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Building Bridges

**How A Minority Culture Speaks To Itself And Others
Through Historical Fiction.**

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2006



Massey University

Research Supervision Statement

Date: 23/2/06

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to state that the research carried out for the masters thesis/research report entitled

was completed by *Building Bridges: Analysing how a minority culture speaks to itself + others through historic fiction*
in the School of *Social + Cultural Studies*.

Massey University, New Zealand, under my direct supervision. This thesis material has not been used for any other degree. I played the following part in the preparation of the thesis:

I have overseen the research + development of this thesis.

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Building Bridges

How a minority culture speaks to itself and others through historical fiction.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in English
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Auckland, New Zealand

Pamela June Reid

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the role of historical fiction in the development of a minority culture with particular reference to how this genre enables the culture to speak to its own members and also to the wider community. Key issues which have created separatism are addressed and also how the sociality of the culture is portrayed. It studies how historical fiction writing, in combining historical data with fictional characters, presents a wealth of perspectives on significant events in the history of minority cultures.

An examination of four works of historical fiction, written by contemporary Latter-day Saint authors will evaluate their effectiveness in: cohering a minority social group, presenting key issues which have induced separatism, explaining a shared value system and spirituality, presenting current problems in a coded form and enhancing general community awareness of historical detail and appreciation of doctrinal and spiritual themes.

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Introduction

Why Historical Fiction?

Several years ago I read a series of historical novels entitled 'The Work and the Glory' written by Gerald Lund. The total of nine volumes depicted the story of the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as seen through the eyes of a fictional family – the Benjamin Steed family – from the early 1820's to the late 1840's.

Although I had always been interested in the factual history of the Latter-day Saint Church, this fictional series opened my eyes to the variety of individual struggles that a relatively misunderstood religious minority group had experienced. The author was able to present historical facts that I was already acquainted with, within the family and community context of the time, so that I could better visualise the personal torments and triumphs that could possibly have taken place.

I began to conduct more personal research into some of the events described within the novels and marvelled at how Lund had incorporated so many authentic details into a fictional story. I also found others who had read all or part of the series of *The Work and the Glory*, and their reactions were consistent with mine. All expressed that they had learned so much more historical detail, not only from the fictional text but also from the extensive footnotes that Lund provided to differentiate historical fact and fictional embellishment.

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I then became enthused about researching and writing the history of the Latter-day Saint church in New Zealand. As

I had already successfully written and published several contemporary novels for both children and adults, I decided that this history should be presented as a series of historical fiction novels. I believed that such a series would be more palatable to the younger generation, reinforce the faith and belief of the older generations and provide an easier and more informative read for those in the broader community who were not Latter-day Saints.

My interest also led me into academic enquiry. I decided to research, as a possible thesis topic, the presence of and modes of portrayal of Latter-day Saint characterisation and beliefs within New Zealand fictional literature since the church was first established in 1850. I believed this would give me a better indication as to how to focus my own work. However, this initial research revealed that although there is a wealth of personal journal records and some thesis literature on the factual history of the church, there is a scarcity of fictional literature, particularly by Latter-day Saint authors. In fact, I was the only LDS writer to have attempted fiction!

I also, at this stage, felt it was important to contrast the depiction of the Latter-day Saints with other religious groups. I looked at some examples from Jewish, Catholic and Anglican writers and from minority groups including the Seventh Day Adventist and Brethren churches. In the process I found myself drawn to understanding how the minority groups expressed themselves within their own culture. For the most part, any literature within the culture was based on biographical accounts of spiritual experiences and expression of doctrine. Little emphasis was placed on fiction. An exception seemed to be the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which has internally produced published works of fiction relating to the culture since the late nineteenth century. There has also been a marked increase in the publication of fictional literature in the last twenty years. These have been

largely books written by Latter-day Saints for Latter-day Saints although an increasing number of Latter-day Saint authors have published in the general market, particularly in science fiction.

In conducting this research I also read a contemporary historical novel entitled 'Belief', published by Stephanie Johnson in 2000. Stephanie Johnson was writing fictionally but drawing on some personal and family history though she is not herself an LDS author. This novel chronicled a man's search for religious truth and details his involvement with the 'Mormon' church in New Zealand in the late nineteenth century. I was frustrated by numerous misrepresentations of basic Latter-day Saint beliefs and social practices. It occurred to me several times during the reading of the novel that if this was the only source of information for a reader then this would be their distorted perception of the culture. I once again determined to write my own books so that a more accurate representation would be available. In doing so, I realised that I was actually deciding to write these books as a form of response to a wider social issue - that of endeavouring to bridge gaps in cultural understanding.

I became even more convinced about the ability of historical fiction to fuel greater interest in history and also provide for increased understanding and respect between cultural groups and between generations. The course of my thesis began to take a different path. I decided to alter the field of my study to analyse works of historical fiction by a variety of contemporary Latter-day Saint authors, not only in New Zealand, in order to determine how effectively they presented their own culture to a relatively uninformed audience. I wanted to see if their work offered satisfactory explanations of basic beliefs and did it also serve to validate those people already within the culture. I also needed to determine how extensively they had

researched and how effectively they placed fictional characters within a believable historical context?

As I researched, I came to realise that in writing about the literary representations of the culture, an author needs to appreciate what factors have contributed most to the actual formation and evolution of the culture and how these elements can best be portrayed. This study led to the recognition of a series of factors that are common to many minority groups. Apart from obvious physical and racial similarities, the key unifying factors are usually based on faith in a common belief system, commitment to living the principles of the group, and the shared persecution and trauma that often results from this determination. Whereas I had been in danger of becoming too subjective about a personal religion, I now saw that the Latter-day Saint culture was actually highly representative of other minority cultures. Again the question arose as to how effectively these unifying elements of a minority culture were expressed through historical fiction.

I had also taught Creative Writing and Life History Writing for several years and had been made aware of the individual's need to record their personal trials and triumphs. Many were able to express these creatively and coherently but many, although they had the desire, were physically and emotionally unable to record them. In effect, the earlier traumas in their lives were what they most wanted to write about but were the very issues that prevented them writing. Originally, this realisation had prompted enrolment in postgraduate papers studying the expression of trauma in literature. I now began to see the relevance of these studies to my thesis topic, of how a minority can express this personal and collective trauma through literature.

In addition, I realised that in personal history writing, the historical accounts produced were still a very myopic representation of events. However, the more individuals I encountered who recorded their memoirs in my classes, the more I began to build a composite picture of similar periods of time from all their different perspectives. This created a greater appreciation within me for the 'bigger picture'. This further substantiated the theory that the successful contemporary historical novelist could weave a variety of historical accounts within the framework of a fictional community or family and thereby provide the reader with a potentially more readable and enlightening text than by reading (or not) numerous volumes of purely historical content.

Another element that I believe serves to heighten the reader-response to historical fiction is the inclusion of the 'romantic' element. This is not to suggest that classic historical fiction be grouped with bodice-bursting cliché novels. Rather, the intent is to recognise the basic elements of building and maintaining relationships within family and community. The author can then use the elements of love and romantic attraction as a catalyst to the weaving of the lives of individuals from different spheres. This process naturally provides the heightened conflict and opposition that is conducive to the literary success of a novel.

The convergence of these various fields of literary interest – of fiction writing, historical writing, personal history or life writing, romance writing and writing for children, has resulted in the formulation of this thesis topic with areas of investigation involving minority cultural groups but especially relating to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Research Parameters

Benedict Anderson is well known for linking the emergence of the 'imagined political community' of the nation with the novel's emergence as a dominant literary form. (*Imagined Communities*, 6. He argues that 'fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity that is the hallmark of modern nations.' (*The Spectre of Comparisons*, 334) Using The Church of Jesus Christ as a case study, this thesis then explores the related question of what role historical fiction, as a literary medium, plays in cohering a minority social group. It examines the works of historical fiction by four LDS writers, investigating how they actively assist in remembering a shared past, presenting current problems in a coded form and explaining and enhancing a shared value system or spirituality. It will also evaluate how texts can locate the cultural system within the boundaries and frameworks of a wider society.

General texts and contemporary journal articles on fiction and historical writing and sociological theories have provided the basis for critical analysis of historical fiction works by the four contemporary Latter-day Saint Authors. In addition to Benedict Anderson's perception of the imagined community as a basis for the evaluation of the Latter-day Saints as a minority culture, the work of Antze and Lambek (1996) provides for an analysis of the unifying effect of trauma and memory on first a personal then a shared community level. Then building on the role of trauma as a unifying element, Judith Herman (1997) suggests that the process for recovery from trauma is also a platform for evaluating how a minority culture can generate healing and growth, while Dori Laub's (1992) work on bearing witness as a vehicle for enhancing learning and progression further substantiates the role of literature in cohering a culture.

While these authors provide the broader sociological framework for analysis of a minority culture, there is also response literature by academics which include Teryl Givens' (2004) work on the challenge to mainstream religions from minority religious groups, specifically the Latter-day Saints. Michael Austin (1994) also provides a critical perception of Latter-day Saint literature and academic discourse and its effectiveness in portraying the culture.

Using these main texts as a basis for evaluation, this thesis analyses *Praise to the Man* by Gerald Lund (1991-2000), *A Vow to Keep* by Susan Evans McCloud (1988), *Light and Truth* by Darryl Harris (2003), and *A Child Named Faith* by Margaret Yorgason (1999).

- Gerald Lund writes for the adult Latter-day Saint market with a heavy emphasis on historical and doctrinal accuracy.
- Susan Evans McCloud writes historical romance involving Latter-day Saints in America and England during the late 19th century and World War Two, thus focusing on the universality of the growth of the church.
- Darryl Harris is a genealogist who has self-published his family history in the form of an historical novel in an attempt to make it more readable by a general audience.
- Margaret Yorgason has written sociological texts and children's books for the general public with a focus on Latter-day Saint values and principles.

I selected these four works based on their applicability and to see how successfully each author presented a similar historical time frame in the slightly different sub-genres.

Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises six chapters:

Chapter One introduces the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons or Latter-day Saints) as a case study for exemplifying the differentiating characteristics of a minority culture. It analyses the history of the culture and how shared beliefs and experiences have assisted in cohering the group nationally and internationally.

Chapter Two studies the evolution of the Latter-day Saint publishing industry with reference to how print media has facilitated the growth of the culture and especially the resulting development of historical fiction.

Chapter three presents the sociological concept of a minority culture and how it remains unified through a shared belief system and experiences of a traumatic nature.

Chapter Four analyses the works of four contemporary Latter-day Saint historical fiction writers and studies how they have explained the concept of faith with respect to a cultural adherence to key doctrinal issues which differentiate the Latter-day Saint culture.

Chapter Five then analyses how these authors have portrayed the basic principles of the Latter-day church as outlined in a primary statement of belief, the Articles of Faith.

Chapter Six evaluates the authors' use of other literary methods, including characterisation and use of historical data, in their presentation of historical fiction

The Conclusion summarises the effectiveness of each of the four authors in meeting the criteria outlined in the thesis abstract, involving bridging gaps in understanding between cultures outside of the Latter-day Saint community and between generations within the culture.

Chapter One

In the World But Not of It

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a Minority Culture.

Count Leo Tolstói, (1828 – 1910) Russian novelist and philosopher, is noted as saying, in an observation about the Mormon Church¹, that if Mormonism was able to endure, unmodified, until it reached the third and fourth generation, it was destined to become a great power in the world. (Richards 412 - 413)²

When a minority culture that is founded solely on a shared belief system can ‘endure, unmodified’ through generations, there must be a number of contributing factors to that growth and durability. The purpose of this thesis is to analyse how that belief system can be perpetuated through generations and communicated to those outside the culture through literature and, in particular, works of historical fiction.

The history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church) will be the basis for the study of how the belief system, doctrine and principles of minority culture can survive, unmodified, through generations. This thesis will then review the role of literature within the Latter-day Saint culture with particular reference to works of

¹ The ‘Mormon’ Church is a nickname for the religious organization known formally as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The church gained this label because of the text, The Book of Mormon - regarded by the members of the church as an accompaniment to the Bible and a second witness to Jesus Christ. For the purposes of this thesis, the formal name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be shortened to Latter-day Saint church or the members referred to as Latter-day Saints. The term ‘Mormon church’ will be used only as presented in historical context.

² Richards records the incident described to Thomas J Yates on meeting with Dr. Andrew D. White, U.S. Ambassador to Germany. On learning that Yates a member of the Latter-day Saint church, Dr. Andrews recounted an earlier meeting with Count Leo Tolstói in 1892 where they had discussed world religions. Count Tolstói described the Mormon Church as the “American” church and made his prediction about its potential growth and power if it was able to “endure, unmodified” for three or four generations.

contemporary historical fiction, to ascertain how a minority culture can utilise historical fiction in bridging gaps in understanding of beliefs and practices.

A minority culture can be only one person amongst any larger group who do not share the same background or heritage and the Latter-day Saint church can definitely trace its origins to a minority of one. A boy, Joseph Smith, was only fourteen years old, when, in 1823, he professed to have actually seen God, the Father, and Jesus Christ in person, as two distinct personages.

The wider community in the eastern American states at the time were in a condition of religious revival and conflict, but Joseph Smith's claim that the divine visitors had told him not to join any of the sects, for they "draw near me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (The Pearl of Great Price 49)³ led to immediate ostracism for Joseph and his family from their community. Because of his family's belief in his account and their willingness to support him, the minority of one became a minority group of ten.

Despite persecution, Joseph continued in his quest after announcing that he had been visited by a heavenly messenger. Successive visits over a period of four years finally resulted, in 1827, in Joseph's acquisition of a set of golden plates from that same messenger.

Hieroglyphic writing on the plates necessitated Joseph's translation of the text into English which resulted in manuscript of scriptural content entitled *The Book of Mormon*, so named for the principle compiler of the ancient record.

³ References to works of scripture (The Standard Works) used within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be as follows: The Bible, The Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great Price and The Doctrine and Covenants.

While in possession of the plates of gold, Joseph had occasion to show them to a select group of men on two different occasions. The first group of three men witnessed they had seen the plates as shown them by an angel. The second group of eight men witnessed that they had seen and ‘hefted’ or held the plates while with Joseph Smith. (Book of Mormon 2) These men shared their testimonies of the plates and the subsequent translations with their families and friends. During 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was formally organised and the minority swelled to a membership of two hundred and eighty people by the end of the year. (Almanac 632)⁴

Concurrent with the official organisation of the church was the securing of a copyright and the subsequent publication of the Book of Mormon manuscript, some “five thousand copies for the sum of three thousand dollars”. (History of the Church 71) With these in hand, an active proselyting⁵ programme was introduced and men were despatched to spread the gospel message throughout the eastern states and Canada and toward the more unsettled mid-western states. The availability of the printed word was again enabling the principles and doctrines to be duplicated and spread to other areas and communities just as the publication of the Bible in Europe had encouraged religious upheaval once the common people had access to it.

Wherever they went, the missionaries met with mixed reactions. Some people welcomed them with open arms and entire congregations joined the church, while this very act stirred up violent contention amongst other sectors of the communities they visited. Despite

⁴ The Church Almanac is an annual compilation of statistics and information about the worldwide leadership and membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

⁵ Proselyting refers to a form of missionary activity where missionaries actively seek potential converts to instruct them about the doctrines and beliefs of a religion.

frequent and often serious physical persecution, the numbers continued to grow and by 1836 the minority numbers had reached nearly 9000. (Almanac 632)

Constant persecution saw the movement of most of the Latter-day Saints from New York to Ohio beginning in 1831 where they settled in Kirtland and built their first temple. This aroused the public wrath and they were driven further west to Missouri where “nearly all the Latter-day Saints were from the eastern States while the Missourians were from the South. The Missourians feared that the ‘Mormons’ would increase and take from them their political domination”. (Smith 132) Thus the threat became religious and political, and persecution intensified dramatically, resulting in an ‘extermination’ order against the Latter-day Saints. The effect of this order resulted in some 15,000 Latter-day Saints being threatened by mobs and ejected from the state in the middle of winter, leaving property and goods to the value of over two million dollars.

As a result of this persecution, Joseph Smith counselled the Saints to keep meticulous journal accounts of the losses they incurred and the injustices exercised against them, including the names of any individuals known. The admonition was even included in modern scripture:

Keep a history, and a general church record of all things that transpire in Zion, and . . . also their manner of life, their faith, and works . . . (Doctrine and Covenants 162)

The expelled Saints moved to the neighbouring state of Illinois and established a settlement on an area of marshy swampland. They called the town Nauvoo and, over the next eight years, worked as a community to establish a flourishing city that became a cultural and economic focus for Illinois.

This period of prosperity enabled the progress of international missionary work, particularly to Britain, and resulted in large increases in the number of converts. This growth stimulated by the influx of British Saints resulted in a deepening hatred towards the Saints fuelled by the Missourians from across the border. The culmination of this aggression resulted in the arrest and subsequent martyrdom of both Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum.

To the confusion of their enemies, the loss of Joseph only served to strengthen and unify the Latter-day Saint community. Despite continued persecution and another expulsion from the state of Illinois, they rallied under the leadership of Brigham Young and began the fabled trek west that is famous in American and church history for the hardships endured and loss of life. In July, 1847, the first Saints arrived in the barren desert wastes of the Salt Lake valley in Utah and began to establish the headquarters of the church where it has remained to the present day.

Thus the minority of one grew to a community of over 40,000 – a community that had been strengthened by shared traumatic experiences and subsequent spiritual ‘miracles’ that appeared to only strengthen faith and conviction.

