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A Biographical Study of Elizabeth D. Kane

Darcee D. Barnes
Brigham Young University - Provo

ABSTRACT

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF ELIZABETH D. KANE

Darcee D. Barnes

Department of History

Master of Arts

This is a biographical study of Elizabeth D. Kane (1836-1909), travel writer and wife of Thomas L. Kane, non-Mormon friend of the nineteenth-century Mormons of Utah. Primary source materials are mainly Elizabeth's fourteen diaries (spanning the years 1853 to 1909), letters and narrative accounts. Elizabeth was greatly influenced by Thomas, while maintaining her independence. She was interested in religion and feminist issues, and those interests, combined with her marital relationship, shaped her life's direction. Thomas Kane's interest in the Mormons also influenced Elizabeth's religious and feminist views, and she initially struggled with accepting Thomas's work for them because of their practice of polygamy. When Elizabeth went to Utah in 1872, her religiosity, feminism, and marriage provided the context in which she wrote her travel accounts, *Twelve Mormon Homes* (1874) and *A Gentile in Utah's Dixie* (1995).

Elizabeth and Thomas had a companionate marriage. Theoretically they were equal partners, but Thomas often acted as Elizabeth's mentor, introducing her to well-

known feminists, encouraging her to attend medical school and develop her writing talents. Religion was important to her, particularly as she tried influencing Thomas to join her Christian (Presbyterian) faith. Elizabeth thought about the Women's Rights movement and wrote her own ideas regarding women's role, endorsing feminist concepts like voluntary motherhood and addressing issues like polygamy and the double moral standard.

This study analyzes Elizabeth's travel accounts which provide information on rural Utah and Mormon polygamous women from the perspective of a trusted outsider. During her Utah visit, Elizabeth changed from being resentful of the Mormons because of Thomas's devotion to them, to being friendly towards them. After Thomas's death in 1883, Elizabeth worked as a local leader in the Women's Christian Temperance Union and was a prominent citizen of Kane, Pennsylvania, the town which she and Thomas founded in the 1860s.

This study is important to women's history because Elizabeth represents how many nineteenth-century women became more independent and socially conscious. It is significant in Mormon history because of her travel accounts and because her writings provide information on the important relationship between Thomas L. Kane and the Mormons.

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF ELIZABETH D. KANE

by

Darcee D. Barnes

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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a dissertation submitted by

Darcee D. Barnes

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

7-5-02
Date

Carol C. Madsen
Carol C. Madsen, Chair

7-5-02
Date

Brian Q. Cannon
Brian Q. Cannon

7-5-02
Date

Jill M. Derr
Jill M. Derr

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Darcee D. Barnes in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

7-5-02
Date

Carol C. Madsen
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

Thomas G. Alexander
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

Sally H. Barlow
Associate Dean, College of Family, Home and Social Sciences

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

At the end of Elizabeth Kane's three-month visit to the Mormons in Utah in 1872 she wrote to her daughter, "You will not understand how I have come to pity this people; for you know how hard it was for me to make up my mind to come among them and associate with them. . . . I have written to you as a sort of penance for the hard thoughts and contemptuous opinions I have myself instilled into you."[1] She also wrote in her diary that her willingness to stay at Brigham Young's Lion House in Salt Lake City at the end of the visit was "a public testimony to the little circle of those to whom my name is known, that my opinion of the Mormon women had so changed during the winter that I was willing to eat salt with them."[2] These statements were recorded in her travel account, *A Gentile in Utah's Dixie, 1872-73: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal* (1995). This book, along with her other, better known travel account, *Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey through Utah to Arizona*, originally published in 1874, stand out as unique commentaries on nineteenth century Mormon life.

Elizabeth Kane and her husband, Thomas L. Kane, visited Utah in late 1872 and early 1873. Thomas was a great friend of Brigham Young, and although not a Mormon himself, he was very friendly to the Mormon people. Elizabeth was not so friendly to the Mormons, and as illustrated in the above quotes, her "contemptuous opinions" of them

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[1]Elizabeth D. Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal*, eds. Norman R. Bowen and Mary Karen Bowen Solomon (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1995), 170.

[2]Ibid., 177.

had made her reluctant to go to Utah. In part, this thesis will examine how Elizabeth Kane went from one extreme –despising the Mormons–to the other–calling them her friends. It will look at the reasons why she originally did not like the Mormons, in spite of her husband's strong desire to help them.

However, this will be a study of more than just her relationship with the Mormons. Because she left several diaries and other writings, her experiences among the Mormons can be analyzed by looking at three elements that characterized her approach to life. This thesis will examine Elizabeth Kane's life, not as a full biography, but rather highlighting these three specific themes, which are all interrelated: Elizabeth's religiosity, her relationship with her husband, and her views on women's issues. From the perspective of these important themes, Elizabeth's two travel accounts and feelings toward the Mormons will be analyzed in detail.

Elizabeth Kane is known for her travel accounts, but other aspects of her life, expressed in several unpublished diaries, are very interesting and worth studying as well. She was a writer, physician, and reformer at a time when most women were confined mainly to their homes. She was also a secretary and advisor to her husband, helping him with his many activities, including his work on behalf of the Mormons. During her lifetime, she published the aforementioned travel account, tried her hand at a work of fiction, which she never finished, and wrote family and community histories. She was among the first students at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania in the early 1850s and was intensely interested in women's issues, although not a member of any specific organization promoting women's rights. She was also very active in the Temperance

movement, being a local leader in the Women's Christian Temperance Union in the late nineteenth century.

Elizabeth Kane, like most nineteenth century women, considered herself first and foremost wife to her husband. She was his companion in the home, and she felt strongly that their marriage and friendship were of utmost importance. She was also a very devout Presbyterian with feminist leanings. She was intensely interested in religion and women's issues, and these interests, combined with her relationship with her husband, largely shaped the direction of her life. Thomas Kane's lifelong interest in the Mormons also had a heavy influence on Elizabeth's religious and feminist views, and for a long time she struggled with accepting Thomas's work for them mainly because of their practice of polygamy, but also perhaps because of what she saw as their lower-class status. When Elizabeth did go to Utah, her religiosity, feminism, and love for her husband provided the context in which she perceived the Mormons. It was from that context that she wrote her travel accounts, which are valuable commentaries on nineteenth-century Mormon life.

Biographical Sketch

> On May 12, 1836, my second daughter, Elizabeth Dennistoun, now Mrs. T.L. Kane, was born. Our accoucheur at that time was Mr. Robert Bickersteth, an eminent practitioner in Liverpool .... He was very late in coming, and his absence gave me a great fright and serious loss of temper. However, "All's well that ends well," and Bessie's life was preserved for her to become a blessing to all about her as daughter, wife, and mother.[3]

Thus did William Wood, the father of Elizabeth Kane, describe the circumstances of his daughter's birth. Elizabeth, or Bessie as she was known to friends and family, was

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[3]William Wood, *The Autobiography of William Wood, 2 Volumes* (New York: J.S. Babcock, 1895), 1:102.

born into the family of William Wood and Harriet Kane. Her parents were very much in love, and the family was quite happy in their Liverpool home. William was a Scotsman who, while traveling in New York City, met and fell in love with an American girl, Harriet Kane. Harriet was the youngest daughter of the aristocratic John Kane family. They were soon engaged and, after a separation of a year, the young couple were married in New York City in September 1830. Afterwards they moved to Glasgow, Scotland, where William was employed in the family mercantile business Dennistoun & Company.

By the time their third child, Bessie, was born, William had begun working in the Liverpool branch of Dennistoun & Co., and Liverpool was where she spent her early childhood. Elizabeth's father's two-volume autobiography contains several letters between him and his wife, mostly while he was away on business. These letters show a constant concern for their children. In late 1841 and early 1842, William was gone for months trying to help the family's struggling business. Harriet wrote to him often, and her letters are filled with news of the children, particularly pride in their successes in schooling and in their spirituality. She wrote of teaching Bessie and her younger daughter, Harriet, while the older children went to a tutor: "[Bessie] is coming on well in her reading, writing, and spelling, and I now teach her a little geography and history." In the same letter Harriet told William how blessed he was to have children who "are giving evidence that they are the children of God. . . . They are all so fond of the Bible, and their talk is like that of men and women--even to dear wee Bessie."[4]

From the tone of her parents' letters, it is evident that Elizabeth Kane grew up in a

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[4]Ibid., 1:235.

loving and religious home, and at a young age she was internalizing the Victorian Protestant values she was taught. She was also taught in academic subjects (as mentioned above) just as other young girls in her position were. But unlike other girls from her social class, she would later pursue her education to greater heights, attending and graduating from the Philadelphia Women's Medical College.

When Elizabeth was eight years old, her father relocated the family to New York City where he began working in the New York office of Dennistoun & Co. Two years later, her mother died within days of giving birth to her seventh child, and the children were left with a father who was not quite sure what to do with them. Charlotte, Elizabeth's older sister, tried to take care of her young siblings, but at age thirteen this was quite difficult. William's sister came to New York to stay with them, but she married soon after she arrived. Elizabeth recorded the effect of her mother's death on their family at the end of her father's autobiography, which she completed after his death in 1894 (he died before finishing it). She wrote that her father was not as comfortable around young children as her mother had been, and so their family life, which had been idyllic before Harriet's death, became rather unhappy.[5]

William married his deceased wife's cousin, Margaret Lawrence, a few years after Harriet's death. The children were unable to bond with their new stepmother and family life did not resume peacefully. They suddenly went from a happy and peaceful home to an emotionally insecure one (although they did become closer to their father after their

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[5]Ibid., 2:249-260 and 2:385.

mother's death).[6] This situation would never be fully resolved while Elizabeth was still in the household. Perhaps that was why, as early as age twelve, she told her family that she was going to marry her second cousin Thomas Kane.[7]

Then, in 1853, when Elizabeth was sixteen-years old, Thomas Kane, a young attorney, married her and thus delivered her from her unpleasant situation. Perhaps it was because he rescued her from an unhappy home that she continued to have a hero-worship relationship with him after their marriage. He was also fourteen years her senior, which may have made him a sort of substitute father as well. They married in New York City and then Elizabeth moved to Thomas's home city of Philadelphia.[8]

In the first years of their marriage, Elizabeth periodically attended the Philadelphia Female Medical College, of which her husband was an incorporator, although she would not finish her degree until 1883. Initially, the births of two children, Harriet and Elisha, in 1855 and 1856, interrupted her schooling. But there were soon other complicating factors as well, including a major move and the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Soon after their first two children were born, Thomas began to show interest in developing land in remote McKean County, located in the mountains of northwestern Pennsylvania. He

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[6]E. Kane, "Continuation by Mrs. Elizabeth D. Kane," in Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:389.

[7]Elizabeth Kane's mother, Harriet Kane Wood and Thomas Kane's father, John K. Kane were first cousins. Their family relationship is explained in Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:71-74.

[8]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, May 11, 1853, Thomas L. And Elizabeth D. Kane Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, hereafter referred to as BYU.

began taking his family there for the summers in 1857, and by the summer of 1858, they had made plans to move there permanently.[9]

These plans, however, were delayed with the onset of the Civil War. Thomas was among the first from Pennsylvania to volunteer for the Union army and he organized a regiment from northwestern Pennsylvania, known as the Bucktail Regiment.[10] From 1861 to 1863, when Thomas left the army because of injuries, Elizabeth and her children lived with Thomas's aunt in Philadelphia. They had two more sons during the war: Evan, born in 1861 and William (who later changed his name to Thomas), born in 1863.

After Thomas returned from the war, the family moved back to McKean County where they founded the town of Kane. They spent the rest of their lives there, although they frequently went to Philadelphia, especially during the winters. During their first two winters in Kane, the family lived in a barn while waiting for their house to be completed. Thomas worked in land development and the lumber business. This move was a major change in Elizabeth's life, as she had been a lifelong urban dweller. McKean County was largely unsettled, and they were building a new community, so Thomas and Elizabeth had taken on a pioneering role.

Having made contact with the Mormons as early as 1846, with several visits thereafter, Thomas was invited to spend a winter in Utah. He accepted the invitation, as the family thought that the mild climate might benefit Thomas's health, which was

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[9]E. Kane 1857-1858 Journal, June 29, 1857 and February 19, 1858; and E. Kane 1858-1860 Journal, August 10, 1858, Kane Papers, BYU.

