Faithful Transgressions In The American West

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Chapter 1

NARRATING OPTIMISM, FAITH, AND DIVINE INTERVENTION

We'll find the place which God for us prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.
We'll make the air with music ring,
Shout praises to our God and King;
Above the rest these words we'll tell
All is well! All is well!

—WILLIAM CLAYTON, “Come, Come, Ye Saints”

The much-loved Mormon hymn “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” written in 1846 by English-born American William Clayton and sung by nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint men, women, and children during their pioneer trek west, captures the optimistic tone of Mary Ann Hafen’s Recollections of a Handcart Pioneer of 1860: A Woman’s Life on the Mormon Frontier. The song’s hopeful refrain (“All is well! All is well!”) reflects Hafen’s attitude as she writes about the challenges that her newly converted family face when they emigrate from Switzerland to North America. The life story that she constructs about her subsequent experience as an industrious pioneer and polygamous wife, sent by Brigham Young to settle Santa Clara, Utah, and then Bunkerville, Nevada, fits well within the tradition of Mormon spiritual autobiography. She faithfully follows the tradition’s major conventions by testifying of God’s existence and interventions, offering brief explanations of and defenses for various Mormon doctrines. By sharing her life story using the plural pronoun “we” with much greater frequency than the singular pronoun “I,” she also exhibits the communal nature of her life experience and her expectation for multiple audiences inside and outside the church.
As an autobiographer, Hafen writes about her own personal struggles on the western frontier; but also, as an eyewitness and participant ethnographer/historian, she writes about her Mormon community’s daily life as well. In fact, she works to establish credibility with readers by providing specific detail about numerous aspects of her own and other Latter-day Saints’ pioneer experience: their food, clothing, housing, customs, and industry. Most Mormon autobiographers tend to view themselves as historians. Hafen, Tanner, Brooks, Martin, Williams, and Barber all write individual history with a sense of the larger family, community, and national history impinging on their lives. Hafen’s life writing is especially interested in documenting Mormons’ pioneer experience colonizing the western frontier. She records their process of making adobe houses (40), softening water using cottonwood ashes, making soap from yucca, weaving and dyeing homemade cloth (46), boiling candy, preserving fruit (76), cutting and preparing alfalfa or “lucern” to feed cows, and making raisins from grapes (80). Each ethnographic detail shows Hafen watching herself and her community make history. Juanita Brooks, her granddaughter, will follow suit in the mid-twentieth century, although in comparison to Hafen, Brooks develops many more stories about her individual experience than her grandmother does in this autobiographical act.

Always moving from the general to the particular, Hafen usually puts her individual life story into context by describing experiences of the group. She then highlights her unique experience. Her discussion of the development of cotton production in southern Utah (what Mormons referred to as “Dixie”) offers a good example of how she moves from the general to the specific. The shift is often signaled by her changing from third- to first-person pronouns and from passive to active sentence constructions. To illustrate, she writes,

One of President Young’s objects in sending the people to settle southern Utah had been that they might raise cotton there. Cotton seed was brought to Santa Clara and planted. Then a cotton gin was brought in. . . . We had not yet planted cotton for ourselves. But we children were permitted to glean those partly opened bolls that were left after the neighbors had done with their fields. We gathered several sackfulls [sic]. By the firelight in the evenings we shelled out the cotton. We dried it further in the sun. And then I traded mine to a peddler for calico. How well I remember that first new dress. I thought it very beautiful. It was yellow with little red and blue flowers. As we had no sewing machine, I made the dress by hand with my aunt’s
help. I was then twelve years old. In the six years that I had been in America I had never had an honest-to-goodness new dress. Everything I wore was made from mother's old dresses. So this new calico dress made me feel like a queen. (45–46)

This general to specific technique demonstrates Hafen's desire to write as a historian of Mormon experience while also securing her own place in Mormon history. In general, she uses the first-person singular pronoun "I" only when describing an experience or character trait unique to her. More often, she uses the first-person plural pronoun "we." Recalling the important moment when she and other Mormons ended their long pioneer journey, for instance, she says:

At last, when we reached the top of Emigration Canyon, overlooking Salt Lake, on that September day, 1860, the whole company stopped to look down through the valley... We all gave thanks to God for helping us safely over the Plains and mountains to our destination. When we arrived in the city we were welcomed by the people who came out carrying baskets of fruit and other kinds of good things to eat. Even though we could not understand their language, they made us feel that we were among friends. (26–27)

Hafen's use of "we," "us," and "ours" de-emphasizes her experience as an individual and, instead, valorizes the experience and feelings of the group—both Mormon pioneers and her own family.

Early Mormons especially viewed themselves as history makers and writers. Many of them were immigrants who came to America creating and defining a new American religious tradition that began with the story of Mormons' flight west, where the LDS hymn "Come, Come, Ye Saints" promised them they would "find the place which God for us prepared, far away in the West." Hafen conforms to the convention of Mormon autobiography when she provides precise historical details, beginning with her predictable first sentence: "I was born May 5, 1854, in the valley of Rotenback, about three miles from the city of Bern, Switzerland. I was the second child of my parents, Samuel Stucki and Magdalena Stettler Stucki" (13). This traditional beginning is vital to a Mormon grandmother since she connects with her ancestors and posterity in this life and the next through her genealogy, frequently recorded in her personal history. Later, twentieth-century Mormon women autobiographers such as Brooks, Martin, Williams, and Barber will break from
strict adherence to this first-page genealogy convention, but the majority of Mormon autobiographers pay close attention to such personal and historical detail. Accuracy serves to validate and authorize the accounts of their own, their families’, and their Mormon communities’ lives.

In Hafen’s case, readers may rightly wonder how much of the style and content is her own and how much is her son Roy’s or her granddaughter Juanita’s, both professional historians. In her foreword, she explains, “My son, Roy, his wife, Ann, and my granddaughter, Juanita, have assisted with the writing by asking me questions to bring out more information and details. Roy has attended to the publication. I hereby acknowledge and greatly appreciate their help” (7). Both she and Tanner had sons who were university educated and who promoted their mothers’ stories, bringing the two women’s autobiographies to formal publication. Regardless of a family’s influence at various stages of the writing and publication process, however, Hafen’s autobiography should be viewed as a work in which she was an active participant. Her carefully crafted story means to entertain. She also purposely constructs an argument that intends to persuade both insider and outsider audiences of her thesis that God has been actively involved in her life. Furthermore, she provides significant evidence to support her narrative’s overall contention that obedience, faith, and optimism will yield ultimate happiness.