By 1893, during the forty years it took to complete the building of the Salt Lake temple, the church population increased to over 200,000 with Saints located all over the world. They were bound together by common belief, a shared knowledge of the Book of Mormon and an intensive education programme that reinforced identical doctrines and programmes both locally and internationally.

It becomes readily apparent that Benedict Anderson's concept of an 'imagined' community (1991) finds literal application within the Latter-day Saint church as members in numerous areas around the world could visualise thousands of their counterparts living the same principles and practices and be strengthened by that image.

There has always been a strong emphasis on the use of printed matter being used to inform and unify the Latter-day Saint community. The very core of Latter-day Saint belief and practice is based on a single volume of literature – the Book of Mormon, the translation of an ancient, hieroglyphic scriptural record. Early critics of the Mormon faith condemned the work as pure fiction, yet the Latter-day Saints were devout in proclaiming its divinity and authenticity as a verification of the Bible.

From the first publication of the Book of Mormon, printed material has been used by church leaders to keep the Latter-day Saint population informed of doctrinal input as well as social and political activity. As the Saints continued in a seemingly never-ending process of gathering, dispersing then reuniting in their trek to the Western states, two publications, the *Times and Seasons* and the *Millennial Star*, figured prominently as the main sources of continuing revelation and inspiration as well as inspirational fictional short stories.

Many of the foundation members of the Latter-day Saint church in America were highly educated, spiritual leaders from other religious denominations in the Eastern States. They brought with them a strong, educational heritage that permeated the new faith and its followers. However, subsequent converts arriving in huge numbers from the British Isles and Europe were largely drawn from the working classes and were not as learned. With the establishment of permanent residence in Salt Lake City in the 1850s, the construction of

schools and implementation of education for males and females became a priority for church leaders. Simultaneously, the immediate production of newspapers and magazines for different age-groups provided the literary foundation for information and education.

Beginning with the publication of the Book of Mormon, the literary focus continued and in every settlement established on the movement west and in missionary endeavours, one of the first priorities was the establishment of the printing press. Antagonistic groups recognised this factor and during persecution, the immediate focus was the destruction of the printing press.

It is interesting to note that among the supplies of 'essential' provisions carried aboard one shipload of migrating Saints were "farming implements of all kinds - - - text books on various subjects and many other volumes. The press and type on which the *Prophet* was printed, and sufficient paper - - - as would be needed to establish a new colony." (Smith 331)

Another aspect of this literary tradition was in response to Joseph Smith's instruction to keep personal accounts of the trials experienced. Journals of the Latter-day Saint pioneers often revealed a simplistic recounting of every-day life and a naive acceptance of circumstances that were traumatic but usually unavoidable. Generally, little thought was given to the narrative flow of the entries, only to recording the essence of the living conditions and the effect on the spirituality of the individuals.

As to be expected, a father's journal would depict those things that affected his functioning as the head of the household, the mother's journal would reflect on her concerns for her

family and both would differ from a teenager's or child's journal that would tend to reflect on those things that held significance for a younger person who held fewer responsibilities.

Cumulatively, the co-ordinated study of these journals has yielded a rich social history for historians endeavouring to garner the broadest picture of this culture and has made the Latter-day Saint history extremely well-documented on a personal and a communal level. The existence of these different forms of records also substantiates the recognition of the Latter-day Saint church as a typical minority culture, conforming to the definitions previously posed in chapter one. With the combination of a shared value system and spiritual identity forming the basis for unity, this cohesion as a minority culture has been enhanced by the experiencing of traumatic events (Laub 1991) and the ability to transmit these memories to other individuals and to successive generations (Antze and Lambek 1996). Literature produced within the culture has been a key factor in promoting the community identity and has also facilitated the sustained growth of satellite communities over a wider geographic area that can retain an image of the wider 'imagined' community (Anderson 1991).

However, as the time frame between these foundational events and the present increases, how can this appreciation of the past and adherence to principles be maintained? The survival of a minority culture relies on the introduction of new members either through natural increase or by conversion to their beliefs. Questions on doctrines and practices must be answered satisfactorily to ensure continuing adherence to principles. Reasons must be found to justify living within the minority, to be in the world but not of it.

Can works of fiction adequately assist in answering these inquiries and more specifically, can the Latter-day Saint fiction industry adequately address the age old issues that have prompted separatism and persecution?

Chapter Two

Evolution of an Industry

Development of the Latter-day Saint Publishing Industry

Historically, since the first publicised exploits of a young Joseph Smith in the early 1820s, and the ensuing growth of the Latter-day Saint church under his leadership, there has been consistent scepticism about, and persecution heaped upon the ‘Mormon’ community. In literature, this fascination with the unexplained nature of the church was, for the first century or so of its existence, particularly manifest in popular fiction.

Typically, the narratives largely focussed on very dramatic characterisation of sinister, rough, and often brutal polygamists who suppressed their women and used God as the excuse for unacceptable behaviour. In over two hundred early novels and fictional narratives written by those who were not members of the faith, Mormons were portrayed as the typical villains, even being assigned distinctive physical characteristics that led to their categorisation as a distinctive ethnic group rather than a religion.

Teryl Givens (2004) provides this representation of the ‘typical Mormon’ given by Dr. Samuel Cartwright and Professor C.G. Forgey in a meeting of the New Orleans Academy of Sciences in 1861.

Relying largely upon an earlier Government report, they outlined the physiological features of the new Mormon “racial type”:

“This condition is shown by . . . the large proportion of albuminous and gelatinous types of constitution; the yellow, sunken, cadaverous visage; the greenish-coloured eyes; the thick, protruberant lips; the low forehead; the light, yellowish hair, and the lank, angular person, constitute an appearance so characteristic of the new race . . . as to distinguish them at a glance.”

Given the extreme physical conditions that many of the early Saints were forced to endure through persecution, it is little wonder that they developed what appeared to be a cadaverous visage. However, in a country that was officially defending religious freedom, it was also more politically appropriate for government officials to defend their purging the state of a potentially dangerous ethnic group than to be seen to be suppressing a religious minority.

For a large part of the nineteenth century, the Mormons became the focus of political and public perplexity. Their religious and social diligence was inexplicable to the general community and subsequently became the subject of a whole new genre of anti-Mormon fictional literature. The main theme of these narratives revolved around the supposedly hypnotic ability of charismatic church leaders to lure away innocent individuals and subject them to brutal treatment from which they would never be able to escape of their own free will.

Interestingly, the preponderance of early popular fictional literature about the Mormons was universally written by those who did not have an intimate knowledge of the beliefs and principles of the faith. Female novelists of the 1850s, especially the wives of ministers of other religions, exploited the popular fears held by the community at large. Metta Victoria Fuller published *Mormon Wives* in 1856, which was then republished in 1860 as *Lives of*

Female Mormons. Resulting from the growing public fascination with the Mormons, the book was republished many times in Europe and translated into several languages.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in his first fiction mystery story, *A Study in Scarlet* (1888), pitted a vengeance driven lover against a group of Mormons who had taken the woman he loved as one of their wives. The ensuing chase for revenge takes the characters through Europe, England and inevitably, the state of Utah where a detailed outline of the Mormon community is given, information supposedly derived from numerous travel documents of the time.

However, the concept of the 'Mormon menace' in popular fiction was peculiarly attractive to readers and early twentieth century novelists continued to take the lead of Doyle, with Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Dynamiter* (1885), treating the characters as threatening and dangerous, and Mark Twain in *Roughing It* (1872) and Jules Verne in *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1864) viewing them more satirically and as objects of humour.

So, the question must be asked, how did the early Latter-day Saints respond to this blatantly hostile treatment of their identity and beliefs? To appreciate their apparent lack of response in a general community sense, there needs to be an analysis of the developing role of literature within the Latter-day Saint community both historically and contemporarily.

The very core of Latter-day Saint belief and practice was based on a single volume of literature – the *Book of Mormon*, an ancient, hieroglyphic scriptural record translated into English by the young Joseph Smith. Early critics of the Mormon faith condemned the work as pure fiction, yet the Latter-day Saints were devout in proclaiming its divinity and authenticity as a verification of the Bible.

Since the development of movable type in the fifteenth century, printing had enabled the dissemination of information to the masses and, just as this process had enabled religious and social reformation in Europe it also facilitated the publication of the *Book of Mormon* in 1830 and the spreading of its message through America and England and Europe.

From the first publication of the Book of Mormon, printed material was used by church leaders to keep the Latter-day Saint population informed of doctrinal input as well as social and political activity. As the Saints continued in a seemingly never-ending process of gathering, dispersing then reuniting in their trek to the Western states, two publications, the *Times and Seasons* and the *Millennial Star*, figured prominently as the main sources of continuing revelation and inspiration as well as inspirational fictional short stories.

Excellence in education and cultural pursuits was especially promoted by Brigham Young, the second president of the church following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith. Young established the first private university in Utah and encouraged the Saints to aspire to higher learning and sharing of their God-given talents. In this cultural atmosphere, study of recognised fictional classics was promoted and enjoyed by the Mormon community.

In 1888, Orson Whitney, a prominent church leader, made the statement,

“We will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own. God’s ammunition is not exhausted. His brightest spirits are held in reserve for the latter times. In God’s name and by his help we will build up a literature whose top shall touch heaven, though its foundations may now be low in the earth.” (Whitney 18)

However, this process of cultivating peculiarly Latter-day Saint literature was hesitant, as Kenneth Hunsaker describes in his dissertation on mid-western literature:

The first pro-Mormon response was slow to come, but in 1898 Nephi Anderson published *Added Upon . . .* (a novel) written to explain the major beliefs of the Mormons . . . for Mormon readers, or for those who may be sympathetic to the theology of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (1998)

The criticism has been levelled at Nephi Anderson that, though his work in *Added Upon*, and eight subsequent novels was heavy on doctrine, they were noticeably lighter on development of character and plot.

At the turn of the century, Susa Young Gates, daughter of Brigham Young, became the first recognised Latter-day Saint woman novelist and publisher. She was very well-educated, attending first the Brigham Young University and then the nationally recognised Harvard University. Commissioned by her father to provide inspirational short stories for the youth of the church, she also published *John Steven's Courtship* (1909) the first fictional novel directed at the youth market.

In 1939, Vardis Fisher, a proclaimed atheist who had been raised within a Mormon environment in Idaho, published the Harper prize-winning historical fiction novel, *Children of God* which many people, both inside and outside of the church recognised as a definitive work on the history of the Latter-day Saints. In recognition of the pervading influence of polygamy within works of fiction, Fisher chose to finish his works at the time of the 1890

Manifesto which proclaimed the official cessation of the practice of polygamy⁶. He saw this event as the birth of modern Mormonism and many readers have since also recognised this time as the “literary birth of Mormon novels”. (Hunsaker 1998)

In 1887, in Salt Lake City, George Q. Cannon, a respected member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles⁷ of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, founded his own company determined to publish literature that was representative of the Latter-day Saint culture and of an “uplifting nature”. The business included a retail bookstore and a mail-order division which marketed the books.

Cannon and five of his sons were involved in the writing and publishing of the *Deseret News*, the main Latter-day Saint newspaper and all of the books published by the company were printed on the *Deseret News* presses. It is not known exactly how many books were actually published by Cannon and Sons, but the establishment of this company marked the beginning of the publishing tradition within the Latter-day Saint market.

Subsequent to the death of George Cannon in 1901, the company, which had amalgamated with the *Deseret News* newspaper, was purchased by the Latter-day Saint church and became known as the *Deseret News Bookstore*. Eighteen years later, in 1919, the *Deseret News Bookstore* merged with the *Deseret Sunday School Union* and became the *Deseret Book*

6 According to the Lord’s law of marriage, it is lawful that a man have only one wife at a time, unless by revelation the Lord commands plurality of wives in the new and everlasting covenant . . . In the early days of this dispensation (period of time), as part of the promised restitution of all things, the Lord revealed the principle of plural marriage to the Prophet (Joseph Smith) . . . Later, the Prophet and leading brethren were commanded to enter into the practice, which they did in all virtue and purity of heart despite constant animosity . . . Plural marriage was openly taught and practiced until the year 1880. At that time conditions were such that the Lord by revelation, withdrew the command to continue the practice, and President Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto directing it cease. (McConkie, 579)

7 The First Presidency, consisting of the current Prophet and two counsellors is the supreme governing body of the Church. If, for a time, there is no First Presidency then equal in authority and power to them is a council of twelve men known as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Their duty is to preach the gospel to the world and to be living witnesses of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Company, the name by which it is known today. It is wholly owned by the Deseret Management Company, which is the parent company for a conglomeration of business enterprises owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Today, the literature published by the Deseret Book Company is still primarily directed to a Latter-day Saint audience and, as such, largely reflects the doctrinal and spiritual values of the culture. The emphasis has been on works that are non-fiction and 'true-life' inspirational pieces. However, during the last twenty five years, Deseret Book Company has acquired several other companies and expanded their range of products into works of fiction and entertainment media, especially a new LDS cultural phenomenon - movies.

Deseret Book published its first contemporary fiction novel in 1979 but the fiction market really exploded with their publication of Gerald Lund's *The Work and the Glory* series in 1990. This set of nine historical novels depicting the fictional family of Benjamin Steed, views the early years of growth of the Latter-day Saint church through close family connections with the Prophet, Joseph Smith and his family.

Lund's historical novels have now sold over four million copies and are undoubtedly the forerunners of LDS fiction and especially historical fiction. Since the release of Lund's series, sales of Latter-day Saint fiction publications have escalated dramatically. Shauna Humphries, then associate editor of Covenant Communications, the largest private publisher of Latter-day Saint literature estimated that fiction accounts for more than half of their total sales. (Humphries 2004)

Covenant Communications was established in 1958 with the sole purpose of producing word-for-word narration of the scriptures. By 1985, printed materials had become an increasingly important part of their product line. Their determination has been to:

Find and develop authors who can make a positive contribution to the lives of church members and select material that enriches the lives of the readers, makes the reader stop and think, provides a moral and spiritual 'lift' and will help increase their testimony of the principles of the gospel. (Humphries 2005)

Covenant publishers have noted a change in preferred content in the last five years, from the formulaic romance to content that is more suspenseful and has a greater human interest factor. More recently there has been a surge in interest in historical fiction with the successful publication of *Till the Boys Come Home* by Jerry Bowman which presents a World War Two story of men from a small Utah town.

However, with such an extensive and comprehensive collection of records kept by the early Latter-day Saints, the question could be asked as to why there is a need for a fictionalisation of their history? The answer seems to lie in the continuing global expansion of the church and the increasing generational differences that inevitably bring about a distancing from personal experiences. Although Utah has long been seen as the 'hub' of the Mormon church, in the last fifty years since World War Two, expansion has seen huge numbers of Latter-day Saints settling throughout North America and in the last twenty years, the most startling growth has taken place outside of continental North America. Where many Utah Saints previously have a firm knowledge of their pioneer heritage, newly converted members of the

church and those settling far from their extended families are not as aware of the enduring stories of faith and courage that permeate Latter-day Saint history.

Works of historical fiction by authors such as Lund and Dean Hughes's historical series *Children of the Promise* and *Hearts of the Children* serve to provide memorable glimpses into the past that new and old members of the church alike can appreciate. Unprecedented sales of millions of Lund's books make him the undisputed leader in historical fiction sales but Hughes follows closely with his depictions of Latter-day Saint families enduring the years of World War Two and then the 'Sixties'.

Latter-day Saint publishers find that authors' fidelity to actuality and reality provides a fascinating insight into history. The reader is both entertained and educated in the details of history while experiencing faith-promoting experiences that they can relate to within the parameters of Latter-day Saint belief. Gerald Lund has intimated that historical detail is what breathes life into his characters and it is his role to present them in such a way that they can tell their story in a way that will edify and uplift the reader.

One of the things I often remind people of when they tell me the influence it's had . . . is that I'm only the storyteller. The story is what gives the whole series its power, to know that this is how God worked His work, that these were real people who went through these terrible sacrifices and demonstrated such incredible faith . . . the story of the Restoration has all the elements of great drama . . . It (the series) has really reached a different audience in some ways, or reached the same audience in different ways. (Lund 2005)

Likewise, Dean Hughes expresses:

Fiction has its power. Perceptions and emotions of imaginary characters can be understood more completely than we ever understand each other, and these perceptions can recreate a feel for history in a way that is rare in a history book . . .

But careless fiction can also distract. That's why I include many perspectives. I try to create characters who differ in their views and values, and by doing so, bring a realistic complexity to the time I'm writing about. (Hughes 2001)

There is no doubt that the works of these two writers has set a standard of attention to meticulous historical detail within a fictional context that contemporary Latter-day Saint writers would advisedly emulate.

Chapter Three

Lonely in a Crowd

Trends in Socialisation in Minority Cultures

There are few people who have not experienced the sensation of being lonely in a crowd or a minority of one amongst a larger group. It may be as the academic individual amongst a group of sports-minded people. It may be as the pale-skinned, blonde haired person amongst a group of black-haired, darker-skinned people. It may be as the childless woman amongst a group of mothers.

Whatever the criteria for singularity, if the position is unable to be altered then the individual who is in the minority usually finds a way of justifying their uniqueness or building an accepting relationship with the larger group. Personal observations have indicated that when an individual exhibiting similar characteristics, dispositions or beliefs joins the larger group, the two individuals often support each other. As the process continues and more individuals unite together, they then begin to develop a separate identity that further distinguishes them from the predominant communal group of which they are still a part.⁸

Unfortunately, on a broader level, as the smaller group defines and asserts itself, they may be subjected to differential treatment by the larger community. In some instances, the attempts by the dominant group to maintain its controlling status are expressed in social or physical discrimination and in extreme cases, subjugation that is traumatizing for the minority group.