[10]Albert L. Zobell, *Sentinel in the East: A Biography of Thomas L. Kane* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1965), 181-184.

generally quite poor, and was particularly so after the rigors of an unsuccessful Congressional campaign.[11] They left their two oldest children, Harriet and Elisha, with relatives so they could continue attending school, while they, along with their youngest two sons, traveled to Utah in late 1872. Thomas had an idea of writing a biography of Brigham Young and he was interested in the development of the West, so he was no doubt excited about the journey. Elizabeth, on the other hand, was very reluctant to go and associate with the Mormons, and she later wrote that she had consented only because she hoped that the trip would benefit Thomas's health.[12]

After they returned from Utah, the family was beset with serious financial difficulties. It was not until the 1880s that they became relatively secure through the coming of the Erie Railroad to Kane. This increased the value of their lands in McKean County and brought a return on their investment in the development of the area.[13] Elizabeth was then able to finish her medical education, attending school with her daughter and graduating in 1883. Thomas died at the end of that same year from pneumonia.

Elizabeth outlived Thomas by twenty-six years, dying in 1909 at the age of 73. Those years were very productive for her. She continued her interest in medicine and, although she never practiced independently, her daughter and two sons, who also became

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[11]Mary Karen Bowen Solomon, "Profile of Elizabeth Kane," in Elizabeth Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal*, (Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City, 1995), xxv.

[12]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 170.

[13]Solomon, xxvi.

doctors, often consulted with her regarding their patients. She also helped with the founding of a hospital in Kane. During her many years as a widow, her time was mainly divided between medicine and involvement in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.[14] Elizabeth Kane's influence left its mark on her family and her Pennsylvania community, but because she wrote so perceptively about the Mormons, her influence extended to a far wider circle.

Dealings with the Mormons

Elizabeth Kane has been remembered for her writings on the Mormons and for her relationship to Thomas L. Kane. And, of course, she most likely would not have written about the Mormons if she had not been his wife. Thomas Kane began his relationship with the Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in 1846 after they had been driven from Nauvoo, Illinois. An idealistic and ambitious young man of twenty-two, he heard a Mormon elder, Jesse Little, preaching in Philadelphia. After the meeting, Thomas was introduced to Little and told him that he was interested in traveling West with the Mormons. Thomas went to Washington and saw various government officials with the intent of getting aid for them. Thomas's father, John K. Kane, was a federal judge and had been very active in the Democratic Party which controlled the White House. With the help of his father's influence with U.S. President James K. Polk, he secured permission for the Mormons to temporarily settle on the Indian lands near the Missouri River and made arrangements to muster a Mormon battalion to serve in the Unites States' war with Mexico. He then traveled with Little to Winter Quarters, a

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[14]Ibid., xxvii.

temporary Mormon settlement on the Missouri River.[15]

While at Winter Quarters, Thomas became quite ill and was nursed back to health by the Mormons. He was always very grateful for this and he and the Mormons became quite attached to each other. After he had recovered, he left the Latter-day Saints or Saints, as they were often called, and went home by way of Nauvoo where he saw the camps of the poorest Saints who did not have the means to begin their journey West but who had been forced out of the city anyway. It was this pitiful scene which he recounted in his famous address given to the Philadelphia Historical Society in 1850, entitled "The Mormons."[16]

When Elizabeth and Thomas were married in 1853, he was already deeply involved with the Mormons. He had been helping them in political situations and writing and speaking in their behalf. During the mid-1850s, the early years of his marriage, he was not as active in correspondence and lobbying.[17] But in 1858, Thomas renewed his efforts on behalf of the Mormon Church and his deepening involvement began to affect Elizabeth profoundly. It was at this time that rumors of Mormon revolt were running rampant and President James Buchanan decided to send an army to Utah to put down the supposed rebellion, precipitating the so-called "Utah War." Thomas decided that he also needed to go to Utah to be a mediator between the Mormons and the army and he received President

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[15]Zobell, 3-4, 13-15; and Ronald W. Walker, "Thomas L. Kane and Utah's Quest for Self-Government, 1846-51," *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Spring 2001), 101-103.

[16]Walker, 103, 106-107; and Zobell, 18-23.

[17]Zobell, 73.

Buchanan's approval for his plan.[18] Elizabeth and their two young children were left without a husband and father for months.

During the Utah War, which never actually became violent, Thomas was able to broker a compromise that allowed the army to go into Utah and Alfred Cumming to take over as governor of the territory. Afterwards, he acted as the eyes and ears of the Mormons on the East Coast. He wrote to Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders, many times in a secret code, about matters in Congress that concerned the Mormons.[19] He was committed to aiding and defending the religious group, but he did not visit them again in Utah until Brigham Young invited him to St. George in 1872. This visit forced Elizabeth, who had not been directly involved with the Mormons, to come face to face with them for the first time. It was from that visit that she wrote her two travel accounts, *Twelve Mormon Homes* and *A Gentile in Utah's Dixie*, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

After the Kanes's visit in 1872-1873, Thomas went back to Utah alone in 1877 in the aftermath of Brigham Young's death. In the remaining six years of his own life, he continued to be a staunch supporter of the Mormons. Taking this position was usually good for the Mormons, but it was not always good for Thomas's marriage. Over the years, his relationship with the Saints affected his relationship with his wife and influenced her ideas and beliefs. Thomas Kane had a position of great influence over his wife, but

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[18]Richard D. Poll, "Thomas L. Kane and the Utah War," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 61 (Spring 1993), 112-24.

[19]Zobell, 207-208.

that influence manifested itself in unusual ways because it confronted Elizabeth's own strong convictions and her willingness to follow a plan or a thought to its logical conclusion. Thomas would point Elizabeth in a certain direction, sometimes deliberately and sometimes not, and she would proceed in that direction.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Kane's two published travel accounts are the primary reason that she is known among Mormon and Western historians. These travel accounts have long been esteemed for the insight they give of late nineteenth-century Mormons, but they also tell us a great deal about the woman who wrote them—a picture that can be elaborated and analyzed even further by the other sources now available. Newly available diaries and writings of Elizabeth Kane which span over fifty years of her life (1853-1909) help to tell her story more fully and they provide evidence for the active and involved woman that she was.

Her travel accounts are one venue where the themes of feminism, religiosity, and marriage can be seen interacting and conflicting with each other, and her other writings also reveal these themes. In the following chapters, her writings will be explored and analyzed, with the goal of providing a more thorough understanding of the context from which Elizabeth wrote her travel accounts. This thesis will also attempt to provide a better understanding and appreciation of Elizabeth Kane's life and contribution to history.

CHAPTER TWO

FAITHFUL WIFE, INDEPENDENT WOMAN:

ELIZABETH KANE'S MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

Elizabeth and Thomas Kane were married in New York City on April 21, 1853, but their relationship began years earlier, in 1842, when Elizabeth was six years old and Thomas was twenty. According to family tradition, at that time young Tom Kane won Elizabeth's heart by giving her a French doll while visiting his father's cousin (and Elizabeth's mother), Harriet Kane Wood, and her young family.[1] Elizabeth continued to admire Thomas throughout her childhood, and she even told her sister when she was twelve years old that she intended to marry "Cousin Tom."[2] Although it may have seemed unlikely that her fantasy would turn into reality considering their fourteen-year age difference, she was engaged to him only two years later.[3]

Elizabeth's father, William Wood, wrote that in the summer of 1851 their family was vacationing at Fort Hamilton, New York, where they "had more than one visit from Thomas L. Kane (Cousin Tom), who, even as early as this, began to manifest a partiality for my daughter, Bessie, his future wife."[4] Thomas and Elizabeth became engaged on

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[1]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*, Kane, Pennsylvania, May 28, 1909, Kane Papers, BYU.

[2]Ibid.

[3]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, January 25, 1870, Kane Papers, BYU. In this entry Elizabeth wrote that it was the eighteenth anniversary of their engagement.

[4]Wood, *Autobiography of William Wood, 2 Volumes* (New York: J.S. Babcock, 1895), 2: 302.

January 25, 1852, when she was only fourteen years old, but it was agreed by the couple as well as Elizabeth's family that she was then too young to marry.[5] Elizabeth accompanied her father, stepmother, and their new baby on a trip to Europe in the summer of 1852, returning in October of that year.[6] Thomas remained in Philadelphia. During this time, Elizabeth wanted to marry soon, but she realized she needed to grow older first. She wrote, "I find only one advantage in the length of our engagement that I shall have time to make myself at least a little more fit to be your companion. I suppose . . . that I must wait patiently till I am eighteen or nineteen."[7]

Thomas L. Kane was a member of a prominent Philadelphia family. His father, John K. Kane, was a federal judge and an important figure in the Democratic Party, and his mother, Jane D. Leiper, was the daughter of a large landowning family in Philadelphia. He grew up in a middle class Victorian family, much like Elizabeth's.[8] Thomas was educated in private Philadelphia schools until the age of sixteen, when he was sent to

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[5]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, January 25, 1870; and Elizabeth D. Wood, [Liverpool], to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], September 30, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU. The places from which Elizabeth wrote during her trip to Europe in the summer of 1852 are ascertained from both her letters and William Wood's autobiography. See Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:303-310.

[6]Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:303, 310.

[7]Elizabeth D. Wood, "George Hotel" [Glasgow, Scotland], to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], [September] 21, [1852], Kane Papers, BYU. See also Elizabeth D. Wood, [Paris], to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], August [1], 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

[8]Richard D. Poll, "Thomas L. Kane and the Utah War," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 61 (Spring 1993), 115.

France to complete his education.[9] While in Europe he studied the works of social reformers such as Auguste Comte and Claude Saint-Simon, which perhaps influenced him to become a sort of social reformer himself in areas such as women's education and abolitionism.[10] Throughout his life Thomas spent much of his time and energy on various causes, such as helping the Mormons. By the time of his marriage he had already committed himself to a variety of social reforms (abolitionism, prison reform, education) and it is unlikely that a man with his philosophical bent would have married someone who did not at least have the potential to join him in his work.[11]

It is unclear why Thomas and Elizabeth married just over a year after they were engaged, instead of waiting years as originally planned.[12] Thomas wrote to Brigham Young that he was married "by a strange course of happy events rather than my own original will," although he did not elaborate on what the strange course of events was. He described his wife in the same letter with the following statement: "as I have neither married Beauty, Expectations, Millinery, Dancing, or Piano Playing, I think you may afford to congratulate me. My wife [has] a fine mind, a generous heart, a sweet temper, and one that from her earliest childhood has had the advantage of earnest and truly pious

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[9]E. Kane, untitled biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane, undated, written after 1883, Kane Papers, BYU.

[10]Ronald W. Walker, "Thomas L. Kane and Utah's Quest for Self-Government, 1846-51, *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Spring 2001), 102; and E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[11]Poll, 115; and E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[12]Elizabeth D. Wood to Thomas L. Kane, August [1], 1852 and [September] 21, [1852].

Christian training."[13] (Maybe Elizabeth had not acquired the skills of millinery, dancing, and piano playing because of her mother's death and her poor relationship with her stepmother.)

Interestingly, Thomas chose to specifically point out to Brigham Young that Elizabeth did not have any of the "frivolous" attributes that were valued by society at the time. He may have been responding to Young's idea of what were valuable qualities in a woman. Young did not particularly value skills such as millinery, for example, but he valued the qualities that Thomas attributed to Elizabeth.[14] Thomas paid Elizabeth a great compliment in this letter by telling Brigham Young that his wife was not shallow or materialistic.

Because Elizabeth was only sixteen years old when they were married, while Thomas was thirty-one, there was bound to be some kind of inequality in their relationship. For the first four or five years of their marriage, Elizabeth's immaturity and emotional dependence on Thomas are obvious throughout her diaries. It is also apparent that Thomas had a desire to mold and shape his wife into his concept of an ideal woman, which meant she would become educated and a social reformer. Elizabeth, although at times less than enthusiastic, was generally a very willing student. Before their marriage, she even wrote to him, ". . . if you take a child-wife you will have to educate her for a

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[13]T. Kane to Brigham Young, July 18, 1853, as quoted in Albert L. Zobell, *Sentinel in the East: A Biography of Thomas L. Kane* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1965), 75.

[14]Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 351-353.

woman-wife."[15] So perhaps she hoped and even expected him to provide her with educational opportunities.

As the years passed, and as she faced conflicts with Thomas, mainly over his work with his Utah friends, she became more independent in thought (from Thomas). She became more willing to disagree with him, although she always remained loyal and at least passively supportive of his work. As she grew older and more mature, she still continued in the paths on which he started her, such as writing and feminism. This chapter will follow certain aspects of their marriage that greatly influenced Elizabeth's adult life, specifically her emotional dependence on him, his mentoring of her, and the conflict they faced, mainly over his relationship with the Mormons. It will also show how Elizabeth developed from an immature "child-wife" to an independent thinker, in many ways because of Thomas's original encouragement of her personal growth and development.

