed new light upon essential gospel precepts and practices: the character of God and his relationship to humanity, the premortal existence, the power of the priesthood, the plurality of gods, celestial marriage, and temple ordinances for the living and the dead. "From the celestial fountain" through the Prophet Joseph Smith came a comprehensive theology that extended to include
and exalt all the daughters and sons of God. Before leaving Nauvoo, Eliza Snow would discover and memorably proclaim her own place within that theology. Years later she still marveled at the glorious precepts Joseph had taught, quoting him repeatedly and continuing to honor “the greatness of [his] soul, the superhuman wisdom with which he was endowed.”

At the request of Joseph and Emma, Eliza lodged in their Nauvoo Homestead from August 17, 1842, until February 11, 1843, teaching school part of the time. During that six-month period, she composed at least sixteen poems, almost all of which, as Maureen Ursenbach Beecher has shown, reveal her personal attachment to Joseph. Eliza openly expressed concern for Joseph’s safety as he sequestered himself to avoid arrest by Missouri officials trying to implicate him in an assassination attempt on Lilburn Boggs. In “Invocation” she wrote:

O hide him in thy secret fold
When on his path they tred;
Safe as Elijah, who of old.
Was by the ravens fed.

Most often her expressions of affection were interwoven with her frustration at the confusion of the times—“a deep intricate puzzle, a tangle of strings.” “The raging storm of persecution” she described might have referred to the unrelenting efforts of Missouri authorities. However, in the wake of rumors intensified by John C. Bennett’s exposés, Nauvoo was buzzing with accusations against Joseph Smith and secret plural marriages—almost certainly the “human rage” and “strife of tongues” of which Eliza also wrote.

“In the trying scale of rapid change” that accompanied the introduction of celestial marriage, Eliza struggled “to stand, with nerve and sinew firmly steeld.” In the process, she felt “friends withdraw their love” and came to know the stinging “blast that strikes at moral character.” In a poem addressed to Joseph and Emma, she demanded:

Tell me, what will it be, and O, where will it end?
Say, if you have permission to tell:
Is there any fixed point unto which prospects tend?
Does a focus belong to pell-mell?
From the midst of confusion can harmony flow?
Or can peace from distraction come forth?
From out of corruption, integrity grow?
Or can vice unto virtue give birth?

Will the righteous come forth with their garments unstained?

With their hearts unpolluted with sin?
O, yes; Zion, thy honor will still be sustained,
And the glory of God usher'd in.30

Eliza affirmed her faith that she would ultimately find the “focus,” the “fixed point,” the sacred and glorious pattern in the seeming whirlwind of new doctrines and practices being introduced by the Prophet Joseph, doctrines and practices which estranged her from worldly traditions and approbation. Her pointed questions convey the emotional turmoil and dislocation she and other Saints felt as they tried to live the new marriage principle without disclosing it publicly. Like other references to plural marriage during this period, her questions in verse were ambiguous. These lines and others Eliza wrote during her six months in the Smith household might be read as the expressions of a dedicated disciple, a family friend, or a loving wife. Eliza R. Snow was all three.

When she left the Smith residence in February 1843, she noted tersely in her journal, “Took board and had my lodging removed to the residence of br. J. Holmes.”31 She apparently never elaborated the circumstances of the move, but over the years apocryphal stories circulated about an angry altercation between Emma and Eliza, sparked perhaps by Emma’s realization of the close connection between her husband and her friend.32 Evidence of the affinity between Joseph and Eliza does not abound, but some of her poems certainly imply it. A stanza from “To Who Needs Consolation,” written after her marriage and almost certainly addressed to Joseph, reads:

I feel thy woes—my bosom shares,
Thy spirit’s agony;—
How can I love a heart that dares
Suspect thy purity?33

That the closeness of the association between Joseph and Eliza was understood by those he trusted is suggested in a warm tribute Wilford Woodruff addressed to her in 1857:
Many an hour has Joseph spent in gloom and sorrow because of Fals Brethren and wicked men. Even the hearts of the saints were so barred by fals tradition that He Could not unbosom his soul in the House of His Friends. This Caused him pain. Then thou dist Comfort him. Thy friendly thoughts and acts and words inspired by Gods Eternal truth was like a flaming shaft. Though launch by a female hand, that hand was nerved by faith and power that it pierced the walls of Darkness fear and death and gave the Prophet Joy.34

As Eliza forged her way through the sea of controversy in Nauvoo regarding plural marriage, she was trying not only to integrate the multiple voices in herself, but also to maintain some unity in her divided family. Her parents in Walnut Grove, some ninety miles away, were increasingly removed from the faith to which she held fast. She noted the distance she felt when she and Lorenzo visited there in May 1843:

The care and anxiety which I have experienced for the difficulties to which my parents have been subject since our expulsion from our home in Mo. have been a source of much bitterness of feeling; and that bitterness has been aggravated by the reflection that they did not in their trials draw out from the springs of consolation which the gospel presents that support which was their privilege, and which would have enabled them to rejoice in the midst of tribulation & disappointment.35

Leonora and Lorenzo stood firm in the faith, and Eliza enjoyed long visits with each when she could, but they had families and responsibilities of their own. By the end of 1843, Leonora had entered plural marriage as a wife of Isaac Morley. Numerous missions frequently took Lorenzo from Nauvoo, and by the end of 1845, he, too, had married. Visits to other family members and friends, schoolteaching, meeting going, writing, and handwork occupied Eliza’s time, but nevertheless, she sometimes found “a lonely feeling will steal over me before I am aware,” and she languished more than once in a “sorrowful mood.”36

According to her journal, “being invited to do so,” Eliza moved in with Hannah and Stephen Markham on April 14, 1844. Scanty journal entries before that date do not contain her reaction to the April 7, 1844, funeral sermon Joseph preached for Elder King Follett. Further she left no personal record of the momentous eighteen months between April 14, 1844, and October 1845,
when "O My Father" was composed in her attic room at the Markham home. But the "principles of consolation" Joseph taught during the spring of 1844 were not far removed from her private reflections during this critical period for Latter-day Saints. Indeed, Joseph's teachings seem to have combined with two devastating personal events—the death of her husband and the death of her father—to shape her writing of the hymn.

Eliza Snow's only recorded response to the martyrdom of Joseph Smith is an eighty-four-line public eulogy dated four days after the tragedy and published both as a broadside and an item in the Times and Seasons. In her "Lines on the Assassination of General Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith, First Presidents of the Church of Latter-day Saints, Who Were Massacred by a Mob in Carthage, Hancock County, Ill., on the 27th of June, 1844," she expressed with passion and anger the grief of the sorrowing Saints. She extolled the two great men as "the noblest of mankind," lamenting, Zion "mourns an earthly head: / Her Prophet and her Patriarch are dead!" And she importuned:

Thou God of Jacob, in this trying hour  
Help us to trust in thy almighty power;  
Support thy Saints beneath this awful stroke—  
Make bare thine arm to break oppression's yoke.57

An article in Andrew Jenson's 1901 Biographical Encyclopedia, written by "L.G.R." (probably Lula Greene Richards), recounts that Eliza was "prostrated with grief" following Joseph's death and she fervently prayed to die and rejoin him. She prayed, the article states, "until the Prophet came to her" and told her that she yet had a great mission to accomplish in carrying forward the work he had established.58 The uncorroborated anecdote conveys the grief Eliza never disclosed for public record.

The number of poems she published significantly diminished following Joseph's death, hinting perhaps at the depth of her sorrow. From April 1839, when the Saints left Missouri, until February 1846, when they left Nauvoo, she wrote at least ninety-four poems, nearly one quarter of her life's poetry. Only seven of those followed her public eulogy to Joseph and Hyrum Smith—three to members of the Smith family, one to John Taylor, one to Brigham
Young, and one to a young immigrant sister.39 "O My Father," or as she titled it, "My Father in Heaven," was her last Nauvoo poem.40 Dated “Oct. 1845,” it was probably composed just after the death of Eliza’s own father.

Oliver Snow died at Walnut Grove, Illinois, on October 17, 1845. How quickly news of his impending death or passing reached his daughters and son is not known. Eliza, Lorenzo, and Leonora may well have made the ninety-mile journey to their parents’ home to help comfort their ailing and grieving mother and then returned to Nauvoo. The two sisters and their brother would have then separated—Leonora returning to her daughters and husband, Lorenzo to his wives, and Eliza to her attic room at the Markhams.

Surely the “lonely feeling” that would sometimes “steal over” Eliza in her “beloved City” pained her then. The unfinished upstairs room, Bathsheba Smith recalled, was “so low that she could almost reach the rafters as she lay in bed; without carpet on the floor, perhaps a chair or two, a small trunk, a stand or table, perhaps a candlestick and a tallow candle.”41 She had been bedridden there for five weeks during June and July 1845, and a year before that, she had mourned Joseph’s death in the same room.42 But in the fall of 1845, it seems to have become the place where, in the midst of renewed mourning, she found solace, wholeness, and connection.

Form, Feeling, and Theology in “O My Father”

Rarely in Eliza Snow’s poetry do form, feeling, and theology come together as powerfully as they do in “O My Father.” She was wont to be complex, even erudite, clever, occasionally sentimental, but seldom plain and simple. Her choice of form, alternating lines of four and three trochees, allowed her space for reflection and ease in expressing whole thoughts without unnatural choppiness:

O my Father, thou that dwellest
In the high and glorious place;
When shall I regain thy presence,
And again behold thy face?

The opening lines carry with them a profound sense of longing that is unusual in Eliza’s poetry. Spirited nationalism boosting either “Columbia” or the kingdom of God, anger and indignation,
humility and resignation, respect, concern and hope—these are the primary sentiments Zion's Poetess usually expressed. But in "O My Father," Eliza longs, leading with her heart, looking heavenward to lost loved ones, and posing the question that her grief wants answered. The queries continue, but the tone becomes more reflective:

In thy holy habitation
Did my spirit once reside?
In my first primeval childhood
Was I nurtur'd near thy side?

These hopeful questions are answered in the next two stanzas as the poet affirms her own faith and intuition:

For a wise and glorious purpose
Thou hast plac'd me here on earth,
And withheld the recollection
Of my former friends and birth:
Yet oft times a secret something
Whispered you're a stranger here;
And I felt that I had wandered
From a more exalted sphere.

The poet's questions and affirmations blend to form an eloquent statement of Joseph Smith's recent teaching regarding premortal existence. Yet, it is the poet, the "I," who hears the whispering and intuitively feels her glorious past. Her poem moves forward, weaving together the other means of knowing available to her: personal revelation through the Holy Spirit, the "key of the knowledge of God" administered through the priesthood (D&C 84:19), and finally, reason:

I had learn'd to call thee father
Through thy spirit from on high;
But until the key of knowledge
Was restor'd, I knew not why.
In the heav'ns are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare;
Truth is reason—truth eternal
Tells me I've a mother there.

All the poet's means of knowing come together in "truth eternal," the comprehensive vision in which reason accords with revelation and both witness the "mother there."
The poem’s closing stanza looks forward to life after death, the return to the “exalted sphere.” Its wording and questions echo the preceding lines. In the first stanza, the poet asked when she would regain God’s presence, a question answered here in phrases also introduced by the word “when.” “The wise and glorious purpose” is recapitulated here as “all you sent me forth to do.” The terms “father” and “mother” of the third stanza are repeated, and the sense of their partnership and union resounds in the poet’s use five times of the plurals “you” and “your”:

When I leave this frail existence—
   When I lay this mortal by,
Father, mother, may I meet you
   In your royal court on high?
Then, at length, when I’ve completed
   All you sent me forth to do,
With your mutual approbation
   Let me come and dwell with you.46

While the movement of the poem is clearly from premortal to mortal to postmortal existence through time linear, there is roundness to it, reflecting God’s “eternal round” and providing a deep sense of continuity and connection. Unity is accentuated by the harmonious coming together of opposites: heaven and earth, parent and child, male and female. Such a profound expression of wholeness suggests that a fragmented and grieving Eliza had found peace.

For Saints who had been feasting upon the doctrines taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith, Eliza’s poem did not call up literary complexities, but rather evoked the plan of salvation in its entirety: the existence of intelligences, the council in heaven, the foreordained mission of Jesus Christ and of each individual, the possibility of godhood, and an everlasting union of man and woman with eternal increase. It elicited a sense of intimacy with God. It pointed to truths emphasized in the temple endowment, which the Saints would begin to receive in the nearly completed Nauvoo Temple less than a month after the poem appeared. (Eliza Snow, who received her own endowment December 16, 1845, would be among those who officiated there for her sisters.)45 Beyond the poem’s personal meaning to Eliza, “My Father in Heaven” was a fitting celebration of the truths Saints would carry forth from the City of Joseph.46
Two months after its initial publication in the November 15, 1845, issue of the *Times and Seasons*, the poem was published in Liverpool in the Saints’ *Millennial Star*. In March 1849, editor Orson Hyde featured it in the Kanesville (Iowa) *Frontier Guardian* for the benefit of Saints trekking westward, though Eliza herself was by then well settled in the Great Salt Lake Valley. Exactly when the Saints began singing the poem is unclear, but in 1851 it was included without a title in the *Hymns* published in Liverpool. Indeed, in 1855, the *Deseret News* noted that “O my Father, thou that dwellest” was Brigham Young’s favorite hymn. Affection for the hymn has been enduring.

While “O My Father” makes reference to a number of doctrines important to Latter-day Saints, it often has been best remembered for its mention of Mother in Heaven. Eliza’s declaration of the reality of Mother in Heaven is unforgettable because it is simple and personal, because it comes from a woman, and because there is a paucity of references to the concept elsewhere. In the writings and recorded discourses of Joseph Smith, there is no mention of Mother of Heaven. Indeed the doctrine has become more closely associated with Eliza R. Snow’s hymn than with any subsequent official statement. To what extent did she help define the doctrine? Both men and women have repeatedly asked that question, and it must be explored. But a fresh question more relevant to Eliza’s personal journey must also be addressed: To what extent did the doctrine help Eliza define herself?

How did Zion’s Poetess learn of the existence of Mother in Heaven? Speaking at the October 1893 general conference, President Wilford Woodruff declared:

> With regard to our position before we came here, I will say that we dwelt with the Father and with the Son, as expressed in the hymn, ‘O my Father,’ that has been sung here. That hymn is a revelation, though it was given unto us by a woman—Sister Snow. There are a great many sisters who have the spirit of revelation. There is no reason why they should not be inspired as well as men.

Joseph F. Smith, however, emphasized the importance of acknowledging Joseph Smith as the source of the doctrine. A counselor in the First Presidency at the time when he spoke at a stake conference in Franklin, Idaho, he said:
Our Heavenly Father has never yet to my knowledge revealed to this Church any great principle through a woman. Now, sisters, do not cast me off nor deny the faith, because I tell you that God has never revealed any great and essential truth for the guidance of the Latter-day Saints through any woman. "Oh! but," says one, "what about Eliza Snow's beautiful hymn, 'O my Father, Thou that dwellest,' etc? Did not the Lord reveal through her that great and glorious principle that we have a mother as well as a father in heaven?" No. God revealed that principle to Joseph Smith; Joseph Smith revealed it to Eliza Snow Smith, his wife; and Eliza Snow was inspired, being a poet, to put it into verse.\textsuperscript{51}

Susa Young Gates, who grew up in her father Brigham Young's household with "Aunt" Eliza, observed in 1911 that "no one thought to ask Sister Snow in life to recount the incidents connected with the [hymn's] composition" and then provided "a possible glimpse of the thought-kernel which grew into such fragrant bloom in the full-voiced poem of Sister Snow."\textsuperscript{52} Susa indicated that she and others had heard Zina D. H. Young recount the Prophet's comforting words to Zina after her mother, Zina Baker Huntington, died July 8, 1839:

"Will I know my mother as my mother when I get over on the Other Side?"

"Certainly you will," was the instant reply of the Prophet. "More than that, you will meet and become acquainted with your eternal Mother, the wife of your Father in Heaven."

"And have I then a Mother in Heaven?" exclaimed the astonished girl.

"You assuredly have. How could a Father claim His title unless there were also a Mother to share that parenthood?"\textsuperscript{53}

About the same time, Gates assumed, Eliza "learned the same glorious truth from the same inspired lips, and at once she was moved to express her own great joy and gratitude in the moving words of the hymn, 'O My Father.'"\textsuperscript{54} Susa could not have grown up near Aunt Eliza without knowing of her love for Joseph and his expansive understanding.

In 1916, David McKay, patriarch and father of a later prophet, shared with a Relief Society sister in Scotland memories of a long conversation with Eliza R. Snow he had when he was asked to take her by buggy from Huntsville to Eden, Utah. He had decided he
wanted information on some things that was not clear to my mind. "Did the Lord reveal that doctrine of motherhood in heaven to you?" he asked Eliza. He remembered her saying, "No indeed." Rather, the Prophet had taught the Relief Society sisters "many things that transpired in our Spirit home. . . . I got my inspiration from the Prophets teachings [and] all that I was required to do was to use my Poetical gift and give that Eternal principal in Poetry." 55

A 1988 study by Charles R. Harrell clearly shows that published mention of the concept of Mother in Heaven occurred in Nauvoo as early as December 1844, when the Seventies Hall was dedicated and a W. W. Phelps hymn was sung. It contained the following couplet:

Come to me; here’s the myst’ry that man hath not seen:  
Here’s our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen: 56

Further, Harrell observes:

With the basic preexistent family organization being delineated near the end of 1844, the idea of humankind originating as spirit children of heavenly parents became a subject of great interest throughout 1845. Eliza R. Snow’s ‘O My Father,’ written in October 1845, is significant only in that it so eloquently captures the essence of this already developed thought. 57

Wilford Woodruff’s declaration that Eliza Snow’s hymn “is a revelation” is not inconsistent with the idea that she discussed with Joseph Smith and others the concept of heavenly parents. President Woodruff’s statement, like the poem itself, suggests that Eliza received her own personal confirmation of the doctrine by revelation. The poem is powerfully personal, written in the first person to reflect the poet’s own spiritual search and witness. By itself, an intellectual grasp of the doctrines could not have transformed Eliza’s sense of displacement, loneliness, and grief into the testimony of divine design, association, and joy that pervades “O My Father.” The hymn represents Eliza’s epiphany; like the magnificats of Hannah and Mary, it fuses knowledge of God and intense personal rejoicing.

In a sense, the writing of “O My Father” initiated Eliza R. Snow’s leadership of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women. As she and other Saints prepared to evacuate Nauvoo in the fall of
1845, she was forced to come to terms with her own identity as never before. Her relationships with the men in her life, of primary importance to most nineteenth-century women, had unalterably changed. The daughter of Oliver Snow had become the secret plural wife of Joseph Smith, but with husband and father dead, who was she? She had been attached to several different Nauvoo households and was about to be displaced again during the Saints’ removal from the city. Whatever importance she assigned to being Zion’s Poetess, that role could not fully identify her. How was she to locate herself amidst displacement and change? When Eliza soulfully articulated her personal connectedness to Father and Mother in Heaven, her attachment to the eternal household where she had resided and would yet dwell, she defined the polestar by which she would orient herself for the rest of her life.

The poem’s original title, “My Father in Heaven,” suggests the poet’s conceptual move from “my father’s family” to “my Father in Heaven’s family.” But dwelling in the “royal court on high” are both Father and Mother, a fact Eliza emphasizes in the final stanza by repeating the plurals “you” and “your,” a contrast to the singular “thou” and “thy” in the first stanza.

Recognizing “a mother there” allowed Eliza to understand Joseph Smith’s famous King Follett Discourse as an affirmation that women as well as men could achieve exaltation, godhood. “God Himself, the Father of us all, once dwelled on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did in the flesh,” the Prophet Joseph explained on April 7, 1844, admonishing Saints “to learn how to be Gods yourselves . . . by going from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you are able to sit in glory as doth those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.”58 The concept made it possible for Eliza to identify with a holy woman thus exalted, a female far beyond herself, her own mother, or the classical heroines whose names had served as Eliza’s pseudonyms when she was a young poet. Certainly it allowed her to project her own marriage to Joseph into eternity, where husband and wife, as revelation to Joseph promised, might ultimately “be gods” whose “glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19, 20).
Affirmation of Woman’s Eternal Worth and Destiny

It would be nearly a decade before Eliza R. Snow would publicly revisit the importance to her of “a mother there.” The connectedness to deity Eliza expressed so eloquently in “O My Father” and the glorious doctrines by which she had begun to define herself in Nauvoo would enable her to inspire her sisters in Utah with a sense of woman’s eternal worth, equality in the sight of God, and divine destiny. But her remarkable leadership from 1867 to 1887 followed years of navigating her way through a sea of contrary definitions regarding her position as a woman. During the 1850s, as she pondered her place within the community of Saints, Eliza’s witness of a Mother in Heaven, of potential exaltation, and of the importance of personal revelation oriented and steadied her and, beyond that, enlightened and energized her for the leading role she assumed in 1867.

During the 1850s, heightened interest in the question of woman’s position or calling or role sparked discussion in both the Church and the broader American culture. Eliza’s thoughtful searching of the question is evident in her poems, the only personal documents available for this complicated period of her life. Her 1850s poems dealing at length with woman’s status reveal that she, like most Latter-day Saint women and men, brought to the Salt Lake Valley traditional ideas about men’s and women’s roles within marriage, applying them even to plural marriage.

