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Richard E. Turley Jr. and Brittany A. Chapman,
Women of Faith in the Latter Days

Reviewed by Amy Easton-Flake

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has determined that publishing these would be unwise).”¹ After acknowledging his debt to his Apache “teachers and friends,” Basso makes this unequivocal statement: “How deeply they loved their country. And how pleased they were that some of their knowledge of it would be preserved and made public, subject to a set of clearly defined restrictions which have not—and shall never be—violated.”²

When I first heard about *The Mormon Quest for Glory: The Religious World of the Latter-day Saints*, I sincerely wanted to have high hopes; sadly, I end my encounter with this unhappy book deeply disappointed and unable to recommend it to other readers.

Richard Buonforte teaches anthropology at Brigham Young University. He holds two advanced degrees from Yale, one in linguistics, the other in anthropology, and wrote his doctoral dissertation on Latter-day Saint testimony discourse. His interests include ethnographic methods and writing, contemporary anthropological theory, and American and Mormon culture. He is currently writing an introductory text on social-cultural anthropology, which he hopes to title *Human Being—An Anthropological Perspective*.

Richard E. Turley Jr. and Brittany A. Chapman, eds. *Women of Faith in the Latter Days*. 3 vols. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011–14.

Reviewed by Amy Easton-Flake

WOMEN OF FAITH IN THE LATTER DAYS, edited by Richard Turley and Brittany Chapman, fittingly stems from an impetus similar to that which motivated the *Woman’s Exponent*, a bimonthly newspaper founded and run by women of the LDS Church from 1872 to 1914. As editor Louisa

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1. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, xv.
 2. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, xvii.

Lula Greene explained in the inaugural issue, the *Exponent's* purpose was to encourage women to “help each other by the diffusion of knowledge and information” and to give women a space to “represent [them] selves” because “who are so well able to speak for the women of Utah as the women of Utah themselves?”³ Similarly, Turley and Chapman have brought together a wide variety of Mormon authors to recount the stories of women from LDS Church history in order to, as they state in the introduction, “enhance awareness of these women through inspirational accounts written for a general readership” so that their lives may “be an inspiration to readers” (1:xiii–xiv).

The primary audience is clearly the general membership of the church in North America; however, since the editors hope their work will lead “to better scholarly and popular works” on the subject (1:xiv), they also see these volumes as part of the growing field of Mormon women’s studies and serving a more specialized audience. Thus Turley and Chapman seek to produce a work that engages a general audience while attaining a certain level of academic rigor in terms of sources, tone, and historical accuracy that will make it useful to scholars and researchers.

Women of Faith joins the often-overlooked genre of collective biographies of Mormon women that began in the 1870s and 1880s with such works as *The Women of Mormondom*, *Representative Women of Deseret*, and *Heroines of Mormondom* and that has swelled to more than fifty in number since the 1990s. What sets *Women of Faith* apart and makes it a valuable addition to the genre is both its commitment to historical accuracy (it is better researched than most of its predecessors) and its breadth and ideological commitment to representing, as far as it is able, “a diverse group of women, both those well known to readers and those who lived lives of faith in comparative anonymity” (1:xiv). As a seven-volume series, *Women of Faith* has an advantage of space over its predecessors. Each volume features women born within a twenty-five-year period, except for volume 1, which covers women born between 1775 and 1820. The number of women featured has decreased in subsequent

3. Louisa Lula Greene, “A Utah Ladies’ Journal,” *Woman’s Exponent*, June 1, 1872, 8.

volumes—thirty-five, thirty, and twenty-three, respectively—but the commitment to diversity in terms of authors and subjects remains.

Besides well-established scholars such as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Jill Mulvey Derr, and Carol Cornwall Madsen, many of the contributors are newer scholars to Mormon women's studies or are novice writers often recounting the stories of their ancestors. Only a handful of the biographies will be well known to readers, with many others being vaguely familiar and most others being unheard of. This mix in terms of subjects is a definite strength because it captures a wider array of women's voices than that of previous collective biographies; however, the authors' various backgrounds seem to result in their having slightly different objectives or audiences in mind. For instance, some choose to moralize a story, taking a more popular approach, while others keep a neutral tone, adopting a more academic approach. In this way the volume reflects the uneven mix that currently exists in Mormon women's studies as both amateur researchers and highly trained academics seek to contribute to the field. Like *Women of Faith*, contributors to Mormon women's studies are often trying to speak to a dual audience of interested individuals and scholars. While the dual audience and mixed contributors serve to broaden the base of those who engage in Mormon women's studies, they also keep the field from advancing as fast as women's studies has within other disciplines.