The Early Years: Emotional Dependence

In the early years of their marriage, Elizabeth's relationship with Thomas was characterized by her desire to be with him, her hurt feelings when he seemed not to want to be with her, and her striving to become "a full grown woman."[16] These aspects of their relationship led her to consistently seek for his approval during this time. She was very unsure of herself and dependent on Thomas. She was rather emotionally immature and her feelings were easily hurt by things that Thomas did or did not do.

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[15]Elizabeth D. Wood, [New York City], to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], May 15-16, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

[16]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, July 16, 1853; and E. Kane, 1854-1857 Journal, January 19, 1854, Kane Papers, BYU.

Her diaries reflect her emotions and worries about their relationship. She was always thinking about what he wanted, what he was thinking, and whether or not he loved her. She worried, for example, that he would stop loving her, "Oh how I love him, the dear noble fellow . . . . If he will only keep loving me, my own dear husband."[17] Another time she wrote, "he can't love me more than I love him."[18] She also missed him intensely when they were separated for short periods of time. In January 1853, Elizabeth went to New York to accompany her sister, Charlotte, back to Philadelphia. The sisters ended up having to wait a few days longer to leave New York than Elizabeth had expected, and she wrote, "I don't think any one knew how great a sacrifice it was to me to remain away from my dear Tom so long."[19] Particularly in the first months of marriage, she often wrote like an infatuated schoolgirl.

Less than a month after they married, Elizabeth recorded that she had wanted to read "Cousin Tom" to sleep after dinner, but he refused and in so doing hurt her feelings: "It cast a shadow over the day." In the same entry, she wrote that after eating supper with Thomas's family that evening, Thomas and other family members began singing. She wrote, "It always makes me a little melancholy to hear them, and in my present mood made me quite sulky." But when they went home, Tom "took me into his room, made me sit on his knee, and petted me as if I had been good and some one had ill-treated me."[20]

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[17]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, May 12, 1853.

[18]Ibid., July 6, 1853.

[19]E. Kane, 1854-1857 Journal, January 9, 1854.

[20]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, May 13, 1853.

Another time when he did not want her to read to him, she wrote that she threw the book down and left the room.[21]

These episodes are examples of Elizabeth's seemingly silly issues with Thomas in their very early marriage. Misunderstandings occur in any marriage, of course, but these particular problems give evidence of Elizabeth's youth and immaturity. It is also important to note that Elizabeth was very young, was living in a new city and had left her immediate family behind. Being in a new place without knowing many people almost certainly added to her need for her husband's companionship and attention. Their age difference was more important in the beginning of their marriage as there was a very obvious difference in maturity between them. It is almost comical to think that Thomas had already performed much important work in his life, working with government officials regarding the Mormons, for example, while Elizabeth was worrying about Thomas not wanting her to read to him. The two were in completely different stages of life.

This inequality of age, experience, and education was typical of marriages in the nineteenth-century. Men were often much older than their wives, and had lived independently for a number of years before marriage. Women, on the other hand, usually lived in parents' home until marriage and so went directly from daughter to wife.[22]

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[21]Ibid., May 18, 1853.

[22]Anya Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 20; and Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 192. Jabour points out that large age differences between married couples were more common in the southern United States then other regions, such as the Northeast, where Thomas and Elizabeth lived.

Historian Anya Jabour demonstrated how, during the engagement of one early nineteenth-century couple, the woman seemed quite nervous about having a truly "companionate" marriage, meaning a marriage based on mutual love, respect, and equality, because of her youth and inexperience.[23] Elizabeth likewise worried about the inequality between her and Thomas. She wrote to Thomas, "I feel so conscious of my inferiority to you, that I am afraid you will not be happy with me."[24] She was very aware of her youth and lack of education, and she wrote of both to Thomas during their engagement.[25]

After four years of marriage and the births of two children, Elizabeth was not quite as emotional about small things, but she did worry about her dependence on her husband. Elizabeth and Thomas spent the summer of 1857 in the mountains of northwestern Pennsylvania. On their return trip to Philadelphia, they separated so that Thomas could see to some business of his and planned to meet in the town of Olean. However, when Elizabeth arrived in Olean, Thomas was not there. She knew he would be in a hurry to get to Philadelphia and when he did arrive in Olean, he would probably have to go on ahead without them. And, since she was ahead of him, she thought that perhaps she should continue and let him catch up with her so they could go at least part of the way together. But the original plan had been to meet in Olean, so she was not sure what she should do.

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[23]Jabour, 20-21.

[24]Elizabeth D. Wood, [Folkestone], Kent, to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], August 8, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

[25]Elizabeth D. Wood to Thomas L. Kane, September 2, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU; and Elizabeth D. Wood to Thomas L. Kane, August [1], 1852, and [September] 21, [1852].

A few days later she recorded the following concerning her dilemma: "I paced up and down the [train] platform in the grisly dim atmosphere, chilled and wretched, and oh so anxious to know what Tom would have me do. Had I been independent, I should not have hesitated about the steps to take, but it puzzled me to know what he would wish."[26] It doesn't seem unreasonable to be unsure of what to do in this kind of a situation. Anyone would worry about the right course of action, but Elizabeth felt that her dependence caused the problem. She did not say that she was unsure because she didn't want him to wait for her, not realizing she had left; instead she said that she just wanted to do what he would wish.

Nineteenth-century women were often dependent on their husbands in many ways. Both men and women had an ideal of "companionate marriage," meaning both men and women were to find their ultimate personal fulfillment in romantic love. However, in practice men and women tended to have different concepts of what a companionate marriage should be. Men felt that companionate marriage should be something they could draw upon for strength periodically as they conquered the outside world, while to women it meant they would spend much of their time together, as companions. Also, although in theory the home was the source of happiness for each spouse, in reality, men had outside obligations and opportunities to provide satisfaction, while women often had only their home and marriage. Thus, women tended to be much more emotionally dependent on their husbands.[27]

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[26]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, October 6, 1857.

[27]Jabour, 2-3, 6-7, 22.

Elizabeth and Thomas Kane followed the pattern of companionate marriage, in that they expressed feelings of romantic love and they had an ideal of equal partnership in the home. However, they did not exactly fit the "typical" marriage, as Elizabeth did have outside interests for fulfillment (most notably medical school), and so she did not rely solely on her husband's companionship for happiness. However, she did have more of a need and expectation of being together than Thomas did. Even though Elizabeth often had things to keep her busy, Thomas was always the main focus of her life.

Thomas's Training of Elizabeth

Elizabeth was emotionally dependent on Thomas, especially in the early years of marriage, and she was also trained and mentored by him in many ways. Thomas acted as a sort of father-figure to Elizabeth, and he opened up many opportunities for her that a husband of a differing philosophy would not have. Thomas believed in equal rights and higher education for women, and he wanted to change the world by providing those things for his wife first of all.[28] Along with this, he had other plans for his wife which she did not always agree with, but in general she seemed to be interested in what he thought she should be interested in.

Other men espoused the idea of wife as partner and companion, but Thomas Kane took ideas of equality and partnership much further than was typical by insisting that Elizabeth could widen her sphere to include the world outside of the home. He even thought, in direct conflict with popular ideas of the day, that her work in the home was not

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[28]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, June 20, 1858; and "Biographical Sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane," c. 1909, Kane Papers, BYU.

as important as "intellectual work."[29] Thomas hoped that Elizabeth would be his partner in social reform and other humanitarian work. Before they were married he wrote to her, "How much . . . must arise out of the union of two who, loving one another for every other cause, and united in every wish and purpose and interest, go their ways through life, laboring with their united strength in good works. . ."[30] He also wanted Elizabeth to let him, "help me to help you–to do good even as my will once was!" to which she replied, "You will show me how to do my Father's will, darling, I know, and I am so happy that I shall have you to guide me."[31]

Thomas wanted Elizabeth to be educated to prepare her for a public life, but he was not the only person who was interested in her education. Elizabeth herself was always a voracious reader. For instance, when she and Thomas were in northwestern Pennsylvania in the summer of 1857, Elizabeth ran out of new books to read before it was time to go home. She wrote to Thomas's mother:

> I haven't had any book to read since [Thomas's sister, Bessie] went home. I read aloud in the evenings books, new to Tom, but stale to me, and yet I have continued to exist without books! I never could have believed it, but I have, day in and day out! I daresay you will be cruel enough to laugh and say, "So much the better for my ordinary duties." I daresay it is so, for my attention has been roused

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[29]E. Kane, 1858-60 Journal, August 13, 1858; Jabour, 57-58; and Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 27-37.

[30]Thomas L. Kane, Philadelphia, to Elizabeth D. Wood, [Folkestone, Kent], August 6, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

[31]Thomas L. Kane, to Elizabeth D. Wood, August 6, 1852; and Elizabeth D. Wood, Edinburgh, to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], August 22, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

enough to induce me to paste paper over the broken window panes.[32]

Apparently Thomas's mother did not value Elizabeth's love of reading. Even as a young child, Elizabeth apparently read a great deal, which caused her own mother to worry over what Elizabeth read. Just before her death Harriet Wood wrote to William Wood, "dear Bessie needs much overlooking and watching respecting the books she gets hold of; though fond of wholesome reading, she has a great or greater craving for trashy stories from annuals or newspapers."[33] Along with Elizabeth's great love for reading she also had a father who supported the higher education of women.[34] So attending a professional school was probably a welcome opportunity.

On Elizabeth's seventeenth birthday, May 12, 1853, Tom took her driving on a very bad road. "Tom said that it was one of the best opportunities in the world for learning to drive, and that I was going to be a good driver"[35] This happened only a few weeks after they were married, and Thomas was already playing the role as Elizabeth's teacher and trainer. This incident also reveals that Thomas did not want to shelter his young wife, but instead he wanted to help her learn how to drive and how to manage the difficult road. This attitude characterized his desires for Elizabeth. He did not want to simply take care of her, but he wanted to encourage and train her in new areas, which

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[32]E. Kane, [Williamsville, PA], to Jane D. Kane, [Philadelphia], September 22, 1857, Kane Papers, UOU.

[33]Harriet A. Wood to William Wood, March 25, 1846, as quoted in Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:266.

[34]Wood, *Autobiography*, 2: 370-371.

[35]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, May 12, 1853.

could be somewhat controversial.

On the eve of the Civil War, Elizabeth revealed the extent of Thomas's influence over her when she wrote of South Carolina possibly seceding from the Union. "Tom is a little irritated with me, I think as having contributed my infinitesimal share to the result [secession of Southern states] by my vague notions on the subject of Southern Rights. I tell him I was such a child when I married him that my notions are formed merely on what I conceived his to be."[36] Another incident reveals that Elizabeth had a desire to be loyal to her husband's opinions in the face of opposition from others, but she did not necessarily agree with him. She wrote,

> I remember the first proposal to employ blacks as soldiers struck even me as dreadful; but the rest of the family denounced it so much that I kept silence, assured that Tom would be first to approve any movement which the family honored with the old abusive epithets I had so often heard applied to his "advanced" ideas. A timid remark I made in defense of the negro was summarily set down by Bess [Thomas's sister] as excusable, because I was not an American, "just an English abolitionist."[37]

In these entries Elizabeth wrote about political issues, but Thomas's influence over her crossed over into many areas. She also wrote "I have grown up since I was fourteen loving him [Thomas] and moulding myself to him."[38] She realized that she had the tendency to simply follow Thomas's lead in her opinions, but she still had ideas of her own. However, attending medical school, which was the most nontraditional thing that

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[36]E. Kane, 1860-1863 Journal, December 5, 1860, Kane Papers, BYU.

[37]E. Kane, "Story of the Mother of the Regiment," (unpublished manuscript, 1869), 113, Kane Papers, BYU.

[38]E. Kane, 1860-1863 Journal, Dec 13, 1861.

she did, may have been Thomas's idea. Only a few months after their marriage Elizabeth wrote in her diary, "Tom, it seems, thinks of making me a doctor . . . Heaven make me able to do my duty in whatever station I may be placed."[39]

This is an interesting statement because she was so passive. She did not write that she wanted to be a doctor or that Thomas thought she should become a doctor, but instead she wrote that Thomas was going to "make" her one. She also wrote that she hoped to do her duty wherever she "was placed" as if she had no choice in the matter. But it is likely that she was not really so passive about obtaining an education. She had already expressed a desire to become educated and she was very interested in medicine.[40] In October 1851, Elizabeth's father told Thomas that she wanted to study medicine.[41] This was when Elizabeth was only fourteen years old, and it was also only a year after the establishment of the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. Perhaps Thomas, who was a corporator of that college, had mentioned the medical school to Elizabeth during the summer of 1851 when he had visited her so often.[42]

Elizabeth wrote that Thomas was interested in the higher education of women, so

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[39]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, August 25, 1853.