As Brigham Young and other Church leaders coped with the complaints and uncertainties surrounding plural marriage, they emphasized the importance of keeping traditional marital roles and duties intact. The father was to be “the master of his own household,” President Young declared. Wives and children were to “say amen to what he says, and be subject to his dictates, instead of their dictating the man, instead of their trying to govern him,” though he advised husbands and fathers not to rule with “an iron hand.”59 Praise for woman’s submissiveness resounded from many of the nation’s pulpits. Indeed, for most white Americans of the period, it was axiomatic that the married woman was “to direct her household affairs, raise up children, be subject unto her husband, and use all due benevolence toward him.”60
Rising to oppose this traditional view were the woman’s rights activists, who had first gathered in 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York. Their mounting campaign for educational opportunities, political and economic power, and legal recognition for women inflamed national debate regarding woman’s rights and woman’s sphere. Many early suffragists objected to interpretations of scripture that taught women “that God created them inferior, and designed them to occupy an inferior and subordinate position, and to rebel against man’s rule was to rebel against God.”61

At the close of 1851, presumably in response to newspaper accounts, Eliza criticized the woman’s rights convention held earlier that year. Echoing the teachings of Brigham Young and other Church leaders, she affirmed scriptural tradition, attesting that Eve had indeed “led in the transgression, and was plac’d / By Eloheim’s unchangeable decree, / In a subservient and dependent sphere.” Then she invited the “female conventionists” to come to Utah, where they might find “noble men, / Whom woman may be proud t’acknowledge for her own superior.”62 Eliza would always be uncomfortable with the movement for woman’s rights, which, she believed, encouraged women to work in opposition to rather than in harmony with men.63 On the other hand, after 1852 she began to reshape her own rhetoric to elevate women by emphasizing their eternal worth and destiny rather than speak of the superiority of men.

Her willingness to abandon whatever notions she may have had of woman’s inferiority and her increasing commitment to speak for woman’s eternal equality may have been spurred by the denigrating treatment Mormon women received in the popular press following the Church’s public acknowledgment of plural marriage in August 1852. Branded “female dupes of the priesthood,” the presumably “degraded” and “downtrodden” women were not considered acceptably “subject to” their husbands, but instead were believed to be subjugated. For the rest of the century, the world would view Latter-day Saint men and women through the lens of caricature: tyrants and slaves, oppressors and oppressed, deceivers and deceived. The portrayal was unfair and insulting, but it had an impact. The Saints would battle un成功fully against the series of antipolygamy laws it spawned. And the
women, especially, would fight against the stigma of victimization it imposed.

Eliza refused to be seen as victim or to deem herself downtrodden. Her earliest efforts to defend the standing of Latter-day Saint women appear in several addresses she composed for the Polysophical Society, a sort of lyceum or study group sponsored by her brother Lorenzo in Salt Lake City between 1854 and 1856.64

Women might have broached the subject of their status privately in their family and friendship networks and at the sewing meetings of ward Relief Societies, which functioned briefly from 1854 to 1857.65 How often it was discussed publicly among women or in mixed groups of men and women like the Polysophical Society has yet to be determined. However, diaries and Tabernacle sermons make it clear that woman’s status was an issue among Latter-day Saints during the 1850s. “Women are made to be led, counselled, and directed,” opined Heber C. Kimball.66 Understandably, some women found such rhetoric harsh and hurtful. Although over time Brigham Young’s rhetoric and actions became more inclusive, Martha Spence Heywood solemnly recorded in her diary what she understood him to say in 1856: “God never in any age of the world endowed woman with knowledge above the man and when a woman has in any instance a message from God to man ‘tis because of the Priesthood.”67

Church leaders, in their efforts to order and regulate the rapidly expanding community in Utah, repeatedly emphasized the necessity of obedience to the hierarchical order of priesthood government. Even so, the possibility that through the newly reestablished Relief Societies women might claim for themselves organizational authority outside priesthood channels apparently concerned Church leaders. In 1855, in the midst of the complex discussion of men’s and women’s roles, they revised Eliza’s original record of Joseph Smith’s sermons to the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. Before the minutes were approved by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve for inclusion in the official history of the Church, all passages referring to authority and keys in connection with women were reworded to clarify the obligation of the sisters to work under the presiding authority of priesthood leaders. The changes repudiated the authority Emma Smith had claimed in using her calling as Relief Society president to promote
opposition to plural marriage. Eliza seems to have struggled privately with the revision of her record, an event that may have underscored her sentiment that woman might feel “at times, neglected now, / Misjudg’d and unappreciated too,” a rare admission all but hidden in her Polysophical poem entitled “Woman.”

In “Woman,” Eliza acknowledged the “noble aim” of the advocates of woman’s rights, though she rejected their efforts as ultimately ineffectual since they lacked the saving and transforming power of the priesthood. She was certain that only through the keys and ordinances of the holy priesthood could earth be renewed and each individual woman and man receive a fulness of life—eternal life. Thus she remained committed to working according to priesthood power, patterns, and order. “In order to arise in the scale of being, that we may mingle in the associations of high and holy ones who dwell in the mansions of light, we are to become as little children, and in all things be instructed by the Holy Priesthood,” she affirmed in “Good Society,” a prose address to the Polysophical Society.

The poetry and prose Eliza wrote and read before the men and women of the Polysophical Society reflect her careful search for ways to wholly honor the authority and power of the holy priesthood without attributing to men superiority and diminishing herself. For example, nearly all of the Polysophical addresses echo and amplify the concepts and feelings she presented in “O My Father,” particularly the sense of divine worth derived from a knowledge of her place in time and eternity. They emphasize more explicitly the importance of obedience and the possibility of becoming “as the gods,” and like Eliza’s earlier epiphanic poem, they affirm personal revelation and carry a profound sense of connectedness to a heavenly home and heavenly parents.

Indeed, as she wrote these poems, she was probably preparing “O My Father” for publication in her first volume of poetry. Poems: Religious, Historical, and Political, published through the Latter-day Saints’ printing office in Liverpool in 1856, featured her Nauvoo poem on page one. The poem bore neither its original title, “My Father in Heaven,” nor its popular hymn title, “O My Father.” Rather, its new title reflected Eliza’s growing eagerness to bear personal witness of the place of woman within the eternal scheme: “Invocation, or the Eternal Father and Mother.”
Eliza’s post-Nauvoo works contain few direct references to Mother in Heaven. She more often spoke in general terms of “the holy ones” or specified “Mother Eve,” a term that captured the essence of what Eliza understood—that the Divine Mother had once experienced mortality, like mortal Eve, and, in the language of Joseph Smith, had gone “from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation.”72 For Latter-day Saints, the name Eve signifies not only the first woman to live on this earth, but also the prototype of every woman throughout time and eternity who progresses in righteousness through mortal life to completeness, perfection, motherhood, and eternal godhood.

The critical personal importance of these concepts to Eliza is evident in one of her most carefully crafted poems, “The Ultimate of Human Life,” which was delivered as an address to the Polysophical Society in March 1855. The poem recounts how the pondering poet, seeking divine instruction, received a vision, a seraph who identified himself as “the Priesthood—he who holds the key / T'unlock the portals of Eternity.” The poet asks the angel a twofold question: What is the cause of suffering among mortals, and what is the result of human life—its final point or end, its ultimatum? The angel counsels the poet against prying into “the secrets of the worlds on high,” the “decrees, organizations, laws—/ Form'd by the Gods,” but declares that “the more immediate cause of all the woe / And degradation . . . Is disobedience.”73

“This life’s an ordeal,” a test, the seraph advises:

Earth is your Father's workshop: What is done—
All that's attain'd, and what achievements won,
Is for the Parents: All things are their own—
The children now hold nothing but by loan.74

It is not earthly station, the seraph confirms time and again, but a willingness to obey the will of the Father that assures Saints “a fullness in his legacy” and will ultimately renovate the earth. If disobedience brought disorder and degeneracy into the world, obedience will bring order and regeneration. Through the seraph, the poet emphasizes the common destinies of women and men. "'Tis important that each one prepare / To be with Christ, a joint, an equal heir,” the angel advises and then emphasizes that every faithful
Thus said the Seraph: Sacred in my heart,
I cherish all his precious words impart;
And humbly pray, I ever may, as now,
With holy reverence in his presence bow.
The field of thought he open'd to my view,
My wonder course'd, and admiration too;
I marvel'd at the silly childishness
Of saints, the heirs of everlasting bliss —
The candidates for Godheads and for worlds,
As time on time, Eternity unfurls,
I felt my littleness, and thought, henceforth
I'll be myself, the humblest saint on earth;
And all that God shall to my care assign,
I'll recognize and use as His — not mine.
Wherever He assigns to me a place,
That will I strive with diligence, to grace,
And, for my Parents, wherever my lot,
To work with all my might, and never murmur not;
I'll seek their highest interest, till they come,
And, as a faithful daughter, take me home.

Saint “is an acknowleg’d heir, / . . . When God a patrimony shall bestow / Upon his sons and daughters here below.”

Adam and Eve are prototypes of such faithfulness because of their obedience in mortality and their eventual exaltation and eternal life (D&C 138:38-39). The ultimate goal of life for all men and women—and it can be accomplished only jointly—is to be exalted and to reign over both their earthly posterity and their eternal increase, as will our first earthly parents:

To stand as Adam and as Eve, the head
Of an inheritance, a new-form’d earth,
And to their spirit-race, give mortal birth—
Give them experience in a world like this;
Then lead them forth to everlasting bliss.

Significantly, the poet writes ten lines to describe Father Adam and all men like him and ten lines to describe Mother Eve and all her righteous daughters. The parallel descriptions extol each person who magnifies callings and through obedience progresses to exaltation and godhood:

Adam, your God, like you on earth, has been
Subject to sorrow in a world of sin:
Through long gradation he arose to be
Cloth’d with the Godhead’s might and majesty.
And what to him in his probative sphere,
Whether a Bishop, Deacon, Priest, or Seer?
Whate’er his offices and callings were,
He magnified them with assiduous care:
By his obedience he obtain’d the place
Of God and Father of this human race.

Obedience will the same bright garland weave,
As it has done for your great Mother, Eve,
For all her daughters on the earth, who will
All my requirements sacredly fulfill.
And what to Eve, though in her mortal life,
She’d been the first, the tenth, or fiftieth wife?
What did she care, when in her lowest state,
Whether by fools, consider’d small, or great?
’Twas all the same with her—she prov’d her worth—
She’s now the Goddess and the Queen of Earth.75

The exalted Mother Eve, according to Eliza’s understanding, is a celestialized being who through her faithfulness has obtained “the power of reigning, and the right to reign.”76 With the divine
Father Adam, she reigns over their posterity in the patriarchal order of the priesthood, that priesthood whose blessings are "given only to husbands and wives together."  

In "The Ultimatum of Life," Eliza Snow bore witness of males and females becoming gods. But more explicitly than she had in 1845 with "O My Father," she affirmed herself a god in embryo. That was enough. She could, by comparison with what lay ahead, feel her own "littleness" and agree to be "the humblest saint on earth," trying, "with diligence, to grace" her appointed place, seeking the interest of her Parents "till they send or come, / And as a faithful daughter take me home."  

At least one other poem, undated but probably written in the 1850s, confirms the comfort Eliza gleaned from her knowledge of the existence of Heavenly Mother. This personal poem, addressed to an unnamed sister, touches, as do many of Snow's 1850s poems for individual women, on questions of status and position. "To me, it matters little now, / To where I rise—to what I bow," the poet tells her friend. Glimpsing "at data far behind / What now is tangible to mind," she confirms "our existence, ere / The Gods had formed this nether sphere." And then comes her soul-enlivening witness:

Adam, our father—Eve, our mother,  
And Jesus Christ, our elder brother,  
Are to my understanding shown:  
My heart responds, they are my own.  
Perfection lifts them far from me,  
But what they are, we yet may be."  

Earlier in the poem, Eliza speaks of the divine source of her understanding and its inexpressible comfort:

We find a radius in the soul,  
Illumined by th'eternal pole,  
And thro' the heart's deep sympathy,  
We taste of immortality.  

Revelation to her, Eliza confirms here and again and again elsewhere, is dependent on her own obedience, her "constant yes" to God's requirements. She writes:

And when I'm all in all resigned—  
In very heart as well as mind,  
I'm filled with light—I've eyes to see  
His kind parental love for me."
She wrote of personal revelation through the Holy Spirit as a sixth sense, "a pow’rful telescope, whereby / We look beyond the stretch of mortal eye," gaining a view "of origin and destination too." It was not sublime doctrine alone that energized Eliza Snow, but her own knowing, by reason and revelation, that gave her such anchoring surety, such cause for rejoicing. She attempted to describe the feeling in another Polysophical Institute address:

Like rich clusters of grapes on a desolate plain,
Or cool streams on the desert, is what we obtain
From the presence of God when his spirit unbinds,
And with holy inspirings, gives scope to our minds.
And our minds must expand, and our hearts be enlarg’d,
Or with "line upon line," they will be overcharg’d:
Small vessels, when fill’d, can but little contain—
All that each can receive, we are sure to obtain.
But the eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard,
Nor hath enter’d the heart, what the Lord has prepar’d
In the heavens, for the saints, who their faithfulness prove,
And in keeping his statutes, exhibit their love.
Yet sweet foretastes flow down, like refreshings of dew
On our pilgrimage here, to encourage us through.

For Eliza, obedience and personal revelation were inseparable. She understood that if her eye were "single" to the glory of God her whole body would be "full of light" (D&C 88:67). Her connection to deity was affirmed in both the obedience she gave to God's holy principles and priesthood and in the divine gifts of the Spirit she received.

The sense of connectedness and wholeness Eliza achieved before leaving Nauvoo was enlarged in Utah in the 1850s as she resolved for herself questions about woman's position. Rather than polarizing obedience and personal revelation, submissiveness and power, she searched for the connections between them. Jesus Christ was her model, he who through "strict obedience . . . won the prize with glory rife." She believed that his life evidenced the course taken by the Eternal Father and Mother, the course Eliza was seeking to follow with faith that she might become "with Christ, a joint, and equal heir." Aligning herself with neither side of the contemporary debate on woman's role, she spoke of woman's obedience and submissiveness in conjunction with woman's access
The holy Spirit which a saint receives
Is one sense added to what nature gives,
And 'tis a powerful telescope whereby
We look beyond the stretch of mortal eye.
Its keen perceptive vision takes a view
Of origin and destination too.
Instructed by this spirit-sense, we learn
What our corporal sense can't discern.
A show, we are not natives of this earth—
We pre-existed—had an earlier birth—
A clime and habitation highly pure
Beyond what these gross senses can endure.

Stanza from “Nationality” by Eliza R. Snow. Holograph dated February 27, 1855, in Eliza R. Snow Journal and Notebook, 1842–1882, LDS Church Archives.
to personal revelation and her potential for worthily entering
the presence of the heavenly parents and becoming like the Eternal Mother.

Indeed, the submissiveness and power Eliza harmonized conceptually were fused in the life she lived. Her intense obedience and loyalty to the Church and its leaders gained her a position of trust and authority in teaching, directing, and ministering to the women of the Church that is without parallel in Mormon history. During the 1850s, her powerful addresses to the Polysophical Society reached only a small circle of women and men, an audience expanded by publication of some of the addresses in the Deseret News and Millennial Star. But the greatest impact of her ideas and example would be felt from 1867 to 1887, when through the reorganization of the Relief Society and her appointment as general president she was able to speak personally in hundreds of congregations to thousands of Latter-day Saint women.

In multiplying circles of sisters, many of them gathering in Relief Societies for the first time, she was able to encourage, bear witness, and inspire. As she traveled throughout the territory, conscientious secretaries tried to capture in their local minutes the power of her words to the women. "While sit[t]ing here I have been looking upon the faces of my Sisters and can see the form of Deity there and I have been Reflecting of the Great work we have to perform, Even in helping in the Salvation of the Living and the Dead," she told sisters of the Lehi, Utah, Relief Society in October 1869. "We want to be ladys in very deed notaccording to the term of the word as the world Judges but fit Companions of the Gods and Holy ones."84 A month earlier, she had been in Provo asking:

Who are these my sisters they are the daughters of the most high God, and we are here in this dispensation to cooperate with God and our brethren in saving the human family. We read that one hundred & forty-four thousand Saviours are to stand upon Mount Zion, has women anything to do in this great work of salvation, or are the sisters merely machines to be saved by the brethren, In these last days woman has her part to perform, which is a significant part, we are apt to think little of the responsibilities that rest upon us. Woman is designed to be a help meet for man, and the work of the last days cannot be accomplished without our assistance.
She counseled, "In your lives seek to refine and elevate, that you may be prepared to come into the presence of holy beings, and associate with Gods, we do not know our own abilities until they are brought into exercise."  

Brigham Young's 1867 reorganization of the Relief Society inaugurated a new era for Latter-day Saint women as they began to exercise their abilities through callings as officers in newly organized ward Relief Societies, Young Women's Mutual Improvement Associations (1869), and Primary Associations (1878). The intensifying responsibilities were new to many women who had never assumed duties beyond their own households. To eager sisters, to reluctant sisters, to sisters overwhelmed, Eliza Snow provided instruction regarding rapidly increasing stewardships, including care of the poor, retrenchment and home industry, grain storage, silk culture, medical training, visiting teaching, and the teaching of children and youth. More importantly, she recognized that their intensifying temporal labors required the spiritual context that would give the work deeper individual and collective meaning.

"God bless you, my sisters, and encourage you, that you may be filled with light, and realize that you have no interests but in the welfare of Zion," she assured Ogden women in August 1873.

Let your first business be to perform your duties at home. But inasmuch as you are wise stewards, you will find time for social duties, because these are incumbent upon us as daughters and mothers in Zion. By seeking to perform every duty you will find that your capacity will increase, and you will be astonished at what you can accomplish. You have been astonished at what duties you have done. The Lord help us. The Lord is with His Saints and helps them to do His will, and He watches over them by night and by day. Inasmuch as we continue faithful, we shall be those that will be crowned in the presence of God and the lamb. You, my sisters, if you are faithful will become Queen of Queens, and Priestesses unto the Most High God. These are your callings. We have only to discharge our duties. By and by our labors will be past, and our names will be crowned with everlasting honor, and be had in everlasting remembrance among the Saints of the Most High God. 

Temporal responsibilities were a small part of a much larger eternal picture. "It is the privilege of each young lady here before me to become a queen in Heaven. This is the design of our Heavenly
Father,” she explained in 1874 to young women in the Salt Lake City Fourteenth Ward. Such doctrines would by the end of the nineteenth century be woven into the lessons for young women, but the unceasing ward and stake visits of Eliza Snow and her sisters predated formal lessons for women, youth, and children, filling the need for doctrinal teaching powerfully fortified by personal witness. Women and men remarked upon the incredible stamina of aging Eliza Snow, and they were often deeply moved by the unforgettable spirit of her preaching. “I attended the R. S. Conference which I enjoyed myself exceedingly,” recorded Mary Ann Freeze in her diary March 9, 1883. “Felt like shouting hallelujah; while listening to Sister Eliza R. Snow, H. M. Whitney. I never heard the sisters speak with such power as they did that afternoon.”

Many of her sermons, instructions, articles, and poetry were featured in the Woman’s Exponent, the semimonthly, semiofficial newspaper she encouraged her sisters to edit and publish. Through every medium at her disposal, Eliza R. Snow tried to help Mormon women grasp how the “solemnities of eternity” (D&C 43:34) pertained to them. “The Latter-day Saint women of Utah occupy a more important position than is occupied by any other women on the earth,” she assured her sisters through the Woman’s Exponent.

Associated, as they are, with apostles and prophets inspired by the living God—with them sharing in the gifts and powers of the holy Priesthood by which, through the merits of our Great Redeemer, we have access to, and hold communion with the Father of our spirits—participating in those sacred ordinances, without which, we could never be prepared to dwell in the presence of the Holy Ones. Who can fully appreciate our blessings; and who is capable of realizing the weight of the responsibilities resting upon us?

Looking ever to the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” promised faithful Saints (2 Cor. 4:17), Eliza R. Snow was able to lift the vision and spirits of her sisters. Her writing of “O My Father” in 1845 marked her own profound recognition of her connectedness throughout time to the Holy Ones, “the Eternal Father and Mother.” Her personal witness of these truths deepened during the last half of her life, enabling her to resolve natural personal quandaries about her status and position and to weather the storm of criticism she and her sisters incurred for their involvement in
plural marriage and support of priesthood leaders. Her understanding energized her extraordinary contribution as a leader and inspired her spiritual nurturance of Mormon women.