Although Hafen scrupulously records the exact journey of her family’s overseas travel to reach America, southern Utah, and Nevada, for the majority of her life, this Mormon mother is not mobile until after her children are grown. Frontier living ties Hafen to her farm and family. She doesn’t even return to Salt Lake City where she was married until forty-five years later. Her life experience as a Mormon plural wife in the American West is not about striking out alone for the territory but about being sustained within two groups—her family and her Mormon community. She views her writing task as recording the colonization of a land new to Mormons who sought refuge from religious persecution and a place they could call “Zion.” Readily accepting her role as wife, mother, and caretaker of the home, she also becomes her children’s primary wage earner and provider, a role traditionally reserved for men in Victorian ideology. Without explicitly addressing the enormity of managing both homemaker and provider roles simultaneously, her autobiography indirectly demonstrates the challenges she faces and the successes she achieves while negotiating this double burden.
Like many Mormon spiritual autobiographers before her, Hafen recounts the history of her family and Mormon pioneer community to inculcate family values and leave readers with a definitive witness of God and His gospel. Weaving numerous anecdotes together to form a compact, one-hundred-page autobiography, she works to prove that God has offset the hardships of her life with positive outcomes and that He has always buoyed her up with comforting blessings, dreams, and visions. Using concise historical detail about her late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century experiences, Hafen writes a more faithful than transgressive autobiography. However, the faith-promoting story that this Mormon woman writer weaves threatens to unravel when she discloses troublesome details about the circumstances of her second plural marriage.

In general, she organizes her text inductively and reserves her most explicit thesis statement for the concluding pages of her text. Accumulating numerous anecdotal examples of hardships overcome and small miracles or visionary dreams received, she offers her most explicit teaching moment at the end of her autobiography. Characteristic of Mormon talks or personal testimonies offered by church members in Sunday Sacrament Meetings, this inductive writing pattern builds toward her autobiography’s major theme. “I have tried to acknowledge the hand of the Lord in all things,” she declares. “Trials and difficulties of all kinds often turn out for our own good in the long run. The Lord knows better than we do what is best for us and we should humbly bow to his will” (99–100). Situated at the end of her life story, this thematic idea, with its thesis-like quality, controls the major content and shape of Hafen’s entire autobiography, providing evidence for the text’s utilitarian purpose—a literary convention in both spiritual and, later, secular American women’s autobiographies. Margo Culley traces the utilitarianism of many American women’s autobiographies back to the influence of the Puritans, who exhibited “ambivalence about the first person singular.” Puritans reconciled their discomfort with the self-indulgence of autobiography by publicly sharing individual conversion narratives meant to strengthen members within a congregation. “Thus, the individual autobiographical act was ultimately an act of community building” (10). Latter-day Saint spiritual autobiographies such as Hafen’s parallel these Puritan motives and traditions. With modesty, Hafen mentions in the foreword of her autobiography, “If the sketch is of some interest and if any of the incidents give encouragement to my dear ones I shall be very happy and feel fully repaid for the effort” (7).
Structuring Stories to Promote Faith

Characteristic of Mormon autobiography, which Latter-day Saints write in order to preserve what Mormons refer to as “faith-promoting” stories, Hafen’s pattern of presenting some past distress with a positive outcome or lesson learned begins at the outset when she describes herself at six years old, emigrating in 1860 with German-speaking family members from Bern, Switzerland, to the Utah territory. “For weeks we were on the Atlantic Ocean,” she writes. “As we children played around, sometimes we stood and watched the cooks kill chickens by wringing their necks. This seemed horrible to me. But after all I remember how good the chicken bones tasted that we picked up after the sailors had thrown them away” (19). This determination to emphasize the good, even when incidents bother her, continues throughout the account of her life. After a “great storm” on the sea, for instance, she admits, “We were so fright-ened that we did not go to bed but stayed in a group about the Elders praying for safety.” With restrained drama, she reports that the captain himself cried out, “We are lost!” Despite the captain’s fear, however, Hafen claims her group “did not give up hope.” Relying on God’s protection and exercising faith, she writes, “We had been promised a safe voyage. Next morning the sun came up bright and clear. We all gave thanks to God for our deliverance. The ship was repaired and we had pleasant sailing the rest of the way” (20). Hafen’s pattern of presenting “storms” in life followed by “pleasant sailing” becomes her most predictable storytelling strategy as she attempts to control readers’ response to the difficulties of her life.

Describing conditions during the pioneer trek west, when Mormons used moderate-sized handcarts that required them to abandon many beloved possessions, Hafen writes, “The first night out the mosquitoes gave us a hearty welcome” (22). Besides pesky insects, she acknowledges that they had “many other difficulties” (23) but always focuses the story of their arduous journey on the positive. She recalls her mother’s swollen feet, for example, reporting that the painful condition eventually prevented her mother from wearing shoes for a time. “She would get so discouraged and down-hearted,” recalls Hafen, “but father never lost courage. He would always cheer her up by telling her that we were going to Zion, that the Lord would take care of us, and that better times were coming” (24). Hafen’s autobiographical account clearly reenforces her father’s attitude of trusting in God amid tribulation. She briefly records
occasional complaints surrounding a past trial, but, like her father, she prefers to point readers toward future prospects, insisting on any event’s bright outcome. Following up her tribulations with some mitigating blessing or lesson learned accentuates God’s constancy in Hafen’s life. With each anecdote, she implies that those reading her autobiography who follow her example will also be blessed. No negative event, no trial, she argues through example, will go unredeemed or unrewarded if her readers will bide their time, lovingly follow God’s laws, and exhibit patience as she has.

Hafen repeatedly expresses admiration for her father’s self-sufficiency, physical strength, financial acuity, and skill as a farmer and a carpenter. She writes, “I was so glad that father was a carpenter; he could make us so many nice things [like a spinning wheel] that others did not have” (46). She recounts several episodes when Samuel Stucki overcomes hardships or when he is hurt but later healed. One incident occurs when a hill where he was helping to build a canal for water collapses on him. Hafen says that she remembers seeing her father’s “bruised” and “injured” body. She writes, “[I]t seemed impossible for him to live, but through the blessing of God and the administration of the Elders he was gradually healed and able again to provide for his family” (39).