⁸ These are from personal observations of dynamics among pre-schoolers, university students, primary school, creative writing workshop participants and religious groups.

Ironically, shared trauma also seems to be one of the most significantly binding links in cohering a minority group.

Michael Lambek and Paul Antze (1996) in their theoretical discourses on trauma, contend that, “remembering trauma may be personally empowering and sometimes leads to collective organising. The inscription of trauma narratives may be a necessary, sufficient and compelling means of establishing recognition.” (xxiv) In other words, discriminatory practices by a majority group, which are designed to undermine and dissipate a minority culture, might often produce the opposite effect and increase their unity.

Where individuals are subject to injustice, they are usually powerless to change their circumstances even when given the opportunity to respond or retaliate. However, when there is collective injustice there is also collective potential to combine recollection and retaliation on a grander scale. In these situations it is generally necessary for survival to have an unquestioning sense of identity with others within the minority.

This process of identification is based on the minority group’s ability to maintain its core beliefs and practices while clearly defining the reasons for their differences from the wider community. It becomes vital to the group to stimulate memories of the injustice or of how the community triumphed in order to heighten resolve and dedication. Lambek and Antze assert that, “When identity is not in question, neither is memory” (xxii). Thus, the importance of remembering is about recreating an event in the mind of both the person who has experienced it and those who need to know about it.

However, historical accuracy is often sacrificed in order to instil a greater degree of allegiance between the minority members. Each story remembered is only as good or as accurate as the teller's ability to recall or interpret their perspective of the event but the accumulation of a number of stories reinforcing each other creates an identity. The minority then becomes a community bound together by shared experiences.

Benedict Anderson has suggested that a community, especially one that has members living in different areas, is really an imagined entity in that:

The members (of the imagined community) - - - will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion - - - in a deep, horizontal comradeship.

(6-7)

An outstanding example of this widespread minority fellowship can be seen within the Jewish community. After centuries of being ostracized because of their race and religious beliefs, the horrors of the mass genocide in German concentration camps during World War Two at the hands of Adolf Hitler left a traumatic impression that has bound the modern generation of Jews together. Despite being a race that is scattered throughout the world, there is still the 'deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 7) that is founded on the memory of personal suffering and loss. Even though the survivors who remember are fewer in number, the process of remembering the pain unites the members of the minority and helps them stay faithful to their belief system.

At the same time there is an image of similar principles and actions propagated that enhances the feeling of belonging to the community wherever the individual is located. Members may never personally interact but the thought of others living the same way validates their personal actions. Anderson asserts that there is a “synchronic novelty of imagining substantial groups on the same trajectory . . . sharing a language and a religious faith . . . but without any great expectation of ever meeting one’s partners.” (188)

So how does a minority culture manage to ‘speak to’ itself and to others in the wider community in order to share these values and practices? It is not unusual for people who have experienced traumatic events to virtually erase them from conscious thought, conditioning themselves to forget a painful past and look only to the future. It therefore, does not take long for successive generations to forget or even acknowledge events that have originally fuelled the formation of the culture in which they exist. Judith Herman observes that, “the knowledge of horrible events periodically intrudes into public awareness but is rarely retained for long.” (Herman 2)

So if those events, which originally united a culture, have the potential to be easily forgotten or misinterpreted, how is minority culture able to keep its members enthused about its espoused principles and practices? Especially in contemporary societies, how does the older generation ‘speak to’ the younger generation who have not experienced the same traumatic beginnings?

The initial difficulty arises when people have not actually experienced an event and therefore cannot rekindle the memory in order to remind them of their purpose or uniqueness. The challenge within the minority culture lies in recreating these events in such a way that they can be remembered. According to Lambek and Antze, “as memory emerges into

consciousness, as it is externalised and increasingly objectified, it always depends on cultural vehicles for its expression” (xvii).

This dependence on “cultural vehicles” is manifested in the passing on of oral histories, the collecting of artefacts and in the use of literature and other media to record events and social processes. Historically, a minority culture would form and exist within a limited geographic area and so their ability to share the principle elements of their belief system could be passed on relatively easily by way of oral history and artefacts. However, as individuals began to travel and settle in different areas, these methods became less effective.

Benedict Anderson argues that cohesiveness came with the advent of printed books, contending that the ability to formalise beliefs and practices in printed format meant they could be passed on in an unadulterated form within the local community and also be shared with people in different areas. He reiterates the thoughts of Elizabeth Eisenstein regarding the unifying qualities of printed matter.

Printed materials encouraged silent adherence to causes whose advocates could not be located in any one parish and who addressed an invisible public from afar . . . (and therefore) Print capitalism made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves and to relate themselves to others in a profoundly different way. (Anderson 36)

Not only could a minority duplicate its belief system for its own purposes, these beliefs could also be extended to the wider community of which they were a part in an attempt for increased understanding and acceptance. Paradoxically, this process also opened up the

potential for even greater discrimination as more people felt threatened by the minority culture. Using the example of the daily newspaper and its reading by millions of people unknown to each other, Anderson solidifies this argument by coining the term 'print-language', referring to any widely distributed printed matter that coheres members of like-minded communities through the written word.

Still, especially in contemporary society, the ability to use books as a physical means of propagating principles and beliefs has been fundamental to the sustained growth of minority cultures on an international level. "They had no reason to know of one another's existence . . . but they did come to visualise in a general way, the existence of thousands and thousands like themselves, through print language" (Anderson 77).

So although mostly dominant cultures benefited from the advent of print, minority cultures gained some advantage as writers were able to use the texts as a means to present their views, or to testify, to a wider audience. This not only served to expose principles but enabled a vesting of traumatic tension often felt after being discriminated against.

In his work on the crisis of witnessing in literature, Dori Laub suggests that victims of post-traumatic stress disorder often require an appropriate audience in order to be able to remember what has been forgotten and then to move forward in their lives. He contends that in order for an individual to recreate a traumatic event, they require a "witness" who is effectively "the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed." (Laub 57) Although their presence is required in order to encourage the telling, the witness is often required to be silent to enable the individual to testify of their experiences.

Laub contends that the unwritten pages of a manuscript offer a blank screen on which to inscribe events of the past, with the unseen, non-contradicting audience functioning as the required witness to motivate the recording. Up to this point I have been evaluating the development of a minority culture in terms of different psychological and sociological theories. However, once the members of a community begin to record their stories depicting the past the analysis then needs to move to a study of the actual recording procedure.

When conflict develops between two parties, understandably, each party to the conflict has an opposing reason for participation and consequently, a differing story to relate. Given the means to record and promote these stories through printed means, it follows that there are always two sides to every story and each needs to be recorded. This thesis analyses how these differing perspectives can be portrayed and the effectiveness of purely historic records compared with works of historical fiction in bridging gaps in understanding of these events.

Those historians who endeavour to compile an accurate record of events in history are ethically bound to represent these elements as factually as possible. Through research they may be made aware of the differing motivation and arguments of each of the conflicting parties but their responsibility is to relay accurate factual details to their audience. Their job is not to persuade or take a moral stand but to give a fair account of all points of view involved in any given event.

Although the compilation of an historiographic work is based on the accurate accumulation of data from authentic materials, the effectiveness of the work lies in how well these are synthesised into a narrative which will not only stand the test of critical analysis but will

stimulate the reader to further study or increase understanding. This becomes particularly important the further we become chronologically removed from the actual event.

Changing concepts of social and environmental circumstances can distort the perception of past events if they are not well presented contextually and this necessitates the historian depicting his facts so that the reader of his history can visualise the events more clearly.

Helen Cam, in her analysis of historical novels, asserts that “the historian worth his salt can no more dispense with imagination than the creative historical novelist can dispense with facts.”(4) Merely researching and expounding history in lengthy tomes of academic argot does not necessarily make history ‘live’ for the uneducated or uninformed.

This issue assumes more importance when a minority culture needs to communicate its foundational principles to a new generation or a new listener from the wider community, who have never experienced the primary motivation or bonding. Creatively contextualising historical data becomes vital for their enhanced appreciation of the past and the belief system.

I remember an oft-quoted phrase from my childhood that stated, “Those who ignore history are destined to repeat it”. This must ring true if the audience is not able to visualise the physical setting and the resulting traumatic experiences that have occurred in the past. As their perception is heightened, so their ability to respond is increased.

Initially a form of literary escapism, fiction writing has sometimes been seen as ‘ungodly’ and as attracting people away from religious community and true belief. The prevailing feeling was that writing about people, places and events in a fictional context could distil

reality. In more recent times, however the historical novel has become recognised by both authors and readers as a powerful vehicle for stimulating an interest in history. Instead of using history as merely a backdrop, the author has the opportunity to artfully and accurately depict history so that the reader is more readily able to visualise the context and develop appreciation for the people and events.

Although some writers have recognised the potential of fiction as an effectual ‘pulpit’ from which to espouse social and religious belief, more recently, the form has taken a different route from pure doctrine and has been used to reinforce moral behaviour and spirituality, especially for the younger generation who have not experienced the past. Helen Cam asserts in her treatise on *Historical Novels* that:

The first service that the historical novelist can render the historian is to give the young a taste for history . . . when a child first begins to read or listen to a historical novel, accuracy is not of the first importance. What matters, above all, is that the story should be interesting . . . Historical novels may then stimulate the desire to know more of the past by their appeal to the romantic streak in the young reader – to his taste for the unfamiliar, the exciting, the heroic.(Cam 5 - 7)

The question then arises of whether history can be portrayed truthfully and effectively within the context of fictional novels? Unlike the historian, the novelist is allowed artistic license or the leeway to use a variety of creative devices to develop a character’s personal traits, characteristics and beliefs. By developing the character in response to the prevailing circumstance, the author is able to tailor the character’s contribution to the plot. This process is designed to appeal to the reader’s imagination and sympathies and to help them appreciate

the character and situation. Where the historian is morally compelled to present the facts, the novelist is permitted, by virtue of the expectations of their audience, to put their own interpretation on character and situations. In this respect, they have the opportunity to present a multi-dimensional perspective.

Judith Herman, in her psychological text, *Trauma and Memory* refers to this advantage of fiction writing when presenting representative case studies of post-traumatic stress.

The testimony of trauma survivors is at the heart of the book . . . the case vignettes that appear here are fictitious, each one is a composite, based on the experiences of many different patients, not just on the individual. (Herman 3)

The historical fiction writer then is compelled to research a variety of perspectives in order to create a single character that can convincingly portray a particular dimension of an event or belief. By then creating a cast of characters who interact, the author is then able to give the reader a multi-dimensional view of history. Robert Liddell reflects on the responsibilities of the fiction writer when he explores the principles of fiction writing. “What is the truth in Literature – for it is clearly not the same thing as historical truth . . . It is always an artist’s duty to tell the truth, it is never his duty to tell the whole truth; his function is to choose what truth is worth telling.” (Liddell 117)

Often, in the case of a minority culture, there are distinguishing beliefs or characteristics that serve to alienate a minority culture and it is generally ignorance about these elements that present the greatest barriers to understanding. The fiction writer has the opportunity to isolate these elements, to literally choose the truth worth telling and to present them in context and

from several different perspectives. By presenting several perspectives the reader is then given the chance to recognise their own level of comprehension and also to discover possible reactions and solutions.

Historical writing is also a way of writing about the present in a coded form, so that it portrays values via examples from the past. Trials of faith or experience may have a different historical setting but the same principles can be applied to contemporary situations while avoiding current debate. In terms of addressing contemporary issues within a minority culture, a fictional depiction of a common social theme enables the author to recognise modern issues and enable the characters to find solutions to similar problems within the minority's belief system. By literally presenting a "tried and true" formula, the reader is encouraged to identify with the character and to follow the same path of resolution. By setting a story at a time when other strands of social thinking or custom prevailed, the modern reader can recognise and sense the universality of the theme or issue being presented.

The fiction writer also has the challenge and responsibility to portray human nature effectively. Their work is not just about a portraying history because they must incorporate all the contrasting elements of personality that have contributed to the event taking place and the effects that it has had on those personalities and their resulting lifestyle.

The historical novelist with a proper respect for history has a very stiff task before him; not only must his facts and his concrete details be consistent with those established by research; but the atmosphere of belief, the attitudes and assumptions of society that he conveys must be in accordance with what is known of the mental and

emotional climate of the place and period. . . an historical novel should be both good literature and good history . . . Historians have much to thank novelists for but novelists are only repaying a debt. There is no doubt that the generally high standard of fiction today corresponds with the widening of the field of history. (Cam 8 -18)

When fiction writing is adapted to the necessarily stricter factual boundaries of historiography, the result is a blending of the mediums that supplies a narrative that makes factual detail more palatable to the reader by appealing more to the senses and emotions. The success or effectiveness of a work of historical fiction about a community must then be determined by how well it is received within that community or how it is received by the wider public. The literary skill of the author lies in presenting multiple perspectives of an event that enable comparable understanding by one who comes from within that community as opposed to an onlooker's perspective.

Fiction is one method of building bridges within and between cultures by increasing knowledge about previously unknown beliefs and principles. By accurately presenting these practices in the correct historical context and creating characters who can present a multitude of perspectives, the fiction author has the ability to enhance the degree of acceptance of the culture.

This thesis examines how this process has been undertaken in Latter-day Saint literature by reviewing four works of contemporary historical fiction and analysing how the authors have met the requirements for creating a palatable learning environment that invites identification and comprehension of the Latter-day Saint belief system.

Chapter Four

Key Issues of Differentiation.

Doctrines and Practices that Differentiate the Latter-day Saint Culture

This thesis argues that key cultural issues which have historically differentiated a minority group can be openly addressed when the origins and beliefs of the culture are presented in historical fiction. Having established that the Latter-day Saint society conforms to the hallmarks of a minority group, this study will analyse how distinguishing cultural issues such as the nature of God, the use of temples, polygamy and continuing revelation are presented in selected works of contemporary Latter-day Saint historical fiction. It will also study what literary techniques are used by the authors to effectively enable understanding of these differences.

Historically, obvious variations in fundamental religious doctrines and in aspects of lifestyle were the main reasons for Latter-day Saints being alienated from, firstly, the predominant religions found in the eastern American states and then from the mainstream, mid-western frontier culture. Initially, issues such as ‘new’ scriptures being revealed to a new prophet, Joseph Smith, were the basis for ridicule and persecution. There was also the belief that God and Jesus Christ had appeared to Joseph Smith as two separate human beings, thus threatening to disable the doctrine of the Trinity (that God, the father, Jesus, the Son and the Holy Ghost are one entity) as understood and taught within all other Christian churches at the time, except Unitarians.

However, as more people began to accept and uphold these new doctrines and affiliate themselves with the Latter-day Saint religion, the resulting communal life-style also created a distinctive cultural phenomenon. Particular issues developed regarding their polygamous practices of plural marriage and also their determination to establish a Zion community based on strict adherence to the Ten Commandments. They also planned and executed the construction of temples where ceremonies could be performed which they felt would ensure the perpetuation of families on an eternal basis. These were concepts which the larger society to which they belonged, failed to comprehend or tolerate.

These key issues include concepts and doctrines that are not only renowned for creating discrimination in the history of the culture but which are still a cause for concern or fascination to a modern audience. The challenge to an author of historical fiction is to present these elements in a well-researched historical context but to be able to construct the perspectives of the different characters in such a way as to provide answers to questions. They also need to provide enough information to bridge gaps in understanding while maintaining an interesting and entertaining narrative flow.

So, how does a modern Latter-day Saint author address these issues such as prophecy, polygamy and continuing revelation in such a way as to communicate them positively to a disbelieving society while also strengthening the conviction of those principles within a new generation of the minority culture? This thesis analyses the works of contemporary Latter-day Saint authors, Margaret Yorgason, Susan Evans McCloud, Darryl Harris and Gerald Lund, who among others, have written historical novels set in the same time frame of the mid to late nineteenth century. While they all place their stories within the historical and social context of the emerging Latter-day Saint religion, each author offers a variety of different perspectives and literary techniques. While Yorgason writes for children, McCloud

uses the romance/mystery genre, Harris clothes personal family history as fiction and Lund writes the epic historical novel for adults.

Margaret Yorgason has written *A Girl named Faith* as a children's novel, directed to readers in the 7 – 12 year old age group. Set in the American mid-west, the story is about Faith, a young girl who is starting a new life on the wild, unsettled prairie along with her father and grandmother. Her mother has died during the trek west, so Faith's adventures are based around adjusting to a new life in many different ways. Apart from her family, her best friends are a boy named Will and an Indian girl named Chenoa. As befitting a children's book, the chapters are only 8 to 10 pages long and each has a separate story contributing to the central theme of nurturing the principle virtue of "Faith".

Darryl Harris has made *Light and Truth* the first of a series of four novels in which he portrays the lives of a group of individuals from the English working class in the mid nineteenth century. A devoted family historian, Harris had done considerable research into his own family history in the Gloucester/Herefordshire area of England before making his decision to write his ancestors into a historical novel.

"I realize that it is unusual to write a novel about real people. But they were long deceased and that became the beauty of it. I could recreate them as my feelings dictated. I could shape my characters not only based on their suspected physical attributes but also their sociological and psychological dimensions." (Harris vii)

Harris's intention was also to recount the process involved in the conversion of his ancestors to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints while detailing the initial missionary work

done in the Gloucester/Hereford area – an area of particular historical importance to the Latter-day Saints.