Catherine Albanese, a non-Mormon scholar of American religion, commented on the theology of "O My Father" in terms unfamiliar and somewhat inharmonious to most Mormons but striking nonetheless:

From the mystical world view [Latter-day Saints] have taken a host of powerful symbols, typified in their affirmation of the Father-Mother God. These symbols do for them what they do for every group or individual in the history of religions who has genuinely encountered and entered them: they transform and energize; they provide a rationale and a power that reaches from beyond and transports people beyond their ordinary human capacities.89

Transformed, energized, and transported beyond ordinary capacity, Eliza R. Snow became a leader of mythic proportion. Traveling extensively from ward to ward during the last twenty years of her life, she organized Relief Societies for women, Retrenchment or Mutual Improvement Associations for young women, and Primary Associations for children and directed most of the work of all three organizations until her death in 1887. She compiled recitations, catechisms, and hymns for Primary children. She promoted women's home manufacturing and superintended their commission store, championed medical training for women, and chaired the governing board of the sisters' Deseret Hospital. She presided over women's temple ordinance work, laboring both in the Endowment House and St. George Temple, and she preached endlessly.90

Her contemporaries recognized and praised her unique ministry. "Our sister [is] entitled, in a certain sense, to be designated the mother of this people," remarked John W. Taylor at her funeral in 1887. Certainly, she was the female voice heard more widely, clearly, and consistently than any other, she the witness of divine relationship and connection, she the herald who memorably affirmed the reality of Mother in Heaven and woman's capacity to become like Her. Sister Eliza nurtured with strength, nourished with truth, and touched with the Spirit.
Her life unfolded in unpredictable ways, yet almost precisely as promised in the patriarchal blessing given her in Nauvoo in 1843:

Thy influence shall be great—thy examples shall not be excel’d. Thou hast a heart to be enlarg’d, and a mind capable of expansion; and for thy comfort remember in thy retired walks, that yonder sun is typical of a crown of glory that shall be seal’d upon thy head: The stars that twinkle in yonder sky shall show to thy mind the workmanship of thy Creator, and by those glories thou shalt read the destinies of man and be capable with thy pen to communicate, to thy fellow man the blessings & glories of futurity: and thy blessing shall roll and continue to thec until time is lost in eternity: and thy name shall be handed down to posterity from generation to generation: and many songs shall be heard that were dictated by thy pen and from the principles of thy mind, even until the choirs from on high and the earth below, shall join in one universal song of praise to God and the Lamb.91

The sisters who met on January 21, 1910, to remember Eliza R. Snow and sing “O My Father” celebrated their cherished sister and their sisterhood. “She taught us life’s great lessons,” wrote Emmeline B. Wells in a poem for the occasion, “precious truths,”

Rarest, sweetest songs of Zion
That are sung with sacred feeling—
Given her through inspiration,
Holy principles revealing.

Calling her queen, “regnant-mother . . . Poet! Priestess, Prophet too,” Emmeline continued and affirmed, “Zion’s daughters down the ages / Will her messages be telling.”92

For most Latter-day Saints, Eliza R. Snow will be remembered primarily as the author of the “doctrinal hymn and anthem of affection, ‘O My Father.’”93 That is entirely appropriate. When her sisters and brothers remember her, they rediscover their own holy place within the cosmos and their eternal connection to their heavenly parents. Her journey is in part their own.

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NOTES


4The greeting was addressed to Eliza R. Snow and her friend and counselor Zina D. H. Young. M. Elizabeth Little, “A Welcome,” Woman’s Exponent 9 (April 1, 1881): 165.

5"Review of Primary Associations, and Instructions,” Juvenile Instructor 25 (November 15, 1890): 685.


7"My Father in Heaven," Times and Seasons 6 (November 15, 1845): 1039.


10The change of name may well have been prompted by “The Last Testimony of Sister Emma [Smith],” published in the RLDS Saints Herald 26 (October 1, 1879): 289–90, some six months following her death, April 30, 1879. After reading the printed testimony, including Emma’s statement that Joseph Smith “had no other wife but me; nor did he to my knowledge ever have,” Eliza R. Snow responded through the columns of the Deseret News:

I once dearly loved “Sister Emma,” and now, for me to believe that she, a once honored woman, should have sunk so low, even in her own estimation, as to deny what she knew to be true, seems [sic] a palpable absurdity. If what purports to be her “last testimony” was really her testimony she died with a libel on her lips—a libel against her husband—against his wives—against the truth, and a libel against God; and in publishing that libel, her son has fastened a stigma on the character of his mother, that can never be erased. (“Letter on Plural Marriage,” Woman’s Exponent 8 [November 1, 1879]: 84–85, signed “Eliza R. Snow, A wife of Joseph Smith the Prophet”; italics in original)

By July 1880, Eliza’s name consistently appeared in the Woman’s Exponent and elsewhere with “Smith” attached.


A description of the organization of the Relief Society by the Prophet Joseph Smith and its subsequent workings in Nauvoo is found in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 23–62. The petition to the governor has been published in Carol Cornwall Madsen, *In Their Own Words: Women and the Story of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 131–33. The visit to the governor is described in the same work (38) and in Snow, “Sketch of My Life”: “Soon after our return, we learned that at the time of our visit, and while making protestations of friendship, the wily Governor was secretly conniving with the basest of men to destroy our leaders” (17, 52). Joseph Smith was arrested August 8, 1842, “on a warrant issued by Governor Carlin, founded on a requisition from Governor Reynolds of Missouri,” naming Joseph as an accessory to Orrin Porter Rockwell’s alleged attack on former Missouri governor Lilburn W. Boggs. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:86.

The twenty-three poems Eliza Snow published in the Ravenna Western Courier and Ohio Star were over the signature of various noms de plume, including Narcissa, Tullia, Cornelia, and Pocohontas. The two hymns were the first published works bearing her own signature.

Several of Snow’s poems laud American democracy and freedom and protest by contrast the treatment of Mormons in Missouri. “Columbia—My Country” celebrates the virtue of Columbia, the United States, over other foreign lands, concluding ironically:

But O, I find no country yet,
Like my Columbia dear;
And oftentimes, almost forget
I live an exile here.  (Quincy Whig, November 14, 1840)


The poem was printed in 1841 by Ebeneezer Robinson as an eighteen-page pamphlet. “It is the production of a well cultivated, chaste, and pious mind,” the *Times and Seasons* noted. “Let the young commit it to memory, and thus transmit it as a useful and pleasing lesson to future time.” *Times and Seasons* 2 (April 15, 1841): 383. Copies of the pamphlet are extremely rare. Eliza published the poem in her *Poems: Religious, Historical, and Political* (Liverpool: Latter-day Saints Printing Office, 1856), 1:237–61.


Oliver Snow to “My Dear Brother and Family” [Franklin Snow], August 13, 1842, photocopy of holograph in files of Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Eliza R. Snow, “Nauvoo Journal and Notebook,” in *Personal Writings of Eliza R. Snow*, 52. The original holograph is in the Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

Significance of “O My Father” to Eliza R. Snow

23During the Nauvoo period, the Saints worked to assimilate many new doctrines relating to the temple that were introduced by the Prophet. The celestial order of marriage was just one of them. Larry C. Porter and Milton V. Backman Jr., “Doctrine and the Temple in Nauvoo,” BYU Studies 32, nos. 1, 2 (1992): 41–56.
24A Record of the Organization and Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” March 30, 1842, LDS Church Archives; see also Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, Women of Covenant, 39–56.
25Eliza R. Snow Smith, Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 78.
28These phrases are taken from three different poems: “To President Joseph Smith; and His Lady, Presidentess Emma Smith,” Wasp, August 20, 1842; “Saturday Evening Thoughts,” Times and Seasons 4 (January 2, 1843): 64; “O how shall I compose a thought,” untitled and unpublished poem in “Nauvoo Journal and Notebook” (September 23, 1842), in Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow, 57. With reference to the practice of plural marriage in Nauvoo, Eliza Snow told Relief Society sisters in 1872, “Polygamy did not hurt me, but to be looked upon as a woman of light character that did hurt me, the very idea of my not being a virtuous woman.” Payson [Utah] Ward Relief Society Minutes, September 26, 1872, LDS Church Archives; spelling and punctuation standardized.
29These phrases are taken from two of Eliza’s poems: “Saturday Evening Thoughts”; and an untitled poem, “The noblest proudest joys that this,” in “Nauvoo Journal and Notebook” (November 16, 1842), in Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow, 60–63, later published as “True Happiness,” in Snow, Poems, 1:47–48.
30Snow, “To President Joseph Smith.” Misspelling of polluted is in the original.
31Snow, “Nauvoo Journal and Notebook” (February 11, 1843), in Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow, 64.
34Journal of Wilford Woodruff, December 16, 1857, LDS Church Archives.
35Snow, “Nauvoo Journal and Notebook” (May 23, 1843), in Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow, 75. The holograph reads: “has have been a source of much bitterness of feeling.”
36Snow, “Nauvoo Journal and Notebook” (June 29, 1842, and February 11, 1843), in Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow, 52, 65.
37Snow, “Lines on the Assassination.”


40Additionally, in a short note with a cut paper insignia, Snow addressed four lines "for the President Brigham Young and his lady Presidentess Mary Ann Young," dated "Temple of the Lord, Jan 7th 1846," Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

41Artistic and hospitable Bathsheba reflected that if Eliza "had had a splendidly furnished room with every comfort, perhaps she would not have been inspired to compose that hymn ["O My Father"]." Bathsheba W. Smith, "An Item of History," *Woman's Exponent* 30 (June 1901): 3. Susa Young Gates mentioned a Bible and Book of Mormon on the table and a "braided rug mat" on the floor and described the bed as "exquisitely neat with its valance of white and its cover of snowy home-woven linen." Susa Young Gates, "Eliza R. Snow Smith," *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from November 1869 to June 1910* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1911), 15.


44Eliza R. Snow, "My Father in Heaven," *Times and Seasons* 6 (November 15, 1845): 1039. The *Times and Seasons* misspelled *recollection* (line 11). Unlike the version of "O My Father" found in current LDS hymnals, this version and that in Eliza's first book of collected poetry use the singular "court" in "your royal court on high."


46Edward W. Tullidge described the hymn as "a divine drama set to song. And as it is but a choral dramatization, in the simple hymn form, of the celestial themes revealed through Joseph Smith, it will strikingly illustrate the vast system of Mormon theology, which links the heavens and the earth." Edward W. Tullidge,

47Millennial Star (February 1846): 64; Frontier Guardian (Kanesville, Iowa), March 21, 1849; Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs, for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in Europe, 9th ed., rev. and enl. (Liverpool and London: F. D. Richards, 1851), 143.

48"Deseret Theological Institute," Deseret News, June 20, 1855. J. Spencer Cornwall noted that "'O My Father,' according to fan letters received by the Tabernacle Choir, ranks second as the most popular and most beloved LDS hymn sung by the choir. 'Come, Come, Ye Saints' came first." J. Spencer Cornwall, Stories of Our Mormon Hymns (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 146.

49In a 1909 statement entitled "The Origin of Man," the First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund) declared the following: "All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity." James R. Clark, ed., Messages of the First Presidency, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 4:203; originally published in the Improvement Era 13 (November 1909): 78. In a 1991 address to women, Gordon B. Hinckley referred to "O My Father" and added, "Logic and reason would certainly suggest that if we have a Father in Heaven, we have a Mother in Heaven. That doctrine rests well with me. However, in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, I regard it as inappropriate for anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven." "Daughters of God," Ensign 21 (November 9, 1991): 100.


50Discourse by President Wilford Woodruff, October 8, 1893 (in Salt Lake), Millennial Star 56 (April 9, 1894): 229; also in The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 61–62.


55David McKay to Mrs. James Hood, March 16, 1916, photocopy of holograph, LDS Church Archives. It appears that Eliza may have responded similarly to inquiries from Edward Tullidge. She helped Tullidge collect Mormon women's autobiographies for Women of Mormondom and very probably reviewed and certainly promoted the volume, which includes a discussion of "O My Father" and the doctrine of Mother in Heaven. According to Tullidge,

the revelation of our Mother in heaven—co-existent and co-equal with the eternal Father... was left, among the unrevealed truths, to
the present age, when it would seem the woman is destined by Providence to become very much the oracle of a new and peculiar civilization. The oracle of this last grand truth of woman's divinity and of her eternal Mother as the partner with the Father in the creation of worlds, is none other than the Mormon Church. It was revealed in the glorious theology of Joseph. . . . The Father is the first in name and order, but the Mother is with him—these twain, one from the beginning. Then came our Hebraic poetess [Eliza R. Snow] with her hymn of invocation, and woman herself brought the perfected idea of deity into the forms of praise and worship. Is not this exalting woman to her sphere beyond all precedent? (Tullidge, Women of Mormondom, 193–94)


"Significance of "O My Father" to Eliza R. Snow"

61Letter of Amelia Bloomer: read at the woman's rights convention held at Akron, Ohio, May 28 and 29, 1851, quoted in Donna A. Behnke, Religious Issues in Nineteenth Century Feminism (Troy, N.Y.: Whiston, 1982), 108.

62Eliza R. Snow, "The New Year, 1852," in Snow, Poems, 1:212, first published in Deseret News, January 19, 1852. Eliza never abandoned the traditional idea that the Fall had placed woman in a subordinate position and required her to be obedient to her husband (Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:11-15), although she cast it in terms of obedience to husbands with priesthood authority. The Fall, she believed, had altered the primeval unity and equality shared by men and women, and through woman's righteousness and submission to priesthood authority, that unity and equality would ultimately be restored. She told Bountiful Ward sisters in November 1870:

For before the fall the Lord gave Conjointly to both but after the Fall Man and Woman had her orders given separately, and it has never been reversed, and never will be till the Curse is taken off. My sisters we are placed in a position so that the Curse may be recalled by obedience, for it will be by obedience, and by fulfilling that law, that we shall be called forth to a State of Glory. Though we may feel humiliated, yet the Lord has shown a way to come out of that, So that we can enjoy perfect union again, For union will be restored between Man and Woman. (Relief Society Minutes of the Bountiful [Utah] Ward, 1868-1875, November 7, 1870, LDS Church Archives)


63Eliza Snow commented to Relief Society sisters in 1880, "We are not only helpmeets to our husbands as wives, but we are helpmeets to the Priesthood. The women of the world are working against the men of the world, and will never accomplish what they aim at, though they may do some good." Unity was always paramount for her. Gunnison [Utah] Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1879-1887, August 13, 1880, LDS Church Archives. See also Mulvay [Derr], "Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question," 250-64.


60Heber C. Kimball, in *JD*, 5:29, July 12, 1857.


62Emma Smith’s use of her position as president of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo to oppose plural marriage and the revision of the record of Joseph Smith’s instructions to the Relief Society are discussed in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, Women of Covenant, 59-63, 74.

63Eliza R. Snow, "Woman," in Snow, Poems, 2:176; first published in The Mormon, December 27, 1856. Snow’s uneasiness with the reworking of her record might be read between the lines of a poem composed in March 1855, the month she was invited to take her minutes to the Historian’s Office and informed that they would be revised. Historian’s Office Journal, March 29 and 30, 1855, LDS Church Archives. Her unpublished poem, “The Will” (Eliza R. Snow, Nauvoo Journal and Notebook, 1842-1882, holograph, LDS Church Archives), lists the sacrifices a Saint might make and the spiritual manifestations she might have, concluding:

Yet our labors, our tithings & offerings
Will to little or nothing amount,
If that one—just that one little item
Is withheld from the gen’ral account.

Though we keep every other commandment
In the one, we may be lacking still;
Not to sell and impart our possessions,
But to lay on the altar, the will.

64Snow, "Woman."


67Eliza R. Snow, "The Ultimatum of Human Life," in Snow, Poems, 2:5-6; italics in original. The poem was published in the Deseret News, February 20, 1856, 394, under the title “Instructions of the Priesthood”; when it was reprinted in Poems, the original title of “The Ultimatum of Human Life” was used. See holograph dated March, in Eliza R. Snow Journal and Notebook, 1842-1882, LDS Church Archives.

68Snow, "The Ultimatum of Human Life."

69Snow, "The Ultimatum of Human Life."

70Snow, "Woman"; italics in original.

71Lynn A. McKinlay, "Patriarchal Order of the Priesthood" in Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 3:1067; Arthur A. Bailey, “Adam,” in Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 1:16-17. In calling Adam “God . . . of the human race,” Eliza also reflects the understanding that Adam and Eve set the pattern for all to follow and that through divine investiture, Adam had conferred upon him “all essential keys, titles, and dominions possessed by the Father” necessary for Adam to perform his work. Bailey, “Adam,” 1:17. In “[Adam] arose to be / Cloth’d with the Godhead’s might and majesty,” Eliza draws a clear distinction between Adam and the Godhead.
Significance of “O My Father” to Eliza R. Snow

78Snow, “The Ultimatum of Human Life.”

79Eliza R. Snow, “To Mrs. ———,” in Snow, Poems, 2:194; italics in original. The lines are reminiscent of the well-known couplet later formulated by Eliza’s brother Lorenzo Snow: “As man now is, God once was; / As God now is, man may be.” Lorenzo’s account of his gaining an understanding of the doctrine and discussing it with Joseph Smith and his sister is contained in Lorenzo Snow, “The Grand Destiny of Man,” Deseret Evening News, July 20, 1901; and LeRoi C. Snow, “Devotion to a Divine Inspiration,” Improvement Era 22 (June 1919): 653–62.

80Snow, “To Mrs. ———”; italics in original.


84Lehi Ward, Utah Stake Relief Society Minutes, 1868–1879, October 27, 1869, LDS Church Archives.

85Provo Second Ward, Utah Stake Relief Society Minutes, 1869–1882, “Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Female Relief Societies of Provo held at the Meeting House September 1869 Eliza R. Snow Presiding,” LDS Church Archives.

86An Address by Miss Eliza R. Snow . . . August 14th, 1873, Reported by James Taylor,” Woman’s Exponent 2 (September 15, 1873): 62–63.

87Diaries of Mary Ann Burnham Freeze, March 9, 1883, holograph in Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.


89Albanese, “Mormonism and the Male-Female God,” 57. Herren, Lindsey, and Mason reject Albanese’s thesis; they consider the “range of functions” the Mother in Heaven doctrine fulfills from theological, sociopsychological, and sociopolitical perspectives; and they claim that the concept reinforces the “patriarchal authority among Latter Day Saints [which] provides for an extreme separation or division of labor between men and women.” Herren, Lindsey, and Mason, “The Mormon Concept of Mother in Heaven,” 407–9. Their interpretation might be used to explain the allegiance of Eliza R. Snow to priesthood principles and leaders and to plural marriage, but Albanese comes closer to capturing the essence of Eliza Snow’s spiritual power.

On the other hand, the present article makes clear that Eliza R. Snow’s understanding of Mother in Heaven combined with other factors such as her close relationships with Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, her role and renown as a poet, and her spiritual gifts and ministry in the temple. This combination, not simply her understanding of Mother in Heaven, is what shaped her extraordinary leadership. As Linda Mercadante concludes from her case study of the
Shakers, "Formalized changes in religious imagery are not adequate alone to powerfully and directly shape changes in experience. Imagery must emerge from, confirm, and relate to changes in experience, and be encouraged and reinforced by changes in social structure." Mercadante, *Gender, Doctrine, and God*, 155.


93Spencer W. Kimball, “The True Way of Life and Salvation,” *Ensign* 8 (May 1978): 6. The passage containing President Kimball’s response to Eliza’s hymn states:

When we sing that doctrinal hymn and anthem of affection, “O My Father,” we get a sense of the ultimate in maternal modesty, of the restrained, queenly elegance of our Heavenly Mother, and knowing how profoundly our mortal mothers have shaped us here, do we suppose her influence on us as individuals to be less if we live so as to return there?
The "Hymn of the Pearl": An Ancient Counterpart to "O My Father"

An early Christian hymn portraying a soul's journey from the heavenly court of regal parents through an earthly probation to a divine inheritance fascinates interpreters of many faiths.

John W. Welch and James V. Garrison

One of the most endearing writings found in early Christianity is known as the "Hymn of the Pearl." This text has immediate appeal to readers of all levels and resonates a beautiful message of a soul's journey from a premortal home, through mortality, and back to heavenly parents. To this extent, the poem can be seen as an early Christian counterpart to the early Latter-day Saint hymn "O My Father."

The Hymn of the Pearl is quoted in an apocryphal work entitled The Acts of the Apostle Thomas, probably named after Didymus Judas Thomas, the same Thomas who doubted Christ's resurrection. Many manuscripts of the Acts survive, but only two contain the Hymn of the Pearl; one is a Syriac version and the other is in Greek. The original text of the hymn appears to have been written in Syriac, probably in the first or second century A.D.

In The Acts of Thomas, we find Thomas imprisoned in India, imploring the Lord for deliverance. When he finishes praying for himself and for the other prisoners, he sits down and begins to recite the Hymn of the Pearl. The hymn tells of the journey of a soul through a treacherous kingdom in order to recover a sacred pearl and to return with it to awaiting parents. The whole poem is spoken by the soul in the first-person singular, making it beautifully personal. The composition begins with the soul as a young boy in his primeval childhood, being nurtured in the royal house of his parents, the King of Kings and the Queen of the East. One
day his parents instruct him that he is to leave home and his glittering robe and garments and take a journey down into Egypt to find there a pearl guarded by a terrible serpent. The parents covenant with him that, if he recovers the pearl and returns home with it, he will be allowed to put his glorious robes back on and will be made an heir in the kingdom together with his oldest brother, the second in command. Accordingly, he leaves home with a bundle of provisions prepared for him, and with a pair of guides, he makes his way for Egypt.

He is left on his own just outside of Egypt, and he decides to head straight for the serpent, because, if he can catch it asleep, he can easily snatch the pearl away and accomplish his mission. Outside the den he settles in, waiting for the serpent to fall asleep, and while there, encounters a young man from his homeland, whom he takes in as a partner and companion and whom he warns about the wickedness of the Egyptians. He also decides to dress himself in Egyptian clothes in order to blend in with them lest they recognize him as a foreigner and call the serpent against him. The Egyptians, however, detect him and trick him into eating their food. The food has the effect of a drug, making him forget who he is and that he is on a mission; soon he is serving the king of Egypt.