[40]Ibid., September 16, 1853; and Elizabeth D. Wood, [New York], to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], May 2-5, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

[41]William Wood, New York, to Thomas L. Kane, Philadelphia, October 13, 1851, Kane Papers, BYU.

[42]Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:302; and E. Kane, untitled biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane, undated, written after 1883, Kane Papers, BYU.

he sent her there to study medicine.[43] He was probably not using her as an experiment to see if higher education for women was a good idea, as he already believed that it was. He just wanted to show others that he was truly committed to the idea by having his own wife participate. He also thought that having Elizabeth attend would encourage other women of similar class and station.[44]

It seems that for the most part, *only* women from Elizabeth's upper-middle class and station were likely to have the means to attend medical school, as it was quite expensive and took a lot of time. But these women were also the most likely to fear a loss of status because of their study of medicine and they often believed the popular notion that medical study would result in a loss of femininity.[45] Because of societal disapproval, it was difficult for them to decide to study medicine and someone in Elizabeth Kane's upper-middle class position probably did provide encouragement. Throughout her life, Elizabeth's social standing would help to define her roles and opportunities, as it did in providing her this opportunity to go to medical school.

Men like Thomas who were not afraid of being controversial supported women in medicine, but other men, particularly physicians, were adamantly opposed. In fact, in 1859 the Philadelphia County Medical Society decided to "excommunicate" any physician who taught at the Women's Medical College, along with every graduate of the

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[43]Biographical Sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane; and E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[44]E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[45]Mary Roth Walsh, *"Doctors wanted, no women need apply": Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 62-63.

institution.[46] This could have influenced Elizabeth's decision to discontinue her studies there, but there were other personal reasons she stopped going, such as moving out of the city and becoming pregnant.

Thomas may have "sent" Elizabeth to medical school, but Elizabeth obviously thought it was worthwhile. She wrote, "[Tom] brought me a report of the Female Medical College that I might read it. How I should like to be a physician if only to do good to the sick poor!"[47] After she began attending classes in 1854, she wrote in her diary with great interest of her classes. Elizabeth also agreed with Thomas's idea that it was important that she attend medical school as an example to the world of a respectable woman attending college.[48] And, whatever her feminist leanings before attending medical school, it is certain that while attending, she would have been exposed to feminist ideas.[49]

Elizabeth was probably fairly eager to take advantage of the educational opportunities which Thomas provided her. During their engagement, when it was thought that she would go to school before they married, she had written to Thomas, "Can you not make out a plan for my studies this winter?"[50] She was one of a small, but growing number of nineteenth-century women who had the familial support and financial means to

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[46]Ibid., 72.

[47]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, September 16, 1853.

[48]E. Kane, 1854-1857 Journal, January 3, 1854.

[49]Regina Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 29-30, 50.

[50]Elizabeth D. Wood to Thomas L. Kane, [September] 21, [1852].

expand her world and do something outside of the home. Notwithstanding Elizabeth's personal interest in education and medicine, if she had been married to a man who did not see value in women's education it would have been very difficult for her to pursue it. Having a husband like Thomas meant that Elizabeth not only was provided with the opportunity, she was "sent" to school.[51] Elizabeth probably viewed Thomas's encouragement and even pressure to attend college as a very positive thing for her. However, this pressure to do something with herself may not always have been welcome.

For instance, along with medical school, Thomas had ideas of Elizabeth being an activist or educator of women. "Tom speaks of my being the instrument of some great work--of lecturing to women, etc. I am sure he overrates my mental powers, as well as my physical, and therefore it is not only laziness which prompts my extreme disinclination to contemplate such a mission."[52] Apparently, Elizabeth was not as willing as Thomas to put forth the effort required to have an impact in the public arena. Whether or not she wanted to do "some great work," however, Thomas had designs for his wife to serve society. Even before their marriage he wrote of her doing charity work and acting as a "Christian lady."[53]

During the 1860s Thomas began to formulate plans for Elizabeth to become a political writer to promote women's rights. He began to direct Elizabeth's studies with the object of improving her writing and political knowledge. After Thomas decided that

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[51]E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[52]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, January 16, 1858.

[53]Thomas L. Kane to Elizabeth D. Wood, August 6, 1852.

Elizabeth should be writing on behalf of women's rights, he began to edit her writing and teach her "political economy."[54] In the fall of 1868, she started to write the story of their settling in Kane "as an exercise of composition." She wrote, "In the evenings I read over what I have written, and Tom criticizes it. He thinks we may fit me for an author if I persevere for two years in trying to improve my writing."[55]

But she did not always feel so keen on such a life for herself. "Poor dear Tom. I wonder if he would despise me if he knew how little vocation I feel for the ideal life he plans for me."[56] Thomas's desires for Elizabeth put pressure on her to try to live up to his expectations. When Thomas was in Utah in 1858, she wrote, "how little I have done to fulfill the course Tom marked out for me. . . . Ah no, no! How far from it! But my darling, how nobly he acts out his life, God bless him, my true love and Red Cross Knight. I canonize him in my very heart of hearts."[57] She was not always enthusiastic about his plans but she usually followed him at least half-way. She may not have had the desire to be an activist and political writer, for instance, but she still participated in exercises to improve her writing. She would become a writer, as he had wanted, although not writing publicly on women's issues. She did write privately on them, however, and she also wrote family and community histories. And, off course, she wrote her published travel account,

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[54]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, November 24, December 12, 1869, and January 18, 1870.

[55]Ibid., December 6, 1868.

[56]E. Kane 1857-1858 Journal, January 16, 1858.

[57]Ibid., April 18, 1858.

Twelve Mormon Homes.

By her husband's encouragement and influence Elizabeth started out on various endeavors, namely medicine and writing, but she made her own decisions regarding those pursuits. As mentioned above, she followed Thomas's lead in her writing, but she never became or even really tried to become a public activist as he desired until she became involved in temperance reform years later. Apparently she was not willing to go somewhere she did not have the inclination to go just because he wanted her to. She did not have the desire to make her non-domestic pursuits as public as his were. She was influenced by Thomas, but not controlled by him.

Conflict between Thomas and Elizabeth

It was the book, *Twelve Mormon Homes* that put Elizabeth Kane in the public eye, not that she ever became famous because of it, but it was her most successful undertaking and her most significant contribution to history. However, the circumstances that put her in a position to write the book were not particularly welcome in her life. It was Thomas's continuing friendship with the Mormons and his stubborn desire to help them that allowed Elizabeth such close proximity to the people in 1872-3. But many times in her marriage prior to that visit to Utah, Elizabeth resented the relationship her husband held so dear. It would cause problems off and on for Elizabeth for nearly twenty years before she wrote her important book on the Mormons.

Elizabeth was deeply in love with Thomas, but more than that, she had grown up from her very early childhood idolizing him. After they married she continued to look up to him in the same way she always had. He was more intelligent, more refined, more

moral than anyone in her eyes. She felt that because of his goodness, his motives could really not be questioned. For example, after Thomas returned from the Utah War to high public praise, Elizabeth wrote that "no matter what they say, they make him, my own husband, neither less nor more than I have always known him, the noblest, in action, most unselfish, most thoughtful for others, the highest in aim, of anyone I ever knew."[58]

But her admiration of Thomas did not necessarily make understanding his relationship with the Mormons easy. Elizabeth was an active Presbyterian and she did not consider the Mormon people Christian, nor necessarily worth the time that Thomas gave them. Because she attributed his work with them to a pure motive of wanting to help a down-trodden people, she could not object very easily, but that did not mean it was easy for her to accept. And as time went on, she began to wonder if his work for them was always a good thing.

For example, when Thomas left her and their two young children (ages 2 ½ and 1) to go on a long and dangerous journey to Utah in January 1858 to assist the Latter-day Saints in their conflict with the United States government, Elizabeth was left alone to deal with the consequences of his sudden and extended absence. Thomas was willing to give up his salaried position as a clerk with the U.S. District Court to help the Mormons, but Elizabeth had to worry about his returning without a job. Thomas was willing to leave his employment, but Elizabeth had to worry about paying their bills without his income. Thomas was willing to risk his life on a dangerous journey from which he might not return, but Elizabeth had to worry about her and her children's lack of financial security

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[58]Ibid., May 19, 21, and June 20, 1858.

should he not return.

Thomas chose to make sacrifices for a noble cause, but Elizabeth was forced by Thomas's decisions also to make sacrifices. And for her, it was perhaps more difficult, because she did not necessarily believe in the cause as her husband did. She later wrote, "I besought him not to go; I could not see that it was his duty. But while my feeling remained unchanged, I recognized that if I forced him to stay, I would make him sin against his conscience. So I 'ceased,' and since he must go strengthened him as far as I could."[59]

In an 1869 manuscript Elizabeth gave an account of the Utah War, which had taken place a decade earlier, in which she told of how trying the situation was for her. Thomas had decided to get to Utah by taking a boat to the Isthmus of Panama, traveling across, then taking another boat on to California. This was usually a longer and more dangerous route West, but it was probably the best option for a January departure, as his was. When Thomas set sail from Philadelphia, a friend of his was there to see him off. Of this man (she does not give his name) Elizabeth wrote, "When Dr. ____ cried to part with him, I almost hated the man for the weak tears he shed. I did not dare to begin to weep. . . What was it to him if he lost a friend–when I was risking the loss of my all! I think it was a wonder my own reason did not give way."[60] In her diary, she also wrote of her anguish over his absence: "Tom if I can't stand it, and you are reading your dead wife's journal, believe me that I struggled my very utmost to keep up and not to grudge your sacrifice, by

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[59]E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 77.

[60]Ibid., 78.

pining away. But, oh my husband, it is very hard to part from you when we are so weakened by our own late trials."[61]

A week after Thomas's departure to Utah, Elizabeth faced the first and perhaps most stressful problem caused by his absence: lack of money. She began writing of her worries over their financial accounts, which she couldn't understand. In his desire to train Elizabeth, he apparently did not think to teach her some accounting. She found, to her dismay, that every bill she had to pay exceeded Thomas's estimate.[62] She thought about finding some kind of an occupation for herself and she worried constantly about finding an occupation for Thomas after he returned.[63] She was very aware of her dependence on his ability to financially support their family.

One possible occupation for Thomas that she considered was that of "agent" for the McKean and Elk Land Improvement Company. The company planned to develop the land in McKean and Elk counties in northwestern Pennsylvania by bringing railroads, followed by business and industry. She felt it was ideal for them because they would live in northwest Pennsylvania, which had a mountainous climate thought to be better for Thomas's delicate health. Thomas had family connections with the company and he had already done work on railroad routes the summer before when they were in the area.

In general, upper-middle class wives in the nineteenth-century, like Elizabeth, fully

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[61]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, February 3, 1858. The trials she referred to are those dealing with her father's financial troubles and mental breakdown which occurred in November 1857. See E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 71.

[62]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, February 2, 1858.

[63]Ibid., January 12, February 19, 26, and March 25, and 26, 1858.

expected that their husbands would provide for their economic needs. In colonial America women and men had usually both worked at home and although men were still considered the main provider, women contributed significantly to the household economy. However, with the increasing urbanization and industrialization of America, men began to work away from the home, and cash income became more and more important. Women still contributed to the household economy, but they were unable to provide cash as men did. The doctrine of "separate spheres" of males and females dictated that women managed the home, while men worked outside of the home to financially support their families.[64] In this instance, when Thomas left the family in a precarious economic situation, he was not fulfilling his responsibilities as Elizabeth and society expected he would, so she was very worried and even a little disappointed in him.

This expectation of support was generally a middle and upper class attitude. Women in the working classes generally supported themselves in occupations such as domestic service or factory worker. So, while Elizabeth felt that she did not have any opportunity to earn money, women of lower social classes found work when they needed it. However, Elizabeth never even considered working at those kinds of occupations. Also, her worries over money may have been less if she did not have a high standard of living to maintain, which was defined by her upper-middle class status. Social class not only defined the lifestyle she lived, it set the parameters for how she could achieve that lifestyle, which was by her husband's support.