Susan Evans McCloud uses Victorian England as the setting for a novel about a young family of six children who, upon being orphaned, face the dilemma of being separated and adopted by different families. The ensuing trauma brings forth a vow from the oldest brother, Percy, that he will reunite them all one day. The classic historical background of child labour and hard times in the coal mines during the Industrial Revolution in England in the 1850's is merely the starting point as McCloud weaves many historical facts into the process of following the lives of the six children before they are finally reunited some ten years later.

Percy's conversion to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ has a profound effect on his resolve to be true to the vow he made in his youth – to reunite his family. Underlying themes reflect the varying effects of circumstance and socialisation on the individual as depicted in the lives of the children and their adoptive families and how the concept of a family varies according to each individual. Six different opinions are also presented regarding the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as given from the perspectives of each of the children.

Gerald Lund writes what is popularly considered in Latter-day Saint circles as the modern historical fiction masterpiece presented in a nine volume series, 'The Work and the Glory'. Set in America in the mid nineteenth century, he chronicles the life of the fictitious Steed family as they work and worship alongside the founder of the Latter-day Saint church, Joseph Smith.

This thesis focuses on Volume Six, 'Praise to the Man', which features several key issues of controversial doctrine including polygamy, the nature of God, personal conversion and continuing revelation. Lund uses two main characters, brothers Joshua and Nathan Steed, to represent the main reactions to the church beliefs. Nathan is a total convert from the start whereas Joshua not only has initial reservations but becomes openly opposed. Their extended family and friends form a supporting cast of characters who provide a variety of motivations and conflicts to challenge both their views on these issues.

As explained earlier, key issues that have historically distinguished the Latter-day Saint culture as a minority group from the religious and social beliefs and practices of the wider community include: the idea of the Nature of God, the idea of there being a process of Continuing Revelation and Prophecy from God, the religious requirement to build temples and the significance of those temples, the concept of families being eternal in nature and polygamy or plural marriage being regarded as a religious practice. The work of each author will be evaluated in the context of each of these issues to identify how they have handled the explanation of these principles and doctrines through the narrative flow and the interaction of characters.

However, before these key issues are discussed, the concept of faith needs to be put into context as the basis for a reinforcing a unique belief system. In many minority groups there is a strong motivation to unite that is difficult to rationalise or to explain. That motivation is based on "faith", described in the Webster's dictionary as

Firm or unquestioning belief in something for which there is no proof . . . the act or state of wholeheartedly and steadfastly believing in the existence, power, and

benevolence of a supreme being, of having confidence in his providential care, and of being loyal to his will as revealed or believed in. (Webster 816)

Scripturally, as evidenced in the Latter-day Saint scriptural resources of the *Bible* and the *Book of Mormon*, prophets note that “faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true’. (BOM 289) and that:

Faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel and is more than belief, since true faith always moves its possessor to some kind of physical or mental action; it carries an assurance of the fulfilment of things hoped for. (Bible Dictionary, King James Version, Appendix 670)

Recognising that faith is intangible, it remains to be seen how each author describes faith and its acquisition so that the reader can adequately appreciate what motivates the characters within the story. Ironically, the inability to communicate something intangible is often what the reader can most relate to so the author’s challenge is to have the characters exhibit identifiable frustrations while discovering faith.

In addition, in most scriptural admonition there is reference to prayer as being the vehicle by which faith is perpetuated. If the individual desires greater faith in a principle or belief, it is suggested that they pray for confirmation or answers to their questions. It follows then that any discussion of faith usually has prayer as part of the equation.

In recognising that faith and prayer are an intrinsic part of discussion of principles and beliefs, an evaluation of each text will analyse the literary techniques used by the four writers to verify what faith is, how it is acquired and why it is necessary to appreciate controversial issues.

In Margaret Yorgason's *A Girl Named Faith*, the main character is a young pioneer girl living on the Western frontier. During a quiet time out in the vegetable garden with her Scottish grandmother she is told that her name has a special purpose.

“Faith . . . ye were given yer special name as a reminder of how important it is to develop faith in your life.”

The grandmother then reinforces the concept of faith and the process by which it actually increases by using the example of an actual seed, something the child is familiar with.

Grandma was digging in the soil as she continued speaking. “Faith is like a little seed. When ye plant it and care for it, a miracle takes place and it grows - - - Lassie, faith is a growing thing that ye must plant in yer heart . . .” (Yorgason 17-18)

Her father later reinforces this principle by teaching the child how to apply her faith while dealing with a fearsome rooster.

“Just march in there and act brave, even if you are not. Go with faith, not with fear and you will win the battle.” (Yorgason 40)

When Faith becomes lost and frightened while out picking berries the author has her remember the teachings of her father and grandmother and then to act on faith in a God that would help her.

Suddenly I remembered Papa's words to me . . . I dropped to my knees in the dirt and I pled for a safe return to my home and family." (Yorgason 56)

She is subsequently rescued by an Indian and expresses her reaction in terms of what she has been taught.

My prayers had been answered. I was rescued by the very Indians that I had been afraid of. (Yorgason 59)

By using very simple examples of child-like faith, Yorgason reinforces familiar concepts to a child within the minority culture while also introducing them to a reader in a wider community who may be unused to the terminology. Stories reinforce the language by way of careful explanation by the adult characters then the child, Faith, repeats them back in a child's vocabulary so that the concepts are more easily comprehensible by the younger or uninformed, audience.

In *A Vow to Keep*, McCloud uses Percy and Randall to demonstrate contrasting journeys in the acquisition of faith. The reader is shown Percy at a young age where he is quick to question but also quick to resort to prayer once he is shown how, and quick to identify potential answers to his questions. Even Percy is shown to query his own rapid acceptance when he wonders "Why me? Why has this happiness reached out to touch me, and why have

I embraced it so quickly?”(McCloud 47) McCloud uses italicised script to indicate his thought process, thus drawing it to the attention of the reader, enabling them to possibly identify with the question.

In contrast, she has Percy’s younger brother Randall takes a more ponderous route. “Randall read slowly but he read carefully, and the questions he came up with taxed Percy’s patience and persuasion. He would not be easily won”. (McCloud 237) The reader is then given the opportunity to see what types of questions are asked and whether they are similar to their own questions. Again, McCloud reinforces the spiritual nature of getting an answer when she has Percy reinforce the need for prayerful consideration.

“Pray about it,” was always Percy’s instruction. And Randall did . . . What Randall didn’t realise was the fact that Percy was praying too. Praying fervently, night after night, exercising his faith. (McCloud 237)

This short description validates the scriptural counsel that faith without works is dead.

Using the example of young Will Steed, Gerald Lund actually takes the reader through a detailed mental and physical process of acquiring faith and ultimately knowledge. Will has some reservations about doctrine and is also swayed by his father, Joshua, who is antagonistic toward the church. Will’s Aunt Lydia counsels him to read a particular scripture or parable, which he read “a couple of times before and gotten nothing out of it. Now he was ready to try . . .” (Lund 213). The sentence suggests that the person asking the questions has to be in the right frame of mind to receive an answer.

The scripture is then given to the reader by way of Will reading it quietly out loud to himself but then qualified by his mentally asking questions as to the relevance of it. The reader is then told to read it again because Will reads it again for clarification, while again asking more questions. He then notes a specific phrase about prayer, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Because ‘to faint’ in modern English usage means to lose consciousness, Lund has Will remember that ‘to faint’ is a term used in olden day England which means ‘to quit or to give up’. So the reader is now counselled to pray and not to give up.

The process of analysing the scripture continues with Will noting things that he had missed before, thus giving the reader the opportunity to notice as well. His interpretations are a man’s version of what God is trying to say and his frustration is given voice as he speaks his thoughts out loud. Lund then uses a metaphor to reinforce the concept of continuing to work at the problem of understanding.

Based on Will’s previous years at sea as a sailor, Lund uses the metaphor of a knot in a wet rope.

It was like a knot in the rigging of a ship. Swollen with water, or stiff with ice, at first it looked as if it might be impossible to undo. But you just kept working at it, pushing here, prying there, pulling hard, then starting all over again. And eventually it gave away. (Lund 215)

The reader can then identify with the physical process and then the sudden release of tension, thereby enabling them to recognise the feeling that realisation or comprehension brings.

Having given the metaphor of perseverance, Lund then introduces another method for finding an answer. By stating that “Will was very methodical and precise”, Lund would appear to be saying that this is not just a whim but something that is being carefully considered. He has Will take up paper and pen and begin writing down what has occurred to him then he reads it again, asks himself a question and writes an answer. This process is repeated four times until there is realisation and a feeling described that is physically akin to the releasing of the knot.

Now he understood. And it was not just the parable that he understood. He knew now what he had to do. With determination, he pushed his chair back and dropped to his knees. (Lund 217)

Lund then uses more scriptural references to guide the reader through steps of inquiry, finally coming to the same conclusion the McCloud presented, that faith without works is dead. Leading the reader to the seventh chapter of the Gospel of John, he has Will discover the phrase, “If ye do His will, ye shall know!’ . . . Do! And then know!” (Lund 217) With this concept italicised for emphasis, the reader is then prepared to read and ponder about the more complicated doctrines and principles contained in the rest of the book.

But if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place to a portion of my words. (Book of Mormon 289)

This suggests that if an individual has even the smallest desire to know about the validity of doctrine then these are possible steps to finding out. With that process established, the reader

is then prepared to face explanations about more contentious issues contained within the Latter-day Saint belief system.

In 1842, when asked to define the basic tenets of Latter-day Saint belief, Joseph Smith wrote thirteen brief statements that have since become known as the ⁹*Articles of Faith*. (Appendix One) These consolidated the beliefs and status of the culture and left it to the reader of the articles to decide how they would respond to them. These Articles are still held as scripture by modern Latter-day Saints and are therefore especially subject to explanation within works of historical fiction as a means to bridging gaps in understanding in a modern context.

The first Article of Faith relates to the nature of God and states that 'We believe in God, the Eternal Father and in His son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.' (The Pearl of Great Price 60 - 61) Historically, the account is given how Joseph Smith, as a fourteen year old boy, reported to his family that he had received a visit from two personages who had declared themselves as God the Father and His son, Jesus Christ. Report of this vision marked a separation from established religious thought of the time, that God was an omnipotent being who was large enough to fill the universe yet small enough to dwell in the heart of man and that Jesus Christ was one in Him. Joseph's adamant declaration as to the existence of two distinctly separate divine beings created the first reason for discrimination from the wider community.

The primary reaction to such news must have varied considerably depending on the spiritual and social standing of the hearer and the effect such information might have on their life and

⁹ A copy of the thirteen Articles of Faith is the last item included in the Pearl of Great Price. It was originally part of a letter written by Joseph Smith to a John Wentworth, editor and proprietor of the Chicago Democrat, to be used in a written history of the state of New Hampshire. A copy of the Wentworth letter was published in the Times and Seasons, a Latter-day Saint publication, on 1 March, 1842. It has since been published as modern scripture under the title, Articles of Faith.

belief system. In *Light and Truth*, Darryl Harris presents the contrasting views about deity by having one of his characters conveniently present a theological thesis on the 'History of Christianity in England'. The twenty page historical account interprets how the concept of the nature of God and the administration of religion had developed over centuries. (Harris 274-293)

Personal reactions about these teachings are then registered through thoughts and dialogue of different characters. The local Anglican congregation is alarmed and the Methodist minister counsels his flock to stay away from such doctrine. In contrast, Daniel and Elizabeth, and Hannah and Bobby actively seek further explanations about God and the organisation of the church and find their answers in long discourses by the characters of Thomas Kington, John Benbow¹⁰ and Wilford Woodruff – all significant people in Latter-day Saint church history in England. Harris acknowledges in footnotes at the end of each chapter that while he has created the text, many of the statements made by these characters contain recorded elements of their teachings.

In contrast, the other three authors deal less with the detailed doctrine of the nature deity and more with the concept of a God who is personally aware of the individual and desires the best for them. Lund, especially, reinforces this idea by presenting an actual discourse where a Mormon preacher, converted from another faith, has harangued the congregation for their lax Christianity. Lund records Joseph Smith's response as an actual sermon:

¹⁰ Thomas Kington and John Benbow were among the first converts to the Latter-day Saint Church in the Gloucester/Herefordshire area. Kington, especially, had previously assembled a congregation that he called the United Brethren, to whom he taught Christ-centred principles that he believed were missing from existing Puritan faiths. His entire congregation of 600 was baptized by Wilford Woodruff when he came to preach in the area.

“I wish to give no offence to Brother Clark . . . (but) the Spirit that he has demonstrated is pharisaical and hypocritical (which) comes out of Christian sectarianism, where this is the normal approach to getting people to repent.”

The sermon is interspersed with narratives on how different individuals respond to his words:

A murmur of shock and surprise was passing through the crowd’ . . . ‘And then Will understood. Which was more important? To protect the feelings of a man who, though well meaning, was clearly in error, or to make it clear that this did not represent the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ. (Lund 137)

Lund then weaves two actual records into one speech, taking what he acknowledges as the contents of an actual letter written by Joseph Smith and making it part of the sermon.

“Brothers and sisters . . . there is an important truth that you must understand. Religion was not meant to beat down and oppress. True religion should lift people and make them happy. You see, happiness is the object and deign of our existence.” He stopped. “Let me say that again. *Happiness is the object and design of our existence*, and happiness will be the end thereof if we pursue the path that leads to it.” (Lund 138)

By repeating the statement on happiness and then italicising it for emphasis, Lund reinforces a principle that he obviously feels strongly about as well. It also encourages the reader to think more carefully about the purpose of life and how this concept applies to them.

Within Latter-day Saint culture, there is the firmly held belief that revelation from God did not cease with the publication of the Bible but that God still reveals his will through modern prophets and continuing revelation pertinent to the needs of society today. This is manifest in the recognition of Joseph Smith as the first prophet of this modern dispensation¹¹ (period of time) and the subsequent translation and publication of the Book of Mormon as a companion to the Bible. There is the assertion that both books are a testament of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, although they are records from different parts of the world; the Bible being a record of the Mediterranean area and the Book of Mormon recording his work on the American continent.

What a singular thing! A new religion based on new revelation. God still dealing with man . . . something about it felt right.” (McCloud 43)

Percy has to come to a personal conclusion about the information that has come to him through the Gilmans and the other members of the church, all of whom seem completely happy with the idea of modern revelation and scripture. And so McCloud has Percy follow a path of reading as much literature relating to the subject as possible in the process of finding an answer for himself.

Joseph Smith – the Book of Mormon – truth unchanging; Percy needed to know, he really needed to know for himself. He stayed down on his knees a long time. He said things from his heart he had not known were there . . . He kept nothing concealed or

¹¹ Bruce R. McConkie states that “Gospel dispensations are those periods of time during which the Lord reveals or dispenses the doctrines of the gospel to men so that reliance need not be placed on past ages for this saving knowledge . . . When we speak of the great gospel dispensations, we generally have in mind those given to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Apostles in the Meridian of time and to Joseph Smith”. (McConkie 201)

unspoken, and he asked with a faith he had been a stranger to before the death of his parents and this knowledge of Mormonism. (McCloud, 47)

In this one paragraph, McCloud manages to present the elements of continuing revelation followed by Percy's questions and then his mode of finding an answer based on faith.

Harris uses a variety of literary techniques to express these same ideas about continuing revelation. In the early stages of the book he has the fictitious character, Daniel, read a letter supposedly written by an old uncle. The letter talks about new revelation (Harris 169) and forms the basis of Daniel's future questions regarding religion. These questions are then answered through Thomas Kington and Wilford Woodruff. The fictitious characters, Daniel and Hannah especially, pose questions about the new religion but the actual characters in history answer them.

Questions are asked such as, "So you went through your own struggle about religion?" and "Did you talk to other ministers?" (388) "What do you think?" (169) lead to answers such as that supplied by Wilford Woodruff to Hannah.

"The message of the Restoration centres on the idea that it is not common ground we seek in sharing the gospel . . . there is nothing common about our message. The way we answer questions about our faith ought to be by finding the quickest and most direct route to the Sacred Grove, meaning the story of how God and Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph. . . . We have not built upon the theological rubble of the past. All that we have has come by direct revelation in the latter days." (Harris 500)

In a similar, but even more personal approach, Lund has his cast of fictitious characters, the members of the Steed family mingle with the Prophet as good family friends and close church associates. In this way, the characters are in the same vital places in church history and the actions of Joseph Smith are justified by his sharing personal thoughts and feelings with close friends. They laugh, joke and cry together and thus enable the reader to see a more personable side to the prophet figure.

In real life, Joseph Smith and his wife, Emma, were the parents of eleven children, two of whom were twins that they adopted as babies. Of these eleven children, only five of them lived beyond childhood. To lose six children as babies or infants must have placed a great burden on the couple and it is little wonder that knowledge of what happens to babies after their death and the eternal nature of families was of concern to Joseph Smith.

A basic premise of Latter-day Saint belief is that families are:

Central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children . . . Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. (The Family – a Proclamation 1995)¹²

Latter-day Saints have always placed a heavy priority on the construction of temples for the purpose of performing sacred ordinances for the eternal salvation of man. A key belief has

¹² The Family – A Proclamation to the World is an official document published by the First Presidency of the Church in 1995. It reiterates the beliefs of the church regarding families.

always been maintained that marriage in the temple¹³, between a man and a woman, is the foundation of an eternal union and that ‘the family is ordained of God’ (The Family: A Proclamation 1995). With the motivation to have their families sealed as an eternal unit, the early Saints were industrious in the building of temples at Kirtland, Nauvoo, and Salt Lake City, even when conditions were primitive and persecution was rife. Their faith in the strength of an eternal family was a driving force in ensuring the construction of these temples was completed.

