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Andrea G. Radke-Moss

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Martha Sonntag Bradley. *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, and Equal Rights.*

Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005

Reviewed by Andrea G. Radke-Moss

The story of the modern battle over the Equal Rights Amendment from its 1970 passage by Congress to its ultimate defeat in 1982 is an important one in the history of American women. Inextricably linked to this fight were Mormon members and leaders, who represented the mobilization of religious organizations against its passage. It can be argued that, next to Phyllis Schlafly's Stop ERA movement, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints exhibited the strongest voice to defeat ratification. In spite of the Church's official stance against the amendment, a significant number of Mormon women supported ERA. *Pedestals and Podiums* is the story of Mormon women and leaders against ERA who confronted their pro-ERA Mormon sisters. In the telling, Bradley has explored some of the emotional, political, and religious damage during the ERA movement that still lingers close to the surface of Mormon society. Bradley has provided an important contribution to women's history, political history, and the New Mormon History. This work is a riveting and well-researched volume that I recommend as a must-read for any student or professor interested in the history of Latter-day Saint women.

Although Bradley herself is an admitted feminist and ERA supporter, she has sought to tell this story with balance and fairness to both sides, especially in representing each camp's realistic perceptions of the ERA. She suggests that proponents and resisters alike drew upon historical Mormon women as examples to support and justify their points of view, and thus "women on both sides of the battle over the ERA believed they were fighting for a better world for all women" (2). Still, the prolonged ratification effort highlighted opposing ideologies such that Mormon women found themselves divided. Pro-ERA women feared for the failure of women's equality if the ERA was not passed, while those opposed feared that its ratification would lead to the destruction of stable families and traditional motherhood. The divisions were so pronounced that

Feminists [were] pitted against homemakers, Mormons against Mormons, conservatives against liberals, heterosexual marriage against homosexual union. These dichotomies were seemingly irreconcilable. Demonized by ideas or labels that burned like cattle brands, feminism was the catch-all for modern society's woes, the scapegoat for citizens who were apprehensive about what the next change would be. Women struggled to decide for themselves who they were in the context of a new world they did not recognize and almost certainly did not trust. (81)

Bradley's research is exhaustive; she culled material from participants' interviews, personal writings, newspaper editorials, official LDS Church statements, Church leaders' talks, transcripts of radio and television programs, official documents and voting records of numerous women's organizations, International Women's Year meetings, and the U.S. Congressional Record. The actors include pro-ERA Sonia Johnson, Algie Baliff, Teddie Wood, and Jan Tyler, as well as Mormons opposed to ERA like General Relief Society President Barbara Smith, Senators Jake Garn and Orrin Hatch, Beverly Campbell, and a long list of Mormon apostles, regional representatives, stake presidents, and bishops. Still, even in the amassing of so many events, personalities, and details, Bradley's narrative never loses its punch, especially when she directly quotes those involved. Aside from a few laborious and wordy sentences, most of Bradley's writing is succinct, ironic, and catchy.

Bradley's most significant methodological tool is her use of rhetorical analysis to describe how ERA proponents and opponents employed strong language to fight for their respective causes. For instance, Mormons for ERA called actions by those opposed to ERA as anti-woman, blindly following authority, or as supporting what Sonia Johnson unfairly called "savage misogyny" (366). In turn, Church leaders often couched their opposition to the ERA by calling it a moral issue worthy of the Church's political intervention. Leaders argued that the ERA would lead to the destruction of the family and motherhood, and the introduction of unacceptable social norms like unisex bathrooms, coed dorms, and a genderless draft. Many women could not reconcile the widely opposing views and found themselves ultimately marginalized.

Bradley's conclusions in the early chapters indicate that she presumes LDS leaders worked against the ERA mainly because of a cultural motivation to maintain a traditional paradigm within the home. According to Bradley, the ERA battle showed how the "true womanhood" ideology of submission to male authority still held sway in Mormon culture. This is where Bradley takes the most liberty in her argument. While some Mormon leaders may have had a history of making what can be construed as culturally infused statements about the roles of women, many leaders had legitimate and viable legal arguments against the ERA, including the potential loss of protective legislation for

divorced women and custody rights for mothers, and the decriminalization of spousal abuse and rape. Indeed, the ERA battle highlighted the dilemma of absolute equality versus protectionist legislation for women.