Unlike the numerous stories in the autobiography that characterize her polygamous father as a heroic religious figure (57), Hafen includes little discussion about her mother, Magdalena Stettler Stucki. When she does appear, Magdalena is usually downhearted or discouraged. Besides the difficult journey west on swollen feet, for example, Hafen also recalls her mother’s dismayed reaction to the conditions she and her family faced in a new land. Repeating a memorable exclamation that her mother used to describe the harsh desert landscape on more than one occasion, Hafen writes, “Oh, these red hills! this roily water!’ [Mother] would sometimes say as she remembered the green hills and clear mountain streams of Switzerland” (32). Magdalena rarely appears as a distinguishable character in her daughter’s autobiography, except for brief passages expressing dismay, like this one, or an occasional anecdote, such as the time when Hafen tells about her brother falling in a river and his mother trying to rescue him with a pole before he is able to catch hold of a bridge and save himself (27).

Reporting her mother’s death in a relatively emotionless passage, Hafen writes, “When my [last] baby was just a year old, my brother Christian came down on horseback to tell me that mother had died of la grippe” (77). Briefly describing the return trip to Santa Clara for the
funeral, she talks about her siblings dividing up their mother’s possessions into “four piles” before they drew lots. “In the draw I got Mother’s bedstead that she had slept on all these years; and some of her nice dishes. We each got seventy-five dollars from money left her by a relative in Switzerland” (78). Her recollection seems matter-of-fact, almost indifferent. In fact, taken by itself, the text suggests that she may have neither admired nor identified with her mother’s suffering, even though she uses her mother’s complaints to express what was surely on the minds of many family members at one time or another. Ultimately, however, Hafen does not want her autobiography to focus on despair but, rather, on hope and the blessings that she believes will come after long-suffering.

In contrast to the flat account of her mother’s death, Hafen describes her aging father’s loss of vision and eventual death with sadness:

It pained me to see that father was fast losing his eyesight. Ever since he had been caught in a blizzard years before, his eyes had troubled him. Often they were sore and inflamed, and now within a year he was to go totally blind, and to be so the fifteen remaining years of his life. He had always been such a hard worker that the handicap of blindness was very hard on him He would sometimes cry like a child because he was unable to do much work. (78)

This sympathy for her father and the fact that many anecdotes in Hafen’s text focus on him suggest that she identified strongly with Samuel Stucki as a resourceful, skilled Latter-day Saint, who was also a stoic church member. She portrays Stucki as an ideal Mormon. In contrast, she portrays her mother as frequently suffering and in doubt, conditions that may actually have mirrored Hafen’s own life of struggle. Nevertheless, instead of exploring her mother’s discouragement and character, Hafen valorizes her father, who, her text maintains, lived a life beyond reproach due to his unwavering faith in God, Puritan-like work ethic, and Christian charity. Reading between the lines, it appears that Hafen’s mother sometimes tried to monitor her husband’s abundant generosity in an effort to preserve the material goods that she herself and her children might need. Yet Hafen downplays her mother’s practical concerns, choosing, instead, to characterize her father as the noble and admirable parent.

My father Samuel Stucki was a hard working man. He worked from daylight till dark, on the farm or in his workshop. He was liberal hearted and always
willing to share his meager means. I remember one time a neighbor came for flour when we had only a small amount ourselves, but he gave them some. Mother scolded him and said he would give the last we had in the house if someone else needed it. He was very religious, always paid an honest tithing and was strict in honoring the Sabbath and attending meetings. (97)

Such a passage reveals a telling dynamic at work in this family’s relationships. Here Hafen’s mother expresses concern for the material welfare of her children, which conflicts with her husband’s determined desire to follow the religious principle of charity at all cost—even to his family. A similar situation may have existed for Mary Ann Hafen, striving to provide for her children’s welfare and education alongside a frequently absent husband and father, John Hafen, whose devotion to his religious duties and responsibility to multiple families prevented any of his wives or children from ever receiving his undivided attention, support, and care. Despite her own or her children’s sometimes deprived condition, however, in Hafen’s autobiography she upholds the sacrificial ideal and reenforces its importance by praising her father’s life.

Transgressing Victorian Boundaries While Upholding Ideals of Womanhood

Despite the theoretical and theological gender distinctions within nineteenth- or twentieth-century Mormonism that may have existed between the separate spheres of Hafen’s father and mother, the preponderance of anecdotes from Hafen’s text reveals that in actual practice, no boundary between men’s and women’s work or men’s and women’s roles held much force in her own life. She writes about working in the field and on the farm alongside her father, brother, and sons, while also participating in the culture’s traditionally female endeavors: sewing, weaving, cooking, washing, and mothering. Such traditional activities coincided with Mormons’ practice of nineteenth-century Victorian virtues for middle-class white women: piety, purity, submission, and domesticity. As Julie Dunfrey explains, the “domestic ideal” of the mid-nineteenth century “dictated that a woman’s life be built around her husband and children in the private sphere of the home, where the wife and mother provided a refuge from the public sphere of men. Women were expected to be the keepers of tradition and the upholders of morality.” They were to be “angels” and, on the frontier, “civilizers” (524). Except
for their anti-Victorian practice of polygamy, Mormon women worked to uphold these domestic ideals. Besides hand sewing her first new dress in America at twelve years old, for example, Hafen writes, “This very same year I learned how to weave. Father made me a loom. My arms were too short to reach both sides of the loom to shove my shuttle through the web, so I had to lean from side to side. I was proud of the first dress I wove” (46).

Hafen never lived, however, as a member of any leisured class whose work was kept inside the home. Even as a young girl, she recalls working hard to tend cows with her brother (42) and assist her father in cultivating their land. She writes, “Father, John [Hafen’s brother], Rosie and I would cut an acre [of grain] in a day, by working early and late. My, how our backs would ache and how the sweat would roll off us. One year, I remember, I helped father sickle nine acres. That was the last year before I was married” (48). On May 6, 1891, when Hafen moves from her first married home in the Utah territory to a second in the unsettled area of Bunkerville, Nevada, where “more and cheaper land” was available (69), she continues her manual labor, supporting seven children, mainly on her own. Although she does not mention it, Wilford Woodruff’s “Manifesto” officially ending Mormon polygamy was issued in 1890 (see appendix B). However, church authorities did not advocate dissolving ties among already married couples. Rather, leaders encouraged polygamous men to fulfill their present family responsibilities, but they were not to marry additional wives. Hafen’s move to Nevada may, therefore, have been precipitated not only by the couple’s desire for land, but also by church efforts to end polygamy. Such a change made it more likely for a woman such as Hafen, whose second marriage was made more out of convenience than love, to separate physically from her husband, who was not financially or emotionally providing for her or her children much anyway. John Hafen’s continuing multiple family responsibilities, along with his calling as the Bishop of the Santa Clara Ward, meant he was often unavailable to support Hafen directly. His physical separation further forced his second wife to manage her own farm and raise their children in Nevada approximately forty miles away from him. With the understatement that characterizes Hafen’s writing style, she remembers, “[I]t was a new country and we had a hard time to make a go of it” (76).