So the entire time that Thomas was gone, Elizabeth thought, planned, and worried

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[64]Degler, 28-29, 362-364; and Jabour, 25-27.

about getting him a job. The first time she wrote of it she said, "I . . . must try to think what Tom can do to earn his living, as his clerkship is gone. Go West, we must not, while Mother lives. If he could replace Mr. Struthers (the agent of the McKean and Elk Land Improvement Co.)?"[65] She hoped that he would be able to get his clerkship back, but didn't think it likely, particularly after his father, federal judge, John K. Kane, died on February 22, 1858. "I wish there was any chance for a clerkship for Tom or if not that, I wish the McKean and Elk people would make Tom agent in place of Struthers!"[66]

Having to face disapproval from family and friends for Thomas's actions was another problem that resulted from Thomas's absence. Thomas was gone, but Elizabeth lived with his family, who did not support Thomas's work for the Mormons. Elizabeth, not Thomas, had to endure the family's criticism of Thomas's foolish actions (in their view). For instance, during the summer of 1857 Thomas had worked on a plan for three possible railroad routes for the area. But a few weeks after he left, Elizabeth found out that it was too late to send his proposed routes to the company. She was upset at the wasted time and effort, but more so at the inevitable judgment that would come regarding Tom's seeming inability to get things done. She wrote,

> I know how much labor, what brain and ingenuity this cost, and I was very proud of his three routes–and to have all this more than wasted–for it will pass down as 'one of Tom's half-finished schemes,' 'one of the times when he has started with steam up on his hobby, worked it far too hard, and then abandoned it.' I know that Tom has plenty of perseverance and I know how many things he has done, but who will remember these if the reputation of this sort of saying sticks to him. . . I cannot endure daws to pick at him and it galls me so to hear it implied that 'poor

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[65]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, February 19, 1858

[66]Ibid., February 26, 1858.

Tom' doesn't attend regularly to his official duties.[67]

Later, regarding this same situation, Elizabeth wrote, "I was so mortified by Tom's going off leaving his route unexplained. I daresay it was just as well to punish me for my pride, but I was so very proud of his engineering, though he didn't know it."[68] She was not pleased that he had left work unfinished because it looked bad, and she didn't want others thinking poorly of him. She later wrote of the time in which Thomas was gone to Utah, ". . . it was one of the unfortunate consequences . . . that I learned to hear my husband's actions criticized as one's family does consider itself at liberty to criticize. No wife should permit her husband to be discussed in her presence."[69] Whether or not she herself agreed with Thomas's going to Utah, she "[shared] the blame that fell upon him from all his friends, [defended] him and [said] with a laugh that my consent was the most important, and he had that."[70]

Thomas's absence also was difficult for Elizabeth simply because she worried about his safety. She hoped he was not suffering from cold, and she worried about the dangers of being among Indians and Mormons.[71] Elizabeth wrote in one entry that she felt shaky and "so miserable about the dangers my boy runs."[72] She loved Thomas very much

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[67]Ibid., January 26, 1858.

[68]Ibid., April 25, 1858.

[69]E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 102.

[70]Ibid., 77.

[71]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, February 7, 1858.

[72]Ibid., March 17, 1858.

and she did not want to lose him. Also, Elizabeth fully realized her precarious financial situation should he not return.[73]

Thomas did return from Utah, however, in June 1858. He was successful and triumphant but Elizabeth was definitely disillusioned. She still believed that his motives for going were honest but it had been a miserable five months for her. And, as time passed, she began to be annoyed when his work for various causes, particularly his friends out West, interfered with his family duties. This was especially true in the late 1860s when Congress began legislatively attacking the Mormons' practice of polygamy. Time spent in Washington, D.C. lobbying Congress in behalf of the Mormons did not put food on the table. Elizabeth felt the pressure of trying to stretch a monthly budget and was not happy when her husband did not appear to be doing all he could to help his own family, but instead was using precious resources for others.

For example, after Thomas returned home from the Utah War in the summer of 1858, their lack of financial security continued to be a major issue for Elizabeth. She had been the one to worry about paying the bills while he was gone and she worried extensively about Thomas's lack of income and dim prospects for future employment. She wanted him compensated for the work he did to bring peace in the Utah matter. She didn't ask for pay for the work he did, but just that he would be reimbursed for the expenses he incurred.

When Thomas returned, Elizabeth pleaded with him to allow the government to pay his expenses because with

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[73]Ibid., June 20, 1858.

a useless woman like me to be a drag on him, with no prospect of employment . . and with two children, I do not think he can afford it. Still . . . notwithstanding his theory of partnership, equal rights, and so forth, practically the only result of my disapproval is to depress his spirits, and make him firmer in the belief which I know he entertains that my honor is not as delicate as his, and that my mercantile associations [her father was a merchant] make me covetous. God knows, If I could work so as to maintain him and our children, I would never interfere to prevent his sacrificing every cent he had, for I do honor and respect . . . his noble delicacy and disinterestedness. But I know that if he dies, or if he cannot get work he can do, we must be a burden on Mother's estate. That galls me. Oh, if I had only not come to him penniless. To be a burden on him in everything degrades me in my own eyes. Heaven grant me sense enough to make my daughter independent."[74]

Elizabeth could not support the family, and he was so busy with his "noble service" that he would not support the family. It made her feel very helpless and dependent, as well as guilty for complaining, and the only thing she could do was to convince him to do something. Thomas's Utah adventure made her feel her dependence even more keenly because her security depended on his decisions, which had not been financially wise. Also, her objections were met with a somewhat superior attitude from Thomas, which was, as Elizabeth saw it, that she was not as noble as he. From her perspective, it was a matter of practicality. They needed money to live.[75]

To make matters worse, Thomas was going to be busy with "this Mormon work that will for some time prevent his finding occupation."[76] Apparently this work was to

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[74]Ibid., June 20, 1858.

[75]However, Elizabeth agreed with Thomas in his refusal to allow Brigham Young to compensate him for his expenses incurred while on his journey to Utah. He felt that it would look improper if he took anything from the Mormons. See E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 94-97.

[76]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, June 20, 1858.

publish a report of the Utah War as well as continue to influence the federal government over Utah affairs.[77] His willingness to serve the Latter-day Saints and his country meant that Elizabeth and their children suffered from his lack of attention to them. It came to a point where she had to remind him of his familial obligations. She wrote, "I have told Tom we must go West, whether to Elk County (Pennsylvania) or beyond the Rocky Mountains. I cannot tell, but it is evident that Philadelphia cannot be our home. He cannot earn enough to enable us to spend our winters here, our summers in a healthier climate. Better therefore to remain permanently in the healthy mountains."[78] Her previous adoration of Thomas and feeling that he could do no wrong was now gone. She still loved him and admired him, but she was also annoyed by his desire to do charity work at the expense of family responsibilities. Matters were eased and Elizabeth's worry of Thomas's need for employment at that time eventually was resolved. He was appointed the agent for the McKean and Elk Land Improvement Company. That summer (1858), in fact, they went back to northwestern Pennsylvania to begin his work for the company.[79]

It was during the Utah War and after that Elizabeth began to truly feel her financial dependence on her husband. It was very frustrating for her because he was not providing as she thought he should, but she could do nothing about the situation but nag him. Because she felt this dependence much more keenly than she would have if they had not

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[77]Poll, 134. Thomas decided not to continue in these pursuits soon after Elizabeth wrote that he was going to be doing so. See Poll, 134.

[78]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, July 15, 1858.

[79]E. Kane, 1858-1860 Journal, August 10, 1858.

had financial problems, she understood the value of independence and hoped that her own daughter would not have to experience financial dependence on her husband. As noted before, middle class women of the time expected their husbands to provide for them and this meant that they were financially dependent. Historian Nancy Cott notes that economic dependence was legally forced upon married women, in that anything that they could earn belonged to their husbands. Also, married women usually did not have easy access to paid employment nor to the higher education that could give them some means of support. Their husbands worked, while women were not supposed to have to worry about such things.[80]

Elizabeth's disappointment in her husband's ability to provide led her to distrust him with money, at least for a time. While Thomas was away, his father passed away, leaving money from a life insurance policy that was to go to Thomas. Thomas's brother, Robert Patterson Kane (called Pat) talked Elizabeth into letting him "take care" of the money. She later wrote,

> I consented, and influenced by his specious talk, learned to fancy the money safer in his hands than in my husband's. He appealed to my vanity, praising my practical common sense, and showing me that my husband's first step would probably be to "sink" it in the San Bernardino ranch in California, or in Elk County Pine Lands. I saw [Pat's] "wisdom" plainly when Tom came home, and sought to take the very steps of which [Pat] had forewarned me. And what do I see now? Those very lands have made the purchasers millionaires. I have kept track of them ever since by way of punishing myself. And [Pat] "took care" of the money so safely that he has never paid back more than two-thirds of it.[81]

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[80]Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 20-23, 70-71.

[81]E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 100-102.

This unfortunate incident shows that Thomas's inability to take care of her financially led her to distrust him with money, at least for a time. Although she regretted not having trusted Thomas, she still would feel the need to take their financial situation into her own hands in the following years, so it seems that she never may have completely relied on him again for financial support.[82]

Besides the financial conflicts that the Utah War caused, the Mormons would cause other conflicts for Thomas and Elizabeth. The next chapter will focus on Elizabeth's religious beliefs, and detail how it seemed to her that the Mormons prevented them from having religious unity in their marriage. Thomas had become "born again" before leaving for Utah in 1858, but on his return, he gave up his faith, much to Elizabeth's disappointment.[83] Also, Elizabeth was very strongly against polygamy, yet Thomas continued to defend the people who practiced it, and he even tried to prevent anti-polygamy legislation from passing Congress.[84] Elizabeth's feelings on Mormon polygamy will also be covered more fully later on.

It was not just Thomas's work for the people of Utah that caused problems for Elizabeth, however. Years later, in 1869, he was chosen to be the president of Pennsylvania State Charities, a position that did not bring in a salary. Elizabeth wrote,

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[82]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*. This biographical sketch tells of Elizabeth pawning the family's silver during a financial crisis. See also E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 116, where Elizabeth wrote of having to sell their farm stock and several personal items, and of asking her father for money, all while Thomas was fighting in the Civil War.

[83]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, December 26, 1857 and June 20, 1858.

[84]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, April 10, 1870.

"May God give him health and means to perform its duties. Inclination he has enough." And later she wrote that although she did not feel that they were "wronging the children" by letting Thomas take the post because he did not have any other opportunities to make money at that time anyway, she was still worried about their lack of income and the time he was spending in a non-lucrative position.[85]

After the Utah War, Elizabeth began to be more bold about confronting Thomas. She was willing to disagree with him about where he spent his time and money. Throughout the 1860s, she disagreed with him often, particularly on matters regarding career choices. Thomas was always thinking of something else that he could be doing, something more exciting and personally rewarding. Elizabeth convinced him time after time that they should remain in Pennsylvania and she refused to let him go to places as varied as the Arctic, California, Central America, Tennessee, Minnesota, Washington, and Canada.[86] By that time she had come a long way from her original emotional dependence, but because she was still dependent on his income, she had learned how to exercise some control and influence over Thomas in matters of his career choices.

Conclusion

During the Utah War, Elizabeth was stressed to the utmost to take care of her and Thomas's financial obligations, and to try to figure out a way for Thomas to earn money when he did return. At that time she was not happy about his going away, but she still

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[85]Ibid., December 3 and 12, 1869, and January 25, 1870.

[86]E. Kane, 1858-1860 Journal, November 1, 1858 and October 14, 1860; E. Kane, 1864-1867 Journal, June 6, 1864, Kane Papers, BYU; and E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, April 6, 1869 and July 17, 1870.

consented. When he did return, however, months of being alone perhaps emboldened her to speak and Thomas was now home to hear her objections. At that time, she voiced her opinions about Thomas being reimbursed by the government for the expenses he incurred on his trip to Utah, for example. And, in the following years, she was willing and able to put a stop to many impractical plans of his.

Thomas and Elizabeth had plans to permanently move to McKean County, Pennsylvania (in northwestern Pennsylvania) where he worked for the McKean and Elk Land Improvement Company in 1858. They planned on building a house there and began construction in 1861, but the outbreak of the Civil War delayed their plans.[87] After Thomas left the war because of injuries in 1863, they did return to McKean County, where they spent the rest of their lives. Together they built the small community of Kane, and while Thomas continued his work for the Mormons and other causes, they had a fairly quiet life.