Each entry in the first two volumes is organized into two sections: "Biographical Sketch" and "Life Experiences." The biographical sketches generally follow a basic format: date of birth, place of origin, joining the church, travel to Utah (volume 2 adds experience settling the West as well), family life, talents, and contributions to the church. The "Life Experiences" section varies from one woman to the next. While some authors fully develop the biographical sketch, others share highlights exploring important aspects of the subject's life and character, and still others focus on only one life event in great detail. Some authors employ long journal entries with no commentary, others intersperse their own summary and analysis with quotations of the person and of people who knew her, and some relate the stories in their own prose.

The contributors' freedom in choosing what to include in this section sometimes leads to unevenness between the chapters and to dissatisfaction over what is featured. Readers will at times wish for context and analysis where long block quotes dominate and for quotations when none are offered.

Finding the right balance between letting women's words speak for themselves and providing analysis and context to make their words more pertinent and understandable is a difficult negotiation, but as the chapters by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich illustrate, this blend is what makes great history—for both popular and academic audiences. Those of either group will appreciate the deeper understanding that comes when a trained historian weaves together sources, context, and analysis. Ulrich shows how even a line or two of context may do much to locate readers in the past. For instance, she explains that Phebe Whittemore Carter Woodruff did “an amazing thing” when she left her home in Maine and traveled one thousand miles to Kirtland by herself, because “except for the handful of girls who moved to nearby factory villages to seek work, New England women did not migrate alone” (1:451). Thus in just two lines, Ulrich helps readers understand much better Woodruff and her actions. Likewise, in her sketch on Esther Romania Bunnell Pratt Penrose, the first Mormon woman from Utah to become a doctor after studying in the eastern United States, Ulrich explains how medicine was perceived in the early Latter-day Saint community, thereby adding an appreciated depth to *Women of Faith*.

The strength of the series is in the particulars of the women and their dynamic lives. While readers may expect rather monolithic backgrounds, they will find instead women originating from the northern, southern, and midwestern United States as well as from England, Ireland, Scotland, Australia, Canada, and Mexico. Some came from wealth, others from poverty; some were relatively young when they joined the church, while others had already lived full lives as teachers, seamstresses, wives and mothers, and, in one case, even as a coal miner. Volumes 1 and 2 also offer many cogent themes, three of which are particularly striking: faith amid trials, death and loss, and agency.

Faith amid trials

Although the biographies in the first two volumes generally recount the standard narrative of the trials and persecutions early Latter-day Saints faced as they were driven from one state to the next, what makes these narratives engaging is the details they reveal about how individual women experienced and dealt with these difficult times. For example, Drusilla Dorris Hendricks suffered mob violence on a very severe and personal level when her husband was paralyzed from the neck down after being shot at the Battle of Crooked River and she spent the rest of her life caring for him. The journal of Hannah Last Cornaby recounts how quickly “friends became enemies” when she and her husband joined the church in Suffolk, England, and how they were “persecuted” and “sometimes stoned” (2:36). The recollections of the Martin Handcart Company by Janetta Ann McBride and her brothers bring needed life to this historical moment as we learn of sixteen-year-old Janetta wading through the icy Platte River multiple times to help her family across, pulling the family handcart through the snow while barefoot because her father had died and her mother was ill, and then giving her blanket to other family members to use at night while she lay freezing and crying. As these first two volumes unmistakably illustrate, joining the church and committing to spend one’s life as a Latter-day Saint was never an easy path—persecution, ostracism from friends and family, mob violence, death, illness, and laborious labor were the standard. Yet each sketch, as the title *Women of Faith* anticipates, shows each woman’s underlying faith that helped her engage with and overcome these afflictions. What Sherilyn Farnes wrote of Emily Dow Partridge Young could be said of all: “Much of her ability to see the hand of the Lord came through her willingness to work hard and choose faith amidst her trials” (2:440).