Lund begins Volume six with the building of the Nauvoo temple, thus setting the scene for some explanation of this principle. His first descriptions are of a physical nature, detailing the techniques used to cut rock and assemble the structure. He also includes a footnote reference from the Encyclopaedia of Mormonism to clarify more construction details. (Lund 17-18)

It is also an opportunity to outline the various attitudes of the characters toward the construction of the temple. By expressing the thoughts of one Alpheus Cutler, the man in charge of the temple building committee, Lund is able to give details of the revelation given through Joseph Smith that was actually published in the *Times and Seasons* newspaper. To emphasise the importance of the passage in explaining the need for temples, Lund mentions that Cutler has committed one particular passage to memory and then records, in italics, the content of the revelation.

¹³ A Latter-day Saint Temple is an elaborate building constructed specifically for the performance of sacred ordinances and ceremonies that pertain to salvation within the kingdom of God. They are considered the most sacred places of worship on the earth and should not be confused with the smaller “chapels” or meeting houses that Latter-day Saints meet in on a weekly basis.

Build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein; for there is not a place upon the earth, that he may come and restore again that which was lost unto you, or, which he hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood; for a baptismal font there is not upon the earth; that they, my saints, may be baptised for those who are dead. (Lund 15)

With this premise in mind, he has Nathan Steed and his father, Benjamin working their “tithing time” (one day in ten)¹⁴ on the temple, thus demonstrating their willingness to provide the voluntary labour for such a work. This also demonstrates the commitment of the early Saints to the principle of making their families an eternal unit.

Although the concept of families being together forever is familiar within the Latter-day Saint culture, it still requires faith in the belief to accept it.

By placing his characters in extreme circumstances of personal loss, Lund manages to convey the feelings about families that are typically only experienced in a crisis.

Immediately following the death and funeral of their older daughter, Olivia, Joshua and Caroline Steed have another baby girl. While moved by the birth of his new daughter, Joshua still desperately misses seventeen year old Olivia. He remembers the words spoken by Joseph Smith at Olivia’s funeral – “How he had talked about the spirit world, and that Livvy was there now, still with all her personality, her laughter, her love of music”, but he is unable to accept this doctrine of life after death and the eternal nature of man. Caroline, who does

¹⁴ “Tithing,” refers to the practice of contributing one-tenth of an individual’s annual interest or income to the church for the purpose of assisting in building up the kingdom of God on the earth. It is strongly presented in Malachi (Bible 3:8–12) and reinforced in Latter-day Saint scripture in (Doctrine and Covenants 238-239). Lund’s reference to the men tithing their time in working on the construction of the temple meant that they contributed their time in working one day out of ten, rather than a financial commitment.

believe this concept, desperately wants her husband to feel the same assurance. Lund has her ask Joshua the questions:

“You’re not sure it’s true, are you?” she asked . . . “Oh, Joshua, she cried. “How can you bear it if you don’t know?”

To which Lund gives the reader the opportunity to feel doubt by having Joshua vent his feelings and fears.

“I don’t know if I can bear it . . . If only I could see her once more. Take her in my arms . . . (But) I can see why the gospel is so appealing to you, Caroline, but . . . but just wanting something, even desperately wanting something, doesn’t make it so. I wish it did.” (Lund 660)

In *A Vow to Keep*, when the children are first left on their own together after the death of their parents, Louisa asks the question:

“What will become of us, Percy?” she choked . . .

“We’re a family. We’ll always be a family.”

The words were a cry in the dark. They held no faith, and they gave her no comfort.

(McCloud 14)

Percy makes a vow to eventually reunite his six siblings after they are adopted by different families.

An eternal family, marriage through the eternities, children sealed to father and mother – all things he had dreamed of, yet never dared hope for. This spoke to his heart with a purity that swept through his spirit; he knew it was truth. (McCloud 45)

By beginning the story with the young characters expressing a naive hope in the family as an eternal concept, the way is opened for them to discover the validation of their hopes through the discoveries of principles that reinforce these desires. Percy is led to the source of this hope through his new family, the Gillmans, and their membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – the Mormons.

To begin with, McCloud uses Percy, as the uninformed bystander, as the means to explain to the reader about basic administrative details within the church community. As the Gillmans continue to explain concepts to Percy, so the reader is kept informed – not only of the historiographic details but also of the general reaction of someone who has little knowledge of a closed community. By italicising Percy's thoughts, McCloud is actually defining the questions and doubts that are a normal response to new information.

In *Light and Truth*, Harris uses the actual Latter-day Saint historical figure of Thomas Kington to preach the concept of eternal families to fictional characters. The content is presented in a very forthright manner but, because it is a character preaching to other characters in a fictional context, it allows the reader to be introduced to the concept in a non-confrontational way.

“Something in Christianity is lacking, and it has been lacking for centuries. I think we ought to be together as families in the hereafter, but nothing in Christian theology that I know of teaches that kind of doctrine.” (Harris 119)

A statement such as this invites further investigation of this concept both in relation to Latter-day Saint doctrine as well as general Christian theology. Again, Harris uses actual characters from history, John and Jane Benbow, to share some of their personal background with the apostle, Wilford Woodruff.

They had been married thirteen years and had lost two sons, both dying as infants . . . Wilford knew there were things he could say in his discussion that would bring them tears of happiness regarding their lost children. (Harris, 299)

Without actually stating doctrine about the eternal nature of families, Harris intimates that there is more for the reader to know, after all, what information might bring forth tears of happiness about dead children? Harris also remains constant in his endeavours to address key doctrinal issues within his text, using the predicaments of his characters to expound such principles as infant baptism and life after death.

A basic premise with the Latter-day Saint Church is that children are baptised at the age of eight when they can be accountable for their actions whereas infants do not require baptism as they are completely innocent. This doctrine is addressed when Bobby’s father and the reverend of the Anglican Church are discussing whether Bobby’s children had been baptised. The reverend responds with information that is representative of the majority of religious faiths.

“What if one of their children died without being christened? There is no salvation outside the church. The child would not be saved in heaven.” (Harris 205)

Similarly the issue of life after death is addressed when Robert Harris Senior dies and Bobby has to confront his own fears about death and whether he will ever see his father again. His thoughts are manifest in a number of short sentences which would represent general thoughts on the matter.

Death confused him: Where did the spirit go after death? Was the resurrection spiritual or physical, or both? What do dead people do after they die? Was his father with his mother now? Were they reunited with the little children they had lost in infancy? Why couldn't anyone give him answers that made sense? (Harris 214)

By asking these questions, Harris is foreshadowing the types of doctrinal answers that will be revealed through the Latter-day Saint missionaries later in the story. It also prepares the Latter-day Saint reader for concise doctrinal answers that they would be able to use in speaking to friends who had the same questions or for the non-Latter-day Saint who might have had the same thoughts.

Driven by the desire to attain the promise of an eternal family, another practice developed among the early Latter-day Saint population that further ostracised them from the general community was polygamy. Possibly the most contentious social practice that was participated in by the early Latter-day Saints was that of polygamous marriage, or the practice of a man being married to more than one wife.

Although polygamy was practiced by a relatively small group of the pioneer saints, it became the cause for much persecution until its official cessation in 1849. Even then, the reputation of the Latter-day Saints as being polygamous rascals continued to manifest itself throughout successive decades. In a modern context, some 150 years later, it is still the feature that most of the wider community who are generally uninformed about the Latter-day Saint culture, have some cognisance of. This is despite the fact that the contemporary practice is of eternal marriage to one mate and a promise of complete fidelity to them.

Of the four books being studied, only Lund actually addresses this topic and he is careful to qualify his treatment of the issue in the preface to the book. He begins by stating that “Volume 6 may prove to be a troublesome book for some readers” as the topic is “highly divisive” with “explosive emotional ramifications”. He then describes how he has sourced information from “journal entries, letters, affidavits, recollections, reminiscences, and formal historical accounts”.(Lund ix) Given this dedication to correct research techniques, it still remains an ordeal for the writer to differentiate between what is supposedly truth and what might be rumour.

Lund is first to acknowledge that while endeavouring to present multiple perspectives on the topic, the essence of his depiction revolves around one fundamental question: “Did God reveal this law to Joseph and require him and others to live it, or was it purely the product of Joseph’s own mind?” In answer to his own question, Lund presents a variety of perspectives to enable a personal response from the reader,

In a historical context, the doctrine of plural marriage was touted in 1841 but immediately received a mixed and emotional response from the select group of people in the hierarchy of the church who were asked to participate. Lund uses the Steed family, as trusted friends and spiritual associates of Joseph Smith to present the differing responses. His use of Nathan Steed as the main opponent to the revelation is significant as he portrays Nathan throughout as the ultimately committed Latter-day Saint. To have Nathan be consumed with doubt and then to voice his doubts illustrates the extreme difficulty many had in accepting the doctrine.

This perspective is enhanced by the initial inability of Nathan to discuss the proposal with his wife, Lydia, thus upsetting a previously uncontentious marriage. Lund contrives a meeting of both Nathan and Lydia with other leaders in the church hierarchy to discuss the issue and provides the opportunity to “give voice” to actual journal entries of these leaders. In depicting Brigham Young’s response, Lund uses personal records:

“When Joseph revealed this principle to the Twelve (apostles) and said we must live it, it was if a stake had pierced my heart. It was the first time in my life that I desired the grave. For days I longed for death. That, to me, was a far more pleasant prospect than having to go to my beloved Mary Ann and tell her what was required of us.”

(Lund 441)

As details of the nuptial agreements are given, each character is provided with the opportunity to voice their doubts, fears, and feelings about this particular trial of their faithfulness. Actual characters from history provide insight for the fictitious characters and therefore, for the reader.

In many respects, the personal commitment and the emotional trauma of adhering to such a request superseded pure physical tragedy. Lund has Brigham Young, as the second in command in Church authority express the sentiment that:

“I thought we had seen it all. Jackson County, Haun’s Mill. Far West ¹⁵. . . How naive I was . . . how little did I dream that there was something of far greater pain, far greater demands.” (Lund 436)

Typically, the concept of polygamy is viewed in a purely sexual context by society in general, but, in order to encapsulate the traumatic effect of this doctrine, Lund enables it to be viewed from the perspective of the perpetrator, the adherent, the antagonist and, unexpectedly, the beneficiary. For instance, regarding the beneficiary, Lund provides numerous instances where the practice is rationalised because of the preponderance of single women who had need of protection in the harsh pioneer environment. With the introduction of polygamy these women were afforded continued care and, from a spiritual perspective, the opportunity to be part of an eternal connection.

The feminine perspectives are also given as wives of the men involved in polygamy express fears and doubts but also acceptance. Again, the fictitious wives ask the questions and the answers are supplied by their women friends, many of whom are actual people in history, such as Mary Fielding Smith, sister-in law to Joseph Smith.

“I would like to say . . .” Mary Fielding was saying. “That just because you are having difficulty accepting it (polygamy), Melissa, doesn’t mean you are a person of

¹⁵ Jackson County, Haun’s Mill and Far West are all places where the early Latter-day Saints were subjected to severe physical persecution including the massacre of a small community.

no faith . . . Yes, faithful, tireless, ever-patient Emma (Smith) . . . is really struggling with this. It has been the most difficult thing she has ever had to deal with.” (Lund 556 - 557)

Immediately, by mentioning the Prophet’s wife as having difficulty with this doctrine, the reader is allowed to glimpse another perspective. This is reinforced soon after with a description of the reaction of Joseph’s sister-in-law. The character of Mary Fielding shares her experience of how the principle was confirmed to her and her sister, Mercy after she is widowed.

“Joseph then went to Mercy and told her what had happened. Her reaction was as strong as mine. She loved and respected Hyrum, but only as a brother-in-law. Now, was he to be her husband? She told me that every natural feeling of her heart rose up in opposition to the principle.”

Melissa was nodding now. That was the exact description of her own feelings. Every natural feeling of her heart rose up in opposition against this. Yes, that was it exactly!
(Lund 558)

By initially listing negative responses to this principle, Lund appears to be leading the reader to a growing realisation of the amount of faith required in accepting the practice of polygamy. Although the reactions of his characters are human and understandable and, as mentioned, largely based on actual Latter-day Saint journal entries, he allows room for development and change.

A meeting with several women, including those of the Steed family, along with leaders in the church, gives the reader another glance into how this principle became more accepted. After

sharing a spiritual experience with the other women, Vilate Kimball, an actual person, declares:

“I will not tell you this was an easy thing to accept,” she said haltingly. “Nor has it been without its trials and challenges since then. But I cannot doubt,” Her shoulders pulled back. “I *cannot* doubt that the order of plural marriage has been given by God, for the Lord revealed it to me through the glorious answer to my prayer.” (Lund 446)

In contrast, Joshua Steed sums up his disbelieving attitude towards polygamy when he spends time alone with Joseph Smith.

“I guess you know that Mormonism will always test my patience and strain my credulity . . . I guess I’m going to have to wait until I get on the other side and have God tell me directly that he allows a man to have more than one wife before I will accept it.”

But he qualifies his disbelief of the doctrine as not interfering with his personal relationships.

“But know this, Joseph Smith. While these things are true, they shall no longer stand between our friendship.” (Lund 655)

This sort of conversation allows the reader the scope to believe or disbelieve points of doctrine while still befriending those who do believe.

At the beginning of this literary analysis, the principle of faith was outlined as the catalyst for people abiding by these key issues of Latter-day Saint belief despite persecution. It was defined as being the motivation to act in the hope that fulfilment of promises or expectations would result. More important to readers is not simply knowing what faith is, but being able to identify with experiences that assist in the acquisition of faith. Each of the four authors has presented a variety of experiences in which the Latter-day Saints have acted upon faith in adhering to these principles; the nature of God, continuing revelation, temples and polygamy. But just as faith was the motivation to act, the real commitment to act is seen in the process of baptism and continued adherence to communal practices as outlined in the Articles of Faith.

Chapter Five

Basic Premises

Fundamental Beliefs and Practises from Latter-day Saint Culture

Throughout their history, the Latter-day Saints have been recognised for their determination to establish a society dedicated to keeping the commandments, with the belief that “mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel” (The Pearl of Great Price 60). Numerous acts of persecution over doctrine have seen them scattered and divided only to regroup in different places with renewed resolve to strengthen each other and their cause. These often traumatic periods have traditionally served to unite the persecuted members and have been well-documented in journals and historical records. They have been further mythologised in songs, poems, and historical fiction.

As already discussed, treatment of the culture in historical fiction has varied depending on the author’s point of reference. This thesis has already analysed how selected Latter-day Saint authors of historical fiction have treated key doctrinal issues that differentiate the Latter-day Saints as a minority group. This chapter continues to build on this study by analysing how Margaret Yorgason, Susan Evans McCloud, Darryl Harris and Gerald Lund interpret the thirteen basic premises of the Latter-day Saint culture as expressed in the Articles of Faith given by Joseph Smith.¹⁶

¹⁶ In 1842, Joseph Smith was requested by a Mr. Wentworth, editor of the Chicago Democrat newspaper, to explain the basic premises of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph responded in a letter containing thirteen concise doctrinal statements. Originally called the Wentworth letter, the document became known as the Articles of Faith and was later adopted as official scripture by the church.

The previous chapter dealt with the concept of faith as the primary motivation for the Latter-day Saints dealing with opposition against their most contentious beliefs and practices.

Whereas the fourth Article of Faith states that faith is the first principle of the Gospel. It ranks repentance next, the theory of repentance involving recognition of a wrong-doing, an expression of contrition at doing wrong, then making rectitude for it, especially if there are other people involved. This concept is demonstrated in *A Vow to Keep* by Percy's interaction with Clair Gillman. On the arduous trip west by handcart, Percy finds he is often angered by Clair's complaining attitude.

At last one night Percy spoke to Benjamin.

“What's wrong with Claire?”

“Heavens, boy, don't you know . . . She's with child . . . We'll just have to hope for the best.”

Percy did more than hope for the best. He asked help from the Lord in his prayers . . .

He saw now why Claire had complained, and he began to notice instead all the times that she held her tongue, all the times she made jokes out of hardships, all the times she endured, pale-faced and ill, with a smile on her face.

He helped her as much as he could. (McCloud 71)

In this instance the reader is being asked to consider a common element in human interaction – the lack of communication or comprehension – a factor that is recognised as being at the root of contention between modern generations and cultural groups. When Percy feels frustration with Claire it is because he is focusing on her failings rather than her strengths – “What's wrong with Claire?” After receiving information from Benjamin about Claire's condition, he has a complete change in attitude – “He saw now why . . .” But McCloud then

gives the reader the rest of the communication equation – that action follows observation.

“He helped her as much as he could.”

In a spiritual context, the principle of repentance becomes obvious to those who are familiar with the concept; acknowledgement of a wrong-doing, prayerful admission of personal fault followed by active recompense to those who have been wronged with an individual promise not to repeat the wrong. By giving Percy the opportunity to improve his relationship with Claire, the reader is also given the guidelines to improve their own relationships. Whether they receive the information in a sociological or a spiritual context is up to the individual but it is a good example of how McCloud manages to present problems within the historical context while enabling the reader to receive a coded solution to current relationship problems.

The fourth Article of Faith then lists baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost as third and fourth in priority, the practice of baptism by immersion being heralded as the tangible expression of belief. It signifies acceptance of a Heavenly Father and His son, Jesus Christ, and a promise to abide by their standards. In *Light and Truth*, Harris has Wilford Woodruff explain the practice:

William Jenkins was totally immersed under the water . . . Wilford Woodruff then turned his attention to curious bystanders.