Boundaries between male and female work often became blurred for women settling in the West. This was certainly true for Mormons, who
relied on the strength, ingenuity, and industriousness of women to colonize their newly possessed territory. Jill Mulvay Derr, a chronicler of Mormon women’s history, argues that LDS women “united to confirm the separateness, not the subservience, of woman’s sphere.” She shows that “biological realities and popular convention provided a common experience that was distinctively female” (169). In addition, according to LDS historian Leonard J. Arrington, the “distinctively female activities” carried out by Mormon women during the last decades of the 1800s contributed significantly to the economic growth and success of the Great Basin. Mormon women’s contributions were not “negligible.” Women were “heavily involved in the economic life of the community” (164). Relief Societies were officially designated to carry out five responsibilities: “systematic retrenchment; the establishment and operation of cooperative stores specializing in merchandise of home manufacture; the promotion of home industry, particularly the silk industry; grain-saving; and nursing, midwifery, and the maintenance of a hospital.” Arrington’s research demonstrates, “All of these programs were calculated to build the Kingdom by diminishing consumption and increasing production.” (“The Economic Role” 147–48). Mormon women participated in numerous projects that utilized homemaking skills tied firmly to a public world of commerce. For instance, besides writing about how Mormon women sewed clothes and braided hats for sale and exchange (47), Hafen describes the Mormon silk industry, explaining how she and other Latter-day Saints would exchange cloth for cotton at a factory in Washington. Demonstrating her involvement in the financial aspect of the exchanges, Hafen recalls, “I think we got about twelve and one-half cents per pound for cotton in the seed and paid fifty to sixty cents a yard for jeans—a cotton and woolen mixed cloth” (76).

In her study of pioneering women’s autobiographies, Lynn Bloom points out that Mormon and other frontier women autobiographers frequently portray themselves as “capable, resourceful, hardworking, energetic, vital” (129)—all attributes necessary for life on the frontier. Most Mormon pioneer wives in polygamous relationships had to be resourceful in order to sustain themselves and their children when husbands were serving six-month to three-year missions, living with other wives, or imprisoned for bigamy in the 1880s. For example, Hafen writes that her husband served a six-month German-speaking mission to Minnesota in 1874 when their first child, Albert, was two years old. Then in 1882, when their third child, Bertha, was just a year old, he
served a two-year mission to Switzerland. During John's absence, Hafen writes about picking cotton to support her family. "I did not want to be a burden on my husband," she claims, "but tried with my family to be self-supporting. . . . That cotton picking was very tiresome, back-breaking work but it helped to clothe my children" (79). She also writes about having "kept a garden," and, using characteristic understatement, she explains, "With a couple of pigs, a cow, and some chickens, we got along pretty well" (79). Like many other essentially "single" Mormon mothers, able-bodied children from the wives of other families also often assisted when a father/husband was away. In Hafen's case, she writes that Susette's older son, Johnnie, supported her "in every way he could," including providing her with wood (61). Describing the intermingled connections among Mormon plural wives and their children, Derr explains that "[t]he practice of plural marriage legitimized the commitment of one woman to another in a complex social, emotional, spiritual, and theological relationship" (168). Polygamous wives' relationships with each other and their children helped Mormon women maintain their homes and stave off the loneliness of their husbands' frequent absences.

Photographs published in Mormon women's autobiographies often best tell the story of men's physical absence from their families' lives. Frequently, as in Mary Ann Hafen's autobiography, the photos consists only of a mother and her children, like the 1895 family photo located in the center of Hafen's text (66). In this photo, Albert, then twenty-one years old and still living with his mother and younger brothers and sisters, looks at the camera with a stern expression. His frown, especially in contrast to the relatively pleasant or neutral expressions on his younger siblings' faces, may reflect the burden placed on him as he was forced to become the "man" of his family at an early age. In other Mormon family photos, absent men's images are sometimes manually inserted into the family portrait for the autobiography. Such a publishing strategy appears to try to insist that the man remained part of the family, even though he was physically absent for the picture and physically distant from his wife and children for long periods of time. "Just as autobiographies are obviously artificial representations of lives," observes Timothy Dow Adams in Light Writing And Life Writing, "so photographs are clearly manufactured images: sitters are artificially posed and lighted, made to conform to the laws of perspective and the ideology of the photographic culture. . . ." (5). In the photography of the
Mormon polygamous family, the illusion of togetherness is often ironically made evident through efforts to represent male presence by artificial means.

An 1885 photo of the Samuel Stucki family as adults, for example, shows a grown Hafen next to a superimposed photo of her brother, John S. Stucki, who was serving a mission to Switzerland (38). Similarly, a 1907 photo taken of her then mostly grown, living children also consists of Hafen, her adult daughters, fourteen-year-old son Leroy, and a superimposed photo of thirty-three-year-old son Albert, also away on a mission to Switzerland. Albert’s photo is placed in the family photo at the bottom of the picture over his mother’s breast (83). Interestingly and perhaps significantly, John Hafen’s image never appears in any family photo in Mary Ann Hafen’s autobiography—either alongside his wife and children or superimposed. The absence of such a photo suggests that John must have lived only on the periphery of Hafen’s and her children’s lives. Only at the end of the autobiography does a photo of him appear in his old age with two grandchildren from a different marriage—a frail gesture seemingly made to include him visually in Hafen’s personal history.