Meanwhile, his parents and oldest brother see his plight and in council decide that they must write a letter commanding him to wake up and to remember that he is a son of royalty and that he is on a sacred mission. All the nobles of the kingdom sign the letter, the king seals it with his right hand, and it is sent. The letter reaches the boy, wakes him up from his sleep, and reminds him of his origin and his purpose. Determined to fulfill his mission, he puts the serpent to sleep by invoking the name of his father, his mother, and his elder brother. He seizes the pearl, sheds the filthy clothes of the Egyptians, and makes a journey back to his home in the East. As he approaches his home, his beautiful robe and garments are sent out to him, and after dressing himself in them, he reenters the home of his parents with the pearl. There he is lovingly received and made an heir to the kingdom together with the eldest brother.

LDS readers can immediately sense the potential significance of the Hymn of the Pearl since many of its elements are consistent with fundamental LDS precepts. In addition to the obvious symbols
are some subtle ones, and these symbols have caught the attention of several scholars. For example, Hugh Nibley has outlined possible LDS interpretations for many parts of this text. Nibley sees the hymn as the reflection of a ritual journey of the soul, a journey of “deliverance from the dark prison of this world and of the underworld.” Accordingly, the main character in the hymn is the redeemed soul, probably of a typical good Christian, retelling the story of personal salvation and deliverance. Especially intriguing to Nibley is the bundle of treasures given to the soul before the soul leaves its premortal existence. In his view, the treasures are “the treasures of wisdom” or the knowledge of ordinances, especially those of the temple, and the garment left behind symbolizes the premortal glory of the soul and the robe of the priesthood.

The soul travels down through Babel and into Egypt, which represent the materialistic world and “spiritual Sodom,” or the telestial world. The pearl that the soul must find there is in fact the soul itself, “rescued and returned from the depths.” The serpent guarding the pearl embodies all obstacles that would impede progress and spiritual growth. The Egyptian food that puts the soul to sleep could have various LDS interpretations, such as sin or pride; Nibley, however, favors the view that it represents the false philosophies of men.

Concerning the robe sent to the soul as it returns home, Nibley wishes to see this encounter in a ritual sense, although the text is problematical and hence most translations of this passage are obscure. Nibley emphasizes the point that the text clearly involves a message “whispered,” although “all the translators are puzzled by the context.” Passing through this stage, the soul is received back to its heavenly family, where it receives the promised rewards. Significantly, the hymn mentions not only the soul’s father, the King of Kings, but also the soul’s mother, the Queen of the East, along with the elder brother and second in command, who together send the letter from the heavenly home to the sleeping soul.

While the hymn lends itself well to an LDS interpretation, one needs to be aware of the problems in such an understanding as well. The text has puzzled many scholars, who have placed it in various contexts, including pre-Christian gnosticism, Syrian Christianity, Iranian or Egyptian religion, Hellenistic miracle stories, or Greek
worship of Helios in Syria.\textsuperscript{15} For example, the hymn contains many common gnostic elements,\textsuperscript{16} and thus some of its symbolism is difficult to accommodate within an LDS framework. For instance, difficulties arise when one recognizes that the pearl was already in place in Egypt before the king’s son was sent to retrieve it. Under Gnosticism this is easily explained: The pearl is not the soul of the main character, but rather a lost soul needing to be freed by a savior, the king’s son. But in freeing the pearl, the king’s son himself must be freed when he eats the food of the Egyptians. The hymn, then, becomes a story with two levels: one of a lost soul saved and another of a savior saved. While the idea of a “savior saved” was common in Gnosticism,\textsuperscript{17} it opposes LDS belief. Second, the “dirty garment” of the Egyptians should probably be understood to represent the mortal body.\textsuperscript{18} Gnosticism, like the hymn, viewed the body as “filthy,” something to be overcome and “left behind,” quite the opposite of LDS doctrine.

Moreover, although the hymn can clearly be viewed as a general parable of salvation or of the freeing of a soul lost in the world and its return to its heavenly parents, the identities of the characters remain subject to various interpretations. The main character may be either the soul of a good Christian or of a savior. Some see the soul as the Savior, as does Jonas: “We can confidently take the King’s Son to be the Savior, a definite divine figure, and not just the personification of the human soul in general,”\textsuperscript{19} while others have noted that it could be both: “Whether this . . . is the soul or a redeemer does not make much difference as in both cases we are dealing with a phenomenon of the deity saving itself. Thus the hymn is explained as a classic example of the gnostic ‘redeemed redeemer’.”\textsuperscript{20} A simpler explanation emerges from the plain recognition that the soul is not the same person as the elder brother, the second in command, but still has its own divine potential. Following the view that “the younger son is the Christian who believes in Christ the Son of God and thus becomes a son of God (John 1:12), and that the elder brother is Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:10–15),” Colless argues for an entirely Christian interpretation of the hymn as presenting “the teaching of the Apostles . . . in parable form, modelled on the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) and the pearl merchant (Matt. 13:45–46).”\textsuperscript{21}

The meanings of some of its further elements seem obvious enough; others are more obscure. The house of the soul’s father is
clearly the heavenly home, and the King of Kings is God the Father.\textsuperscript{22} It is also well accepted that Egypt represents the material world, since this is a common image both in Gnosticism and Christianity,\textsuperscript{23} and likewise, the serpent is either the ruler of the material world or the presence of evil in the material world. The main issues of dispute among the scholars are over the meaning of the letter, the robe and garment, and the pearl; on these points there is little consensus. The pearl may represent "the sparkle of light emprisoned in this world or the soul lying in the darkness of the human body."\textsuperscript{24} Others see in it "the individual's 'capacity for growth . . . even in an alien environment; the goal of this growth is realizing the full capacities of the personality.'\textsuperscript{25} Another interesting view is that "to fetch the one pearl means partaking in the kingdom."\textsuperscript{26} Klijn determines this by comparing the pearl in the hymn to the pearl of Matthew 13:46, but then he adds, "It appears that the pearl can not be considered to have one general meaning. Every thing related with the heavenly world can be compared with the pearl."\textsuperscript{27} Finally, the sacred ritual meaning that Nibley has suggested opens the possibility of yet further meanings for the garment, the robe, the instruction carried by a messenger, and a pearl of exaltation.

Readers may easily agree or disagree with any of the interpretations suggested here or elsewhere in the scholarly commentaries, but on one feature of the hymn all would agree, namely its simple beauty and appeal: "The immediate charm of this tale is such that it affects the reader prior to all analysis of meaning. The mystery of its message speaks with its own force, which almost seems to dispense with the need for detailed interpretation."\textsuperscript{28}

The hymn is available in a variety of translations.\textsuperscript{29} Some are simplified retellings of the hymn,\textsuperscript{30} but the better ones adhere to the original texts, especially the Syriac. Bevan gives a translation based solely on the Syriac text and presents it side by side with the Syriac.\textsuperscript{31} Others translate the Syriac text and show variations in the Greek. Among these are the classic translation by M. R. James,\textsuperscript{32} a beautiful translation by Hans Jonas,\textsuperscript{33} and a very readable translation by Werner Foerster and R. McL. Wilson.\textsuperscript{34} Another, the Bentley Layton translation, translates only the Greek text but gives ample footnotes to show variances from the Syriac.\textsuperscript{35} One of the more
interesting translations is an attempt by Burkitt to render the Syriac in English hexameter verse—an ambitious and largely successful endeavor.\textsuperscript{36} A full translation of the hymn has not been previously published in LDS sources. We reproduce here, by permission, the Oxford translation of Foerster and Wilson (pages 135–38 below).\textsuperscript{37}

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NOTES

\textsuperscript{1} It has long been recognized that the Hymn of the Pearl is a separate work from \textit{The Acts of Thomas} that was likely “borrowed from some extraneous source and inserted—at what period we cannot say—into the Acts.” Anthony Bevan, “The Hymn of the Soul Contained in the Syriac Acts of St. Thomas,” \textit{Texts and Studies} 5, no. 3 (1897; reprint, Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1967): 2; see also F. Crawford Burkitt, \textit{Early Eastern Christianity} (London: Murray, 1904), 211.

\textsuperscript{2} Although referred to as Thomas, the main part of the apostle’s name is Judas, or Jude. \textit{Thomas} is a Syriac or Aramaic word that means “twin,” and \textit{Didymus} a Greek word that also means “twin,” producing the name Didymus Thomas (see John 11:16). His name, then, means “Jude the twin.” Other apocryphal works attributed to him are \textit{The Gospel of Thomas} and \textit{The Book of Thomas}. Some also attribute the Epistle of Jude to Thomas. The Epistle of Jude was written by the “brother of James” (Jude 1:1). Both Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55 confirm that a Jude/Judas was the brother of James, the same James who was the brother of Christ (see also Gal. 1:19). Whether this Jude is Didymus Judas Thomas is debatable, since there was a third Jude in the Twelve besides Judas Thomas and Judas Iscariot. This was Judas “not Iscariot” (Luke 6:16; John 14:22), also called Lebbæus or Thaddæus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18).

\textsuperscript{3} Eighty-one manuscripts of the Acts of Thomas have been found to date, six in Syriac and seventy-five in Greek. The Syriac manuscript containing the Hymn of the Pearl dates to A.D. 936, and the Greek to the eleventh century A.D.

\textsuperscript{4} Bevan recognized that the Syriac version of the hymn is written in hexameter, with the verses arranged in couplets. On stylistic grounds, it is evident that the hymn was originally composed in Syriac and that “even those who believe the Acts to have been first composed in Greek admit that the [hymn] is not a translation but a purely Syriac work.” Bevan, “The Hymn of the Soul,” 2, 7–8; see also Burkitt, \textit{Early Eastern Christianity}, 212. The hymn has been dated to as early as A.D. 50–70 by A. Adam, \textit{Die Psalmen des Thomas und das Periplentia als Zeugnisse vorchristlicher Gnosis} (Berlin: Topelmann, 1959), 59, and to as late as A.D. 200–225 by Bentley Layton, \textit{The Gnostic Scriptures} (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987), 367.
"Hymn of the Pearl"

The ancient title is "Song of the Apostle Judas Thomas in the Land of the Indians." "Hymn of the Pearl" is a modern title. It is occasionally referred to as "Hymn of the Soul," another modern title.


Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 267.


That the garment represents premortal glory was recognized as far back as Burkitt, who notes that "the Robe is no article of clothing, but a Bright Form. The Syriac word means The Bright or The Shining thing." Burkitt, Early Eastern Christianity, 215. Nibley draws particular attention to the fact that "the two garments go together to make a unity, but the white undergarment is the proper pre-existent glory of the wearer, while the other is the priesthood later added to it." He notes also that "the individual's garment fits him and no one else." Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 268.

Before reaching Babel and Egypt, the soul and its two guides pass through Mesene, where the soul is left on its own. Nibley equates Mesene with a way station, "the place of transition between worlds; neither heaven nor earth but in between; . . . [the place where the hero must change his clothes and part with his heavenly guides, who can accompany him no further]." Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 268. Stephen E. Robinson suggests in personal correspondence that the two guides are probably not heavenly beings but mortal parents, who bring children to the age of accountability, when the test truly begins.

Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 268.

Nibley notes that it is the richness of the food that puts the soul to sleep, where the richness is satisfying to the appetites and senses. False philosophies likewise are pleasing to the intellect and senses alone. Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 269.

See Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 270–72.

For a discussion of these interpretations, see Ioan P. Culianu, "Erzählung und Mythos im 'Lied von der Perle.'" Kairos 21 (1979): 60–71.

Gnosticism believed that the soul was imprisoned in physical existence and could be freed only by a difficult journey through enemy powers and by secret knowledge (gnosis) revealed from heavenly messengers. Gnostic thought was heavily influenced by Jewish and Christian religion. For instance, Jesus was commonly viewed as one of the heavenly messengers who came to deliver the secret knowledge. Gnosticism also featured strong themes of "dualism," such as spirit versus physical matter, good versus evil, and light versus darkness.


Most of the scholarly community is in agreement with Bevan: "There can be no doubt that the Egyptian garb, which the prince puts on as a disguise and casts away as soon as his mission is accomplished, represents the human body." Bevan, "The Hymn of the Soul," 5; see also Klijn, "The So-Called Hymn," 154–64.
esp. 162. Compare Jonas, who agrees that it is the body but asserts that it is put on by a savior as a way of remaining unknown to the world’s rulers, “taking on by turns their various forms.” He also notes that “the King’s son has actually no choice but to put on the terrestrial garments, seeing that he has left his own in the upper realm.” Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, 118-19.


22More disputed are the identitities of the Queen of the East and the eldest brother. As Nibley points out, most commentators think that the trio of the king, the queen, and the eldest brother is the Trinity. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 270. Burkitt believes that the Queen of the East corresponds to the Holy Spirit, since “in Semitic languages Spirit or Wind [a common term for “spirit” in antiquity] is feminine.” Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 214. Klijn suggests that the eldest brother is the Holy Spirit: “[Because the soul will inherit the kingdom with the eldest brother] we are probably dealing with the relation soul-Spirit. . . . [T]he real destination of man is to be united with the Spirit.” Klijn, “The So-Called Hymn,” 161.

23For Egypt as a gnostic symbol, see Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, 118. Egypt is also a common symbol of captivity in Christianity, as in the Israelite captivity in Egypt.

24Klijn, “The So-Called Hymn,” 156.


26Klijn, “The So-Called Hymn,” 158.


30One of the better retellings is by Anne Twitty in “The Hymn of the Pearl/ Gnostic,” *Parabola* 10, no. 2 (summer 1985): 75–77.


33Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, 113-16. A main weakness in the Jonas translation is that he omits parts of the text: the descriptions of the robe, the garment, and the journey back from Egypt. His work also presents, in several respects, a pre-Nag Hammadi understanding of Gnosticism.


Hymn of the Pearl

When I was a speechless infant in my father’s palaces, resting in the ease and luxury of those who reared me, my parents provided me with means of support and sent me out from the East, our homeland. From the wealth of their treasuries they put together a pack, large and light, such that I could carry it alone. The pack from above consists of gold and unminted silver from the great treasures, of chalcedony stones from India and of pearls from the land of the Cushites. And they armed me with diamond <which scratches iron>. And they took off from me the suit encrusted with stones and shot with gold, which they had made in their love for me, and the robe of yellow colour to match my height. And they made an agreement with me, engraving it upon my mind that I should not forget it, and said: “If you go down to Egypt and fetch from there the single pearl which is there beside the devouring dragon, you shall (again) put on the suit encrusted with stones and the robe which goes over it; and with your brother, our second, become an heir in our kingdom.”

I came from the East by a hard and terrible way with two guides, for I had no experience for travelling that way. And I came also along the border-lands of Mesene, where there is the hostel of the oriental merchants, and reached the land of the Babylonians <and entered the walls of Sarbug>. But when I came to Egypt, the two guides who had travelled with me left me, and I made straight for the dragon and waited near his lair, watching for him to doze and

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Passages in angle brackets <> are explanatory expansions from the Syriac version.

James: “my parents provisioned me”; Jonas: “my parents sent me forth . . . with provisions for the journey”; Layton: “my parents equipped me with supplies.”

James: “they put together a load, both great and light, that I might carry it alone”; Jonas: “they tied me a burden: great it was, yet light, so that I might carry it alone.”

James: “garment”; Layton: “garment.”

James: “made for my stature”; Jonas: “woven to conform exactly to my figure”; Layton: “tailored to my size.”

James: “And they made a covenant with me, and inscribed it on mine understanding, that I should not forget it”; Jonas: “and made a covenant with me, and wrote it in my heart that I might not forget it.”

Jonas: “our next in rank.”
fall asleep so that I might take away my pearl. And I was alone and foreign in appearance, and I looked strange even to my own (household companions). But there I saw one who was related to me, from the East, one who was free, a graceful and handsome boy, a son of noblemen. He came and associated with me, and I had him as my companion, making him both friend and partner in my journey. And I urged him to be on his guard against the Egyptians and the society of those impure men. But I put on their clothes, so that I might not appear foreign, as one from abroad, in order that I might get the pearl, and so that the Egyptians should not wake up the dragon against me.

But I do not know how they discovered that I was not from their land. But they cunningly devised a trap for me, and I tasted their food. I ceased to know that I was a king’s son, and I served their king. I forgot the pearl for which my parents had sent me, and under the weight of their food I sank into deep sleep.

But as I suffered these things my parents also observed it and were sorry for me. And a proclamation was made in our kingdom that everyone should come to our gates. And the kings of Parthia and the potentates and the great ones of the East took a decision about me that I should not remain in Egypt. They wrote me (a letter) and the mighty ones each signed it: “From the father, the king of kings, and the mother who possesses the East, and the brother who is the second beside us, to our son in Egypt, greetings. Get up and sober up out of your sleep, and listen to the words of this letter. Remember that you are a king’s son. You have come under a servile yoke. Think of your suit shot with gold; think of the pearl on account of which you were sent to Egypt, so that your name may be mentioned in the book of the valiant, and you may be an heir with your brother in our kingdom.”

—James: “And forasmuch as I was alone I made mine aspect strange, and appeared as an alien to my people”; Jonas: “Since I was one and kept to myself, I was a stranger to my fellow-dwellers”; Layton: “Being on my own, I put on a disguise and would have seemed alien even to my own people.”

—Jonas: “one of my race.”

—Literally, “anointed ones.”

—James: “they that bare office”; Jonas: “the nobles”; Layton: “those in office.”

—Jonas: “Awake and rise up out of thy sleep.”

—The Greek version renders this passage differently than the Syriac, as the James translation shows:
And the king sealed (the letter) because of the wicked,\textsuperscript{a} the children of Babylon, and the tyrannical demons of Sarbug. It flew in form of an eagle, the king of all birds. <It flew and landed by me and became entirely speech.> And at the sound and sight of it I started up from sleep, took (it), kissed (it) tenderly, and read. And it had written in it just what was written down in my heart. And immediately I remembered that I was a son of kings, and my freedom longed for its kind.\textsuperscript{b} And I remembered also the pearl for which I had been dispatched to Egypt. I began to charm the terrible dragon with spells and put him to sleep by uttering the name of my father <the names of our second (son)\textsuperscript{c} and of my mother, the queen of the East>. I stole the pearl, took it away, and returned to my parents.\textsuperscript{d} And I took off the dirty garment and left it behind in their country. And at once I directed my course towards the light of the homeland in the East. And I found on the way (the letter) that had roused me. And this, just as it had by its sound raised me up when I slept, also showed me the way by the light (shining) from it; for the royal (letter) of silk stuff was before my eyes.\textsuperscript{e} And with love guiding and drawing me, I went past Sarbug. Leaving Babylon on the left I reached great Mesene, which lies on the coast.

<My parents sent me by their treasurers my shining suit and my long robe.> And I did not remember (any more) my brightness.\textsuperscript{f}

For when I was still a child and quite young I had left it behind in my father's palaces. And suddenly I saw the suit which resembled (me) as it were in a mirror, and I spied my whole self in it, and I knew and saw myself through it; for we were partially separated from each other, though we were from the same, and again we are

\begin{flushright}
Remember thy garment spangled with gold, and the glorious mantle which thou shouldst wear and wherewith thou shouldst deck thyself. Thy name is named in the book of life, and with thy brother whom thou hast received thou shalt be in our kingdom.
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{a}James: "the King . . . sealed it with his right hand because of the evil ones"; Jonas: "the King had sealed [the letter] with his right hand against the evil ones."

\textsuperscript{b}Jonas: "my freeborn soul desired its own kind."

\textsuperscript{c}James: "our second in rank"; Jonas: "our second in rank."

\textsuperscript{d}Jonas: "and turned to repair home to my Father."

\textsuperscript{e}James: "For at times the royal garment of silk shone before mine eyes."

\textsuperscript{f}Jonas: "Its splendor I had forgotten, having left it as a child in my Father's house"; James: "But I remembered not the brightness of it: for I was yet a child and very young when I had left it in the palace of my Father."
one through one form. Not only (so), but I saw also the treasurers themselves who carried the suit as two, yet one form was present upon both, one royal sign in both. They had wealth and riches in hand, and they gave me precious things, the gorgeous suit which had been skilfully worked in bright colours with gold and precious stones and pearls of brilliant hues. They were fastened above. And the image of the king of kings (was) fully present through the whole (suit). Sapphire stones were set appropriately above.

I saw moreover that movements of knowledge were emitted by the whole, and that it was ready to utter speech. I heard it speak: "I am (the property) of him who is bravest of all men, for whose sake I was engraved by the father himself." And I myself noticed <my stature, which increased in accordance with its impulse>. And all the royal movements extended to me. It made haste, straining towards him who should take it from his hand. And love roused me to rush to meet him and receive it. And I reached out, <adorned myself with the beauty of its colours,> and drew my brilliant garment entirely over me.

But when I had put (it) on I was lifted up to the gate of acknowledgement and worship. And I bowed my head and acknowledged the radiance of the father who had sent this to me; for I had done what had been commanded, and he likewise, what he had promised. And in the gates of the palace I mingled with those of his dominion. And he rejoiced over me and received me with him in the palace. And all his subjects sing with pleasant voices. And he promised me that I would also be sent with him to the gates of the king, so that with my gifts and my pearl I might together with him appear before the king."

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4Jonas: "As I now beheld the robe, it seemed to me suddenly to become a mirror-image of myself: myself entire I saw in it, and it entire I saw in myself, that we were two in separateness, and yet again one in the sameness of our forms."