“That’s the way Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. The total immersion of the person receiving baptism is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Saviour. Baptism is the introductory ordinance of the gospel and now must be

followed by baptism of the spirit to be complete. We will do that inside by the laying on of hands.” (Harris 353)

Because there are many different perspectives on baptism and the actual physical expression of baptism, full immersion as opposed to sprinkling of water requires explanation. Harris manages to equate the act with its origins with the Saviour as well as establish the practice as remaining unchanged from the foundation of the church to the present-day. This again establishes the unmodified nature of an important ordinance in Latter-day Saint culture.

Lund, similarly, gives a full description of the baptismal service when Caroline Mendenhall and her son, Will and daughter, Olivia are baptised. The fact that three people are being baptised at once gives Lund the opportunity to present a number of perspectives on the significance of the occasion. He presents the feelings of those being baptised, those who are conducting the baptism and those who are spectators. He also includes the actual words of the “brief but significant” baptismal prayer and describes the method of baptism (Lund 501). The reader is then given a comprehensive description of an event that though being short and simple is significant.

Caroline was barely aware of the water’s touch as she followed Father Steed into the water . . . Benjamin smiled then gently took her arm in his left hand as he raised his other hand to the square. “Caroline Mendenhall Steed,” he began. She closed her eyes. “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. (Lund 502)

Baptism may be the physical expression of commitment and yet it is one of the simplest acts. Despite chapters dedicated to Percy's understanding and acceptance of Latter-day Saint doctrine and then, later, more relating to his family's reaction, McCloud expends only a small portion of text to this decisive element in the story, of baptism and the receipt of the Holy Ghost.

One of the most important events of his life, taken as more or less commonplace . . . He wasn't instantly better, he wasn't instantly changed, but he had been marked. He had again felt the spirit and responded in spirit, and that wove a strength, a quiet, subtle strength within him. (McCloud 64-65)

In a concise paragraph she summarises the feelings of many people who have experienced baptism. The act is simple but profound in its implications, recognising the quiet strength that comes with resolve. This description then consolidates one of the key elements that have served to bind the Latter-day Saints together both historically and in a contemporary sense.

Once totally committed to the principles through baptism, the resulting lifestyle of the early Latter-day Saints demonstrated distinctive traits. A critical element in the socialisation of the culture was the unrelenting quest to become "Zion", a state of existence where the social and religious structure of the community would be the way the Lord intended it to be:

And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. (The Pearl of Great Price 22)

With this goal in mind the early Saints were determined to establish a society where they were free to worship how they pleased and to co-exist in a mutually beneficial society. This

desire to have personal freedom to worship as they please, is expressed in the eleventh Article of Faith where the Saints stated:

We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where or what they may. (The Pearl of Great Price 61)

Harris primarily uses two young couples to represent this attitude that became more obvious in the changing social, economic and religious face of the post-industrial English society. They represent a group who are no longer content to live at subsistence level and who are striving to make their way into a different class of society. In the process they question their livelihoods, their religious upbringing and their future potential.

Bobby, the butcher, who becomes a pugilist or professional boxer, typifies the young person who will use any means at his disposal to gain social mobility. The chance of earning money and status through fighting is a major source of discontent between him and his wife, Hannah. She desires only to have a family that is complete and cared for by a father who will provide enough for their spiritual and emotional needs as much as for their physical needs. They also face the conflict of coming from different religious backgrounds which they have never really seen as an issue until it involves them personally.

Until her attraction to Bobby, Hannah had not paid too much attention to the continuing conflict between the Anglican Church and her own Methodist faith. Why couldn't all Christians get along better? Why did her father view Anglicans with such suspicion? (Harris 13)

Harris then presents an issue that is just as relevant in today's society as it was in 1850. Very early in the story, he has proposed a universal question that is based on majority religions but when the same questions arises with the establishment of first the United Brethren and then the Latter-day Saint Church, the area of discontent has already been established. It is only the focus that has shifted.

Bobby's sister, Elizabeth, marries Daniel, a Quaker, and their union again typifies the controversy caused when people of different religious backgrounds attempt to come together. The difference in their situation is that their discontent with their religious upbringing finds mutual fulfilment within the doctrines of the new Latter-day Saint faith. However, as discontent can give rise to bitter feelings, Harris reinforces the need for religious tolerance when he uses Thomas Kington to reinforce this principle.

Kington lifted a pointing finger. "I want both of you to remember that although historical facts condemn the Church of England and the Church of Rome, that doesn't mean there are no honourable people in those churches and in all churches. There are – lots of them. They, for the most part, are trying to do the right thing. They can't help their past." (Harris 157)

This statement is, however, a two-edged sword. For the Latter-day Saint reader, therein lies a quiet admonition to be tolerant toward those who do not understand the complexities of their faith. But for those not of the Latter-day Saint faith there would appear to be a patronising attitude toward their religious beliefs in the intimation that they cannot help what they

believe – it's what they have inherited. Thus Harris, within one short paragraph, manages to be both conciliatory and controversial.

In *The Work and the Glory*, Lund uses Carl Rogers to establish an objective view of the Zion society that he sustains throughout the novel.

Melissa Steed had been a Mormon when Carl married her . . . he wasn't at all interested in the Church but he respected Melissa's right to worship as she chose. Though he had not openly admitted this to her, he was actually pleased to be living among the Mormons now. They were good people and they made a strong community for him and his family. (Lund 9)

Carl becomes the means by which Lund can ask about questions of faith and also be the vehicle to present considered opinions on the Latter-day Saint practices. He is even used to defending their cause when pressure intensifies from political and social enemies, thus forcing him to reflect on both perspectives. As Carl reflects, the reader is given the opportunity to appreciate both views. In this manner, Lund ensures that the commonly held public view is presented but ensures that the Latter-day Saint interpretation is paralleled.

Yorgason establishes a similar attitude towards people who have different beliefs or backgrounds. Without stating it, she sets her characters within a Latter-day Saint context of a pioneer family who are dealing with native Indians. She uses Faith's father to teach his daughter about relationships. Because Faith is frightened of the Indians, she is perplexed that her father is being kind to them by giving supplies to them.

“Because,” Papa explained. “It is better to feed them than to fight them. I don’t want my head on top of one of their scalp poles. Do you?”

Then in response to the child’s next fearful question as to why the Indians don’t leave them alone, Yorgason supplies the response.

Putting his arms around me, he softly replied. “Faith, they lived here long before we came. They probably wonder why we don’t go away and leave them alone. There is plenty of land for everyone and if we are generous, I believe we can live in peace with each other.”(Yorgason 5)

In providing these two simple answers, the young child reading an historical account of interaction between Indian and White Man is actually being given examples on how to overcome hostility, fear and provide for improved communication. Remembering also that a children’s book is often read to the child by an adult, learning about communication can also take place by the adult as they read aloud words such as “softly replied” and “putting his arms around me”. Yorgason also demonstrates that it is all right for children to listen to parents and grandparents. In this instance, there is not only a bridging of cultural understanding but also a bridging of a generational gap.

Amongst the sequential unfolding of the seasons on the prairies with the inherent activities relating to the times of the year, another powerful message that Yorgason manages to convey is the acceptance of individuals regardless of race or cultural identity, thus reinforcing the principles expressed in the eleventh Article of Faith. Within this commonly coded format of “Cowboys and Indians”, Yorgason enables a child reader to identify with elements such as

appreciating differences, fear of the unknown, being helped, building relationships of trust, and of sharing precious items as a means of showing friendship.

As Faith is forced to confront her fear of the Indians that she has previously only observed from a distance, she comes to the realisation that Chenoa, the Indian girl, has family – just like her, has likes and dislikes – just like her, has favourite things – just like her. Having Faith lost and then found by an Indian and placed into the Indian environment gives the young reader an insight into the Native American community through Faith's eyes. It enables Faith to ask the questions and find the answers about these 'unknown people', thereby providing a formula for contemporary children to explore in building similar relationships.

In *Vow to Keep*, by beginning the story with the young characters expressing a naive hope in the family as an eternal concept, McCloud opens the way for them to discover the validation of their hopes through the discovery of principles that reinforce these desires. Percy is led to the source of this hope through his new family, the Gillmans and their membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – the Mormons.

At this point, McCloud uses Percy, as the uninformed bystander, as the means to explain to the reader about basic administrative details within the church community and beliefs. As the Gillman's explain to Percy, so the reader is kept informed – not only of the historiographic details but also of the general reaction of someone who has little knowledge of a closed community. By italicising Percy's thoughts, McCloud is actually clearly defining the questions and doubts that are a normal response to new information.

Later, when Percy is reunited with his sister, Laura we see a list of descriptive words that indicate the range of emotions the siblings go through as they become reacquainted. In quick progression McCloud uses a variety of words to describe the tumult of emotion. “Perplexed”, “passionate” and “exuberant” are quickly followed by “gladness”, “laughter”. As they become more comfortable with each other and begin to share elements of their lives, words such as “annoyed”, “different” and “blank” indicate an increasing lack of understanding about each other’s situations. Then the question of religion is introduced and terms like “strange Mormons”, “wary”, “shuddered” and “guarded” indicate a growing apprehension on the part of Laura. This is however met with a simple invitation from Percy:

“I know Mormonism is different, but it’s really quite easy to understand. I would like you to understand it, for my sake . . . there may be something in Mormonism that you need, something that would make you happy.” (McCloud 127)

To which Laura gives the reply, “Percy, Percy! I’m happy now! I couldn’t be happier.” This is a statement which serves to maintain equilibrium in the conversation but effectively puts a stop to any progression of information.

The issue of the breaking down of communication within relationships, especially between parents and children, exists in most societies – a fact that is not often realised by the younger generation and not handled particularly well by the older generation. Fictional characters are able to be placed into generically similar situations but because of the differences in their location in place and time, they can also ‘arrive’ at solutions that are well-choreographed by the author. They provide possible steps in improving communication and decisions are validated with appropriate scriptural references.

Percy's younger sister, Louisa, also admonishes him when he tries to explain the basic premises of his faith in an attempt to convince them to join him. "Don't expect to remake us in the image you hold of us." (McCloud 181) But later, after more information has been acquired, the brother and sister have another conversation. This time, Louisa tells Percy, "I believe it was important for you to come . . . You've touched each of our lives in some way. You've changed us." (McCloud 241) Even Percy's brother, Stewart, who is so violently opposed to Percy's faith to begin with, has a change of heart as he gains more knowledge.

The way is then opened for improved communication between the siblings in the future. It also validates the idea that no matter how impossible an issue may seem, the desire to rectify the situation and provide for improved relationships is at the heart of being a Zion people.

This is expressed in the thirteenth Article of Faith which states that the Saints believe in:

Being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul . . . If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things. (The Pearl of Great Price 61)

Lund deals with these virtues in his treatment of the formation of the women's society of the church. Known, since its inauguration in 1842, as the Relief Society, the women present at the first meetings were counselled by Joseph Smith on many matters to do with the administration of the church.

In footnotes, Lund acknowledges the use of minutes of the meeting recorded by the society secretary, Eliza Snow. He has Joseph refer to his wife, Emma, then proceed to give

instruction regarding the priesthood¹⁷ and the responsibilities of the men in the church. He qualifies this concerning the role of women.

He opened the Bible where he had inserted a slip of paper. “I should like to call your attention to the twelfth chapter of the book of First Corinthians, wherein the Apostle Paul says, ‘Now concerning spiritual gifts, I would not have you ignorant.’ That is my desire as well. I would not have you ignorant. Paul also tells us that the church is like a body and that every member of the body is needed.” (Lund 361)

By referring to this incident, Lund manages to give a scriptural reference, show Joseph’s deference to his wife and indicate the prevailing attitude held toward the equal status of women in the church. This is further elaborated on within the context of Article thirteen when Joseph states, “This is a charitable society . . . it is natural for women to have feelings of charity and benevolence . . . and if you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates.” (Lund 364)

Such a noble desire to do good unto all men must have been difficult to maintain in the light of the persecution extended toward the Latter-day Saints as they were pressured to move out of their established communities and move towards the Western states. In particular, it is interesting to note how Lund explores the relationships between Joseph Smith and his persecutors.

While the twelfth Article of Faith states that the Saints believed in being “subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates in obeying and honouring and sustaining the law” (The Pearl of Great Price 61), Lund manages to convey numerous situations where this resolve

¹⁷ The term “Priesthood” in the Latter-day Saint context pertains to man’s existence on the earth and refers to “the power and authority of God delegated to man on the earth to act in all things for the salvation of men”. (McConkie 594)

was sorely tested by US government officials. After giving a clear description of the physical presence of Governor Thomas Ford who presided at the final trial of Joseph Smith prior to his martyrdom, Lund then intimates the Governor's attitude to the trial.

The wave of the Governor's hand was like that of a tired mother chiding a particularly malicious young boy, and both mother and boy knew it would never amount to any more than just a wave of the hand . . . the crowd jeered, swore, pounded their chairs, and interrupted constantly . . . And through it all Governor Ford went on reading and half-listening, as if they were alone in a forest glade with nothing but the hum of an occasional bee to break the silence. (Lund 671)

Later, instead of taking the opportunity to run from danger, Joseph and his brother and two friends choose to face a term in prison with the hope that the Saints will be relieved from further subjection. This seems to be in fulfilment of the latter part of the article which states: "We hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to endure many more things." (The Pearl of Great Price 61)

Using the impressions of the fictional characters of Nathan and Benjamin Steed, Lund then manages to convey images from both the city of Nauvoo where the Saints are living and the Carthage jail where Joseph is held prisoner. Nathan's letters to his wife, Lydia, incorporate details of Joseph's last days by intimating that he is a fellow prisoner. Even though this is not historically accurate, the reader is given a first-hand impression of the situation while knowing that Nathan is a fictional character.

With the subsequent martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith at the hands of an uncontrolled mob of militia, the situation provides justification for the Saints to seek retribution. This is expressed in a letter written by Willard Richards and John Taylor who were with Joseph when he was shot.

“Joseph and Hyrum are dead . . . by a band of Missourians from 100 to 200. The job was done in an instant and the party fled. This is as I believe it. The citizens here are afraid of the Mormons attacking them. I promise them no!” (Lund 721)

Lund conveys the Saints’ resolve not to retaliate but in the final pages of Volume Six, he weaves a series of short vignettes into a portrayal of the loss suffered by Joseph Smith’s family and friends within the Latter-day Saint community. The reader is left with the opportunity to decide whether the deaths were justified.

Although Zion was a state of being that the Latter-day Saints aspired to in their relationships, Zion was also perceived as a particular place as recorded in the tenth Article of Faith, “that Zion (the new Jerusalem)¹⁸ will be built upon the American continent”. (The Pearl of Great Price 61) This revelation prompted a period of migration that has become notorious in church history. The initial movement of the Saints was from the eastern states of America where the church was founded, toward the west where supposedly, land to settle and freedom to worship was more readily available. Subsequent settlements in Kirtland, Nauvoo and then Salt Lake City received large influxes of people as a concerted migration policy was instigated to bring newly converted Saints from England to America.

¹⁸ Latter-day Saint doctrine teaches that in the new millennium (A period of one thousand years) two great cities, dual world capitals, will be needed to fulfill the great millennial promise, “Out of Zion shall go forth the law”. (Bible, 863) The belief is that Jerusalem of old will be restored in grandeur and a New Jerusalem will be established in the new world in Jackson County, Missouri. (adapted from McConkie, 855)

Harris has the character of Wilford Woodruff explain the concept.

“Believers of the gospel have always gathered together. Moses gathered the children of Israel. It’s a concept rooted deeply in the Old Testament . . . The Lord redeems his people and he gathers his people.” (Harris 472)

This is a pertinent quote as Woodruff was personally responsible for the conversion of a large portion of the 80,000 Saints in Britain during the mid nineteenth century and their subsequent exodus to America. As the apostle describes the gathering process, Harris details a variety of reactions in the thoughts of his characters: “Sailing across the Atlantic with Elizabeth, Bobby and Hannah . . . what about my mother? My brothers and sisters? What will they think?” (Harris 414)

McCloud, likewise, uses a Latter-day Saint character, Clair Gillman, to explain the emigration process to Percy.

She explained all the details. They would leave May 10th, sail from Liverpool on the Adventurer, come to port in New York, and from there travel by rail to a place called Council Bluffs in Iowa . . . then . . . outfitted for the long journey by handcart – over a thousand miles long – to the city of the Saints . . . It seemed a very good plan.
(McCloud, 51)

In *Vow to Keep*, the pioneer trek to Utah, and the gathering to Zion is accomplished in only four chapters yet it provides the objective for the preceding chapters and a springboard to the

remainder of the book. Numerous events that are well-known in Latter-day Saint history are mentioned with Percy and the Gillman family being an integral part of them. They are shown as being part of the famous Mormon Handcart company that had people stashing their essentials for existence along with a few treasures from their homes into narrow, shallow carts that were pulled by the able-bodied for over 1000 miles.

1031 miles from Winter Quarters to the city of the Great Salt Lake – it was as though someone had hit him and knocked all the air out of him. Great Britain, he knew, was at most six hundred miles from tip to tip . . . this immense distance boggled his mind . . . whoever would dream of travelling a thousand miles just so they might live in a different place? To him it seemed madness. (McCloud 74)

Percy expresses his stupefaction and thereby demonstrates that the trek participants did feel overwhelmed at such a request and yet they still tackled it, driven by the need to reach Zion. The reader is left either to applaud or shake their heads at such an endeavour.

