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## Psalms of Nauvoo: Early Mormon Poetry

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Hal Robert Boyd and Susan Easton Black, eds., *Psalms of Nauvoo: Early Mormon Poetry* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2015)

In 1888, Orson F. Whitney declared that Mormons “will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own.” This quotation has since become a watchword for serious Mormon writers and poets over the intervening century. Mormons everywhere have a special connection to the arts because of the faith’s encouragement of worship through song. Today, many LDS general conference talks draw from analogies based on some form of artistic expression, reinforcing the impact art and poetics have had on Mormon thought over the past two centuries.

Hal Robert Boyd and Susan Easton Black have gathered just one small piece of this rich LDS literary culture in their *Psalms of Nauvoo*. Boyd is a Brigham Young University graduate and is currently a JD candidate at Yale Law School. Black is an emeritus professor of Church History at Brigham Young University, where she taught for decades. Over the years, Black has spoken and published on a number of topics related to the Nauvoo period of Mormon history. In this collection, Boyd and Black set out to present poetry written “by Latter-day Saints from 1839 to 1846. Preference was given to poetry that focused on the history and citizenry of the city of Nauvoo, especially the events surrounding the life, ministry, and death of the Prophet Joseph Smith” (xvii).

In their introduction, the editors touch on the cultural environment in which these poems came to life. Nauvoo was a time of great art, music, and theatre in the lives of the Saints. Boyd and Black remind us that Emma Smith herself was directed by revelation to

collect “a selection of sacred hymns” in 1831, signifying the importance of song and poetry in the Church at a very early stage in its existence (xxviii; D&C 25:11). The editors review the lasting contributions of Eliza R. Snow, W. W. Phelps, Parley P. Pratt, and others (Joseph Smith himself has some poems in the volume).

The compilation begins with Warren Foote’s “Let Zion and Her Children Mourn,” a poem lamenting the 1838 Extermination Order signed by Governor Lilburn Boggs. The poems then weave a literary narrative of the Saints’ expulsion from Missouri; their taming of the marshlands of Commerce, Illinois; the rise and beauty of Nauvoo and the Mormon Renaissance; and the concluding disenfranchisement of Church members and their somber abandonment of their city and beloved temple. Yet even this closure is heartened by hope, with the final entry in the collection, appropriately William Clayton’s “All Is Well”—now known as the famous anthem “Come, Come Ye Saints”—written in 1846.

The anthology is divided by three chapters denoting distinct historical periods: Flight from Missouri, Nauvoo the Beautiful (which garners the lion’s share of the volume), and Martyrdom and Aftermath. Each chapter is accompanied by a brief sketch of events that shaped the subsequent poetry. The poems themselves, numbering over one hundred, are enriched by illustrations and valuable contextualization provided by the editors. These notes are sometimes lengthier than the poems they introduce.

Aside from the poetry and history, *Psalms of Nauvoo* also includes biographical information on the poets and offers a useful set of author and title indexes for readers searching for a particular poet or poem. The editors also

provide full citations of the originals of each of the poems, as well as a bibliography for further study.

*Psalms of Nauvoo* will be useful to scholars of Mormon literature for its commentaries and source work, finding a welcomed place alongside other LDS literary anthologies, most notably Cracroft and Lambert's essential *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints*. Members of the LDS Church will enjoy the basic history and expressions of faith found in the poetry of some of their most celebrated poets as well as that of others with whom members may be less familiar.

—Gerrit van Dyk

Larry W. Draper and Kent P. Jackson, eds., *A Missionary's Story: The Letters and Journals of Adolf Haag, Mormon Missionary to Switzerland and Palestine, 1892* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2015)

In the early years of the LDS Church's formation, it was common for worthy male members to be called to leave their families and serve a mission. Many of their stories of faith and sacrifice have been published to serve as reminders and examples for Latter-day Saints today. *A Missionary's Story: The Letters and Journals of Adolf Haag* is no exception. However, no two missionaries' stories are alike, and this is a story with unique adventures and lessons of its own.

*A Missionary's Story* provides a brief but powerful history of the life of Adolf Haag. Divided into five sections, the book tells of Adolf's premission life and includes portions from his mission journals, sent letters, and other articles regarding Haag's service as a missionary. Introduced to the gospel in Germany, Adolf was the first of his family to

immigrate to the United States. He settled in Payson, Utah, where he married and began a family. It wasn't long before he was called to serve a mission to Switzerland and Germany, but when he arrived in the field, he was assigned to be a traveling elder in the Turkish Mission, which included Palestine. Adolf's letters and journal entries describe his travels across the United States to New York and to London, Paris, Switzerland, Turkey, Greece, and Egypt, culminating in his arrival in the Holy Land.

Larry W. Draper (a former Church historian and curator at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections) and Kent P. Jackson (BYU faculty member and associate director at the BYU Jerusalem Center) have compiled Adolf's letters and journals into a valuable text that is gracefully accented with photographs and copies of the original scripts. Through the letters and entries he recorded about his mission experience, we get a glimpse into Adolf's life and character, including the love he had for the people he met and his dedication in doing the Lord's will. Adolf's mission was not short of difficulties by any means. Faced with financial and health burdens, Adolf strived to keep the Lord's work his main priority while still caring for his family back home. His letters are full of hope as he describes these challenges, continually reassuring himself and his wife that the blessings of the gospel come through faithful service and sacrifice. Though he struggled to find people to teach along his journey, he recorded the humbling and infrequent event of watching someone enter the waters of baptism.

Draper and Jackson do a commendable job in organizing the many entries and letters that Adolf wrote throughout his mission. There are small guides to direct the reader between corresponding