5Layton: "one single royal token consisting of two halves."

6James: "and paid me the due price"; Layton: "and gave me my reward."

7Jonas: "And the image of the King of kings was depicted all over it."

Jonas includes this sentence also as part of the robe's speech: "And I [the robe] perceived in myself how my stature grew in accordance with his labors."

8Jonas: "He [the king] received me joyfully, and I was with him in his kingdom, and all his servants praised him with organ voice, that he had promised that I should journey to the court of the King of kings and having brought my Pearl should appear together with him."
Changes in the Religious Devotion of Latter-day Saints throughout the Life Cycle

*LDS women rate themselves higher in religious devotion than do LDS men. Both experience diminished religious devotion in certain life stages but increase in devotion over their life spans.*

James T. Duke and Barry L. Johnson

Do the religious beliefs and commitments of Latter-day Saints vary during the course of their lives? If so, how much do they change? Specifically, do the Saints grow in religious devotion as they grow older and approach death? Do marriage, children, retirement, and widowhood change people's religious beliefs and behavior in positive or negative ways? Do these experiences have a different effect on men than on women? This study seeks to answer these questions by investigating the religious devotion of LDS people during the life cycle from young adulthood to old age.

Social researchers have learned much about personal religious commitment and behavior,¹ or what they refer to as *religiosity* but what we will call *religious devotion* in this paper. Researchers have found that people have many ways of being religious. That is, there are many different aspects of religious devotion, such as church attendance, prayer and gospel study, religious beliefs, knowledge of scriptures and doctrines, and spiritual experiences. Not all people are religious in the same way. Some people always attend church but rarely read the scriptures, while others pray daily but rarely attend church services.

In this paper, we explore (1) gender differences in religious devotion and (2) religious devotion through the family life cycle. But first we will discuss how the study was conducted.

¹ *Religiosity* refers to the level of religious involvement and commitment, including attendance at religious services, prayer, religious study, and participation in religious organizations.
Methodology

In order to investigate changes in the religious devotion of Latter-day Saint women and men throughout the life cycle, we conducted a survey of a national sample of Latter-day Saint families, using the subscription list of a major Latter-day Saint publication. A random sample of 1,026 households who subscribed to the publication was selected. Each state was represented in proportion to its population except the state of Utah, whose proportion was cut in half to ensure that Utah Latter-day Saints would not predominate in the study. Because we chose this method of sampling, our sample was composed primarily of active Latter-day Saints.

Two questionnaires were mailed to each address with a cover letter asking that they be filled out by the husband and wife or, alternately, by two adults in the household. A number of follow-up mailings were sent to those who did not respond to the first mailing. A total of 1,384 usable questionnaires were received, with 80 percent of all households returning at least one questionnaire.

Religious Devotion

Some Americans are more religious than others. Belief in Christ, for example, is higher among women, older people, people living in the South, non-Whites, and people with less education and income. Among members of different denominations, Latter-day Saints have a relatively high level of religious devotion, as do conservative Protestants such as Southern Baptists, Pentecostals, and Assembly of God members.

The so-called mainline Protestants—Episcopalian, Presbyterians, Unitarians, and Congregationalists—have lower levels of religious devotion. Catholics have higher than average church attendance, although the attendance of Catholics has declined significantly since the 1960s. Jews are considerably lower than most other Americans in both church attendance and belief in life after death.

Gender and Religious Devotion

Social factors provide the broader context within which human choices take place, so to understand individual experiences and
choices, one must also understand the macrosociological context and the forces that impinge on people in their real lives. For example, marital adjustment is different for men than it is for women in southern California, and the adjustment for both is different again in Saudi Arabia.

The experiences of being a man or a woman are among the most significant in any person's life. Men and women often make different choices because of the social context within which they live. In the United States and many other societies, women typically are more religious than men. A recent Gallup poll found that 46 percent of American women attended religious services weekly, while only 39 percent of men did so. In addition, 66 percent of women and only 48 percent of men said that religion was very important in their lives.

Are Latter-day Saints different? Religious devotion among Latter-day Saints followed the general pattern of other Americans. However, on the level of specific practices and beliefs, the survey reveals some interesting differences between Latter-day Saint men and women in their religious devotion. As the data in table 1 demonstrate, Latter-day Saint women typically rated themselves as being more religious than did Latter-day Saint men. For example, they were more likely to attend church, to pray privately, to consider themselves strong Latter-day Saints, and to have spiritual experiences. They also were more likely to believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true church, to have faith in Christ, and to love other people. In fact, on 26 of the 31 questions, women were more religious than men. On a twenty-seventh question, women were more likely than men to say they hold family home evenings weekly but were also more likely to say they never hold family home evenings.

On the other four questions, men responded with higher religious devotion than did women. One of these questions concerned knowledge of the scriptures and doctrines of the Church, and the men's higher rating of themselves on this question obviously is due to more men serving missions on which they learn such doctrines. Men were also more likely to say they are more temperate than women. Most notably, men were more likely than
Table 1. Percent Men and Women with High Religious Devotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How strong a Latter-day Saint would you say you are?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely strong</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Strong</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you attend church meetings?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every week—two or more meetings</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you hold a genuine family home evening?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a month</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you pray privately?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a day or more frequently</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a day</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often would you say that you have the feeling that God has answered your prayers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you say that you have ever had a spiritual experience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often would you say that you have had such spiritual experiences?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon leaders teach that Jesus Christ is a divine person who is the Son of God and the savior of the world. Please rate yourself on the extent to which you accept that teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rated Self 10:</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you were to die today, which of the three degrees of glory do you feel worthy to enter?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celestial</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telestial</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What score would you give yourself on each of the following dimensions of religion, in comparison with other LDS people? [Percent Giving Themselves an 8, 9, or 10]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the scriptures and doctrines of the Church</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that the LDS Church is the only true church</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith in Christ</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church activity &amp; attendance at meetings</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>86.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilling Church callings &amp; assignments</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of others</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to others</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality, or the reception of the Holy Ghost</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience to the commandments</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimony</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How closely your life follows the life that Christ wants us to live</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now, taking all things together, how religious a person would you say you are?</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We would like to ask you now to compare yourself to other people you know, both LDS and non-LDS people. What score would you give yourself on the following characteristics? [Percent Giving Themselves an 8, 9, or 10]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedient</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrificing</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperate</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtuous</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>92.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
women to believe that if they died today, they would be worthy of the Celestial Kingdom (36 percent of men and only 29 percent of women responded this way). Men were also slightly more likely to say their lives closely follow the life that Christ wants us to live, although the difference between men and women was less than 1 percent. Men therefore felt more confident than did women about their place in the final judgment, despite the fact that they rated themselves less religious than did women on 26 of the 31 questions.

Because responses to questionnaires involve self-ratings (which are used extensively in social sciences), we must be cautious about interpreting such data. Respondents may deceive themselves, differ in mind sets and therefore differ in perceptions, or have other response biases. Obtaining observational data on some indices such as church attendance can help us substantiate the self-report data—women do attend church more frequently than do men. However, many self-reports cannot be corroborated with behavioral data. Obviously, the percentage of men and women who will eventually live in the Celestial Kingdom cannot be objectively determined at this time through social research. But we doubt men are really more likely to be worthy of gaining the Celestial Kingdom.

Religious Devotion throughout the Life Cycle

Many researchers have used the family life cycle to examine changes in the family over time. The family life cycle refers to the sequence of stages through which individuals pass during their lives, including marriage, parenthood, the maturation of children, the “launching” of children into adult life, the “empty-nest” stage, retirement, and widowhood.

Every time an individual makes a transition from one stage of the life cycle to another, a new social role must be learned, challenges met, and adjustments made. Evelyn Duvall found that in each stage of a person’s life there arise “developmental tasks.” Some of the tasks associated with becoming a parent, for example, are learning to care for the new infant, adjusting to the physical and emotional pressures of parenthood, and reconciling the roles
of spouse and parent. If the person makes an adequate adjustment to each developmental task, life proceeds in an orderly and normal fashion. However, if the individual does not learn the task or cannot make an adequate adjustment, then a crisis ensues that threatens the peace of the family and its members.

Many people, including some Latter-day Saints, drop out of activity in their teens or early twenties and then return to activity after marriage and the birth of children. Changes in religious devotion are likely to occur in conjunction with other fundamental changes, such as marriage, the birth of a child, or retirement. Of course, many changes in an individual's life may lie outside the typical stages of the family life cycle, such as employment or educational changes, changes in health, and changes in place of residence. Thus we would not expect that all changes in religious devotion are correlated with changes in the life cycle. Still, as we will show, significant changes in religious devotion are associated with progress through the cycle.

Some people do not experience all these stages, or they go through them in a different sequence, especially those who remain single, are divorced or widowed, or are childless. Sometimes the timing or order of the stages is neither expected nor considered ideal. The timing of events in one's life is significant, such as the timing of the beginning of dating, the birth of the first child, and of retirement. In many cases, a "normal trajectory" during one's life, or what Allen Bergin refers to as "continuous religious development," is more likely to lead to better adjustment than a truncated trajectory.

This study is not a longitudinal study that followed people through their entire adult lives. Ours is rather a cross-sectional study; we compared persons in each of nine different stages in the life cycle. We defined the stages as shown in table 2. Our definitions included the marital status and age of the parents, the presence of children, and the age of the youngest child. We had a very few respondents who did not fit into one of these stages, such as couples over the age of 35 with one child, or widowed people under the age of 54, and these respondents were excluded from this analysis.
### Table 2. Family Life-Cycle Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Name of Stage</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Age of Adults</th>
<th>Presence of Children</th>
<th>Age of Youngest Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Age 17–35</td>
<td>No children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Young Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Age 17–35</td>
<td>No Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>New Parent</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Age 17–35</td>
<td>One Child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Young Children</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Age 17–64</td>
<td>2+ Children</td>
<td>Age 0–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Growing Family</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Age 17–64</td>
<td>2+ Children</td>
<td>Age 5–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Launching</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Age 17–64</td>
<td>2+ Children</td>
<td>Age 12–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Empty Nest</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Age 17–64</td>
<td>2+ Children</td>
<td>Age 19+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Age 65+</td>
<td>2+ Children</td>
<td>Age 19+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Age 54+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changes in Religious Devotion throughout the Life Cycle

We analyzed each question concerning religious devotion separately, and we also performed a statistical technique called factor analysis to combine questions into factors or dimensions of religious devotion. Factor analysis is a statistical technique designed to show which questions fit together into a single factor. In this report, we will discuss five significant factors of religious devotion. In turn, these five factors can be divided into two types, intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic aspects of religion involve the inner self and the feelings and experiences people perceive inside themselves. The extrinsic aspects of religion are the outer and behavioral manifestations, such as church attendance. We will briefly discuss each factor separately and identify the changes that occur through the life cycle. Then in the following section, we will discuss the life cycle trends in total religious devotion and make some concluding remarks.

**Public Devotion.** The "public devotion" factor includes a question each about church attendance, church activity, and the fulfilling of callings. This factor involves religious behavior that is public and may or may not be performed for social rather than purely religious motives. Changes in public devotion were similar for men and women and occurred in an opposite direction to those of most other factors, as we shall see presently.

Public devotion was fairly high in the single stage, dropped precipitously for both men and women upon marriage, and then began a long period of progress through the family-rearing years. Public devotion then decreased in the empty-nest stage and stayed relatively low for women through the years of widowhood. For men, public devotion increased moderately upon retirement. Except for the stage of retirement, the public devotion of women was considerably higher than that of men, especially in the child-rearing years.

**Beatitudes.** The "beatitudes" factor is composed of six questions in which the respondents rated themselves for gentleness, kindness, humility, patience, love of others, and temperance. Men rated themselves very low before marriage and then experienced a huge jump in these tender qualities upon marriage. Both men and women
suffered a decline in the beatitudes upon the birth of the first child. The decline was followed by fairly consistent increases through the rest of life, with small downward variations especially at widowhood. Women rated themselves higher than did men on these beatitudes except for a slight reversal immediately after marriage.

**Prayer.** Two questions are included in the "prayer" factor—frequency of prayer and answers to prayer. This factor shows trends that were distinctly different from other factors. Some groups of people who were highly religious on most dimensions, such as high priests and their wives, prayed relatively infrequently. Conversely, divorced people, especially divorced women, were much more likely to pray daily than other subgroups. Prayer, then, in a time of trial may be used as a source of strength and comfort and a reminder that one is not alone. At other times, people may not pray as often because they are satisfied with their situation or confident in their standing with the Lord.

A fairly high percentage, about 30 percent, of Latter-day Saint people were highly religious on the prayer factor before marriage. After marriage, this percentage jumped more than twenty percentage points for women while remaining flat for men. At the birth of the first child, women experienced a decline in prayer while men showed a slight increase. Thereafter, the trend for women was a gradual but significant decrease in the percentage who prayed regularly, with only a slight reversal in the last stage of widowhood. This decline, from a high of 53 percent in the just-married stage to a low of 14 percent in the retirement stage, was one of the most prolonged and significant changes in our data. Unfortunately, it was a negative change. Men showed more variation, but overall the percentage of men who prayed regularly was about the same at retirement as it was before marriage.

**Testimony.** Three questions compose what we call the testimony factor: belief that the LDS Church is the true church and self-ratings of the respondent's testimony and faith. The overall trend was upward—toward an increasing percentage of people who had strong testimonies. In later life, approximately 70 percent of both men and women believed they had strong testimonies. Women again were more likely than men to rate their own testimonies as strong, although the percentage difference was not great. Women
experienced a sharp increase when the youngest child was a teenager, a significant decrease in the empty-nest stage, and then a significant increase again in the retirement stage.

**Spiritual Well-Being.** The final factor was spiritual well-being, which includes five responses: ratings of the respondent’s knowledge of the gospel, emulation of the life of Christ, and overall religious devotion, as well as questions on how strong a Latter-day Saint the respondents felt they were and what degree of glory they felt worthy to enter. The latter two responses indicate how well people feel they are doing in the grand scale of life. People who rank high on this factor would feel their lives were going well and that they were “right with God.”

Contrary to what we found with the other factors, more men than women felt a high sense of spiritual well-being. Men started out very low in the single stage and then experienced a huge increase upon marriage. Through the life course, men experienced many ups and downs in spiritual well-being, but the final trend was upward with over 50 percent rating themselves high in the retirement stage. Women experienced declines in spiritual well-being at marriage and even further at the birth of the first child. Then their spiritual well-being increased in the child-rearing years, declined during the empty-nest stage, and increased again through retirement and widowhood.

**Total Religious Devotion.** Finally, we computed a “total” religious devotion score that represents the average of all questions on religious devotion (see figure 1). This is as an indicator of the total religious life of the individual when every dimension of religious devotion is taken into account.

As the graph in figure 1 shows, the total religious devotion of Latter-day Saint respondents was relatively low, especially for men, in the single stage and then increased fairly consistently through retirement and widowhood. Women were more highly religious than men in the first six stages, but men and women were almost identical in the empty-nest and retirement stages. Men’s total religious devotion was more consistent than that of women respondents, with an especially notable increase at marriage. Women experienced a large increase when the youngest child was a teenager, a sharp drop when all the children left home, and a large increase again about the age of retirement.
Figure 1. Percent High in Total Religious Devotion in Each Life-Cycle Stage

The Effect of Each Life-Cycle Stage

Having summarized the trends for each of our measures of religious devotion, we now look specifically at each life-cycle stage and discuss more fully the effect each stage has on both men and women. Table 3 shows the percentage of people classified as having high total religious devotion in each stage of the life cycle. We also show the average change in the percent who were highly religious in each stage.

The Single Stage. There were relatively few respondents who were unmarried and under the age of 35. Among the ten single men, the level of religious devotion was extremely low, with only 20 percent categorized as highly religious, while 39 percent
of single women were highly religious. Many single men may have been serving missions and were not included in the sample, but many also may have been inactive in this stage of their lives. Single women, on the whole, appear to be more committed to the Church and its teachings at this stage of their lives.

**Marriage.** Marriage has a powerful influence on the religious devotion of Latter-day Saint men. Newly married men were much more religious than single men, and the percent of men who scored in the high range of religious devotion doubled from 20 percent to 40 percent. For men, this was the most significant period of growth in religious devotion during the entire life cycle. Women also experienced growth in religious devotion upon marriage, but their change was modest, from 39 percent to 43 percent of respondents.

Marriage appears to have a softening and tempering affect on men, changing them most significantly in the inner or intrinsic aspects of religious devotion. From the point of view of Church teachings, growth in love, devotion, caring, service, and sacrifice are more likely to be practiced in a close relationship with a loved spouse. Newly married people become involved in establishing and enhancing a relationship with a loved one, and therefore become more concerned with helping and serving that person. Men probably experience this shift from self-concern to concern for another person more than do women because such service is less a part of the role definition of the single male.

**The Birth of the First Child.** The growth of religious devotion at marriage was reversed at the birth of the first child for both men and women, but the decline was larger for men than for women. For men, the most significant declines were in precisely those intrinsic aspects that had shown the greatest growth at marriage. As new parents, Latter-day Saint men believed they were less loving, warm and sharing.

One notable finding was that public devotion again underwent a change opposite to most other religious devotion factors. Church attendance increased at the birth of the first child while other dimensions were declining. Perhaps parenthood puts greater social pressure on parents to attend church services and motivates them to establish more consistent attendance habits. Church attendance may also be a means of compensating for the perceived
Table 3. Percent Who Were Highly Religious and Percent Change in Religious Devotion, by Gender and Life-Cycle Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life-Cycle Stage</th>
<th>Percent Highly Religious</th>
<th>Percent Change in Religious Devotion</th>
<th>(Number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Single</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Young Married</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. New Parent</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Young Children</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Growing Family</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Launching</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Empty Nest</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Retired</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Widowed</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
decline in the other dimensions of religious devotion. If one observes that one's kindness and feeling of religious self-worth are declining, church attendance may be a means to reverse that trend.

Motherhood is an especially significant transition in the life of the young Latter-day Saint woman, but this transition does not appear to have as great an influence on religious devotion as it does on other aspects of the young mother's life. LDS women experienced approximately the same types of changes in religious devotion as men did, but the changes were not as extreme.

Why was there a decline in the inner or intrinsic dimensions of religious devotion in this stage, and why was this decline more significant for men than for women? One explanation is that the added pressures of child care, even though anticipated and desired in most cases, resulted in the individual being more tired, impatient, and perhaps frustrated. The needs of the parents for affection, caring, and emotional response may not have been met to the same degree as during the period before the birth of the first child.

The love and warmth poured out upon the child could be expected to lead to an increase in the intrinsic aspects of religious devotion, but these would be offset by impatience and frustration as the new parents sought to adjust to the new role of parent, to meet the needs of the child, and to deal with the loss of sleep. The father probably experienced less growth from the nurturing process devoted to the child in his new role of parent than did his wife, especially at this time when the husband is most likely under pressure to complete school or establish his occupational career.

The Birth of the Second Child. As the parents became established in their marriage and in their parental roles, the percentage of people who were highly religious again increased. At the birth of the second child, both men and women showed a slight overall increase in total religious devotion. The birth of the second child probably did not require the same level of adjustment as did marriage or parenthood. Most parents with a second child probably had completed their education, had entered upon their careers, and perhaps were feeling less stress as life progressed.

The Aging of Children. With older children in the family (stages 5 and 6), there was a continuation of the increase in religious devotion noted at the birth of the second child. This increase
was substantial for both men and women, but was especially strong for women, principally as their children became teenagers—a paradoxical and unexpected finding.

Both men and women experienced an increase in their testimonies, a 26 percent increase for men and a 32 percent increase for women. We believe such increases were due primarily to the experiences of parenthood, which gives people practice in living and teaching the theological principles they have learned previously. They come to recognize the validity and truth of gospel principles. This awareness strengthens their testimonies that the Church is true, that the principles are correct and have been revealed by God through his prophets, and that they have practical applications in the mortal world.

At the same time, prayer declined for both men and women. As noted previously, the prayer factor was the most dissimilar to the other factors. Persons with high scores on prayer often were people with significant problems, such as illness, divorce, separation, or other family challenges. Prayer may have been a source of solace and reassurance for people with problems. Conversely, some people who were otherwise strong in their religious devotion prayed only infrequently. Possibly prayer was taken for granted and neglected as other aspects of life became more comfortable and secure. The lack of a strong prayer life among otherwise highly religious people is one of the most important findings of this study and should be a matter of deep concern for leaders and members of the Church.

The Empty-Nest Stage. The changes in religious devotion that occurred at the empty-nest stage were especially interesting and significant. On balance, men showed neither growth nor decline in religious devotion, and the transition experienced by fathers as their children left home did not have a substantial effect on their religious devotion.

The same cannot be said of the Latter-day Saint mothers in the sample. The empty-nest stage had a very strong negative impact on their self-reported religious devotion. A decline was evidenced in all five factors, with the average decline being 11 percent. The greatest declines were in public devotion, testimony, and spiritual well-being.
On questions concerning happiness (not reported here), there was a gradual increase rather than a decline in overall happiness during the transition from child-rearing to the empty-nest stage, a finding which is consistent with research on Americans in general. By this measure, the transition does not appear to be a traumatic one. Nevertheless, the empty-nest situation had a significant negative impact on the religious devotion of women.