The compulsion to establish Zion as a place, a destination, also gave rise to comprehensive programmes of missionary work which actively sought new followers of the faith.

Missionaries travelled throughout America, Europe and the Pacific Islands for periods of two or three years at a time seeking to bring about the 'literal gathering of Israel' as outlined in the tenth Article of Faith. This missionary movement has since assumed iconic status within the modern church as thousands of Latter-day Saints every year leave their homes to travel around the world teaching the exact same doctrines as the early missionaries. In this respect, many of the emotions and even practical implications of missionary work discussed in the texts have equal relevance in a modern context.

New converts were not only required to consider the theological implications of their new faith but also the physical and emotional requirements to move from their homes into unknown territories. As mentioned, many detailed accounts of missionary activity have been kept in numerous individual journals of the early Saints and it has been the work of the authors to place these recorded feelings and experiences in context.

Based on the scriptural admonition “To stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in” (The Book of Mormon 181), the early converts to the church were quick to assume their proselytising responsibilities and to travel extensively both on the American continent and overseas. It was primarily the men who undertook this work and this required separation from their families for long periods of time. Their willingness to do this work was paralleled by the readiness of wives and mothers to let their husbands and fathers go away, leaving them with the burden of raising families in rugged, frontier conditions. The trials and triumphs experienced in doing this work are dealt with by Lund and Harris.

In *Light and Truth*, Harris deals with this issue as he includes several of the actual missionary leaders of the church within his script. Wilford Woodruff was recognised as one of the most influential apostles and missionaries of the early church. Harris includes extensive footnotes of Woodruff’s personal journals detailing the responsibilities and results of missionary work in the British Isles. Details are often brief and mainly stating names and numbers along with a few memorable incidents.

May 29, Friday. Baptized two at the creek, Ann Daniels and Ann Bannister, then walked to Shucknell Hill and preached, then baptized John Powell, Elizabeth Powell, and Sarah Rock. Ordained Benjamin Williams a priest. (Harris 428)

The emotional impact of these activities must then be expressed through the feelings of different individuals that the author creatively enables to be part of these scenes.

With regard to missionary work, it followed that responses would vary. How did people feel about these new concepts and the fact that it was Americans who were bringing this information? How did it affect the lives of the individuals and what were the main problems they had with the information? Harris uses his four main characters, Bobby and Hannah, and Derek and Elizabeth to present four perspectives from four contemporaries.

It is the women, Hannah and Elizabeth, who respond most readily to the information provided by the missionaries. Their desire is to have spiritual depth and serenity in their homes and families and they find this in the doctrines of the Latter-day saints. Derek, who has been raised as a Quaker then joins the Latter-day Saint congregation, conducts a slower, more thorough investigation of doctrine and organisation. In total contrast, Bobby typically fights the conversion process, not only questioning doctrine, but challenging the threat of a change of lifestyle.

Contemporary society abounds with cultural differences which prevent integration and acceptance of minority groups but varying forms of these prejudices have existed for centuries. Within the text of *Light and Truth*, Harris focuses on defining the major religious groups existing in Victorian England as being the Anglicans and the Methodists and of

demonstrating how their customs united their members and demanded inclusion of others or, if that was unsuccessful, then manifested in conscious exclusion of the unco-operative faction. A gentle way of expressing this division, “Anglicans tended to do business with Anglicans” (Harris 31) is given heightened meaning when a generational separation intensifies the chasm in understanding. Bobby and Hannah’s announcement of their proposed marriage plans brings an instant tirade from Bobby’s father, a staunch Anglican.

Bobby frowned, thinking how behind the times his father was. That was true twenty or thirty years ago, but British citizens left and right were ignoring Church of England mandates . . . His father was blind as a bat, clinging to yesterday’s religious traditions. The trouble was, Bobby didn’t dare say it. (Harris 126)

This one paragraph summarises the social and generational division that is prevalent in modern society. Ironically, the accusation levelled toward the traditions of the Anglican Church is one that is often directed toward contemporary Latter-day Saints, and sometimes, by the children of committed members of the church. Thus Harris uses phrases that would adequately describe current thoughts and feelings of a younger generation.

Harris’s description of the social and religious practices prevalent in England in the mid-nineteenth century also intimates that the common people had, hitherto, been prevented from informed participation in religion. Detailed discourses on the religious sects of the time provide the platform for a comparison of doctrines with Latter-day Saint beliefs that the characters have to deliberate over.

The belief that the church of Jesus Christ has been restored in the original form “that existed in the primitive church” and that “a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority”, are Latter-day Saint doctrines that are often seen as presumptuous by the wider community. Harris is the most blatant in his exposition of these principles expressed in the fifth and sixth Articles of Faith (The Pearl of Great Price 60) when he has Thomas Kington, founder of the United Brethren church, outline his reasons for establishing a church contrary to the dominant religions of the day:

“Of the sects that are organised on the earth today; none have any resemblance to the original church set up by the Saviour with apostles, teachers, priests, elders, pastors and evangelists.” (and) Why don't I take it upon myself to organise the United Brethren that way? . . . Simple. I have no authority from God.” (Harris 117)

This short statement is emphatic in its statement of doctrine but is then supported by lengthy descriptions of reasons for doubting and explanations of a selected course of action, thus providing the reader with guidelines for reaching these same conclusions. Once again, by using the character to lend a personal interpretation of doctrine, the author supplies the information without demanding resolution.

As often happens when opposing concepts are presented, questions arise as to the validity of the statements. Harris then infers a sceptical reaction of the character, Daniel, then has him ask a series of questions which might have occurred to the reader.

How are we truly saved? Are we to be baptised by sprinkling immersion or pouring?
Does the Trinity consist of three Gods or is there just one God? Are we to believe in

the rigid Puritan doctrine of predestination or a more open view of it? Are we saved by our works or by God's grace, or both? (Harris 119)

The written delivery of these questions is too rapid to convey a sense of genuine conversation but the issues are put out in the open for the reader to deliberate on and possibly continue reading for potential answers.

The seventh Article then alludes to various spiritual gifts that the Latter-day Saints believe are part of the blessings that can be derived through their faithfulness. These gifts are able to be used as the situation demands and relate to "the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth". (The Pearl of Great Price 61)

All four authors take the opportunity to present one or more of these attributes, particularly relating to the ability to heal the sick or wounded. Because the practice of healing has the potential to be controversial, this perspective is carefully presented.

McCloud contrives a situation where Percy has healed his friend, Allison. She has occasion to tell his sister, Louisa about the blessing.

"I was very ill, nothing was helping me and my father . . . asked Percy to come and administer to me."

Louisa leaned forward. "What does that mean?"

"The elders place their hands on the heads of the sick and anoint them with oil, and pray for the healing power of heaven . . . I can see you're having trouble believing me, but it's true. Some men seem to have a spirit of healing." (McCloud 197)

By having Allison initially observe Louisa's sceptical attitude, the reader is given the opportunity to feel the same doubt and then be provided with an answer. Again, like Louisa, the reader is allowed to make up their own mind. Later in the text, however, McCloud takes the information received a step further when Louisa's close friend is very ill. Desperate for help she turns to Percy, aware of how she wants him to help her but unable to describe it properly

“There is a sick man in my house. Could you come and do what you do?”

“You want me to place my hands on his head and to heal him?”

“... I believe you are the only one who can save his life now.”

In this manner McCloud conveys the tendency to turn for spiritual help when there is no other recourse but also demonstrates the evolution of faith in an unseen power. This has been enabled by Louisa's gradual exposure to the concept of blessings and the willingness of Allison and Percy to share their belief.

Lund, likewise, uses the event of Joshua Steed's wife, Caroline being severely injured in an accident where their eldest daughter is killed. Because of the threat of the mobs, it becomes essential to move Caroline but Joshua opposes the move for fear of hurting her more. His family insist that a blessing will enable her safe removal but he is adamant it will not help.

“No, Nathan.”

“How can you say no? . . . You watched (Joseph) raise Elijah Fordham from his death bed. How can you say that power isn't real?”

“Because,” Lydia answered for him. “Joshua doesn’t think God will let that power be used in his behalf. He’s afraid that Caroline will die because God wants to punish him . . .” (Lund 650)

In this dialogue, Lund manages to convey the details of a blessing but also present another common emotion when such an action is contemplated. Fear of failure replaces faith and prevents the sceptic from believing that success could be possible. By having the character, Lydia, pronounce her opinion on Joshua’s attitude, the reader is given the option of agreeing with the statement.

When Joseph Smith arrives unexpectedly and offers to give Caroline the blessing, it is Joshua who is the most surprised at the unconditional offer. Because Lund has portrayed Joshua as a man who lives his business life by being continually suspicious of those he deals with, it is more reasonable that he finds it more difficult to accept the suggestion. In one sentence Lund manages to convey the years of scepticism and ridicule that Joshua has levelled at Joseph Smith and the church and why Joshua feels uncertain of his ability to be helped.

Joshua was shocked. “You’d do that for me after everything that’s happened?”

Joseph looked genuinely surprised. “Of course.”

Joshua’s head dropped and he looked away in shame. “Yes, Joseph. I want you to give Caroline a blessing.” (Lund 653)

In this incident Lund conveys the desire of the Latter-day Saints to do good unto all men, whether or not they have slighted them beforehand. By representing this unconditional

attitude, the Latter-day Saint reader is given a demonstration of how to behave in a similar situation while the reader is provided a way to accept a conflicting belief.

Chapter Six

Opposition in All Things

Characterisation and Historical Data in Historical Fiction

Having analysed how Yorgason, Lund, McCloud and Harris have depicted key issues and fundamental beliefs of the Latter-day Saint culture, I want to consider their use of literary techniques in weaving believable stories in order to relay events in history. Thoughtful characterisation has enabled the presentation of multiple perspectives on proceedings while adherence to historical detail has helped to authenticate the activities of the main characters. At the same time, opportune dreams and visions have also helped to weave the individuals' paths together in the course of actual events in history. Each author has employed these literary methods to varying degrees to help establish a sense of identity with the minority group within the texts.

An accepted format in novel writing is for the protagonist to have an antagonist to continually thwart them in their striving to achieve their ultimate goal. In the case of the Latter-day Saints there were repeated instances of persecution from antagonists and the combating of harsh physical conditions to provide opposition and develop personalities. This opposition, in reality, provided for the continued development of individuals especially with regard to their testimonies of belief and commitment to their culture. New converts were not only required to consider the theological implications of their new faith but also the physical and emotional requirements to move from their homes into unknown territories.

As mentioned previously, many detailed accounts of experiences have been kept in numerous individual journals of the early Saints and it has been the work of the authors to place the general feelings and experiences in context. All four authors, as indicated in their prefaces and footnotes, have based their narratives on extensive study of these journal records. The unfolding of real events in the lives of these people has provided oppositional material against which other fictional characters can develop.

Helen Cam quotes Jane Austen when she makes the observation that human nature is the novelist's subject and that "human nature at every turn expresses itself in a conflict of wills". (Cam 4-5) A character who has nothing to challenge their personality or situation will present as a very bland figure that has little appeal to the reader. Conflict or opposition is essential to the development of characters within a novel and therefore to the ultimate impact of the text.

As befitting readers for children between the ages of eight and eleven, Margaret Yorgason utilises a discrete story with a distinctive moral in each short chapter in order to enhance the concept of the acquisition of faith. She describes incidents such as seeing Indians for the first time, and naked ducks and ducks wearing jumpers as actual events.

Margaret's paternal grandmother . . . wrote about the day the Indians first came to town. The story of the ducks actually happened to Margaret's great-great-grandparents . . . their flock of ducks ate the poppies that grew by the ditch, and it was a disaster. The story of the rooster following her as she planted her garden is told as it really happened. (Yorgason 45-50).

Even though a story such as this might seem outrageous, this clarification adds credibility to the stories and seems to validate the fictional content of the rest of the book. Use of this type of story also lends to the attractiveness of the text to young readers for by alternating humorous events with more serious challenges, a child is presented with a variety of perspectives.

Yorgason uses four supporting characters to provide the conflict and opportunity for growth for the main character, the young girl named Faith. Each of the characters is a key to Faith's learning simple lessons on life and relationships. Faith's father is committed to establishing a life for his family on the western frontier. Although still hurting from the death of his wife and second child, he still manages to keep Faith's life stable and interesting. With childlike innocence, Faith faces each new incident in her life using the concepts he has taught her to believe in, while Grandmother is another source of wisdom and humorous stories to help keep Faith focused on making correct choices. Will, the next-door neighbour and Chenoa, the Indian girl are also there to provide Faith with social and physical challenges. Between them, they provide experiences that help Faith to learn about friendships and loyalty.

Susan Evans McCloud places the Latter-day Saint church as a minority culture within the wider community by locating it both geographically and contextually in a number of different places and times. She initially shows the contrast between the status of the developing Latter-day Saint church in England where distrust and persecution are the norm as compared to the pioneer trek west where the Saints are unified within their own cultural community. When Percy returns to England to find his family, the reader is again transported to the wider community where, although over a period of ten years the church has grown,

there is still a lack of acceptance, even aggression towards it. Thus the social and geographical provides the background for other conflict to occur.

McCloud focuses on seven major characters - the six children of the Graham family and Allison, the woman Percy loves and who is a catalyst for the children finally uniting. Subsequent to the deaths of their parents, Oscar and Suzanne, the children are delivered into the care of different families and individuals. Over a period of ten years, the lives of the children take completely different paths, but given that all of the children originally came from the same low income, working class background originally, it is interesting to note how McCloud manages to represent the influences of both environment and heredity. The contrasting situations also provide the framework for McCloud to explore the differing effects of the church and its doctrines on the individual.

With regard to a generational connection, this is initially limited within the book by the death, at the very beginning, of Oscar and Suzanne Graham. They leave very little in the way of physical inheritance and what is left for the children to cling to is in the way of familiar expressions and admonitions that the parents have expressed and which become behavioural codes for the children as they set out in life alone. Percy, particularly, remembers more positive things from his mother:

“A happy family is simply an earlier heaven.”

But the pressure to reunite them comes from a final, frantic plea:

“My children . . . don't lose my children!”

Reinforced by his father's quiet request:

“Will you have prayers with them, lad?”

Most people who have had the experience of a loved one dying will identify with the wish to please them, even after death. At death there is no guile so the pleas are from the heart and the listener tends to feel honour-bound to carry out the wishes. Percy is given the double admonition not to lose his mother's children and to unite them in prayer. These are catalysts for the search he embarks on and which finds partial fulfilment within the doctrines and practices of the Mormon Church.

For the major part of the story Percy stands alone in his quest for understanding of the purpose of life once his parents are dead and then his embracing of the Mormon faith in fulfilment of many of his questions. His initial search is driven by a youthful desire to fulfil the wishes of his parents until the seeds of a testimony are sewn and actual conviction as to the validity of the principles supersedes obligation. By way of contrast, every member of his family is used to represent a facet of the wider community that refuses to accept these same principles.

Louisa, the oldest daughter, is initially shown to be a bright, hard-working, no-nonsense young woman who is philosophical about her future after the death of her parents. Upon adoption, she is destined to live a life of physical drudgery in a bakery which we later learn she barely tolerates but uses her hatred of her situation to fuel a passion for rising in social status. Reuniting with Percy after ten years, he finds that she has married and although not

enamoured with her husband, has provided herself with a respectable home and a child and no wanting for the comforts of life.

With a sweep of her hand she indicated the large, sunlit room with its costly appointments. "I waited for this. I waited and I got what I wanted . . . I got more than most people get."

Then in response to Percy's request that she find out more about Mormonism she responds defensively:

"I already said no." Her voice had grown emphatic and hard . . . "I have a reputation, my husband's reputation to uphold now, and my own social position . . . Mormonism would interfere with that. The Mormons around here have a reputation quite different from the one I must cultivate." (McCloud 113)

Thus McCloud portrays Louisa as representing that sector of society that focuses on material satiation of physical rather than emotional needs. A hardening of the heart is suggested as the means dispensing with emotion.

Percy's younger brother, Stanley, is depicted as having a very hard and impenetrable personality even as a child. His reaction to his parent's death is very sardonic as is his response to his adoption by Squire Beal.

"That's all right. What better is there for me? I'll take the old bloke on. I can give him a run for his money, eh, Percy?"

That was Stanley's way, forthright to the point of rudeness. (McCloud 12)

There is bitter irony in the fact that young Stanley not only "takes the old bloke on" but, over the course of next ten years, assumes many of the Squire's worst characteristics and in the end, actually engineers the old man's death. Once again it is the obsession with material wealth that becomes the driving force in his life.

McCloud creates another ironic twist in Stanley's personality by making Mormonism the subject for venting his anger against class injustice in society while at the same time dispensing his own cultural injustice. The reader is given to wonder whether this is a result of Percy's involvement with the church and is therefore an expression of Stanley's frustration toward his brother who was so far away and unable to speak for himself. Stanley's blatantly physical persecution of the Mormons heightens awareness of those in the wider society who manage to imbue the minority group with far worse traits than exist in reality and use these as an excuse to justify vengeance.

Upon being reunited, it is Stanley who challenges Percy's motives in attempting a reunion of the children, insisting that he has only come back for his sake not really for the sakes of the children. This observation causes Percy to reflect upon his grown brother's personality.

He hasn't really changed. He was like this when I left him; unsure of himself. Unable to love, to reveal anything that might come back and hurt him. (McCloud 152)

Laura is variously described as being tender-hearted, a good worker, pleasantly framed and inclined to obedience. Her placement with her elderly Aunt Judith allows her to develop in a

situation that does not compromise her at all and also the advantage of having her younger brother Randall as some familial contact. Her reunion with Percy is similar to that with Louisa. On the eve of her marriage she is swift to assure Percy that she has all that she needs and does not need any religious affiliation other than her husband's.