At the beginning of their marriage, Thomas was the father-figure. Elizabeth was emotionally dependent on him, and in his position of authority over her he acted as a mentor to her, encouraging her to study and write. She did follow his desires in these areas, but as their marriage progressed, and particularly with the conflicts that Thomas's Mormon relationship brought into their marriage, she became more independent from Thomas. She was not afraid to disagree with him and to question the rightness of his actions, even though they were based on what she felt were pure motives. She did not question the goodness of his desire to aide the Mormons, but she did question his

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[87]E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 105-106.

priorities. She grew up, became more educated, more mature and confident in her abilities. He had started her out on that path by encouraging her to become independent and because she did, she changed from adoring teenage bride to mature independent wife.

Elizabeth Kane's relationship with her husband was perhaps the greatest factor in determining the course of her life. He was older and far more experienced than she when they married, and so she naturally followed his lead. But time and circumstance developed her into a far more independent woman than she ever really wanted to be. She began to question her husband's priorities and work as it conflicted with her needs and the needs of her children. Although the conflict that came between Elizabeth and Thomas led her to become more mature and independent, it was not necessarily welcome.

CHAPTER THREE

A WOMAN OF FAITH: ELIZABETH KANE'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

A few weeks before Thomas Kane left for Utah in 1858 to act as a mediator in the conflict between Utah and the federal government, Elizabeth Kane wrote in her journal, "I cannot write about all the horrors we have passed through since I wrote last. God has mercifully brought out of them one great blessing already, in uniting Tom and me in the bonds of a common faith."[1] For some reason, before Thomas left for Utah he had verbalized a personal belief in Christianity. However, when he returned home, something had happened which caused him to take back his conversion.[2] This was devastating to Elizabeth because it had been assurance of Thomas's religious belief that had sustained her through his absence.

Elizabeth Kane, like many other Victorian women, was very pious. In her journals, particularly in times of crisis, she often wrote prayers. She wrote of attending church, reading sermons, and also of reading her Bible. It is evident that her faith in God was very important to her. It brought her through trials, it colored her thinking on different issues, such as feminism, and it caused conflict with Thomas, because he did not accept her religion as his own. Her religious beliefs were also a factor in her struggle in accepting Thomas's work for the Mormons, whose religion was, in her opinion, a perversion of Christianity. Also, in her later life, much of the work she did was rooted to her religious belief, such as her work in the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

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[1]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, December 26, 1857.

[2]Ibid., June 20, 1858.

This chapter will describe briefly Elizabeth's religious life. This chapter will also discuss how Thomas's short-lived conversion and journey to Utah affected Elizabeth and provide evidence that Thomas's participation in the Utah War gave her more reason to dislike his Utah friends then simply the fact that they were not mainstream Christians.

Religion in Elizabeth's Personal Life

Elizabeth Kane took religion very seriously and very personally. She was a member of the Presbyterian Church and she attended meetings regularly, studied the Bible, prayed, and often wrote out prayers in her journal. She also attributed different occurrences in her life to "God's will" and also tried to ascertain God's will when making decisions. She wrote that her belief in God made her feel "peaceful and happy."[3] During the nineteenth-century Protestant women such as Elizabeth were much more likely to belong to and attend churches and work actively in those churches than were men, and like many other women of her time, religious conviction shaped Elizabeth's everyday life.[4]

Historians have argued that religion became part of women's domain after the American Revolution because life for men in the new nation stressed political and economic activities. Religion became a sort of sideline and therefore was turned over to women.[5] Others argue that a major reason for women's increased religious activity was

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[3]E. Kane, 1854-57 Journal, June 25, 1854.

[4]Rosemary Skinner Keller, "The Organization of Protestant Laywomen in Institutional Churches," in *In Our Own Voices: Four Centuries of American Women's Religious Writing*, Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds., (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 68-69.

[5]Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966), 84, 86, 102.

that religion, with its volunteer organizations and other activities, gave women a purpose. It provided women with a sense of community and a sense of self, which were provided to males through their occupation. Religion, in a sense, was the occupation of women. It also had the advantage of being a form of self-expression that had the approval of society.[6]

Elizabeth's religious beliefs were in keeping with the times in which she lived. Her parents were both religious and they had provided her with religious training from her very early years. Elizabeth's father, William Wood, often inserted religious sentiments in his letters to his wife, and in his autobiography he also wrote prominently of the churches they attended in their different residences.[7] Elizabeth wrote that, for her father, religion was a deeply personal thing and that "he heartily disliked to take part even in the publicity of a church prayer-meeting." He was also "intolerant of priestly assumption" and "convinced of the equality of all Christians before God." Wood joined the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in New York while his children joined various other churches, indicating that their family did not consider which church as important as joining some church.[8]

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[6]Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 138-141.

[7]William Wood, *The Autobiography of William Wood, 2 Volumes* (New York: J.S. Babcock, 1895), 1:95, 153, 162-164.

[8]Ibid., 2:329; Also, Wood, who was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, did not see any problem with having his son, Henry Duncan, baptized by the Presbyterian minister who married Elizabeth and Thomas at the same time as their wedding "as I was a very busy man in those days and could ill spare the time from Wall Street for weddings or any other ceremonies, I thought it would be a good plan to 'kill two birds with one stone,'" See Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:313.

Elizabeth underwent confirmation in the Presbyterian Church when she was fifteen years old and, from her journal entries, it is evident that she took her church membership seriously.[9] Elizabeth attended church and read from the Bible, but it is less evident that she ever really became part of a sisterhood in her worship or was active in any religious auxiliary until her later years when she worked in temperance reform. However, the most compelling evidence for her religiosity during the years of her early marriage comes from the desire she had for Thomas to join her in her religious beliefs.

Historians have given some credence to an idea advocated by early American ministers that one reason women may have been drawn to religion in larger numbers than men was that they faced a constant reminder of their mortality in childbirth.[10] Among the issues surrounding childbirth and motherhood were the real danger of death for the woman and a greater likelihood of death for the newborn child. Even after the danger of childbirth had passed, women cared for their small children who often died from various diseases. Women were much more likely to be intimately acquainted with death than were men, and perhaps thus in more need of spiritual guidance and comfort.

Elizabeth certainly faced these dangers just as other women of her time and her first pregnancy provides an example of how religion influenced her in regards to pregnancy and childbirth. She became pregnant almost immediately after her marriage, but the pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. The first time she mentioned her pregnancy in

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[9]Elizabeth D. Wood to Thomas L. Kane, May 2-5, 1852; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, undated entry, page 90 of typescript, Kane Papers, BYU.

[10]Cott, 136-137.

her diary (before the miscarriage), she wrote, "I have been quite sick, and very unhappy because I knew that I was to become a mother. Full of fears and anxieties, quite forgetful of God, But last night in his mercy he sent me the remembrance of his work."[11] Elizabeth was fearful of the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth, as she wrote "I wish I could rid myself of the presentiment that I have always had that its life will be purchased with my death."[12] It is clear here that she felt comforted by God in her fears and afterwards was more comfortable with the idea of her pregnancy. The comfort she received included a "remembrance" of her religious duty and blessing to bear children, which was part of "his work."

It was perhaps quite natural for Elizabeth to be concerned about the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth, as her own mother died of puerperal fever within days of giving birth to her seventh child.[13] Nineteenth-century women were very aware of the dangers of childbirth, and although exact maternal and infant mortality rates (which would provide more information on how dangerous childbirth really was) are hard to determine, women clearly felt that it was a danger.[14] One scholar has pointed out that "the experience of knowing someone who had died in childbirth may well have been common and would help

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[11]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, June 5, 1853.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Wood, *Autobiography*, 2: 254-258.

[14]Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Under the Shadow of Maternity: American Women's Responses to Death and Debility Fears in Nineteenth-Century Childbirth," *Feminist Studies* 12 (Spring 1986), 133-136.

explain women's fears."[15] Whether or not large numbers of women were actually dying in childbirth, Elizabeth's own mother had died when Elizabeth was only ten years old, and this certainly made her more sensitive to the dangers of childbirth. Months after her own miscarriage, she began to write of wanting to have a child, but even then she wrote, "Oh dear, oh dear it will require all my love for Tom and all the hopes and fancies I can cluster round the after time, of 'baby fingers, waxen touches,' ever to give me courage to go through all that dreadful suffering and the weary nine months before it."[16]

But Elizabeth's first pregnancy (in 1853) did not result in the birth of a child, and after she miscarried, she felt that it was wicked of her to have not wanted a child and she hoped to be forgiven. She wrote that Thomas never reminded her about her earlier feelings or how he had warned her not to be ungrateful for the pregnancy "lest God should take away the blessing from us. And he has been punished for my sin."[17] Thomas wanted to have the baby, but Elizabeth did not want the baby. After her miscarriage, she believed that God had taken the baby away from them because of her ingratitude for the blessing of having a child. Ingratitude was Elizabeth's sin, not Thomas's, but he also had to bear Elizabeth's punishment of not having a baby.

She attributed what happened to an act of God, rather than a chance occurrence, which gives evidence of her personal belief in God. It is interesting, however, that in this

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[15]Nancy Schrom Dye, "History of Childbirth in America," *Signs* (Autumn 1980), 100.

[16]E. Kane, 1854-57 Journal, February 10, 1854.

[17]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, July 16, 1853.

same passage, Elizabeth said she was grateful for the chance she now had of "regaining my health and growing a strong woman."[18] It seems that along with feeling guilty for her sin of not wanting a baby, she was almost relieved by the miscarriage, as she could now prepare herself to become pregnant when she was ready. However, by the time her baby would have been born, January 1854, she seemed to be only sad and disappointed that she had miscarried. She wrote,

> I am justly punished for my wickedness by the longing I have for a child. In a week or two I should have been a mother. Tom's baby might have lain in my arms and looked at me with his eyes. Oh darling, lost one, treasure that I never deserved how my heart yearns for you. . . Last night Tom's speaking of what he would have done with his son, went to my heart. How happy he would have been, with our child, his own baby to love. God help me to gain strength first to complete my course at college and know medicine as a means of usefulness to my fellows, and meanwhile to strengthen body and educate mind till I am a full grown woman. And then I pray that He will grant us the great blessing when I am fitter to be so infinitely blessed.[19]

There are other examples of Elizabeth's religiosity. She wrote once of being "forgetful of God," and needing to change.[20] The time of her greatest religious expression in her diaries was while Thomas was in Utah during the Utah War. It was at this time that she wrote often of her need to trust in God, as it was very difficult for her to be separated from Thomas. Elizabeth wrote of her thankfulness that Thomas had become a Christian just before he left, which gave her some comfort, but her happiness would be short-lived.

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[18]Ibid.

[19]E. Kane, 1854-57 Journal, January 19, 1854.

[20]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, July 31, 1853.

Thomas's Acceptance and Rejection

Even before Elizabeth's marriage to Thomas in 1853, she had been worried about his lack of religiosity. Before they were married, for example, she asked him if she would have to go to church alone, so she was already aware of his lack of interest in organized religion.[21] A few weeks after their marriage, she went to church with Thomas's family and wrote afterwards, "Tom went to the door with me. I have need of guidance from on high God give it me- Read the 'Children of the Lord's Supper' to my darling husband in the afternoon who indeed fell asleep in the middle."[22] This was just a few weeks after their marriage and it appears that she was bothered by Thomas's lack of religious participation.

Not too much later, it was definitely an issue. In 1854, she wrote, "Dear Tom thinks he never speaks anything that would injure my faith, yet he attacks things I have been accustomed to respect, and I don't feel at liberty to express myself when God makes me feel peaceful and happy and somehow I feel as if my faith was weakened." She then wrote that she hoped that she wouldn't have a child unless Tom was a Christian so they could raise the child a Christian.[23] She did have a child, however - two of them - without Tom's conversion. This caused their religious conflict to intensify for a time because Tom did not want to have their oldest child, Harriet, baptized.[24]

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[21]Elizabeth D. Wood, New York City, to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], May 15-16, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

[22]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, May 8, 1853.

[23]E. Kane, 1854-1857 Journal, June 25, 1854.

[24]Ibid., October 11, 1855.