In Latter-day Saint families, both the mother and father roles are defined in religious terms. However, the mother role may be more important to a woman's sense of well-being than is the father role for a man. The decline in religious devotion does not appear to have been the result of aging or of what sociologists call cohort or period effects. It occurred specifically at the time that the Latter-day Saint mother lost her most consuming and responsible role, one that she had played for twenty or more years and that had been a chief means by which status had been achieved within the Latter-day Saint community.

Service to and sacrifice for her family is a significant part of a mother's life for many years, and much of this service is viewed in religious terms: one serves God by serving and loving others, especially one's family. Thus the loss of people whom one can serve may lead to a decline in both the inner and outward aspects of religious devotion. Such a decline is significant but does not last long.

**Retirement.** Many people retire before or after the age of 65, but we chose this age as the typical landmark in the life cycle of most Americans. The retirement stage was a good time for our respondents. One would imagine that retirement would have a greater impact on the spirituality of the husband than on that of the wife, but our data do not support such a conclusion. There were substantial increases of both men (an increase of 10 percent) and women (an increase of 12 percent) who were highly religious at this stage. The people we are considering here were still in intact first marriages, because divorcees, remarried people, and those who had never married were excluded from these life-cycle analyses. Therefore, these respondents had been married for many years, their families were grown and gone, and they were facing retirement and old age with the companionship of their spouse.
At the least, this appears to have been a happy and comfortable stage where religious devotion (except prayer) was especially high.

Perhaps men compensated for the loss of occupational status with renewed activity in the Church. Men felt better about themselves and their religious lives, and the Church was a very important part of their lives during this stage. Women exhibited an even more substantial increase in religious devotion than did men at this stage. For women, this increase reversed and perhaps compensated for the decline experienced in the empty-nest stage.

**Widowhood.** The final life-cycle stage before death is widowhood, in which a significant rupture has occurred to a long-held social relationship and in which the widow is usually left more socially isolated. There were only three male widowers in the sample, a number which probably reflects a greater likelihood for husbands to predecease their wives and for male widowers to remarry. Therefore, our analysis can be done only for the forty-four widows in the sample.

Widows experienced a substantial decline in overall happiness at this time, but this was not matched by an equally strong decline in religious devotion. A slightly lower number of widows were highly religious, and this decline was accounted for almost entirely by decreases in beatitudes. These declines may have occurred because of the emotional and social stresses incident to aging, but probably were due to the loss of relationships that allow the giving of service, love, and kindness.

While public devotion was not at the same levels it was during the child-rearing years, it remained remarkably high for these widows. Religion may serve as a refuge in an otherwise stressful period. There was no evidence that Latter-day Saint widows face death with either a marked increase or decrease in religious devotion. Consistency rather than change tends to mark this life-cycle stage. We saw little evidence of disengagement or of isolation among these Latter-day Saints, although such probably occurs in some cases.

Generally, the religious devotion of older people was considerably higher than that for younger people. In summarizing the general changes in religious devotion through the course of people's lives, the increase in religious devotion for men was very great,
while women demonstrated more consistency. Men showed more variation or irregularity in the early stages (one through three) of the life cycle, while women showed greater variation in the later stages (five through eight). Perhaps the challenges faced by men were greater in early adulthood, while those faced by women were greater in later life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, many of the dynamics of religious behavior and attitudes can be understood better by taking into account the specific life-cycle stage of the individual. Personal development during the life cycle, and the accompanying challenges and opportunities generated by changes in people's life situations, appear to have a significant impact on the religious devotion of Latter-day Saint families.

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NOTES

1See Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young, eds., Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).


6Roof and McKinney, American Mainline Religion, 84.


Duvall, Family Development, 229.


Allen E. Bergin, I. Reed Payne, Paul H. Jenkins, and Marie Cornwall, "Religion and Mental Health: Mormons and Other Groups," in Contemporary Mormonism, ed. Cornwall, Heaton, and Young, 149–50.
Celebrating Cultural Identity: 
Pioneer Day in 
Nineteenth-Century Mormonism

*For its first half century, Pioneer Day was no mere holiday. Its festivities served to memorialize and solidify the Saints' freedoms, fundamental values, social roles, and heritage.*

Steven L. Olsen

On the morning of July 24, 1849, the silence of the embryonic Salt Lake City was shattered by cannon fire. The first Mormon Pioneer Day celebration had begun. Once the cannon echoes had subsided, the Nauvoo Brass Band, stationed on two carriage beds, serenaded the awakening citizens with “martial airs.” At half past seven, a large American flag was “unfurled at the top of Liberty Pole and was saluted with the firing of six guns, the ringing of the Nauvoo Bell, and spirit stirring airs from the band.”

At a given signal, the several thousand Mormons in Salt Lake City assembled into their respective wards. Led by their bishops and identified by distinctive banners, these wards then marched as separate groups to Temple Square. Arriving at Temple Square—the spiritual, if not physical, center of the Mormon capital—each ward sat together in the southeast corner of Temple Square under a bowery constructed for the occasion. This was perhaps the single largest assembly of Mormons in the nineteen-year history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Once the wards were seated, a procession marched the few blocks to Brigham Young’s home in the “log row” to escort him to the celebration. The official records report:

The procession started from [President Young’s] house at nine o’clock. The young men and young ladies sang a hymn through the street—the cannons kept up one continual roar—musketry rolled—
the Nauvoo Bell pealed forth its silvery notes—and the air [was] filled by the sweet strains of the brass band playing a slow march. On arriving at the bowery, the escort was received with loud shouts of "Hosana to God and the Lamb," which made the air reverberate.²

The program opened with the formal presentation of copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States to "Brother Brigham." In the keynote address that followed, he told his followers that they had been led by God out of a wicked world to the "tops of the mountains" to escape the persecutions they had suffered for their beliefs and to enjoy true religious liberty for the first time. Poems, songs, and prayers reinforced the basic theme of celebrating the arrival of the first company of Mormons into the Salt Lake Valley two years earlier. The crowd responded enthusiastically with shouts of "Hosanna" and "Amen."³ At the end of the program, those in attendance made their way to nearby dining tables that accommodated not only the several thousand Mormon pioneers, but also scores of forty-niners heading to California goldfields and numerous Native Americans. Despite meager circumstances, one participant commented, "Such a feast of the body coupled with a feast of the soul has not been experienced on this continent for a length of time."⁴

From these confident beginnings, Pioneer Day has become, according to sociologist Thomas O'Dea, "the greatest Mormon holiday."⁵ In the second half of the nineteenth century, Pioneer Day was one of the most important public expressions of Mormon identity. Although Salt Lake City hosted the main event, tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints in towns throughout the western United States participated in their own parades, devotionals, feasts, sporting events, dances, and excursions. These were, for the most part, remarkably like the annual celebration in Salt Lake City but observed on a minor scale and adapted to local conditions.

The relationship between community celebrations and cultural identity has been examined by anthropologists from Émile Durkheim to the present. A principal thrust of these studies has been the complex and systematic, yet traditional and predictable ways in which a dizzying array of ritual-type elements—songs, parades, costumes, speeches, feasts, decorations, sporting events, dances, artifacts, paintings, prominent individuals, collective memories,
dramas and pageants, buildings and other physical spaces, to name just a few—create a public "model" for an idealized social reality. This idealized reality consists of acceptable attitudes, values, behaviors, and relationships that bind individuals to a community and engage them in the celebration of its past, confirmation of its present, and anticipation of its future. In short, through this "ritual process," public ceremony becomes a metaphorical distillation and symbolic reenactment of idealized sociocultural reality. As such, community celebrations provide one of the most insightful and concise windows into the soul of a people.

This paper analyzes the role of Pioneer Day, the major Mormon community celebration, in symbolizing the central aspects of Mormon identity and solidarity in the second half of the nineteenth century. During this period, Pioneer Day expressed three basic dimensions of Mormon identity: (1) It demonstrated how Mormons felt about themselves as a religious and social group. (2) It reinforced the nature and meaning of Mormon social organization and cohesion. (3) It helped create and preserve a strong consciousness of the Mormon past.

To appreciate more fully the importance of these roles of Pioneer Day, we must first examine how the Latter-day Saints felt about this occasion. Although Mormons commemorated several other major events, the anniversary of their founding of Utah, better than any other occasion, enabled the Saints to express in word and deed the most elevated ideals and ambitions of their religion. The day's uniqueness is captured by the Mormon Apostle Daniel H. Wells:

> Among all the anniversaries that might be celebrated, that the memory dwells upon, with peculiar feelings of interest, of recollections dire, and deep fraught with every emotion to which the human heart is susceptible, this, the 24th day of July, the anniversary of the arrival of the pioneers in this valley, has been selected as the dawning of a brighter day, as an era in the history of this people upon which turned the axis of their destiny.7

The significance of the occasion led another Mormon leader, Willard Richards, to declare in 1850 that Pioneer Day was "a day fraught with greater interest to the family of man than any other since the death of Jesus and than expected since the birth of Adam."8 An editorial in the *Millennial Star* scarcely a month before
Pioneer Day Parade. Salt Lake City celebrates “the day of days” with elaborate floats, decorated buildings and spectator stands, and crowds dressed up in their “Sunday best.” Main Street about 300 South. Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Charles W. Carter, photographer, ca. 1887.
Brigham Young died identified this holiday as “the day of days, for without it all other days might become valueless as to results, even when abounding in promise.” Numerous other expressions echoed this early view that July 24 was the most important date in the Mormon calendar, a critical time of year for the community to reflect upon the significance of its founding and future.

**The Cultural Ideology of Pioneer Day**

Pioneer Day enabled the Latter-day Saints to reinforce their cultural ideology in large-scale dramatic public events. Although many aspects of Mormon identity were highlighted on Pioneer Day, this holiday most emphatically reminded the participants that they were a free people, a blessed people, and a chosen people.

Pioneer Day served as an independence day for the Latter-day Saints. It was, from the first, an occasion for the the Mormons’ most patriotic expressions. The American flag, the United States Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and other symbols of American political freedom were prominently featured during the celebrations, whether in Salt Lake City or in small Mormon towns. These symbols reminded participants of the Mormon doctrines of the divine mission of the United States and of the divinely established Constitution. Said one early Mormon, “It was [as] if the anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers and the Fourth of July were welded into one,” and another reflected, “This day, in reality, is the Anniversary of our Birthday as a free people.”

The Mormon sense of freedom, however, was not exhausted by the traditional expressions of American political independence. The Mormons had recently endured persecutions and violence that had left its two principal founders martyred, produced deep schisms among the leadership and membership alike, and threatened the very existence of the religion. Consequently, Pioneer Day was a celebration of freedom as much in the Jewish sense of Passover as in the American sense of political independence. Many Pioneer Day orations remembered Brigham Young’s 1847 trek in images reminiscent of Moses’ leading the children of Israel to the promised land. The 1884 Pioneer Day oration given in Provo by Judge Warren N. Dusenberry is an example:
Salt Lake Tabernacle stand prepared for Pioneer Day program. Notice the choir singing, the numerous American flags, the elderly pioneers seated on the stand, and the covered wagons flanking the podium. Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Charles W. Carter, photographer, ca. late 1990s.
We commemorate the day with feast and festivity, as a sacred passover and escape of the oppressed from their oppressors. We annually hail its return with joy and thanksgiving, because it is the anniversary of a triumph for religious liberty, and the laying the foundation of a great commonwealth.¹³

Pioneer Day thus reminded the Mormons that collectively they were a free people—politically guaranteed the worship of God and the practice of religion according to their conscience and spiritually delivered from those whom they perceived would have prevented the exercise of those beliefs and practices.

Pioneer Day also filled the role of a Mormon thanksgiving celebration, reminding the Saints of their identity as a divinely blessed people. Speeches, feasts, floats, decorations, and other elements of the occasion reminded the Mormons that through their righteousness and hard work and through the mercy of God the climate had been tempered and the desert had been made to "blossom as the rose."¹⁴ On Pioneer Day, "feasts of the fat products of these valleys" were enjoyed throughout Mormondom.¹⁵ In 1851, W. W. Phelps summarized the Mormon attitude of thanksgiving with this toast: "The 24th of July. The Mormon Thanksgiving: for more land, more love, more light, more learning. Honored and blest be the ever great day. Come to the supper."¹⁶

The environmental contrast between "Utah as it was" in 1847 and "Utah as it now is" was a major theme of Pioneer Day during the nineteenth century. This theme appeared in speeches, decorations, and parades. As one of many examples, the 1865 parade in Provo consisted of industrial and agricultural equipment and commercial and home crafts displayed on floats. To emphasize the theme of contrast, these passed under

two triumphal arches, raised for the occasion, one being decorated on one side with sage brush, Desert weed and sunflower; the other with wheat, corn, fruits and flowers, with [the] inscription, "Behold the contrast, '47 and '65," the other expressing its opinion that the desert had been made to blossom as the rose."¹⁷

The First Presidency expressed the following message in a letter to Church leaders in England on the occasion of the first Pioneer Day celebration in 1849:

This is the anniversary of the arrival of the Pioneers in this valley. Then all was a barren waste; now the "desert blossoms like the rose."
Float recognizing Utah's pioneer silk industry. This Pioneer Jubilee parade float depicts silk worms, mulberry leaves, and silk strands being woven into thread. Courtesy LDS Church Archives, C. R. Savage photographer, Salt Lake City, 1897.
Then a few weary worn-out pioneers, with scanty supplies, left the
mark of their industry, enterprise, their perseverance and indomitable
courage in this "howling wilderness." Now thousands feasting, in
abundance, and plenty, and offering gratuitous [gracious?] hospital-
ity to hundreds of strangers.18

The blessings of a prosperous society and of a harmonious natural
environment were seen as favors from a loving God who had mercy
on the Mormons for their sacrifices in trying to obey his will.

Pioneer Day in the nineteenth century also reminded the Mor-
mons that they were to consider themselves a divinely chosen people.
In 1856 in Pleasant Grove, participants in the celebration were
reminded that one object of Pioneer Day was "to qualify us to carry
out the design of our coming here [the Intermountain West], the
measures and missions enjoined upon us as the covenant people
of God."19 In 1851, W. W. Phelps referred to Pioneer Day as, "a day of
exaltation—the pastime of the Lord's anointed—a holiday of bliss."20

In the same light, Pioneer Day was also seen as the fore-
shadow of an anticipated celebration at the advent of the Millen-
nium, when all the promises of God to his chosen people would be
realized. The celebration of 1856, for example, was remembered as
"a foretaste of the day to come when the Spirit of God shall be
poured out upon all flesh and when Zion shall be freed from strug-
gling against the powers of Satan and a wicked world."21 Brigham
Young, however, said it best. In one of his first annual Pioneer Day
orations, he reviewed the beginning of this tradition then, with his
characteristic irony, offered the following observation:

Very soon we will meet in a larger congregation than this, and have
a celebration far superior: we will celebrate our perfect and ab-
solute deliverance from the power of the devil; we only celebrate
now the deliverance from the good brick houses we have left;
from our farms and lands and from the graves of our fathers; we cel-
ebrate our perfect deliverance from these things.

Our lives have been spared and we are yet upon this planet;
and by and by we will celebrate a perfect deliverance from all the
powers of earth; and we will keep our eyes set upon the mark, and
go forward [sic] to victory.22

This evidence suggests that Pioneer Day allowed Mormons
not only the opportunity to vent the full range of emotions appro-
priate to their religion, but also to express in a variety of activities
Float honoring Utah's logo, the beehive. Young girls dressed as bees represent the state motto, “Industry.”
Courtesy LDS Church Archives, C. R. Savage, photographer, Salt Lake City, 1897 Pioneer Jubilee parade.
the meaning of the religious tradition they had founded and of the cultural identity they had found. Pioneer Day was a celebration of the beginning and anticipated fulfillment of this social and personal rebirth.

The Sociology of Pioneer Day

The significance of Pioneer Day was not restricted to cultural ideology. Like other major celebrations, Pioneer Day involved participants in a variety of appropriate, often idealized, group activities. That is, Pioneer Day was also a celebration of Mormon sociology. An analysis of the sociology of celebrations begins with identifying the various social groups involved in the celebration and their respective roles.

Perhaps the most visible group in nineteenth-century celebrations included LDS Church officials. They were honored by being escorted in a procession or parade from their homes to the central square for the program, sometimes a distance of several miles. When escorts were no longer customary, Mormon leaders rode prominently in the parades. They were also usually the featured speakers of the programs. As focal points of the procession and "orators of the day," Mormon leaders provided the formal sanction to the day's events and provided the official link between the frontier community and its religious heritage.

Age and gender categories in the Mormon society were also given considerable attention on Pioneer Day. In the procession or parade, groups of "Aged Fathers in Israel," "Aged Mothers in Israel," "Young Men," "Young Ladies," "Young Boys," and "Young Girls" wore parade dress and carried banners that prominently displayed mottos appropriate to their respective social roles. For example, boys' potential contributions to building up the Lord's kingdom were emphasized with such banners as "Intelligence in Embryo" and "The Young Lions Seen in the Vision." The expectation for girls to imitate their mothers was expressed in the mottos "Mothers Teach Us How to Be Great" and "Virtue, Our Mother's Pride." The virtuous qualities of young ladies were emphasized in banners such as "The Daughters of Zion Rejoice in Zion's Peace" and "Beauty Soon Fades but Virtue Lives Forever." Teenage boys were identified
with strength and courage: “Union Is Liberty Forever,” “Israel's Defense,” and “Zion's Bulwarks.” Adult men were identified as “God's Noblemen,” “Pillars in the House of God,” “Defenders of the Kingdom of God,” and “Fathers in Israel Teach Righteousness and Rebuke Evil.” The social role of adult women—bearing and nurturing children, who were “Zion's Best Crop”—was emphasized in mottoes such as “Our Children Are Our Glory” and “Mothers in Israel.” In a colorful, distinctive, and enthusiastic manner, Pioneer Day reminded the Mormons not only who they should be, but also how they should properly regard others within the community.

Social events were also an important part of Pioneer Day celebrations. Through participation in these activities, celebrants expressed the meaning of Pioneer Day, provided a dimension of enjoyment to the event, and demonstrated the proper relationships among members of different age and sex groups. The usual activities of nineteenth-century Pioneer Day included dances and sports.

Dances were held in boweries, private homes, churches, council houses, social halls, and schools. They occurred during afternoons, evenings, and nights, with many continuing until the following morning. The traditional dances of the day were interspersed with songs, recitations, and humorous toasts. Many towns also held “juvenile dances” prior to the adult dances. These helped socialize the children by teaching them the steps they would use throughout their lives on similar occasions and by letting them play a vital role in the celebration. Although manifestly the most lively and least solemn of the activities on Pioneer Day, the dances added to its religious significance, as indicated in the following reflection: “In the evening our hall was filled with 'Merry Mormons' who met again to dance before the Lord and praise Him for His great kindness in leading us to these sequestered vales where we can in peace live the religion of heaven and build up the kingdom of our God.”

Other than dancing, sports were the most widely held group activities of Pioneer Day. Foot, cycle, and horse races were usual exercises, but rodeos, cricket, and baseball attracted crowds in larger towns and cities. Competition usually occurred between major comparable social groups, e.g., marrieds versus singles, girls versus boys, and couples from one town versus those from another.
Sports thus reinforced commonly recognized social differences and encouraged loyalty to one’s own group through friendly rivalries against other comparable groups or individuals.

**Historical Consciousness in Pioneer Day Celebrations**

Understanding their place and role in history has been of critical concern for the Latter-day Saints from the beginning. Pioneer Day has been a principal mechanism for the creation and maintenance of Mormon historical consciousness. This role was performed primarily by the programs and the parades.

In most cases, the “orator of the day” reviewed Mormon history to that point, and almost without exception focused on the hardships of the migration westward and the victory of the Saints over the hostile environment of the Great Basin. Devotion, obedience, sacrifice, and unity were primary virtues of the pioneers in this cosmic drama, while those opposed to Mormonism were seen as agents of the devil. The social and natural environments in which Mormons pursued their religious ends were seen as hostile. However, these were either transformed or overcome through the righteous efforts of “God’s elect.” The recitation of historical vignettes was designed to teach Latter-day Saints the values central to their religion and to demonstrate to the believers that they were part of a divinely ordained and directed phenomenon that was destined to realize the kingdom of God on the earth.32

Consistent with the role of Pioneer Day as a birthday celebration, these historical reflections generally viewed the pre-Utah period of Church history as primarily a prelude to the westward journey of the pioneers. By contrast, the exodus from Nauvoo, the trek of the pioneers (particularly of Brigham Young’s vanguard company), and the efforts to establish Zion in the American West were rehearsed in great detail. Orators in outlying Mormon settlements often adapted this general pattern to their particular case, including details of the founding of their own areas.33

The decorations and memorabilia displayed during the programs reinforced the historical significance of the occasion. Pioneer relics such as covered wagons from the 1847 company; the “Old Sow” cannon, which came to Utah in 1847; and William Carter’s plow, which turned the first half acre in the Salt Lake
Community Pioneer Day parade. As in many small Mormon communities, these central Utah townsfolk celebrate dressed as pioneers, commemorating the 1847 trek west. Courtesy LDS Church Archives, George Edward Anderson, photographer, ca. 1900.
Float depicting the first publication of the *Deseret News*. The man at the doorway of a replica of the first Deseret News building is handing out facsimiles of the first issue (1850) to parade spectators. Courtesy LDS Church Archives, C. R. Savage, photographer, Salt Lake City, 1897 Pioneer Jubilee parade.
Valley and later in St. George, were among the many items customarily and prominently featured during the programs in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. The surviving pioneers were conspicuously seated on the Tabernacle stand and were honored in word, music, and deed. Communities throughout Mormondom honored the pioneers of their own areas in similar ways.\textsuperscript{34}

The pioneer bias of Mormon historical consciousness was expressed as well in the processions. Customary entries included members of handcart companies and other pioneers, the Mormon Battalion, territorial militias, and local tribes of Native Americans; carriages, wagons, and cannons that had come across the Great Plains; and floats depicting the first cabin, the first printing of the \textit{Deseret News}, the Pony Express, Utah "as it was" and "as it has become," and pioneer industries, such as silk and iron.\textsuperscript{35}

During Pioneer Day, historical events and personalities were emphasized or ignored according to their ability to express core elements of Mormon identity and sense of mission. Pioneer Day was one of the most important occasions for creating and maintaining the collective memory of the Latter-day Saints. It defined and popularized—in performance, costume, speech, song, and decoration—the historical consciousness that accompanied the Mormons well into the twentieth century.