Young Randall, though sickly and dependent as a child, grows up to become the gentle giant, the silent observer who quietly absorbs the elements of a new faith and then acts upon them. He has many questions because he is so thoughtful but he has spent a lifetime learning to listen so is far more amenable to the new doctrines. His conversion is followed by an increase in stalwart strength.

The one Percy feared for most when they were divided as children, little Rose is the catalyst for the character development of her older brothers. Percy is compelled to act by his continual visions of his little sister and especially to reunite their siblings. Stanley becomes more obsessive in his persecution because of her embracing the Mormon faith. However, numerous references to dreams that Percy has had of Rose ensures his diligence in finding her despite severe opposition.

Historically, the collective power of minority groups and the supposed threat that they pose, means that they are destined to face some form of persecution ranging from mere avoidance to outright physical threat. The strength and difference of their beliefs, activities or appearance largely dictates the degree of mistrust they are held in by the wider community in which they live. The fact that that distrust is usually based on fear compounded by ignorance does not change the situation that many find themselves in – of having to avoid contact or to tread warily lest they offend and face recrimination from those in the majority.

McCloud manages to convey this sense of persecution as Percy, especially, interacts with his family and then, as an adult returning to England to find his siblings, with family plus a group of hostile townspeople.

The unpleasant thought came to him: I'm a marked man. I'm a Mormon, which makes me some kind of vermin, something less than human. He wanted to laugh, yet he knew he must not take this lightly; he knew there were those who thought it a most serious matter. (McCloud 120)

Later, after his encounter with the stranger on the black horse which leaves Percy in no doubt as to public feeling against Mormonism, a similar thought pattern is used to voice the questions many members of the church feel.

He rode on toward the inn, his mind struggling to comprehend this senseless opposition, this persecution of Mormons. He never would understand. What had they done to harm anybody? What was it men feared? What was it they hated about Mormonism? (McCloud 144)

Everybody is entitled to their own thoughts and by using this technique McCloud is able to voice the unspoken thoughts of others. The Latter-day Saint reader of any generation who has faced an unwelcome response because of his religious affiliation might well identify with being thought of as “vermin” or being “hated”. A Latter-day Saint who has not faced this and is unaware of history might wonder why the label would be used. The non-Latter-day Saint with a tainted view due to controversial information might nod and grunt assent at the

descriptions whereas the reader with no preconceptions might find the labelling unjust and read on to find out why.

Whatever the reader's perspective, selective use of printed thoughts does assist in helping the reader see that those in a minority do recognise persecution and wonder how to deal with it.

It also enables the reader to form an opinion or to wonder at how other opinions are formed and thus serves the purpose of creating new thought patterns or the possibility of such.

Similarly, the use of rhetorical questions where an answer is not expected but the groundwork is provided for more considered thought on the subject. Using this method, McCloud is inviting introspection on the subject while inviting the audience to continue searching for possible answers or solutions. When an author actually gives voice to a reader's thoughts or fears they tend to build a rapport which lends to a greater trust in what they have to say.

When issues of a spiritual nature are presented and when a character in a book can give voice to those questions, it gives the reader an opportunity to recognise similar feelings of doubt or confusion. This is especially applicable as issues that are spiritual in origin usually require emotional discernment rather than an outright factual response. An essential element of contemporary historical fiction writing is that the reader is able to feel that they are learning without being lectured at and that they come away from reading the text feeling that they have gained insight rather than reeling from an overdose of didacticism.

There is always a danger, as popular Latter-day Saint author, Dean Hughes comments, that "careless fiction can also distort" (Hughes 2001). Darryl Harris is essentially a historian endeavouring to be a novelist and his obvious fascination with historical detail often tends to override the narrative flow. In several instances when the information is delivered in short,

incomplete sentences, these portions of text deliver detail with no constructive contribution to the story line.

The St. Mary de Lode Church reminded Daniel of the Priory Saxon Church in Deerhurst: Granite construction. Added onto. Damaged by fire . . . The Norman nave dated to the eleventh century. Aisles added the next century. Tower fell in and destroyed the chancel at the end of the twelfth century. Tower and chancel rebuilt in a different style. (Harris 139)

Again, although this novel is meant to be a fictional representation of history, the author also seems to lose sight of this when in chapter 43, the character Theodore Turley conveniently writes an entire thesis on the history of Christianity in England and presents it to other characters. The twenty page 'thesis' describes everything from the Norman settlement of England through Catholicism to the establishment of the Church of England under the reign of Henry the Eighth. It discusses elements of baptism, the sacrament and religious institutional offices but, although the content is informative and does increase the reader's knowledge of historical detail, the thesis does not conform with the narrative flow that is central to a work of fiction. The reader gets the impression that the author sacrificed creativity in order to dispense information. Although an interesting literary technique for imparting information, the 'thesis' comes across as being too contrived and convenient to fit into the narrative. Harris could also be accused of what Liddell refers to in his analysis of principles of fiction writing as "restful" writing:

Another history that has to be reported in summary . . . is the history of public events that have been going on while the characters in the novel have lived their private

lives. This kind of summary is a temptation to the novelist: it is restful and easy to do, fills up space, and makes his book look ‘important’. (Liddell 62)

The third section of *Light and Truth* is dedicated to the arrival in England and the subsequent proselyting (missionary) activities of the Latter-day Saint Apostles from America. Harris uses actual journal entries recorded by Wilford Woodruff, an individual who was renowned within the early church for his consistent and meticulous journal keeping, and prefaces each journal entry with a fictional interpretation of the event. He then uses footnotes giving portions of the actual record to substantiate his story and use of real names.

Woven into Harris’s explanation of historical events and theological principles is a representation of his ancestor’s lives. He uses at least thirty-seven characters to provide these opportunities for growth for his four main characters, Bobby, Hannah, Derek and Elizabeth. Between them, these individuals present the reader with numerous questions that provide the reader with interpretations of the Latter-day Saint church and religion in general. The characters’ search for a “correct” religion has the support of actual people in history, namely the Latter-day Saint Apostles, while receiving opposition from family and members of the wider community.

By far the most ambitious characterisation is undertaken by Gerald Lund. With an impressive cast of over seventy active characters plus many others mentioned, Lund uses a combination of imagined and real people to support his main eighteen characters, fourteen of whom are fictitious. The key to Lund’s use of fictional characters is that they are all represented as close friends to Joseph Smith and his family, thus providing the reader with a very personal insight into the life of the Prophet.

Because this is the sixth volume in a series of nine books about the Steed family, readers have already obtained an insight into the lives of all of the characters up to this period - from the summer of 1841 to the summer of 1844. Benjamin Steed is the patriarch of the family and along with his wife, Mary Ann, they endeavour to guide their family of five children, their spouses and grandchildren through the trials and tribulations of establishing the Latter-day Saint church on the western frontier.

Lund uses conflict between the family members as well as from external forces to challenge the testimonies of those members of the family who are faithful members of the church.

While Benjamin had originally opposed the church and his wife and children, Nathan and Rebecca, when they joined, he has since become a stalwart member and ecclesiastical leader. The diligence of these four is a stark contrast to the wavering attitude of the oldest daughter, Melissa and the outright opposition of the oldest son, Joshua.

While Joshua's initial antagonism has been fuelled by conflict with his brother over his love for Lydia, now Nathan's wife, he has since settled into a loving relationship with Caroline and adopted her two children. Lund presents Joshua with continued conflict by having Caroline and their children Will and Olivia desiring to join the church.

Lund writes from within the Latter-day Saint culture, so that Joshua's conflict is representative of the wider community as he struggles to rationalise the doctrines of the church. His frustrations with his family are often fed by contact with people who are antagonistic such as the Missourians. By making Joshua a wealthy businessman and

merchant with high political contacts in the wider community, Lund also enables the reader to 'witness' the controversy and apparent deception involved in the persecution of the Saints.

Melissa's non-committal attitude to the church is rationalised by the desire to maintain equitable family relationships with her husband, Carl, who is not a member of the church. Lund uses this couple to represent those who are impressed with the lifestyle of the Latter-day Saints and enjoy the focus and security but are not convinced about the doctrinal elements. Their presence in the story enables the reader to be supplied with more objective observations about the Latter-day Saint culture as they live the expected standards of a Zion community without total commitment.

Caroline and Joshua's son, Will, is a key character in this volume as he represents the younger generation struggling to find answers without having the doctrines forced upon him. Will's story becomes representative of any generation as he strives to understand the principles of the restored gospel. Lund goes to considerable lengths to detail Will's conflict with his father, his desire to please his mother and grandparents and his romantic attachments with two young women - all of these relationships forming the basis of his determination to find his own answers about the church.

Will's sister, Olivia, is also pivotal in this volume because of her way of life and also her death. Her youthful vitality exemplifies the stereotype of a typical Latter-day Saint young woman, living and loving the gospel. Her untimely death provides the opportunity for all family members, regardless of their religious feeling, to reflect on the purpose of life and the nature of life following death. This situation lends to her mother's explanation of key issues

of Latter-day Saint doctrine that are often questioned while life runs smoothly but actively sought for when death occurs.

Conclusion

Building Bridges.

My intention in conducting this thesis study was to determine why and how works of historical fiction can be beneficial in representing the doctrines and practices of a minority culture in a manner that is both palatable and comprehensible to members of that culture and also to those from the wider community who have differing beliefs.

Using The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a case study, I have endeavoured to analyse how authors from within this minority community have communicated fundamental principles and practices through historical fiction. Have they presented stories that build bridges in understanding of these beliefs or have they merely created wider gaps in appreciation by the wider community by being too narrow in their representation?

I have studied how a minority culture develops and how the use of printed literature facilitates the sense of unity and therefore sustained growth of the culture. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has served as a representative minority community and study of development of the Latter-day Saint publishing industry has confirmed the importance of literature in its growth over the last two hundred years.

Certainly, it would appear that the literary representation of the Latter-day Saint has undertaken dramatic changes since Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's first efforts at depicting members of the culture. In the wider community, the Mormon stereotype has evolved from

the ethnic alien¹⁹ to becoming the consummate “good guys” in fiction. Within the Latter-day Saint culture there has been a definite trend towards representing the Saints as normal people who have been placed in exceptional circumstances whose responses have been strongly influenced by religious standards.

Closer analysis of works of historical fiction by four Latter-day Saint authors, Margaret Yorgason, Susan Evans McCloud, Darryl Harris and Gerald Lund, has given an indication of how both key issues and basic premises that differentiate the culture have been represented within works of contemporary historical fiction. Further study of literary methods such as characterisation and use of historical data have aided in the analysis of this argument.

As I have studied these four fictional texts and the historical background of the time period involved, I have come to recognise the potential problems of incorporating two conflicting imperatives, historical fact and questions of faith into works of fiction. As with any recounting of history there will be questions as to the historical integrity of the texts and whether the incidents described actually took place. It would appear that evidence of extensive research is the key to producing text that is considered historically accurate.

Probably the cause for most concern, for the reader, is the difficulty in discerning between what constitutes actual fact and what is fiction? A personal interview with Gerald Lund (2004) revealed that this is his main cause for concern in writing historical fiction and the reason for his use of extensive prefacing and progressive footnotes along with the fictional

¹⁹This reference to the type of categorization made of the early Latter-day Saints (Givens, 6) gives an indication of the “fencing” process employed by the existing Protestant groups to alienate the culture from mainstream groups. In contrast, the last two hundred years has seen a complete turn around in that treatment in literature, where the Latter-day Saint culture is now depicted as ultra-conservative with an almost “squeaky-clean” persona. This is, perhaps, representative of the fact that in modern society, religion in general is seen as “freakish” and Mormonism is now not so shocking.

text. Each chapter in his novels has discreet explanatory notes to help the reader discern fictional and actual people and events in history.

Darryl Harris has also used this technique but I feel that it has been used to excess, particularly in relation to very long segments of personal journal articles that interrupt the flow of the narrative. I feel that Harris's attempts to convey a large dose of history and doctrine have also led him into the situation that Peabody describes in her analysis of historical fiction, when she quotes Nicholas Hoffman in his review of Gore Vidal's *Lincoln*. Hoffman suggests that the work of the author could no longer be called a novel when he borrows too heavily from source material and is therefore "unable to digest (the) material, to integrate it into (the) book" (Peabody 1989).

In contrast, McCloud has not used any explanation other than descriptive passages within the text. She is obviously writing for a Latter-day Saint audience whom she assumes already has a reasonable amount of background knowledge. Similarly, Yorgason writes descriptively to supply the reader with material to visualise the setting but her only explanation of authenticity is contained in two brief paragraphs at the end of the book.

Because the authors are all writing from within the Latter-day Saint community, there is also a danger of a bias toward the culture and the tendency toward mythologising events that have directed the progression of the minority culture. Persecution could be easily portrayed with a bias toward the Latter-day Saints but Mc Cloud and Lund, especially, contrive to present both sides to the story through the eyes of their non-member characters and their associates as well as the members of the church. Both authors, however, ensure that a comprehensive account is given of each situation so that the reader is in full possession of details from

which to make a judgement. Harris tends to be more blatantly biased in his approach although I recognise that his characters' comprehensive accounts of religious differences are an attempt to explain why the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in the format adopted by Latter-day Saints.

The writer of historical fiction has the advantage of being able to determine what type of character will best illustrate a given issue or answer a particular question that a reader of today may ask. Their knowledge of historical events that has been gleaned through research allows them the scope to have their characters interact in such a way as to create a situation where these questions can be answered. To this end, I agree with Lee Wyndham's statement in her book on writing for children and teenagers, that "Story actors must be built to order, to fit the needs of the tale to be told" (Wyndham 27).

Given what they can achieve through their stories, the challenge is for writers to create a believable balance of historical fact with a smoothly flowing narrative and dialogue. There is always a danger, as Dean Hughes comments in the preface to his novel, *Writing on the Wall*, that "careless fiction can also detract". In this respect, I believe that Lund has earned his reputation as the Latter-day Saint master of historical fiction. The breadth of his characterisation and the fluency of dialogue enable readers to gain a better understanding of at least four different perspectives of most issues dealt with.

In another interview, Gerald Lund recalls an incident involving a woman who was not of the Latter-day Saint faith.

“In an autograph signing . . . I was seated at the table . . . and a lady just came over and slapped the table, and she said. ‘Love your books. Read every one of them. Not a Mormon. Never will be. But now I understand why you believe what you believe. Thanks.’”(Lund 2005)

In contrast, the characters that Harris has presented tend to be somewhat stilted, especially in their dialogue and extensive theoretical questioning.

An essential element of contemporary historical fiction writing is that the reader is able to feel that they are learning without being lectured at and that they come away from reading the text feeling that they have gained insight rather than reeling from an overdose of didacticism.

I believe that writing a work of Latter-day Saint historical fiction is largely about recreating the circumstances whereby personalities from the past have gained testimonies or conviction about principles and beliefs. A testimony can be gained either through process of elimination or by almost instantaneous confirmation. The main issue is that a spiritual testimony, or strong conviction of belief, cannot simply be given to someone, they can only be guided to it at their own pace and degree of comprehension.

Latter-day Saints who were part of historical events gained their testimonies through participating in the events. Contemporary Latter-day Saints, in order to gain an equivalent testimony, need not only to have those experiences recreated for them but to have them couched in terms of modern equivalents.²⁰ I believe that the power of contemporary

²⁰ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints pursues a comprehensive programme of restoring and maintaining museums and historical places in an attempt to assist modern generations in remembering the past. However, these are fixed destinations and therefore not

historical fiction lies in reiterating relevant portions of history and doctrine while having the advantage of hindsight and the ability to see what issues are particularly applicable in a modern context.

As I have suggested previously, merely researching and expounding history in lengthy tomes of academic argot does not necessarily make history 'live' for the uninformed. When readers can feel as if they are a part of the historical action and when they cry or laugh or despair with the characters, then I believe that historical fiction is really making history live for the contemporary reader. When they can read about a historical event and appreciate similar predicaments and emotions on their own lives then history is working literally for them in a coded format.

This study has had a profound influence on my personal attitude toward both historical fiction writing and personal history writing. I agree with Michael Austin in his comments on the function of Mormon literary criticism when he states that:

Like all spiritual systems of values, Mormonism depends on subjective spiritual experiences, and such experiences can never be reproduced by academic discourse or scientific discovery. The most we can prove through scholarly means is that Mormonism is interesting, that it has been misrepresented in the past. (Austin 1994)

There is a new standard that has been set in the writing of Latter-day Saint historical fiction typified by meticulous attention to historical detail combined with endearing characterisation. As this style of literature becomes more popular with the general public,

readily accessible to the main body of the church which now lives outside of the American continent. This reinforces the concept of taking the history to the people through literature.

authors need to be aware that they have an opportunity to literally build bridges in understanding between generations and between cultures.

Oliver Cowdery, scribe to the Prophet, Joseph Smith, warned that there would be a time when “naught but fiction feeds the many” (*The Pearl of Great Price* 59). I believe that fiction cannot, and should not, supersede the relaying of facts but that it can pave the way to a more thorough and less apprehensive investigation of the history and beliefs of minority cultures.

Appendix One

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

1 We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

2 We believe that men will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression.

3 We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

4 We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

5 We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6 We believe in the same organisation that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists and so forth.

7 We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.

8 We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9 We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10 We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; the Zion (the new Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

11 We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

12 We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates in obeying, honouring, and sustaining the law.

13 We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul – We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

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