Thomas did not profess Christianity, but he did see value in Elizabeth's religion and religious feeling in general. He had been raised a Presbyterian, but he never officially joined that or any other church. In his youth, however, Thomas had studied the Bible and had religious training. In 1844, while away in Europe, he wrote to his father,

> Sad and sweet are my memories of the times when I used to be so contented with my thin Sunday School piety; when Mother heard catechism and read good books all the long Sabbath day; when my conscience was yet in the soft shell state and I could not go to sleep before I said my prayers; when by the precept of Authority my mind could still be lifted instead of abased[25]

Although Thomas was no longer content with "Sunday School piety" and he no longer felt the need to say his prayers every night, when he and Elizabeth married he asked her to "pray for God's blessing on us both."[26] It has also been previously documented that Thomas felt some spiritual guidance in his work for the Mormons. For example, just before he gave his famous 1850 lecture, "The Mormons," before the Pennsylvania Historical Society, Thomas was quite ill. He was able to make it through the speech, through what he attributed as divine help.[27]

Whatever his spiritual leanings, it is apparent that Thomas valued religious humanitarianism over formal church-going. In an 1850 letter to Latter-day Saint Church leaders, he wrote about his 1846 visit with them in Iowa and Nebraska: "I believe there is a crisis in the life of every man, when he is called upon to decide seriously and

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[25]Thomas L. Kane, Paris, to John K. Kane, [Philadelphia], Feb 14-18, 21-22, 25, 27, 29 & March 1-5, 1844, Kane Papers, BYU.

[26]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, May 13, 1853; and Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:313.

[27]Ronald W. Walker, "Thomas L. Kane and Utah's Quest for Self-Government, 1846-51, *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Spring 2001), 106-107.

permanently if he will die unto sin and live unto righteousness . . . Such an event, I believe . . . was my visit [with you]."[28] Also, when Elizabeth joined the Presbyterian Church, he wrote that he hoped that her communion "may be to you a vow of confinement within no four walls, but the registry of your admission into the mighty congregation of Humanity."[29]

It seems that Thomas became disillusioned with organized religion in his early adult years. While in Europe in the early 1840s he found both the Catholic and Anglican churches lacking in sincerity. He wrote,

> The English clergy are . . . far over rated. . . . they are totally destitute of that eloquence which springs from a strong conviction of truth or pure religious feeling . . . What we good simple Americans call 'Piety' is never considered anything of a requisite. If I talk about necessity of change of heart, new birth, etc. I am either laughed at or talked to philosophically about fanatical hallucinations.[30]

He also felt that the French Catholics were engaged in "idolatrous worship of disgusting relics and images of saints . . . palmed off on them for the religion of our pure prophet Jesus of Nazareth."[31]

The high value that Thomas gave to religious sincerity was one thing that drew

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[28]Thomas L. Kane to "My dear friends," July 11, 1850, LDS Church Archives, as quoted in Leornard J. Arrington, "'In Honorable Remembrance': Thomas L. Kane's Services to the Mormons," *Brigham Young University Studies* (Fall 1981), 392.

[29]Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], to Elizabeth D. Wood, [New York], May 8, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

[30]Thomas L. Kane, Eaton Hall [England], to Jane D. Kane, Philadelphia, February 2, 1841, Kane Papers, BYU.

[31]Thomas L. Kane, Paris, to John K. and Jane D. Kane, [Philadelphia], August 17, 1840, Kane Papers, BYU.

him to the Mormons. Thomas had been impressed and inspired by their "noble self denial and suffering" which had "[made me] note that there was something higher and better than the pursuit of the interests of earthly life for the spirit made after the image of Deity."[32] He also reportedly said, after over-hearing a Latter-day Saint praying, "I am satisfied; your people are solemnly and terribly in earnest."[33] Thomas was impressed by the Mormons in another way, too. Before meeting them, he had written to his brother, Elisha, "You know what grand dreams I used to have. . . . I still held on to one-it was that I should make to me fame by a religion. . . . A religion suited to the 19th century-a religion containing in itself women-slaves -industrial classes-a religion containing [in] itself the principle of its own change [and] amelioration-finally a religion of movement."[34] It is quite likely that Thomas saw the Mormons as fitting his concept of an ideal religion, "suited to the nineteenth-century."

Thomas may have dreamed of a religion which included all classes and even slaves, but it is unlikely that Elizabeth did. Elizabeth's religion, Presbyterianism, was very much an upper-class faith, and it was a part of her entire identity, which was largely based on her social standing or class. Her status as an upper-middle class woman provided her with many opportunities, such as a medical education, as previously discussed. Her religious

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[32]Thomas L. Kane to "My dear friends," July 11, 1850, as quoted in Arrington, *In Honorable Remembrance*, 392.

[33]H.G. Boyle, "A True Friend," *Juvenile Instructor* 17 (1 March 1882), 74 as quoted in Arrington, *In Honorable Remembrance*, 392.

[34]Thomas L. Kane, Philadelphia, to Elisha K. Kane, Manila [Philippines], June 8 and 11, 1845, Kane Papers, BYU.

beliefs were a part of her class-consciousness, which looked down on Methodists, Baptists, and other less formal denominations. And, of course, Mormons were also beneath her and all other Christians (including the Methodists and Baptists). Thomas, however, was much more liberal and he tended to be open-minded towards other religious groups.

Mainstream Anglo-Saxon Protestantism did not credit Mormons with true religious worth, while Thomas did. Therefore, the religious conflict between the two was not unlike the argument over the definition of a Christian. At the time, Mormons were not considered Christian by the majority of American Protestants (Catholics and other groups were also excluded). Instead they were seen as a strange religious cult, who, whether or not they professed a belief in Jesus Christ, were too radical in their beliefs to be defined as a respectable Christian church. These radical beliefs included polygamy, new scripture (the Book of Mormon), prophets, and divine revelation. The Mormons likewise rejected the Protestant churches and their claims to authority.

Elizabeth agreed with this popular view of Mormons, while Thomas was convinced of their religious virtues.[35] He saw that people he felt were good, religious people did not meet the popular standard of "true" Christianity, and he no doubt thought this was an unjust judgment. Perhaps it was in protest against mainstream clergy that he refused to accept their narrow definition, particularly when he already felt that they and many "Christians" were not as pious as the Latter-day Saints were. Elizabeth herself

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[35]Thomas L. Kane to "My dear friends," July 11, 1850, as quoted in Arrington, *In Honorable Remembrance*, 392; and Walker, 106-107.

would come to broaden her own notions of Christianity after visiting the Mormons years later, enough that she would feel assured of Thomas's true Christianity.[36] Still, Thomas was not willing to give Elizabeth even the profession of faith that she desired. Likewise, he was not willing to discuss religion with Brigham Young.[37] However, he did ask Elizabeth to pray and he did feel and appreciate spiritual guidance in his work. He obviously believed in God, but perhaps he did not want to get involved in the conflicts between religious denominations and doctrine.

This conflict between Elizabeth and Thomas was temporarily resolved in late 1857 when Thomas told her that he was a Christian after all, apparently by simply confessing faith. He never joined a church, although Elizabeth probably hoped that he would.[38] After over four years of Elizabeth's worry, wanting, and waiting, Thomas finally became a Christian and Elizabeth could be at peace in that matter. Elizabeth wrote that Thomas's conversion had come through the trials they had passed through since November, which referred to trouble with Elizabeth's father, William Wood. She wrote, "I cannot write about all the horrors we have passed through since I wrote last. God has mercifully brought out of them one great blessing already, in uniting Tom and me in the bonds of a common faith."[39]

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[36]E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, undated entry, p. 87-88 of typescript; and E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[37]Walker, 104-105.

[38]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, December 26, 1857.

[39]Ibid.

In November 1857, William Wood had a complete mental breakdown because of financial difficulties resulting from the national financial panic.[40] In fact, in Wood's autobiography, the chapter dealing with this time of his reversal of fortune is titled "The Disastrous Year, 1857."[41] During the time of his business troubles, which took place in October and November 1857, he "was laboring under intense depression of spirits, anticipating disaster" and he wrote that about November 16 or 17 he became very ill and was given opium pills by his physician, with the purpose of "quieting [his] nerves."[42] Wood recorded that the opium did not work, so Thomas and Elizabeth traveled to New York in November to take him to Philadelphia "for a change of air and scene."

While in Philadelphia, he became extremely ill and could not leave until the middle of December.[43] Elizabeth wrote about her father,

> For a time his life and his reason were in danger. Tom and I nursed him through a fearful illness. His wife abandoned him, and the physicians thought me a better nurse than Charlotte [Elizabeth's sister] could be. Naturally calmer in temperament, I was credited with a semi-medical reputation, and had really the aid of my husband's knowledge and the consolation of his sympathy. God supported us through it, and enabled us to save him, but He knows what we suffered![44]

Elizabeth attributed Thomas's change of heart to this family crisis. It is obvious that this crisis was not just something that happened at a distance, as Wood was in their home for a

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[40]Richard D. Poll, "Thomas L. Kane and the Utah War," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 61 (Spring 1993), 120.

[41]Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:320-327.

[42]Ibid., 2: 325.

[43]Ibid.

[44]E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 71.

significant part of his mental illness. However, Thomas's desire to go to Utah to help the Mormons in the Utah War of 1857-58 may have also influenced his sudden conversion.

Even if his desire to go to Utah was not a major factor in his conversion, it made Elizabeth more willing to let him go. Soon after he left, she resolved to conquer her grief to show God how thankful she was for "sending His Holy Spirit into my darling's heart."[45] Numerous times she wrote of how happy she was to know he was a Christian at last. The fact that he converted was an enormous comfort to her when she had to give him up.

In the spring of 1857, the newly inaugurated U.S. President, James Buchanan, had become convinced by false reports that the territory of Utah was in a state of rebellion. He decided to send an army to Utah to put down the rebellion and to install Alfred Cumming as the new governor to replace Brigham Young. There was no official message to Utah of the approaching army and their mission, so when Brigham Young learned of the army in July 1857, he decided to treat it as an invading force. Mormon military parties were sent to do all they could to delay the army and in November, when the army camped for the winter, the troops were near starvation because of the raids on their supply wagons.[46]

At the same time, November 1857, Elizabeth recorded that Thomas went to Washington to see President Buchanan.[47] In September and October 1857 Thomas had received messages from Brigham Young regarding the conflict between Utah and the U.S.

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[45]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, January 16, 1858.

[46]Poll, 112-114.

[47]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, November 10, 1857, November 12, 1857.

army.[48] After receiving those messages he decided to meet with Buchanan. This November meeting was not very productive and it was not until he returned in December, at the urging of John Bernhisel, Utah's representative to Congress, that he was able to make arrangements with Buchanan regarding his mission to Utah. Elizabeth wrote in her diary the day after Christmas that Thomas had gone back to Washington a second time.

> I cannot write about all the horrors we have passed through since I wrote last. God has mercifully brought out of them one great blessing already, in uniting Tom and me in the bonds of a common faith. Tom thinks he may be of service to Him by bringing about a peace between Utah and the U.S. and went to Washington last night to see the President about it. May God give him wisdom to do right, and may his peace be with him.[49]

She was willing to accept Thomas's belief that going to Utah was a service to God. It would have been difficult not to, as he was now a believer like herself, and he felt that God had a mission for him in Utah.[50] She later wrote, "Tom was conscious that the Spirit guided him–I am sure of it too."[51] To have him leave on a long and dangerous journey was a devastating blow to her, but in large part because of his conversion, he obtained her reluctant blessing. After all, she did not want to make him "sin against his conscience."[52] Thomas may have claimed spiritual motivations for his mission only to win Elizabeth's approval, but this was not the first time he had believed himself divinely guided in his work

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[48]Poll, 114, 119-120.

[49]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, December 26, 1857.

[50]Ibid., December 28, 1857, March 26, 1858; and E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 96.

[51]E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 96-97.

[52]Ibid., 77.

for the Mormons, so it is likely that he was completely sincere.[53]

Elizabeth later wrote that when the army had become stranded in winter weather, with their supply trains burned, Buchanan telegraphed Thomas to see if Thomas could do anything about the situation. "Tom gave him no comfort; he said his private information showed him that the Mormons were fully aware of their power. Buchanan was frightened; he saw that the U.S. Army would be sacrificed . . . Would 'Colonel Kane, could Colonel Kane' do anything? 'Colonel Kane' thought there was still a chance."[54] She went on to say that Thomas

> pitied the Mormons and thought them unjustly accused. At the same time he felt that 'Discipline must be maintained!' Like boys in school too long oppressed, they had mutinied . . . They felt they were stronger than the miserable usher who's duty it was to enter that school room and govern them and who they had locked up in the map closet. They looked no further–did not calculate on the time when the end must come . . . their ineffectual protest against wrong terminate as Youth's protests against Authority do . . . in a good thrashing. To Colonel Kane was presented the problem whether he could induce the boys to open the door themselves, and admit the ushers of their own free will. He thought he could do it, but it must be in his own way. He would not have the boys' fine spirit, which he admired, humbled. . . . He actually intended to turn a whole people's will, and make them ask for peace in the hour of their triumph.[55]

Thomas suggested to President Buchanan that he (Thomas) would propose a peaceful settlement of the Utah conflict to Brigham Young if Young would accept Alfred Cumming as the new governor and a military post (not directly in the Salt Lake City vicinity) "in exchange for a general pardon for offenses associated with the current

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[53]Walker, 106-107.