\section*{Conclusion}

In the nineteenth century, Pioneer Day served as one of the Latter-day Saints' prime mechanisms for preserving and expressing their ideology—their religious heritage and fundamental values and ideals—solidifying their society and the roles of its members, and maintaining awareness of their history. The celebration began auspiciously, spread rapidly, and expanded in its vitality and importance until it rivaled general conference as the preeminent occasion of the Mormon calendar. A local correspondent to the \textit{Deseret News} observed the following in 1875:

From the cannon firing at daybreak, and immediately after the martial band reminding everybody that the day of the 24th of July had dawned, to the procession and throughout the meeting, in the oration, the songs, toasts, sentiments, etc. there was a choice utterance and presentiment of Latter-day Saintism.\textsuperscript{36}
No other event expressed what it meant to be a Latter-day Saint in the nineteenth century better than Pioneer Day did, the greatest Mormon holiday.

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NOTES

1The first Pioneer Day celebration and subsequent celebrations throughout the Mormon West were documented in considerable detail in newspaper accounts. The principal Utah newspapers were, of course, the Deseret News and the Salt Lake Tribune. However, many smaller newspapers in Mormon towns carried reports of these festivities. Much of the information for this paper comes from these newspaper reports as contained in Journal History, a chronological scrapbook compiled by the LDS Church Historical Department. For details of the first celebration, see Andrew Jenson, Journal History of the Church, July 24, 1849, 1–4, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as JH).

2The sacred “Hosanna Shout” was introduced by Joseph Smith at the dedication of the first Mormon temple, in Kirtland, Ohio. In nineteenth-century Mormonism, a loudly expressed “hosanna” was also used as the highest form of consent to a public discourse or religious act.

3JH, July 24, 1849, 2.

4JH, July 24, 1849, 2.


JH, July 24, 1851, 2.
JH, July 24, 1850, 2.
JH, July 24, 1877, 4.

JH, July 24, 1869, 3; July 24, 1854, 4. See also JH, July 24, 1883, 2; July 24, 1885, 9; July 24, 1890, 2; July 24, 1897, 14.


Frontier Guardian 1 (September 19, 1849): 4; JH, July 24, 1875, 4.

JH, July 24, 1851, 5.

JH, July 24, 1865, 3. For similar expressions see JH, July 24, 1868, 3 (Cedar City); July 24, 1874, 1 (Salt Lake City); July 24, 1878, 4 (Mendon); July 24, 1883, 3 (Springville and Santaquin); July 24, 1869, 11 (Spanish Fork); July 24, 1876, 6–7 (Coalville and Monroe); July 24, 1883, 5 (Plain City); July 24, 1884, 3 (Paradise); July 24, 1890, 2, 4 (Provo, Manti).

JH, July 24, 1849, 5; the origin of the Mormon “myth of the desert” is examined in Richard H. Jackson, “Myth and Reality: Environmental Perception of the Mormons, 1840–1865, an Historical Geosophy” (Ph.D. diss., Clark University, 1970).

JH, July 24, 1856, 6.
JH, July 24, 1851, 3.
JH, July 24, 1856, 4.
JH, July 24, 1852, 5.

For example, Provo’s 1860 parade traveled to neighboring Springville to escort Bishop William Miller to the program, JH, July 24, 1860, 1. Provo’s 1878 parade traveled to Bishop Peterson’s house, “where a bowery had been erected for the occasion” of the program, JH, July 24, 1878, 2. In 1884 a parade went from East Bountiful to Centerville to escort W. B. Smith, the Stake President, to the Bountiful Tabernacle for the program, JH, July 24, 1884, 2.

Throughout territorial Utah, banners were a characteristic feature of Pioneer Day parades. In the newspaper accounts, particularly prior to 1870, banners were identified primarily by their mottoes, not their design. This kind of reporting reinforced the appropriateness of the motto to the social role of a specific group.

JH, July 24, 1856, 10; July 24, 1857, 2.
JH, July 24, 1854, 1; July 24, 1857, 3; July 24, 1860, 3.
JH, July 24, 1852, 1; July 24, 1854, 1; July 24, 1875, 6.
JH, July 24, 1852, 1; July 24, 1856, 7, 10; July 24, 1860, 2.
Pioneer Day in the Nineteenth Century

29JH, July 24, 1856, 5; July 24, 1865, 3; July 24, 1860, 3; July 24, 1865, 5.
30JH, July 24, 1851, 1; July 24, 1852, 1; July 24, 1857, 2; July 24, 1865, 1.
31JH, July 24, 1865, 5.

32For example, JH, July 24, 1851, 3–7; July 24, 1852, 1–3, 9; July 24, 1854, 5–6; July 24, 1862, 6–7; July 24, 1867, 5; July 24, 1869, 4; July 24, 1875, 2; July 24, 1877, 6–7; July 24, 1880, 5, and many other references to historical concepts formulated and reinforced in the orations.

33For example, “Elder John S. Eldredge made a speech in behalf of the hardy Pioneers that first led the way to this desert region; reasoned in a clear and demonstrative manner, showing that God led that noble band, and that our Father in Heaven inspired his servant Brigham Young in all things and led him to this place, and that God has continued to lead this people and has delivered them from the hands of their enemies.” JH, July 24, 1860, 2.

34Numerous photographs of nineteenth-century Pioneer Day celebrations have been preserved in the LDS Church Archives. These frequently include memorabilia connected with the pioneers or the pioneers themselves, appropriately decorated for the event.

35Nearly every detailed newspaper account of parades in the nineteenth century mentions elements of the Mormon pioneer heritage worthy of honor on that occasion. The photographs in the LDS Church Archives, mentioned above, reinforce this emphasis.

36JH, July 24, 1875, 7.
ICU Nursery

The potatoes in the ground
must be dug before it freezes,
so her husband is halfway to Idaho
in the pickup.
Doctors had said earlier
it looked like the baby could be weaned
from machines and make it.
His crop in the field
is food on the table.

She stands by the isolette
while the doctors work on her baby.
Sometimes she cries out, "No!"
You always think words like that
can stop something.

When there is no more they can do,
they pull up a chair,
hand her that baby still hooked
up to life and let her rock.
She tells about the baby's sisters, her Daddy,
about potatoes in the ground.
No one breathed till the baby
couldn't.

Farming is risky business.
Mostly it's hard work
and luck in judgment calls.
You never know when a frost
will come over a crop and, like that,
it's gone.

—Marilyn Darley Williams
Short Study

Family Land and
Records Center in Nauvoo

A new and rapidly expanding research center
contains many one-of-a-kind documents concerning
1840s residents of Nauvoo, Iowa, and Illinois.

Susan Easton Black

Researchers seeking either data for demographic studies or
facts about a specific person who lived in Iowa or Hancock County,
illinois, from 1839 to 1845 can consult the Family Land and Records
Center. Initially established to help visitors locate their ancestors,
this research center in the LDS Nauvoo Visitors' Center contains
numerous documents gathered by Nauvoo missionaries. Each rec-
ord is classified under one of three main headings—Nauvoo;
Hancock County, Illinois; and Iowa—and then under a general sub-
heading and a specific file title. This note gives a brief, descriptive
listing of the documents available under those headings.

The record titled Nauvoo Temple Ordinance Data contains,
among other files, the "Nauvoo Index of Baptisms for the Dead,"
which lists those who participated in vicarious baptisms for their
ancestors from 1840 to 1845. The Nauvoo Property Records give
information regarding subdivision lots, tract lands, and streets; for
example, "Nauvoo Blocks and Streets" lists residents by year and
block. Modern street coordinates are given to clarify block loca-
tions. Documents filed within the Nauvoo Tax Records supply a
record of delinquent taxes due in the Nauvoo Third Ward from
1843 to 1845. The Nauvoo Census Records contain files like the
"Nauvoo LDS Census 1842," which lists Church members who
arrived in Nauvoo after 1841. Their residential location within the
city's nine block radius and their placement in the first four Nau-
voo wards are specified.
Biographical Information on LDS Nauvoo Residents is another accessible record. Included in this collection is "Nauvoo Pioneer Occupations." This file gives an alphabetical listing of pioneers who established an industry on their property. The Nauvoo Burial Records contain items such as "Old Cemetery Records of Nauvoo," which describes the location and acreage of each Nauvoo cemetery and lists the deceased buried there.

Over two hundred Nauvoo journals and autobiographies are available in the Nauvoo Electronic Database Collection. Additional files such as the "Daily Log of Persons Entering Nauvoo" are part of this database. Other records, which are not accessible from the database at this time, have been titled Source Documents Prepared for Electronic Entry. These documents include the "Nauvoo Masonic Proceedings and the "Nauvoo Municipal Court Docket." For the Nauvoo-Specific Dissertations and Theses Record, over thirty biographical, historical, and doctrinal dissertations and theses have been donated by the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University. The Records of Prominent Religions in the Nauvoo Area contain such files as "St. Peter and Paul Records of the Catholic Church, 1849-1988," which lists information about the local members of the Catholic Church during that time period.

The department's second area covers Hancock County, Illinois. Here, in the Hancock Property Records, are files such as the "Maps of Mormon Settlements in Hancock County." The assortment of maps identifies LDS residencies in Hancock County by range, section, and lot. Also available are the Hancock County Tax Records. "Tax Assessments of 1840, 1842, 1849, and 1850" lists for property plots the owners, assessments, description, township, range, and value. The "Hancock County, Illinois, Census of 1850," contained in the census records, lists head of household, spouse, children, place of birth, and occupation. Other records include Biographical Information on Hancock County Residents, specifically the file "Biographies of Early Settlers of Hancock County Illinois." These biographies are records by or about settlers who resided in the county from 1839 to 1846. Marriage and Cemetery Records also supply information about the residents of Hancock County. The "Hancock County Cemetery Lists" supplies a brief descriptive
history of each cemetery and provides a list of graves, plot maps, and tombstone inscriptions.

The third area in this collection involves Iowa. The listings in the LDS Iowa Records include the file "Bear Creek, Iowa Branch," an account of the members in and minutes of that branch. Iowa State Records enable patrons to access "Maps of Iowa Mormon Trail," which give a graphic illustration of the movement of the Saints across the Iowa trail.

The Family Land and Records Center specializes in genealogical and demographic sources on the Saints in Nauvoo and contains additional records on Illinois and Iowa. The Center houses two hundred binders of rare documents and 167,000 pages of other documents. Many of the documents in this collection are unique due to their unusual acquisition—the documents were gathered locally in the Nauvoo area. The Center also invites contributions of documents in order to establish a more complete database of the early Saints’ experiences. Some records, such as Property Identification Files, are available at the Center on an electronic database system.

From January through October 1995, 11,200 patrons visited the Center. To accommodate the growing number of patrons, plans are being made to build a new Family Land and Records Building next to the Nauvoo Visitors’ Center. Those interested in this area of Church history are encouraged to utilize the resources available. Inquires about this collection can be made to the Family Land and Records Office, Nauvoo Visitors’ Center, P.O. Box 215, Nauvoo, IL 62354; (217) 453-2233.

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NOTE

1The Family Land and Records Center is also known as the Nauvoo Family History and Property Identification Department. Dell Van Orden, "Walking in Nauvoo Ancestors’ Steps," Church News, September 22, 1990, 11.
Hymn: Every Kindred, Tongue, and People

Though Rome's lance pierced the Crucified,
Her peace allowed His word.
Now free men live where Joseph died
By mob and law unheard.
We love the right in any land;
The wrong, by gospel truth withstand;
But first we follow, voice and hand,
Our Savior, Master, Lord.

From Deseret, first Zion's hearth,
When east and north toiled west,
He sent their sons about the earth
To gather in the best.
But, as the western church grew strong,
He bade men stay where they belong
To add new Zion to the throng
And strengthen all the rest.

"Christ reigns!" lake-valley, ocean-peak,
And continent proclaim.
In every language brethren speak,
Our hearts and tongues aflame,
From northern straits to boisterous Horn,
To sunset from the gates of morn,
With those long dead and those new born,
We praise His holy name.

—Arthur Henry King
**Book Reviews**


Reviewed by Walter Nugent, Tackes Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame.

Any lingering notions that the settlement of the American West happened according to a fixed pattern will not survive a reading of Dean May's new book. By describing and comparing the founding and development of three mid-nineteenth-century settlements, all quite different, May presents a convincing portrait of frontier diversity. Only when the communities reached their third generation did the three places start to converge in their social life and mores, and in ways that May finds regrettable. In their early years, however, these settlements reveal how different frontiers could be. In this well-researched and well-written history, May carries to new and complex lengths the idea that western settlements were more different than alike.

Dean May is professor of history at the University of Utah and has already authored many books and essays on the history of the New Deal, on Mormon history, on historical demography, and on the history of the West. This volume will further enhance his scholarly reputation. As a founder of the Center for Historical Population Studies at Utah, he pioneered in the use of manuscript census sources, and he employs them exhaustively here, together with tax and probate records, newspapers, business credit reports, and the somewhat elusive diaries and journals of individuals, as well as records of the settlements' schools, clubs, churches, and other associations. Photographs of settlers and their homes add flesh and blood to the written sources.
The three settlements May examines are Sublimity, Oregon, about fifteen miles southeast of Salem, founded by people from the upland South and Ohio Valley in the late 1840s; Alpine, Utah, an early 1850s Mormon settlement fifteen miles north of Provo; and Middleton, Idaho, initially the creation in the mid-1860s of gold seekers who were in some sense escaping the Civil War and who quickly became "profoundly agrarian and rural" (9).

Each of the book's seven chapters is truly comparative, discussing all three communities with regard to some key aspect of the settlement process. Chapter one focuses on the overland migration and the land the settlers found at the end of it. The chapter's descriptions are vivid. May contrasts the communitarian search of the Mormons, the gold rush mentality of the Middleton people, and the land-seeking "Oregon craze" that led people from good Midwestern land to even more and better land in the Northwest. From their first days, these places differed from each other. The Middletonians' "fixation on material well-being would do as much to shape their society as did the Mormons' quest for community and the Oregonians' quest for family continuity" (38). Here May opens up his major subtext (or is it a supertext?), that Sublimity and Alpine would eventually adopt much of the materialistic individualism of Middleton, a shift which grieves him. But that is his ultimate story and lesson: "Were [Frederick Jackson] Turner to know of this work, he would object to the darkness of my perception of the outcome" (7).

Different motives for settling led to the establishment of different towns, as did the different backgrounds and demographic shapes of the settlers. Chapter two describes these in detail: Sublimity's people were bound by strong Southern kinship relationships; Alpine's Mormons were two-thirds English Midlanders partially seared by the Industrial Revolution and eager to regain peace of mind; and Middleton's settlers were adventurers, enticed by the lure of the Boise Basin gold strike of 1862, as well as refugees from the turmoil of the divided families and traumatic battles of the Civil War. Middleton initially had the bizarre sex ratio and age structure (very male and young) common to mining booms. Although these gradually became more normal, May wonders
whether "the role and meaning of the family in the society remain[ed] the same" (76).

The demographic context appears in chapter three—a composite picture of the 667 towns that existed in the West in 1870. For context, May contrasts Sublimity, Alpine, and Middleton with this composite. Many migrants who came to Middleton to strike gold soon turned to farming, but they were already capitalists in attitude and behavior compared to the settlers of Sublimity and Alpine. Nearly half—280—of the towns of 1870 were founded in the 1860s, which "were thus the formative decade for the Rocky Mountain region"; settlement and population patterns were "barely evident in 1860" but "recognizably in place by 1870" (93).

May describes the West's in-migration of the 1860s as young, male, rootless, and disrupted. This is a new view of the region's settlement, and I am sure he is right. My own numbers show that the 1860s brought a sudden, steep decline in the proportion of young people to total population in many Midwestern states, decisively ending the Midwest's frontier phase. Civil War casualties account for surprisingly little of this drop. Most of these young Midwesterners migrated somewhere out of their home state. It appears from May's account that the Middletons of the West became the new homes of many of them.

May believes that the Civil War was responsible for this population shift in a much broader sense than its battles—because it fractured families and social value systems. The War killed its legions, but it uprooted many more. The point is possibly more asserted than firmly proved, but it is very compelling and deserves serious investigation, both as to how the context of the Civil War abruptly drove young people from the Midwest and why they created places like Middleton.

The fourth chapter explores the strength of kin relations in Sublimity, community in Alpine, and individualism in Middleton, and includes a substantial section on the differing roles of women in these towns. Chapters five, six, and seven deal with land inheritance (strongest in Sublimity), community institutions (strongest in Alpine), and a commercial, individualistic outlook on land and living (strongest in Middleton). By the 1890s, May finds, the farms
of Sublimity had become smaller and Alpine’s larger, more like Middleton’s, and the two had begun to resemble Middleton in other ways as well.

At the start of the book, May states that he is interested not only in the comparative description of three western settlements, but also in how they “might shed light” on the roots of what Tocqueville observed and Robert Bellah and Christopher Lasch have recently discussed in widely read books: Americans’ “extreme” individualism and lack of a sense of community obligation (6). May sees these three stories as revealing “the meaning for our time of the rural past within us” (8). By the end of the book, the reader must agree that May has gone a long way to achieving this aim. Bellah and Lasch have lamented how Americans “have become narcissistic and selfish, obsessively devoted to material well-being . . . incapable of the long view . . . [or] the good of a broader community” (282). May concludes, “The founders of Sublimity and Alpine in their own ways fought that tide. Those of Middleton swept it along” (283).

Seldom is monographic history presented as a morality tale; rarer still has it also kept faithful to the evidence. But May has achieved both ends. His tale is one of decline, of the convergence of the more Edenic Sublimity and Alpine with the more worldly Middleton. The evidence he amasses persuade us gently that he may have a point, however dismaying it is.

Reviewed by Sherilyn Cox Bennion, Professor of Journalism at Humboldt State University.

If Eliza R. Snow kept journals during the years between 1849 and her death in 1887, as she rose to preeminence among Latter-day Saint women, they have yet to be unearthed. However, *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* offers considerable consolation for that larger lack. This volume includes Eliza’s Nauvoo journal extending from June 29, 1842, to April 14, 1844, and her diaries written from February 12, 1846, to August 16, 1849, covering her journey to the Salt Lake Valley and her first two years there. The preface to the diaries contains a formal sketch of her life, the original version of which Eliza wrote for Edward W. Tullidge’s *The Women of Mormondom*, published in 1877. She revised it some years later for Hubert Howe Bancroft’s proposed series of histories of the western territories.

Editor Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, professor of English and research historian in the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University, is an authority on Eliza’s life and work, as evidenced by numerous papers and articles and a 1991 book, *Eliza and Her Sisters*. For *Personal Writings*, Beecher provides brief commentaries at the beginning of each section of Eliza’s writings. In her introduction, “The Life Writings of Ordinary Women,” Beecher defends the value of reconstructing history from the often mundane records left by women diarists. The argument is persuasive, although it overlooks Eliza’s far-from-ordinary status.

A woman of intelligence and determination, Eliza undoubtedly would have transcended the ordinary even without the recognition accorded her as a plural wife of Joseph Smith and, later, Brigham Young and as a sister of Lorenzo Snow. Still, these writings from 1842 through 1849—before she became president of the Relief Society and the Deseret Hospital Association and an organizer of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association, the Primary Association, and the Woman’s Commission Store—remind
us of the ordinariness of much of life, even life lived in the midst of momentous events.

Illustrations include photographs of Eliza and facsimiles of pages from the journal and diaries. Copious notes provide explanations and some interpretation of individual entries. Appendices offer biographical summaries of Eliza’s family members and identifications of persons mentioned in her writings. Although additional biographical information about Eliza herself is available elsewhere, a brief chronology of her life would have made a useful addition to this book.

Eliza’s writings offer samples of her daily experiences and those of her sisters in the faith. They visited each other often, both in town and on the trail, meeting not only to share sympathy and support, but also to participate in outpourings of the Spirit, to bless one another, and to speak in tongues. They also consoled each other; twelve of the twenty-seven poems Eliza recorded in the trail diaries addressed words of comfort to families of those who had died. The sisters attended to physical, as well as spiritual needs; in the index, only the entry “poetry by Eliza R. Snow” (309) exceeds “food” (304) in length. These women persevered through miserable weather, dangerous river crossings, and frequent illness. Once Eliza reported careening along the trail “slash mash down over stumps, trees &c. &c.” (204).