In addition to cultivating self-sufficiency, due to the frequent absence of her husband, Hafen boasts about her physical strength and thrift when giving birth. “I have never had a doctor at the birth of any of my children, nor at any other time for that matter, and I have never paid more than five dollars for the services of a mid-wife” (77). Hafen’s pleasure recording her frugality and her early money-making ventures serves to demonstrate the success she felt entering the public world of commerce often reserved for men during the Victorian age. She says, “I guess through those years I made enough hats to fill a wagon box. I would trade them to the neighbors for things which we needed” (47). When John is on his two-year Switzerland mission, Hafen writes, “I dried enough peaches on shares to buy me a sewing machine” (61). With pride, she lets readers know that she still had the “White” machine she used to sew for other people to “support [her] family while John was away” (62). Expressing regret for not also being able to assist John on his mission, she writes, “I could not help him out much, though once I sold a calf for five dollars and sent the money to him” (62).

Besides writing about the challenge of maintaining her family’s economic independence, the ultimate test of Hafen’s physical endurance and faith occurs when she writes about struggles within a female
arena—childbearing. Similar to the stories she tells about her stoic father, Hafen depicts scenes in which she faces her own hardships and potential death when giving birth. During her second pregnancy, for example, she writes that she was “troubled with chills and fever and finally a painful felon developed.” When her condition worsens, Samuel Stucki, as an ordained priesthood holder, administers to his daughter. Hafen implies that this blessing leads to her healing. Still, after the baby’s birth, she “had to go back to bed for three weeks and came very near dying” (60). As usual, Hafen downplays her suffering during this life-threatening pregnancy, never forgetting to express reliance on God's interventions to see her and her family through each difficulty.

Relating Divine Influences and Spiritual Experience

A pervasive strategy for illustrating God’s direct intervention in her family’s life is Hafen’s account of healings, especially those involving her children. She writes, for example, of Albert taking “very sick with a burning fever” when he was two years old. “For a whole week the fever raged. Finally, through fasting and prayer, he recovered” (59). Hafen’s use of a passive sentence construction with unnamed actors suggests that she and her Mormon community, both men and women, exercised the spiritual power to return him to health. Hafen continues to feel anxious about Albert when, later, he was “troubled with queer spells.” As a concerned mother, she asks for a patriarchal blessing for her son. “In that [blessing] he was promised health, that he should grow to maturity and go on a mission. After that,” she explains, “I did not worry about him” (59). Different from blessings of healing, modern patriarchal blessings are usually given to healthy individuals by an ordained male “Patriarch” once in a lifetime, usually during adolescence or young adulthood. Such blessings, which Latter-day Saints write down and refer to throughout their life, tell the recipients about their lineage and what their future life may hold if they obey the principles of the gospel. The story Hafen tells about her son’s patriarchal blessing once more illustrates the theme of her autobiography that trusting in God’s promises brings comfort and peace.

One dramatic example of healing that combines Hafen’s prophetic dreams, her belief in God’s blessings, and the importance she places on her female role as a mother and spiritual influence in her family’s life occurs in 1887 when Wilford, her fifth child, is two months old. In the
dream, she writes that she sees people celebrating and picnicking near Santa Clara, Utah. She says, “I looked up and saw a large, beautiful bird flying around. All at once it came down to where I stood with my baby in my arms. Then it seemed to be a young woman dressed in white. She reached out her arms for my baby, but I said I could not let it go. Then she snatched it from me and flew away. I had no power to hold it.” Believing the dream means she will lose her baby, Hafen feels frightened. So she writes that she “prayed the Lord to lengthen out his stay with us. And He did” (64). Her text implies that without such an influential prayer of faith, Wilford would have died as a baby. The anecdote is a clear message to readers about the spiritual power Hafen has exercised in her life. Years and pages later, when Wilford contracts measles at eight, he actually does pass away at a young age. Hafen recalls, “Shortly before he died he kept looking up to the corner of the ceiling and saying, ‘I’m coming.’ And then he left us” (81). Because of her earlier dream when he was a baby, Hafen claims that she “felt somewhat reconciled to his going.” Writing her autobiographical account of the incident, this now aged mother reflects on the past without the emotion of immediate loss and grief, telling readers, “I believed that his time had come; that God wanted him on the other side” (81).

Located at the end of her autobiography, Hafen’s story of Wilford’s death aims to lead readers to believe one of her most significant major claims—that she has, in fact, been blessed with God-given dreams. “In my Patriarchal Blessing,” she writes, “I was promised that I should have comforting dreams to cheer and bless me in times of need. And this has surely come true” (91). Two elements likely influence Hafen to delay this important claim and also constrain her from foregrounding the important spiritual aspect of her life experience foretold in her patriarchal blessing. First, Christian theology advocates humility, and Latter-day Saint leaders have always taught members to exercise discretion when sharing their spiritual experiences and blessings with outsiders or insiders. Thus, the self-effacing language she adopts from the outset fits Latter-day Saints’ fundamental belief in telling such stories with discretion and humbly giving credit and thanks to God for dreams or visions received. In other words, underplaying the several dramatic dreams that she depicts in her autobiography and delaying her explicit claim to divinely given dreams until the autobiography’s final pages coincide with Hafen’s belief system. In addition, however, she is a woman making claims to experiencing dreams and visions; therefore, she is doubly apt
to characterize what she viewed as undeniable spiritual experiences with the modesty, discretion, and understatement expected of a Mormon grandmother.

The dreams and miracles that Hafen inscribes as given by God would be considered by her Mormon audience to be “manifestations of the Spirit,” described in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12:8–10) and in Latter-day Saints’ Doctrine and Covenants (46:13–26). Such “spiritual gifts” were sought after and exercised frequently among nineteenth-century Mormon men and women. “As we trace the development of spiritual gifts among women in the church,” writes LDS historian Linda King Newell, “it soon becomes apparent that there was initially little difference between women and men as recipients of these gifts.” Spiritual gifts might include, for example, “the differences of administration, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith to be healed, faith to heal, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, tongues and the interpretation of tongues.” According to Newell, spiritual manifestations came then and now to members who seek them “according to their faith”—not their gender (112). Newell documents, for example, the numerous instances of nineteenth-century Mormon women speaking in tongues, prophesying, and participating in “blessing meetings” or “laying on hands” for ill family members, friends, or women in labor. In addition, Newell traces the positive attitudes of early church authorities toward Latter-day Saint women exercising spiritual gifts. She quotes Brigham Young, for example, asking members in a discourse, “Why do you not live so as to rebuke disease! . . . it is the privilege of a mother to have faith and to administer to her child; this she can do herself, as well as sending for the Elders” (qtd. in Newell 119).