Bradley further argues that the mostly conservative Mormon leaders also voiced their ERA warnings in terms of the New Right's fears of socialism, "a Republican distrust of big government," and the extremism of Vietnam-era protest groups (208). Although Bradley deals extensively with this Cold War-era political context to ERA opposition, she gives far less attention to the potential legalistic results of the ERA than what they deserve, especially considering repeated warnings and discussions about these issues. It is clear that she often holds "ecclesiastical directive" (424) responsible for creating the divisions, marginalizing pro-ERA women through subtle intimidation, and playing on faithful women's sense of obedience as a call to confront issues they did not understand. Although readers might suspect a tone of distrust and disappointment with many leaders' actions and statements, still other readers will find that Bradley convincingly argues that some leaders advocated strong political and financial influence over groups against ERA.

This rhetorical, political, and religious battle of ideologies between feminists and traditional Mormon women came to a culmination at the 1977 International Women's Year meeting in Salt Lake City. Bradley describes how thousands of Mormon women were mobilized by their local Church leaders to oppose the ERA and address other women's issues at the conference. She argues that because women were invited in Church meetings to attend the IWY conference, many participants implicitly received direction from "the Brethren' at church headquarters" (189). The Church's influence was apparent as 13,800 men and women entered the Salt Palace—more than the total attendance at similar IWY conferences in California or New York. The results were disruptive to the IWY agenda as well as to the civility of the conference itself, and Bradley places most of the blame on the behavior of Mormon attendees. Bradley describes legions of women who, in the words of one attendee, understood that they were "to vote no on practically everything" even though some had not received proper education on vital issues (190). In their attempts to defeat progressive feminism they even voted against less politicized issues like education and sexual assault defense for young women. Some attendees even resorted to boos, hisses, shouting, and interrupting speakers (198–201).

Bradley confesses that "there were times when it was impossible for me to research this book due to the force of the story, the aborted dreams and pain, which seemed to slap me in the face and knock me to my knees" (444). The reader may feel this pain with her, especially during her descriptions

of abusive and rude behaviors. In spite of her feminist sympathies, Bradley displays balance in describing both sides of many heated events and issues. Though the author's hurt is still palpably close to the surface when discussing the IWY conference, she offers a larger context to this event, describing how earlier state IWY conventions in Colorado and Idaho had blatantly marginalized Mormon women, so the faithful Mormon delegates entered the Utah conference prepared to act in a self-protective manner.

Bradley admits that pro-ERA activists casually dismissed the very legitimate fears felt by conservative Mormon women of the pro-abortion, pro-homosexual, anti-marriage agenda of the 1970s radical feminist movement. At the same time, she sometimes portrays the arguments of the anti-ERA groups as irrational and uninformed. Although her tone in describing Mormons for ERA suggests admiration for their cause, she still admits that they often alienated their potential audience through confrontational letters, marches, flying banners, and chaining themselves at sacred Mormon sites like temples. Bradley feels a shared frustration with pro-ERA groups never getting an audience with Church authorities who might have softened their stance, but she also concedes that "Mormons for ERA was the more radical in spirit and staked out its position in a way that all but precluded an objective examination of issues" (373). Finally, Bradley's sympathetic portrayal of Sonia Johnson's famous excommunication ends with a cautionary tale of Johnson's divorce and eventual retreat "to a lesbian commune in a secluded area of New Mexico." Bradley summarizes: "For some, the unraveling of her former life touched chords of sympathy, but for others, it was the fulfillment of authoritative warnings about feminism and the predictions about what befell the enemies of the church" (368).

Still maintaining in the end that "those on both sides thought they were doing what was right for the world . . . [and that] they were on the right side of a good fight," Bradley reminds readers that "it remains for us to decide if their vision of the future was well advised" (448). Regardless of where readers' sympathies lie after reading this volume, perhaps Bradley's greatest contribution comes down to an important and timely suggestion for all Mormon women: In an almost buried statement by first-year law student Margaret Woodworth in 1978, Bradley quotes, "There needs to be more mutual respect between [women] on their individual choices. . . . Women should not make judgments against each other. In many respects we need to be more sisterly toward each other" (418). ERA or no ERA, this hope still remains.

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Andrea G. Radke-Moss (radkeA@byui.edu) is Assistant Professor of History at Brigham Young University-Idaho.