The reader will learn less about the inner life of “Zion’s poetess” (2) than about her daily activities. Beecher calls attention to a poem, “Retirement,” that ends each stanza with the line “When [or “while”] there’s nobody here but Eliza and I” (xviii, 64), making the distinction between the public woman known as “Sister Eliza” or “Aunt Eliza” and the private “I.” Beecher concludes that the inner woman remained intentionally hidden from her contemporaries. If Eliza meant to remain over our horizon, she has her way.

NOTE


Reviewed by Paula Harline, Instructor, General and Honors Education, Brigham Young University.

*Audacious Women* is based on the lives of one hundred women “who were involved with Mormonism in the first fifty years of the British Mission, 1838–88” (xii). The book takes us from their English branches and villages, across the ocean, up the Mississippi, across the plains, and (as far as source documents allow) follows their lives in the new land. This new contribution to Mormon women’s history is a particular goldmine for Latter-day Saints of British descent, who, like Bartholomew, “search for [their] mothers” (ix). Bartholomew concludes that despite often severe trials, such as “the patriarchal realities of the time,” homesickness, poverty, and polygamy, these “women seemed to have as great a shot at happiness in a caring Mormon setting as in an indifferent Old World environment” (249).

Bartholomew is a believing and rigorous LDS historian. Those wondering about the tone of her women’s history will find her interested in reviving the lives of these women rather than criticizing male hierarchy; in general, she finds that “women’s disappointments usually centered on dead-beat husbands rather than on church leaders” (249). I was impressed with her research expertise and her obvious familiarity with source archives. Although Bartholomew had hoped to have “quality” records for all one hundred women (“contemporary documents created by a directly-involved party”), she had to settle for thirty-four—the remaining sixty-six women come alive through autobiographies or biographies written later in life by the woman, her husband, or another relative (xiii). She excluded from her study women whose lives had already been explored well in other places.

The first chapter investigates nineteenth-century anti-Mormon writing that characterized British Mormon women immigrants as “ignorant,” “naive,” and “fools” (15). Stereotypes such as Maria Ward’s portrayal of “the [British] shopgirl now ensconced in
a Mormon harem” and other polygamy-inspired fantasies are recounted here (18). Bartholomew finds evidence of sexism on the part of anti-Mormon writers who primarily emphasized the “degraded status” of Mormon women and who “allowed comprehensible if not admirable motives” for Mormon men (15). Although I admired Bartholomew’s far-reaching samples of anti-Mormon literature and realized that she intended to set them as fantasy against her reality, still I found myself anxious to get to the British women themselves because I already knew the stereotypes, generally if not specifically.

The second chapter, which will be of particular interest to descendants of British converts, explores the demographics and origins of these one hundred women. As it turns out, “Mormonism was three-quarters urban” (28), the majority of converts came from blue-collar families, most women had “some formal schooling” (143), and one woman might have sixteen to twenty-one pregnancies. The women in Bartholomew’s study often came from “large, landless families acquainted with grief” (38), and their grief may have been a catalyst to their conversion. Mormonism satisfied the spiritual needs as well as conventional mores of these women, especially before they knew about polygamy.

The third, fourth, and fifth chapters cover the women’s conversion experiences and life in a British branch of the Church. Their reactions to the message of the Church are some of the most memorable portions of the book—the women’s voices sound rather “old world,” yet full of spirit. Bartholomew finds that converts expected more persecution from outsiders than they actually received and that “the persecution motif has . . . been overdone in pro-Mormon history” (79). Curiously, much of their “suffering was due to Church responsibilities rather than outside opposition” (77). These chapters are refreshing in their gynocentric view of life in the Church; we find that many uncelebrated women kept early branches alive, even though they had trouble sustaining Relief Societies. Branches would grow only to be depleted by members leaving for America.

The second half of the book proceeds chronologically as we learn more about the women’s emigration, marriages, and lives in a new land. Many of the women’s names, and thus their lives, start
to become familiar, especially since Bartholomew highlights some of them at length. The variety of their lives defies finding “one pattern” that would easily explain their combined experience (xii). Their trials were often excruciating, leading one woman to conclude that it was all “a bubble that [had] burst in [her] grasp” (193). Of the one hundred women in Bartholomew’s study, one-third became polygamous wives in Utah Territory (a polygamous marriage in Britain was rare), and this life-style tried their souls. Some left and returned to Britain. Those who stayed in Utah still often longed for their homeland; one woman wrote to her family in the British Isles, “I seldom go to sleep but I am dreaming about all of you and that I am back there but I am glad I am here” (197).

One complaint I have about the book is the presentation of statistical material. I would have preferred some charts and graphs, or at least numerals rather than numbers written out. For example, I found myself drowning in the following information:

One typically sees the birth of the first child seven to twelve months after marriage, three or four subsequent children born in close succession (sixteen to twenty-four months apart), then later children born at 2.5 to four-year intervals. Women married between ages sixteen and twenty-three and, if not widowed, bore children for the next sixteen to twenty-eight years. (38)

Although her prose could occasionally be smoother, I enjoyed Bartholomew’s personality and the way she puts herself into the book. In the end, the reader has the sense of living the excitement of the research process with her. I felt lucky to find so much previously neglected Mormon history.
A photo essay on the birth of Mormonism, produced in 1907-8, is the crowning achievement of one of the LDS Church's most artistic photographers, George Edward Anderson, an obscure village photographer from Springville, Utah (1860-1928). *Church History in Black and White* brings together for the first time the words and pictures of the photographer's year-long odyssey to document Church historical sites in the eastern United States. Anderson's work has been rediscovered by photographers, artists, and scholars in recent years, and I am delighted to see another publication of these magnificent photographs.

Anderson had an uncanny obsession to tell stories with his camera. He was a photojournalist ahead of his time. Before the turn of the century, he had documented construction of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad through Utah, the lives of miners in Carbon and Emery counties, and the Scofield Mine Disaster of 1900. In his travels with a portable gallery throughout rural central Utah, he documented the lifestyles of his beloved Mormon people. But the most ambitious project of all began when he was called on a mission to England in 1907. On his way east, he decided to make nearly a year of detours to document the roots and historical sites of his church in Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont. These photographic detours were not part of an official Church mission, although some ecclesiastical leaders did give their blessings and verbal permissions for the stops along the way.

Holzapfel, Cottle, and Stoddard have taken the 1907 diary of Anderson's photographic trip, edited it into a more readable form, and published it along with a collection of pictures Anderson took.
along the way. The editors have done an incredible job of deciphering Anderson's often indecipherable writing. Anderson's journal is at once the chief weakness. His pictures say much more than his words—he prosaic observations, weather reports, and recitation of trivial things, as they deal directly with his documentary photography, may be apropos, but they do make for a hard, often-times tedious read. We learn what he had for breakfast and how many steps (254 of them) led down to American Falls, but virtually nothing about what went through his mind or the emotions that filled him as he made his pictures of these historical scenes sacred to Latter-day Saints. And he only alludes to his photographic technique and art, rarely giving specific details or revealing his personal philosophy of documentary photography. One gets the idea he was writing short, cryptic notes to himself without any thought to future public consumption.

I was a little disappointed in the reproduction of Anderson's photographs. The editors were not able to reproduce from the original glass negatives, relying instead on facsimiles supplied to them by the LDS Church Archives. As a result, the halftones suffer and do not reflect Anderson's ideal. After all, he was a meticulous craftsman who had somewhat mastered the science of photographic exposure long before Ansel Adams had developed his famous zone system of photography.

John Collett, the teenage Englishman who accompanied Anderson on his photo excursions through New England from 1911 to 1914, once told me the photographer made all of his exposures "by experience and counting." That is, he had no meters or exposure guides to help him calculate his aperture and time. Instead, he relied on the instincts of thirty years of picture taking to set his aperture and count the time of his exposure to get the best possible range of tones in the resulting negative. Sometimes, if the negative was too thin (underexposed), he resorted to chemical intensification in the darkroom to increase the contrast. If the highlights were too thick (overexposed), he used chemical reduction and/or masks and "dodging" to hold back the light in the shadow details while the highlights got proper exposure.

What a shame, then, that the photographs could not have been printed as Anderson himself would have printed them and
then been reproduced in modern duotone, as were the photos on the dust jacket. Then, the richness of Anderson's detail would give the photographs the pure artistic impact they deserve. But alas, circumstances of access, publishers' limitations, and budgetary constraints sometimes drive such decisions and create something less than ideal. I should point out this is a photographer/printer's frustration and should not detract from the merits of the book.

Some small editing errors, which inevitably creep into most books, occasionally occur in this one. For example, the railing on the tower of the Kirtland Temple is wood, not iron (caption 145); the federal style is an early nineteenth-century style, rather than an early twentieth-century one (caption 146); and two photographs (top 169, 170) identified as taken in August, are, judging from the look of the budding or leafless trees, the newly plowed field, and the warmly dressed boy, probably taken in early spring; compare the full foliage on the trees in same scene (bottom 169), also identified as taken in August.

Despite these frustrations, I am still thrilled with this book. For the first time, Anderson's "photographic mission" is published all together in one place, taking the reader back to the way life was at the historical sites in 1907-8. The emotions Anderson's pictures evoke come primarily from the aesthetics of his art—from the pleasing compositions that were instinctive to him, and from the broad range of tones and detail. His large format camera was steadied on a tripod; his lenses were sharp, set at narrow apertures for broad depth of field; and his exposures were relatively long. He carefully positioned his human subjects, instructing them in body language. They were to "hold still" and not to show any signs of emotion—no laughing, no crying, most of them not even smiling, just vacantly gazing out of Anderson's camera frame into our time.

*Church History in Black and White* is visually intriguing and intellectually stimulating, helping Latter-day Saints better understand their roots. Equally important, the volume is a major contribution to the understanding that photography can be an expression of art at any time in the Mormon experience of life.
Brief Notices

_Spencer W. Kimball: Resolute Disciple, Prophet of God_, by Francis M. Gibbons (Deseret Book, 1995) and _Boyd K. Packer: A Watchman on the Tower_, by Lucile C. Tate (Bookcraft, 1995)

Boyd K. Packer and Spencer W. Kimball served together in the highest councils of the Church from 1970 to 1985, a remarkable period in Church history. These two recently published biographies by veteran biographers provide a new understanding of the lives of these extraordinary men and their influence on the Church.

The definitive biography of President Kimball, written by his son and grandson, was widely read and became a model for biographies on living Church leaders. However, it was published in 1977—before the revelation on the priesthood, before the organization of the First Quorum of Seventy, and before the dedication of the sixteen temples completed during President Kimball’s administration. The new biography is succinct but gives a full account—including the remarkable accomplishments of the last ten years of President Kimball’s life. Francis Gibbons, secretary to the First Presidency, gives a good sense of the struggle that President Kimball faced with the priesthood issue. The report of President Kimball’s 1977 conversation with Helvecio Martins provides unique insight into the culminating revelation of 1978. President Kimball’s decision to sell the Church’s cottage at Laguna Beach, which had provided a peaceful escape for Church presidents for several decades, is included as evidence for his emphasis on work.

In her book on Boyd K. Packer, Lucile Tate gives us a comprehensive look at the man who now presides over the Quorum of the Twelve. The book is well organized into major themes, reflecting President Packer’s assignments and contributions, including his roles in the publication of the LDS scriptures, the revelation on the priesthood, reemphasis on the family, simplification of Church programs, and budget policy. The author weaves a well-told story of a young boy stricken with polio who becomes a pilot, artist, teacher, administrator, and priesthood leader. The story gives the reader an understanding of the experiences that shaped the thoughts and commitments of one of the Church’s great leaders and teachers, as well as insight into important events in Church history in recent years.

—Clark B. Hinckley
The Legacy of Mormon Furniture: The Mormon Material Culture, Undergirded by Faith, Commitment, and Craftsmanship, by Marilyn Conover Barker, photographs by Scott Peterson and others (Gibbs Smith, 1995)

Appreciation of Mormon material culture has come a long way. We now have a beautiful coffee-table book on Mormon furniture! This book tells the early Mormon story through the work of the LDS cabinetmakers and wood-carvers who crafted furniture from the 1840s through the late nineteenth century. The history is illustrated with photographs of chairs, tables, cupboards, and beds.

This furniture underscores the massive effort the early Saints made to recreate the genteel and refined middle-class culture they left behind in England and Scandinavia and on the East Coast. They chose not to live the free frontier life of the open West. The powerful yearning for respectability, seen in photographs of pioneers with neat, starched aprons and white picket fences against the windswept desert, can also be seen in this furniture.

Barker rightly links the production of silk with the creation of furniture, showing the lengths to which Mormons were willing to go to upgrade their material lives. Just as they would care for worms in order to wear finery, so they took the simple woods available to them and applied faux finishes, striving for a finer appearance.

Mormon pioneers included many good carpenters and cabinetmakers who worked the pine into square and blocky cupboards, simple rail chairs with turned legs, heavy rocking chairs, and bedsteads and settees with cutout headboards. Unlike Shakers whose simple furniture was ideologically based, Mormon furniture was derived from contemporary styles, perhaps because the Mormon leader was an eastern-trained cabinetmaker: “At no time did the Mormon Church sponsor design style that could represent their religious philosophy. Mormons were encouraged to sponsor excellent craftsmanship, but design was left to the choice of the individual cabinetmaker and buyer” (26).

Arranged for reference use, this book offers profusely illustrated chapters on furniture types, cabinetmakers, county histories of local craftsmen (but where is the county map?), the work of cooperatives, and finally a section on faux graining techniques. The gorgeous illustrations contrast wonderfully with their simple, spare subjects. The book’s subtitle suggests that the early Mormon material culture reveals the faith and commitment of the pioneers. The photographs and the earnest tone of the text underscore that claim.

—Claudia L. Bushman

Beyond the River, by Michael Fillerup (Signature Books, 1995)

Jonathan Reeves is an LDS golden boy growing up in a small town in California. Athletic, cocksure, and indifferent towards his schoolwork, he goes to the tutoring center only under threat of
being cut from the track team. His tutor turns out to be Nancy Von Kleinsmid, a tall, brilliant, friendless girl, who badgers him, spurs him, challenges his every belief and intuition, and encourages his writing. Despite the fact that Nancy is not LDS, Jon falls in love and determines to marry her and pursue a literary career. He cannot understand why she slips away from him. Within a year of his leaving for college, she is found dead at a local swimming spot, an apparent suicide.

Jon serves a mission in Mexico. His mother dies during his absence, and his relationship with his father deteriorates after Jon returns home. While the narrative has been linear to this point, Jon's adult life emerges through a jumble of flashbacks as he tries to make peace with his past. He has married and postponed his dream of becoming a writer. He is struggling with a daughter's crippling illness and the pressures of teaching remedial English in a California school. As in all too much serious LDS fiction, Jon carries around near-debilitating remorse for petty sins, carelessness, and things beyond his control. Such attitudes surely exist among the LDS people but have never struck me as typical.

The book is about loss, deferred dreams, and appeasing old ghosts. But Fillerup's story leaves room for the Spirit. Jon receives almost audible, at times physical, impulses that encourage him and keep him from making mistakes. One crucial time he fails to listen. In his previous fiction, Fillerup has tended to undermine such passages with sociological observations or competing spiritualities. That tendency is mostly absent here. In Beyond the River, religious experience comes almost as a matter of course, an aspect, among others, of Mormon life. Few literary novels attempt such straightforward depictions of LDS spirituality, though that is at the heart of what Mormon literature ought to do. Beyond the River is a passionate book and a readable one. On the spiritual count alone, it is an important contribution to LDS letters.

—Benson Y. Parkinson

Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Illinois, edited by H. Dean Garrett (Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1995)

The bittersweet experience of the Church's brief sojourn in Nauvoo will always remain a romantic yet realistic construct in the minds of the Latter-day Saints. If any reader has ever wanted to travel to Nauvoo with a group of religious educators from BYU, to listen as they analyze and ponder some of their favorite images and reflections on the Nauvoo period, this volume is a fine surrogate. The essays are personable and sincerely reflect the feelings and knowledge of their authors.

This is the latest volume in the regional studies series published by the BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine. It contains eighteen original papers, plus an index, in a large and interesting collection. Topics include Joseph Smith (represented by several
essays), the Nauvoo Temple, doctrinal teachings in Nauvoo, disease and sickness in Nauvoo, the political environment in Illinois in the 1840s, and Zelp. The collection also offers biographical studies of such interesting figures as Almon Babbitt, Joseph Smith III, John C. Bennett, Howard Coray, Martha Coray, and Steven A. Douglas, as well as two papers on Mormon and Jewish topics. Although this volume does not attempt to present a systematic, comprehensive review of the history of the Church in Illinois, it contains many significant resources, including a useful bibliography.

—John W. Welch

Nurturing Faith through the Book of Mormon: The 24th Annual Sperry Symposium, Brigham Young University, 1995 (Deseret Book, 1995)

Seeds sown by Sidney B. Sperry during his forty years of teaching and research at Brigham Young University are still bearing fruit. New generations of scholars, nourished by Dean Sperry’s example, are casting their seeds on fresh fields, inviting us all to reap the harvest. All of the authors in this book “are recognized authorities on the Book of Mormon” (vii); Ludlow, Elder Holland, Rasmussen, Matthews, and Millet have each served as deans of religious education, succeeding Sperry.

The 1995 Sperry Symposium, “Nurturing Faith through the Book of Mormon,” celebrates the centennial of Sperry’s birth. Scholars pay tribute to Sperry by counseling us to “learn by study and by faith as much as possible about the history, practices, principles, and doctrines found in the scriptures” (xi). In an introductory chapter, Ellis Rasmussen reveals the roots of Sidney Sperry’s philosophy as a teacher, a scholar, and a man: “Brother Sperry hoped to deepen the faith of Latter-day Saint students” (xv) and “believed that understanding the historical setting in which each prophet lived and worked” (xxxiii) was vital to understanding their message.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the life-nourishing force that flows through the Book of Mormon and is its most “commanding figure . . . from first chapter to last” (2). Elder Jeffrey Holland invites us all to “rend the veil of unbelief” in order to behold the revelations—and the Revelation—of God (Ether 4:15)” (24).

Daniel Ludlow thoroughly explores “The Destiny of the House of Israel,” using as his tools the “background and experience of the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . [who] understood more about the destiny of the house of Israel—including its origin, history, and prophesied future—than any other person then living upon the earth” (31-32).

According to Robert Matthews, the records written by the Book of Mormon prophets are like preserved fruit that we can enjoy seasons later: “How enjoyable in January to feast on the harvest of the previous August. And how fortunate in the twentieth century to be spiritually fed by the doctrinal discourses of the Savior and the prophets of centuries ago” (89-90).
The results of eating the forbidden fruit—the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the Atonement—are the subjects of Robert Millet's tender treatment of the plan of salvation as taught in the Book of Mormon. Millet sums up its message: "The plight and the promise, the malady and the medicine, the Fall and the Atonement—that is the burden of the Book of Mormon" (120).

Reflecting Sperry's reliance on both faith and reason, John Welch offers an extensive description of the relationship between intellect and spirit in the context of a person identifying evidence and using it in nurturing faith. The Book of Mormon especially, with its "precision, consistency, validity, vitality, insightfulness, and purposefulness," yields a flow of evidence that "nourishes and enlarges faith" (158).

Each essay in this volume gives readers spiritual and intellectual nutrients to strengthen seeds of faith and produce a harvest of understanding.

—Nancy R. Lund

appeared in a variety of publications that feature Mormon history, including such publications as the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, Journal of Mormon History, Utah Historical Quarterly, and Dialogue.

The authors of these essays represent a broad range of scholarship, religious orientation, academic institutions, and scholarly approaches. These writers are generally recognized as authorities in their fields of academic specialty. Some of the subjects these authors cover include the Nauvoo Charter, the Nauvoo Legion, the press in Nauvoo, religion in Nauvoo, polygamy in Nauvoo, the Martyrdom, and relations between Emma Smith and Brigham Young.

For anyone with any interest in Nauvoo, this book of essays will save time and energy. For one thing, the editors have provided a complete index that gets the reader into relevant material from several articles. The book promises to be a useful tool.

—Donald Q. Cannon

Kingdom on the Mississippi
Revisited: Nauvoo in Mormon History, edited by Roger D. Launius and John E. Hallwas (University of Illinois Press, 1996)

This attractive paperback volume is the creation of two well-known scholars of the Nauvoo period. It constitutes a ready reference to a wide range of articles on Nauvoo in the 1840s. The fourteen essays appearing in this volume are all reprints. They originally
All Tucked In

When I was five, I always slept
with the bedcovers pulled up tight
against my chin. I prayed
that vampires wouldn’t suck blood
through the tasteless threads
of a quilt and that the sharp-clawed monster
waiting behind my bedroom door
for “lights out” couldn’t snap
through sheets that smelled
of the perfume of my mother’s hands.

At fifteen, I pulled the cotton covers closer
to hide myself from the nuclear holocaust
that might mushroom under the moon,
melting my eyes into the hollows of my skull
like two pats of butter thrown
on a hot skillet. The sheets would shield
me from the firestorm,
leaving me alive
to brave a blizzard
of quiet fallout.

Now, at twenty-three, the sheets still skirt
my neck at night. I cannot explain
why the soft fabric feels
like armor during the witching
hours; I simply understand,
deep in my bones,
that we call a bed’s blanket comforter
because it wards off the jagged shapes that snarl
in the dead of the fallen darkness.

—Trenton L. Hickman