Despite Brigham Young’s and other leaders’ sanction of nineteenth-century Mormon women’s right and duty to seek spiritual gifts, by 1880 a new statement from a subsequent First Presidency was issued in an effort to clarify what had become, to some members, not “proper,” “appropriate,” or “respectable.” In the letter, church leaders stressed, it is the privilege of all faithful women and lay members of the church, who believe in Christ, to administer to all the sick or afflicted in their respective families, either by the laying on of hands, or by the anointing with oil in the name of the Lord: but they should administer in these sacred ordinances, not by virtue and authority of the priesthood, but by virtue of their faith in Christ, and the promises made to believers. (qtd. in Newell 122)
Such statements, according to Newell, precipitated a twentieth-century “shift” in official positions concerning women exercising various spiritual gifts (126). She notes, “Over the next few years, an emerging definition of priesthood authority and an increased emphasis on its importance would remove more and more spiritual responsibilities from women and link them with the priesthood alone” (128). In other words, the exuberance of mid- to late-nineteenth-century Mormon women leaders, such as Eliza R. Snow or Patty Sessions, to seek and exercise spiritual gifts was dampened by the time Mary Ann Hafen began to record her life story in 1938. Such dampening is evident in the modest way she speaks about her spiritual life. Unlike an ordained, male, early church authority such as autobiographer Parley P. Pratt—who freely relates numerous instances of healings, encounters with heavenly beings, and visions received—Hafen adopts a more discreet posture. As a woman, she cannot hold a priesthood office, so she understates her spiritual dreams, even delaying her admission to having divine visions until her conclusion. Strategically postponing this aspect of her personal experience, she expects to have established credibility for her spiritual gifts by already having related a significant number of small miracle stories to back her up.

Many anecdotes that Hafen includes in her autobiography also explain various Latter-day Saint doctrines and, to her, provide strong evidence that blessings come from God when individuals properly adhere to gospel principles. By affirming such doctrines, Hafen solidifies her standing as an obedient and devout Mormon woman. Regarding the LDS doctrine of “The Word of Wisdom” (total abstinence from smoking tobacco or drinking coffee, tea, or alcohol), Hafen writes, “I thought it was my drinking tea that made me nervous, so I stopped it. In a few months I got over the nervousness. So I know that the Word of Wisdom was given for our good” (57). Similarly, Hafen uses her autobiography to testify that freely offering tithing, one-tenth of a person’s earnings, to the Lord results in similar blessings. She records an incident in which her father’s first year of planting grain yielded only eight bushels. “But he paid his tithing out of that saying, ‘The Lord will bless the nine parts left to last longer’” (35). Another story attests to her affirmation of Latter-day Saint belief in modern-day prophets and prophecy. She recounts, for instance, how Brigham Young foretold that, despite the Utah desert’s discouraging aridity, there would be “water enough to take out the benchlands” (39). As a faithful Mormon woman, Hafen declares, “Some people did not believe this but it has come to pass”
She includes this story in her autobiography as a witness to her own and other Latter-day Saints’ basic belief in modern prophetic fulfillment. Each anecdote reinforces a gospel principle neatly compiled into self-contained packages that, taken together, work to show that Hafen believes in the truth of Latter-day Saint gospel doctrine and in divine intervention.

Managing Plural Marriage

Hafen offers a wide variety of small miracle stories that intend to prove God has directly intervened in her life. To begin her life story, for example, she writes about seeing a mermaid as a child when emigrating across the ocean. Sailors claimed the sighting warned of an ensuing storm (19). Later she tells about witnessing horses save her own and her brother John’s life by driving away a mountain lion. “To me,” says Hafen, “this always seemed to be a case of divine protection” (43). Besides the seemingly superstitious mermaid sighting and her reported childhood rescue from a wild animal, she includes many more dramatic incidents that, to her, legitimize God’s direct presence and power in her life.

Chronicling an especially dramatic miracle story early on, Hafen tells about John Reber, her twenty-year-old crippled uncle, who had married her father’s sister. Reber was the first extended family member in Switzerland to convert to Mormonism after having a “strange dream” about “a clear stream of water falling from a clear sky” (15). Hafen relates the story for future family members’ benefit as a testimony to the extraordinary event that would eventually lead Hafen’s family to convert. She explains that her uncle “was impressed that if he could drink from that stream, he would know if their gospel was the true church of Christ” (15). Soon after, Mormon elders visited him at home. “He was convinced that this was the stream he had dreamed” (15). Witnessing to the miracle following John Reber’s baptism, she recalls,

I well remember the day my Uncle John Reber was baptized. He was the first to join the church in that section. It was mid-winter and the ice over the lake was more than a foot thick. He came down on his crutches to where they had picked through the ice. As he was helped into the water he handed his crutches to a friend who stood near. When he came out he walked on without them, while icicles froze on all his clothes before he could get them changed. Never again in all his life did he use crutches. The hump disappeared entirely, and his hands became straight. (16)
Besides documenting God’s divine intervention, this miraculous episode also foreshadows the importance of John Reber in Hafen’s life, hinting at her love for the man, even as a child. When she picks up the thread of their relationship thirty-four pages later, Hafen writes happily about becoming his second wife at nineteen years old. With Victorian decorum, she moves quickly through their courtship and proposed marriage in one compound sentence: “John Reber did not dance, so I had not been out much with him, but when he asked me to marry him I was ready to say yes” (50). Hafen portrays Reber’s first wife, Aunt Barbara, as wholly approving. She even helps sew Hafen’s wedding dress. Yet within a week of the marriage, tragedy follows. Reber dies when his spooked horses overturn the wagon that also carries Aunt Barbara, their children, and his newly wed second wife, Hafen, on a tragic Sunday ride. With her usual understatement, she writes, “This was a sad finish to my honeymoon, and I went back home to live with mother and father. Inasmuch as they were getting old and times were hard, they thought it best that I should marry again” (51).

The positive attitude Hafen maintains throughout her autobiography becomes difficult to sustain when she writes about her second plural marriage to a different “John”—John Hafen. In fact, this portion of her life story, which begins precisely halfway through the text, becomes the most transgressive moment in an otherwise “faithful” Mormon autobiography. Hafen expresses explicit displeasure with the circumstances of her second plural marriage, daring to record how she questioned her parents and unnamed “authorities,” who prompted her into a marriage that she did not desire.