Death and loss

A universal trial for these women was the loss of family members, most often the death of infants and young children. Given the high infant

mortality rate of the early and mid-nineteenth century, the fact that so many of these women lost children is not surprising; but the recounting of one instance after another makes the pervasiveness of death all too clear. The pathos is palpable in journal entries and autobiographies such as that of Mary Minerva Dart Judd, who described the loss of her sixteen-month-old son in these terms: "Death came and we had no power it seamed but I could not give him up and did not untill he was buried and then it seamed as thoe I buried my heart with him. . . . I have felt as tho I would never feel joyfull any more" (2:181). Later, after losing the seventh of her fourteen children to "the monster death," she recorded, "What is earth but A phase to mourn" (2:181). From Jane Elizabeth Manning James, one of the first converts of African descent, who saw "all of [her] children but two, Laid away in the silent tomb" (2:132), to Emma Hale Smith, the wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who lost six of her children in infancy, the loss of children was a significant and devastating trial faced by many early members of the church. That these women found comfort in their faith is also plainly evident. For example, Judd declared, "The Lord alone knows how deap the sorrow has been in my heart," and then hoped that these trials "would only give us power to be as Abraham of old to [be] saintes in deed then we mit rejoice in all our sorrow and death in this life" (2:181). Throughout these sketches, these women are shown to choose faith over despair.

Agency

It quickly becomes clear that early Latter-day Saint women were active agents rather than submissive subjects. Cyrena Dustin Merrill and Belinda Marden Pratt left all their family behind to join the church and gather with the Saints. Maria Jackson Normington Parker and Desideria Quintanar de Yañez were instrumental in bringing their families into the church. Numerous women, such as Louisa Barnes Pratt, Lydia Goldthwaite Knight, and Sarah Sturtevant Leavitt, led their children across the plains to Utah without the aid of husbands and filled the role of provider. Many women were also active in civic and religious affairs. Mary Isabella Hales

Horne, for instance, was a ward and stake Relief Society president for over thirty years, instituted a nursing training program, served on the Deseret Hospital board of directors, played a major part in the women's suffrage movement of Utah, and was president of the Women's Cooperative Mercantile and Manufacturing Institution from 1890 to 1905. Aurelia Read Spencer Rogers contributed significantly to the church by introducing the idea of a children's Primary organization. Readers will come away with a transformed view of early LDS women as they read of the unexpected roles many of them performed. This is particularly true as readers turn to volume 3 and see a noticeable shift in women's lives as the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century brought greater opportunities to women in North America.

The third volume of *Women of Faith* makes some welcome structural and thematic shifts that will benefit the series as it moves forward. By replacing the "Biographical Sketch" and "Life Experiences" sections with one unified sketch, most authors more adeptly present a satisfactory overview of their subject while highlighting the moments that made their subject unique. In the first two volumes, authors depicted women's lives as primarily family centered, but the third volume focuses more on women's engagement outside the home and how they helped provide (or in many cases solely provided) for their families. Consequently, while the dominant theme of women's agency and their decision to choose faith amid trials remains constant in the third volume, three new themes—polygamy, professions, and civic and religious responsibilities—move to the forefront and provide much needed insight into the lives of early Latter-day Saint women.

Polygamy

Although many of the women featured in the first two volumes lived in polygamous relationships, it is in the third volume that polygamy becomes central rather than peripheral to the stories presented. Through women's direct words, readers receive fresh insights into how Mormon women actually experienced and functioned within plural marriages.

For instance, the thoughts Lorena Eugenia Washburn Larsen shares after learning of the 1890 Manifesto that ended polygamy encompass both the difficulty and refining nature of polygamous living. She wrote, “As I thought about it, it seemed impossible that the Lord would go back on a principal which had caused so much sacrifice, heartache, and trial before one could conquer one’s carnal self, and live on that higher plane, and love one’s neighbor as one’s self” (3:90–91). In another account, Mary Elizabeth Woolley Chamberlain’s reflections upon being proposed to by a man who already had several wives provide a window into how ingrained the polygamous lifestyle was to many of the second-generation Latter-day Saint women: “The fact that he was a married man did not deter me in the least, as I had always been taught that plural marriage was a divine principle of our religion and I had been raised in it, so it was almost second nature to me” (3:35). Despite many of these women’s openness to and recognition of the refining influence and promised blessings of polygamy, the sketches make it clear that polygamy was not an easy lifestyle for anyone, particularly as anti-polygamy legislation caused many to endure poverty, live in exile away from their families, and become the primary providers for their children.