When John [Hafen] asked me to marry him, I hesitated at first. But my parents urged me to consent, saying what a fine man he was and that by waiting I would probably do worse. Susette [his first wife] was opposed to his marrying again, but the authorities advised him to do so anyway, saying that she would be reconciled. I did not like to marry him under those circumstances, but being urged on by him and my parents, I consented. (52)

Telling this story about her second plural marriage, which resulted in seven children, becomes difficult to characterize in a positive manner. It also becomes the most troubled portion of her otherwise tightly controlled text, pointing toward complicated truths about nineteenth-century Mormon polygamy. The same love and joy that she remembers accompanying her first marriage does not precede the union between
her and her second husband, John Hafen, whom she marries within three months of John Reber's death. Throughout the account of her first plural marriage, Hafen mentions nothing amiss in Aunt Barbara's feelings for her, but she reveals Susette's displeasure when John Hafen proposes to take a second wife.

According to LDS historian Richard S. Van Wagoner, “Mormon plural marriage, dedicated to propagating the species righteously and dispassionately, proved to be a rather drab lifestyle compared to the imaginative tales of polygamy, dripping with sensationalism, demanded by a scandal-hungry eastern media market” (134). Early church leaders, beginning with Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor, declared forcefully that they found the idea of polygamy initially repugnant. Yet these same leaders, and others who came later, insisted that “Celestial Marriage,” officially acknowledged as a doctrine of the church in 1852 by Apostle Orson Pratt (Brigham Young's spokesperson) and officially ended in 1890 by President Wilford Woodruff, was “commanded by God to raise a righteous generation” (136). While many early Mormon converts were also disturbed enough to give up their new religion when they learned about the practice (84), most members eventually came to accept and understand the policy as a way to multiply faithful Mormons and secure eternal rewards. “Polygamy, the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” explains non-Mormon historian Lawrence Foster, “was a means of raising up a numerous righteous posterity in the families of the best men, a glorious eternal increase throughout worlds without end” (Religion 201). Church leaders and members also believed that living the principle of plural marriage was “essential to their salvation, that God required it of them” (Van Wagoner 136).

Although Mormons saw polygamy as the “model lifestyle,” contrary to popular belief, the majority of Mormon men were monogamous, and most of the polygamists married only one or two additional wives. Foster notes that the status associated with a polygamous family may sometimes have benefited Mormon women and made the practice more palatable: “Viewed as an honorable and desirable state, plural marriage could give women a sense of pride and importance” (Religion 212). Nevertheless, members of the church, both men and women, often felt pressured to pursue the principle by leaders who “deftly twisted the guilt in the hearts of Saints who were less than enthusiastic about engaging in the practice” (Van Wagoner 138). According to demographer Stanley
Ivins, this pressure usually “coincided with some revivalist activity within the church or with some menace from without” (232). Because Mormonism was originally “rooted in monogamy,” explains Paula Kelly Harline, the “religion demanded that [members] reconsider and reconstruct their tradition to incorporate polygamy” (119). The dramatic change from a long-standing “Western/Christian/Victorian/Puritan” tradition resulted in what Harline interprets in Mormon women’s autobiographies as “admirable” and “brave”—but often failed—“attempts to destroy old expectations and showcase new ones” (125).

Mary Ann Hafen’s own succinct explanation of the principle of plural marriage, which she offers for her audience of insiders and outsiders to the church, reflects popular Mormon belief about the doctrine that was circulated among members during the late 1800s.

At this time the law of Plural Marriage was being practiced in the church, and the authorities recommended that the men who were able to provide for more than one family should marry again. In this way more persons in the spirit world would have the opportunity to come to this earth and have bodies. It would also build up the church and the country faster. (50)

Throughout her autobiography, Hafen never names the church authorities who, she confirms, exerted pressure on members to seek the “crowning glory” of celestial marriage. Because Latter-day Saints are taught not to criticize their leaders, or at least not to do it publicly, Hafen uses terminology that attributed church policy to nameless leaders. She writes, “Many did not want to go into polygamy, but felt that it was their religious duty to do so when advised by the church authorities” (50). Here Hafen indirectly suggests that in the case of her second plural marriage, she herself was among the “many” who felt obligated to please church leaders and her parents when they prodded her into marrying, especially so soon after her first marriage ended in tragedy. Writing about the experience, she says, “This trip seemed different from the first one. I cried when I left home, and cried often all the way up and back. John [Hafen] was kind to me and did everything he could to comfort and please me, but somehow I was not happy.” This admission of grief is a rare moment when, in retrospect, she discloses a gap between devotion to the ideals of her religion and the real pain she experienced as a result of her second plural marriage. After all the years, though, she still refuses to offer readers much personal insight about her unhappiness, leaving her interpretation of the experience only at a veiled and vague “somehow I was not happy” (55).
Despite glossing over her pain, she does make known that John Hafen’s first wife, Susette, was unhappy enough about his taking a second wife that her displeasure caused John to “neglect” Hafen. Asserting that she did not accept the role of silent victim and insisting on her own needs, Hafen writes, “I told him that if he could not treat us alike I would leave him” (55). By recording this declaration in her autobiography, Hafen intends to show readers that she was not a submissive woman who merely accepted mistreatment and subordination. The passage informs her audience that according to her understanding of the principle of polygamy, plural wives were to be treated equally. Hafen wants Mormons and non-Mormons alike to know that she insisted on such equality, even if she ultimately did not appear to achieve it.

Not surprisingly, after admitting to the second plural marriage’s rocky beginnings, Hafen ends the story on a characteristically positive note. This euphemizing strategy was common among members, who were constantly scrutinized and criticized by outsiders for their beliefs. “Church members, recognizing that the eyes of the world were upon them,” observes Van Wagoner, “may have been inclined to put forth a sanitized, ‘storybook polygamy’ publicly rather than portraying the real hardships involved in trying to live the practice” (141–42). Writing that she fasted and prayed for three days about what she had said to John Hafen, Mary Ann Hafen avows, “The indifference and bitterness had gone from my heart and I loved him and forgave him for his neglect” (55–56). She ends this particular episode about the second plural marriage on another upbeat, but tenuous, note: “I told him what had happened and said I would stay with him if he would treat me right. He promised to do so, and after that, for several years [emphasis mine] we lived happy” (56). Hafen’s characterization of these circumstances intends to demonstrate that she was no shrinking, subjugated polygamous wife. Instead, she tells the story in such a way as to prove her strength of character and her attempt to achieve that ephemeral American ideal—equality for all, even Mormon plural wives. Unfortunately, like many Latter-day Saints who publicly supported the principle while privately suffering from its practice, Hafen moderates her criticism, choosing to end this transgressive moment in the text with an expression of faith.

Shaping this and all other events from her life in faithful ways enables Hafen to write about exemplifying submission to God’s authority and provides evidence for the blessings she believes she received for that conformity and submission. Although she conceals many details about
her polygamous marriage, Hafen does acknowledge some difficulties. For example, with the passage of the Edmunds Tucker Act of 1882, which solidified existing antipolygamy laws, many polygamous families suffered from outside officials coming to imprison Latter-day Saint men, leaving their wives and children to support themselves for extended periods. To avoid capture, most church leaders were forced into hiding and hundreds of other Mormon men were imprisoned (Ivins 232). Explaining that her family dealt with the issue by placating officials with alcohol and by capitalizing on outsiders' stereotyped notions of poor, victimized Mormon women, Hafen writes, “In the 1880s, when the Government sent marshals to arrest polygamists, John tried to keep out of their way. But he met them two or three times in a kindly way, treating them with wine, and they told afterwards that they wouldn’t arrest a man who was taking care of the widows” (63). Hafen’s home life is disrupted by the arrests, but like some Mormon families, she and her family avoided the worst trouble possible by moving around. “Several times when I heard that marshals were in town,” she explains, “I took my children and some sewing, went across the creek into the field and stayed there until night. Then John moved Anna and me over to St. George, where we stayed for two months, when the marshals were most active. John was never arrested” (63). Despite these difficulties with the government, the message she means to communicate to her Mormon family and community, as well as to skeptical and often critical outsiders who view Mormon polygamous wives as degraded individuals, is that she valued herself and believed she deserved respect, despite a coerced choice to marry John Hafen.

Toward the final pages of her autobiography, Hafen maintains that her second husband “was a good man, reared fine children, and did the best he could by us all” (88). Later, she openly admits, “Polygamy was hard to live, both for the man and the women. But we went into it in obedience to the Lord’s command and strived to subdue our jealous feelings and live in accord with the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (91). While she says that John tried to help her “frequently” when she first moved to Bunkerville, Nevada, she points out that after a while “he had his hands full taking care of his other families” (88) in Santa Clara, Utah. According to her account, her second husband married four women during his lifetime: Susette in 1861 (52), Hafen in 1873 (55), Anna in 1884 (62), and Rosie, Hafen’s widowed sister, in 1885 (62). Also, after returning from his second mission in 1884, Hafen explains
that John was called to be Bishop of the Santa Clara Ward—a heavy church responsibility that would last twenty-eight years (62).

Near her conclusion, Hafen includes a photo of John as a grandfather in 1924 with two young grandchildren, Karla and Norma, from a different but unidentified marriage (89). Because Hafen’s autobiography includes no portraits of John with her own children, the photo emphasizes how far removed Hafen and her children must have grown from this bearded patriarch by the end of his life. Sympathetically, though, Hafen gives her mostly absent and overextended husband the last say about Mormon plural marriage. His words appear to sum up her own resolute feelings:

Some time before his death [in 1928], John said, “I complied with the celestial law of plural marriage in obedience to the church authorities because the command was divinely inspired. It cost me much heartache and sorrow and I have shed many tears over it. But I feel that the sacrifices I made have brought great blessings, and I am satisfied.” (91)

Imagining Metaphors for a Life

Looking from past to present settings, Hafen frames the anecdotes that make up the story of her life by romanticizing cherry, linden, and mulberry trees that provided her family beauty, shade, and happiness surrounding their homes. At the beginning of her story she recalls large cherry and linden trees outside her parent’s house in Bern, Switzerland: “I have walked through many orchards since, but those linden flowers of my childhood days seem to be more fragrant than any others I have ever smelled. People said the blossoms might be used for medicine, but so far as I know the greatest value was the delight they gave us children” (14). Likewise, at the end of her story, Hafen describes the large trees, mulberries in this case, growing around her second home in Bunkerville, Nevada. The tall foliage shelters her family from the harsh sun’s rays and becomes an overarching symbol of blessings bound to appear, but only after a period of waiting and deprivation: “Albert dug up three young mulberry trees from Mesquite and planted them around our shadeless house. Now, after forty-seven years of growth, those mulberry trees completely shade the old place” (74). In his early studies of autobiography, Olney argues that “[t]he self expresses itself by the metaphors it creates and projects, and we know it by those metaphors” (Metaphors 34).
Hafen’s repeated reference to the blessing of large, old shade trees that offer beauty and protection, but only following years of slow growth, resembles an earlier controlling metaphor of her autobiography—smooth sailing after a difficult storm. By recommending faithful actions and optimistic attitudes to ease readers along their own challenging life journeys, Hafen intends her autobiography to become a guide for smooth sailing and a book of encouragement that will help readers look forward to shade trees in their own lives.

From the autobiography’s beginning, Hafen hints at her thesis by amassing numerous anecdotes to prove God’s repeated interventions, large and small, and by granting Him devotion and discretion, even during her most difficult tests. She leaves her most sermon-like statement until the end, purposefully leading readers to the inescapable conclusion that God is good and that if His children will rely on him and keep the faith, they will be blessed. She delays her boldest assertions until after recounting numerous examples from her life as a blessed Christian, assuming that readers will be less skeptical about the spiritual manifestations she claims to have experienced and proving that God was always working directly in her life.

By convention, Hafen offers a final testimony to conclude her life story: “The truths of the Gospel are ground deep in my soul. God lives to reward our good works and His Gospel is the true way to Life and salvation” (99). She also, however, bestows a mother’s blessing. Any Latter-day Saint reading these closing paragraphs would recognize the diction and phraseology commonly heard at Testimony Meetings or during formal blessings, usually offered by male priesthood holders. The significant difference between this and another parting Mormon blessing, however, is that no Latter-day Saint man offers it—not a father, ordained priesthood holder, Patriarch, or church Authority. Instead, Hafen adopts the language of Mormon priesthood blessings as her own. Speaking directly to the posterity that she would consider her most important reading audience, this family’s matriarch concludes: “I pray the Lord to bless you and guard you. May His spirit be ever with you to guide and comfort you through life, that you may walk in obedience to his laws and commandments and gain salvation and life eternal in His presence, is the humble prayer of your loving mother, Mary Ann Hafen” (100).