Professions

Whether out of necessity or opportunity, the institution of polygamy catapulted many women into the role of provider. Between 1893 and 1930, Ellen Johanna Larson Smith lived apart from her husband for twenty-one years while he was seeking employment elsewhere, serving a mission, or living with his other wife in Utah. Consequently, Smith was responsible for supporting her children and did so by beekeeping, taking in boarders, cleaning the Snowflake Stake Academy, running a notions shop, and becoming a photographer. Another woman, Ellis Reynolds Shipp, worked within the structure of polygamy to leave her three young children in the care of a sister wife while she attended medical school in the East. What many readers may find surprising is how many of these turn-of-the-century women melded work and family life. One example is Sarah Ann Taylor Howard, who worked

with her husband in starting and running the Bountiful Dairy Company, the Bountiful Livestock Company, and a brickyard. For Martha Maria Hughes Cannon—a physician, trained lecturer, suffragist, state senator, and polygamous wife—the combination of motherhood and professional advancement was central to her ideological makeup. As she wrote in a letter, motherhood “if properly managed should [not] interfere with [a woman’s] true advancement in whatever sphere she might cast her talents” (3:17). Readers will be intrigued as they read about the first female state senator in America, the first woman mayor of an all-woman town council, the housekeeper for the mission home in Japan, an actress and a drama teacher at the University of Utah, and physicians, teachers, and a host of other compelling women.

Civic and religious responsibilities

What makes many of these women notable are the causes they championed outside the home and their responsibilities within the church. Featured in volume 3 are many women who improved women’s lives and made valuable contributions to the church through their positions as Relief Society or Young Women general presidents. Many others served in a variety of other ways, including as missionaries in foreign countries. Some of the wealthier women also had time to devote to championing political and civic causes, most commonly suffrage. Emily Sophia Tanner Richards remained devoted to the cause of suffrage even after women in Utah gained the right to vote, speaking at national suffrage events and serving as a delegate to the National and International Councils of Women. Richards, along with Elizabeth Ann Claridge McCune, Susa Amelia Young Dunford Gates, and others, promoted a number of other progressive and social causes, such as the kindergarten movement in Utah, the Utah Art Institute, the Orphans’ Home of Salt Lake City, and the American Red Cross.

In *Women of Faith*, Turley and Chapman make a meaningful contribution to the field of Mormon women’s studies by providing brief overviews and insights into a wide variety of lives, and those who read the first three volumes will certainly look forward to the remaining four.

To improve these future volumes, the contributing authors would do well to include more context to situate readers within the time these women lived, for readers will wonder if these biographies are representative of Mormon women or are also typical of other North American women at the time. Providing a stronger historical context will help readers to better appreciate these women and their contributions to society. Though readers will at times be left with questions about the more complex aspects of these women's lives, the volume editors hope that any such concerns will serve to stimulate further contributions to this fertile area of study (1:xiv). *Women of Faith* amply illustrates that early Latter-day Saint women's lives are worthy of continued study and that, in fact, much work remains to be done. Readers of the first three volumes will certainly walk away with a new appreciation for and awareness of the diversity of women's experiences in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and researchers will continue to discover additional personalities and sources that may be profitably mined.

Amy Easton-Flake is assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century women's biblical hermeneutics and the Book of Mormon within a nineteenth-century context. She is currently looking at biblical exegesis within the *Woman's Exponent*.

Stephen H. Webb. *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn from the Latter-day Saints*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Reviewed by James E. Faulconer

MUCH OF THIS BOOK READS like an extended love letter, not one from the lover to his beloved, but from the lover to his family explaining what he loves about her and responding to the family's objections. Stephen