[54]E. Kane, "Mother of the Regiment," 75-77.

[55]Ibid.

confrontation."[56] It appears that Buchanan accepted this in principle, but it was not put into writing. Thomas did not have any official authority in the matter, although he did have a letter from the President that asserted Kane's good intentions and his own interest in peace.[57] So Thomas left for Utah hoping that whatever compromise he was able to broker between the army and Utah would be upheld by Buchanan, but without any real security in the matter.

Two days after Thomas's December trip to Washington, Elizabeth wrote a prayer in her journal which revealed her feelings about the situation. She said that she did feel willing "should it prove Thy will" to let her husband go. She was not entirely convinced, but took it on faith that God was leading Thomas as he believed. She wrote that Thomas was leaving "to bring peace to those lost Sheep of Israel." But even though she had allowed it, she was not happy. She prayed with the tone of someone who is trying to be strong while going through a horrible trial. And, as previously mentioned, she had to make an effort to be cheerful "as my Thank offering for Thy infinite goodness in making him a Christian."[58]

In the same journal entry another difficulty was revealed: "Lord, Thou knowest that it is a sacrifice for us to part when we are in trouble, and Thou wilt in mercy strengthen and help us. Lord, wilt Thou show us what Tom ought to do about his business, his daily duties? We do not quite see how to reconcile his neglecting them with

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[56]Poll, 123.

[57]Ibid., 124.

[58]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, December 28, 1857.

his performing this."[59] While he was gone there would be no income at the same time that he was incurring large expenses on his journey. Also, they didn't know exactly what occupation he would have when he did return, as discussed in the previous chapter. His leaving was an economic hardship for the family, and regarding his employment Elizabeth wrote, "I must remember that as Tom gave up his employment for Christ's sake, He will take care of him."[60]

Elizabeth wrote often about how much she missed Thomas, and she wrote of the comfort she received from knowing that he was a Christian. "It seems as if the idea of seeing him again was one of too great happiness to indulge in."[61] In another entry she wrote of the unproductiveness of pining for him, "Miss my husband? Ah yes, but I know only too well that I cannot watch at the window to see him come and therefore I dare not indulge myself in a musing dreamy longing for him. I work it off, and pray God to help me to keep up."[62]

She looked forward to the time when she and Tom could read sermons together as they did before he left. "Ah how blessed a thing to know that if we are spared to meet again, our readings together will henceforward [be as] those of Christians, brethren in

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[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid., March 26, 1858.

[61]Ibid., March 21, 1858.

[62]Ibid., April 2, 1858.

Christ."[63] She wrote of Thomas having given up his occupation for Christ's sake and for his country's welfare, and she compares him to Christ: "My darling, people call you a 'Mormon' as in the old time they called our Master 'Publican and Sinner.'"[64] Jesus went among publicans and sinners, but was certainly not one. Thomas did the same with the Mormons.

Time and time again, when Elizabeth wrote in her diary about Thomas's absence, it was the fact that he was now a Christian that comforted her and made it bearable. She was strengthened by Thomas's statement of belief. She wrote about dealing with her grief, and she thought she must do her duty and try to conquer it to show God thankfulness for "sending His Holy Spirit into my darling's heart."[65]

Thomas left Philadelphia in January 1858. He traveled by ship from Philadelphia to Panama, then took another ship to San Francisco and then to Los Angeles. Under the assumed name of A. Osborne, he traveled overland from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City, arriving there on February 25, 1858. He stayed with Brigham Young and other Latter-day Saint Church leaders until March 8 when he traveled east to Camp Scott and Eckelsville (near Fort Bridger, Wyoming), where the army was camped. While there, Thomas convinced Alfred Cumming to go to Salt Lake City without the army escort which

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[63]Ibid., April 11, 1858; The "readings" Elizabeth wrote of probably referred to their practice of reading sermons and other religious texts together, see also E. Kane, 1853 Journal, May 8, 1853; and Thomas L. Kane and E. Kane, [Williamsville, PA], to Jane D. Kane, [Philadelphia], June 29-30, 1857, Kane Papers, UOU.

[64]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, April 4, 1858.

[65]Ibid., January 16, 1858.

Cumming did on April 12, accompanied by Thomas.[66] The army later traveled through Salt Lake City to set up Camp Floyd, forty miles southwest of the city. And so the Utah War was peacefully resolved with Cumming established as governor and the army at their new post outside of the Salt Lake Valley. Thomas left Salt Lake City for Philadelphia on May 13, 1858.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth had begun to get impatient for some news of Thomas. She had received only a few letters from him and none were written after he had completed his work in Salt Lake City.[67] She began to devour the papers looking for any news of his mission. On May 7 she wrote that the newspaper had a headline "The Utah Mail," but much to Elizabeth's disappointment it was only about the establishment of a weekly mail to Utah. "How great a disappointment it is I can scarcely say. My heart sickens to think how many dangers he runs."[68] On her birthday, May 12, she wrote that if Thomas was still alive, she knew he had thought of her that day, but

> all my thoughts are swallowed up in anxiety. The mail I looked for from Utah is in . . . bringing dates of March 3rd, but with no mention of Tom. The most favorable supposition is that he has only been unsuccessful in the object of his mission. I have been so wrought up with anticipation lately that I hope I am now unnecessarily cast down. Now I drag on hour by hour longing for some news of my husband"[69]

Soon Elizabeth would begin to receive more news and the results of Thomas's

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[66]Poll, 126-128 and 130.

[67]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, January 30, February 15, April 14, 1858.

[68]Ibid., May 7, 1858.

[69]Ibid., May 12, 1858.

mission would be known. During May and June, she received more letters from him and news of his success in Utah began to be reported in the newspapers. Then on June 18, 1858, Thomas himself returned.[70] Elizabeth was overjoyed to have her husband back, but there was a downside to his return. When Thomas got back to Philadelphia, he immediately told her that he was no longer a Christian, as Elizabeth understood the term. This was a devastating blow to Elizabeth. As late as May 2, she had a letter from him that seemed to indicate he still shared her faith.[71] He had become a Christian just before he left and given it up by the time he returned, and her hopes of having a united Christian home were dashed.

Elizabeth wrote, "Tom told me the first moment we were alone, like my dear honest darling, that the hope that had dawned on him of being a Christian was gone." She continued that she was sure that he would come out of his moment of doubt but she was sad that he didn't have the comfort of religion anymore.

> And how hard it will be to shut up in my own breast again all the sympathies that went out to my brother Christian. . .I don't know how to talk to him, for my thoughts have so moulded themselves around that hope that I – Oh dear poor Tom! I think I must not show you my diary. It would pain you now. I am glad I did not know he had lost his staff till now. I could not have borne his absence."[72]

It is obvious to any reader of her journal that Elizabeth found great joy and comfort in

Thomas's Christianity. To have this taken away the moment he returned made for a very

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[70]Ibid., April 14, 1858, May 17, 1858, May 19, 1858, June 20, 1858.

[71]Thomas L. Kane to Elizabeth D. Kane, May 2, 1858, Kane Papers, BYU. In this letter, Thomas wrote, "May the Prince of Peace remove us from this world of Wars together!"

[72]E. Kane, 1857-58 Journal, June 20, 1858.

bittersweet reunion.

She felt sure, however, that eventually he would come again to an acceptance of Christ. "Now what distresses me is not the same trouble as I used to have, because I am sure it is only a cloud veiling the sun. . . . I know that he will be a Christian, and if I exulted in the answer to my prayer too soon, I can wait patiently. Late or soon it shall be answered. . . My grief is that the only comfort in his trouble is not his now."[73] However, a few weeks after he told her "he had lost his staff," she wrote more about things that had happened in Utah which she thought may have influenced his rejection of her faith.

Elizabeth tried to understand what happened to make Thomas turn away from her religion. The obvious answer was that the Mormons, with whom he had spent the last few months and of whom he had such high opinions, played a part in his change of heart.[74] Thomas told her about their "seemingly miraculous power" of faith healings. "He has seen instances, scores of them, of invalids restored to health and working capacity by the word of the Mormon priest." It seemed that Thomas was impressed by these faith healings, while Elizabeth was not. She felt certain that the events that Thomas witnessed were not of God. They probably happened through what she called the "doctrine of the exceeding power of Faith," which was not new, but "the New Testament had already proclaimed it." The power of faith could be used for good or ill. "This power which dedicated to God, enables people to do the mighty works which we have record of, this same power which

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[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid., June 27, 1858; and Thomas L. Kane to E. Kane, February 5, 1858, Kane Papers, BYU. In this letter Thomas wrote of his "Mormon friends."

under the devil's influence simulates equally great works; what is it to be called? Recognized in the Bible it is." Elizabeth wrote of places in the Bible where it says that Antichrist will show signs and wonders to deceive.[75] The faith healings Thomas had witnessed were not truly faith-promoting because they came from an evil influence rather than a good one.

Elizabeth did not deny that the Mormons had some kind of supernatural power, but she was not willing to credit them with any legitimate religious power. She did not accept their faith and could not believe that anything that came of it could be good. Their "miracles" could only come from the devil. Elizabeth felt that the devil used "miracles" to deceive and he had done so with the Mormons.

Elizabeth didn't actually say that the Mormons' miracles caused Thomas to lose his faith. However, it seems pretty obvious that the people must have had some influence on him, or at least she would assume that they did. The Mormon miracles, she believed, had deceived Thomas into thinking that the Mormon religion was legitimate and even better than other faiths, including her own. This was why she felt the wonders he witnessed were negative rather than positive.

Thomas did not feel the same way about the Mormon healings he witnessed, nor did he feel negatively towards the miracles that he had previously been a recipient of.[76] To Thomas religion was action, sincerity, and humanitarianism, while to Elizabeth it was acceptance of an established church, its rituals, sacraments, and traditional doctrine, which

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[75]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, July 9, 1858.

[76]Arrington, *In Honorable Remembrance*, 392-393.

did not always include faith healings. Thomas did not see any problem with miracles in religion as Elizabeth did. To Thomas, it was evidence of the power that religion could have to do good. When Thomas came home and told Elizabeth he was not a Christian, it did not mean he was no longer a believer in religion or spirituality. It meant that he could not in good conscience number himself with Christians, like Elizabeth, who would not give any legitimacy to what he felt was a legitimate religious practice.

Perhaps more than than the Mormons' miracles, however, Thomas's change came from his overall admiration for their religion. He had been impressed by their faith and sincerity before. In January, 1858, before he reached Utah he wrote, "when my thoughts are turned upon going among the Mormons, I am mindful so constantly of the monosexual halfness of our modern Protestantism. I shall doubtless find it again in Utah as I did upon the Plains . . ."[77] Thomas had not been satisfied with "modern Protestantism," before and while in Utah, he was reminded of his dissatisfaction with mainstream Protestants once again. It may be that coming back from Utah he lost all desire to become part of that form of Christianity which was so critical of the Mormons and their faith. He had been very reluctant to "become Christian" in the first place. Perhaps his initial profession of faith had included an assurance to Elizabeth of his not being a Mormon nor believing in Mormon doctrine, and when he returned home, he had to tell her that, although he was

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[77]T. Kane, *The Private Papers and Diary of Thomas Leiper Kane: A Friend of the Mormons*, ed. Oscar Osburn Winther (San Francisco: Gelber-Lilienthal, Inc., 1937), 70 (January 15, 1858). Perhaps by "monosexual halfness" Thomas meant that mainstream Protestant churches had incomplete doctrine that gave women a minor role, or maybe he did not like the largely female influence in those churches. He may have felt that the Mormon religion was more active in expanding and building a kingdom of God, "a religion of movement," while Protestant faiths were weak and stagnant.

not a Mormon, he could not simply denounce their faith.

Looking at Elizabeth Kane's Utah War experience, it is hard to see anything that was positive for her, except perhaps that her husband received praise for what he did. But overall it was a very painful ordeal with very little gained because of it for her. She went through it reluctantly, although she tried to be cheerful and brave. She was buoyed by her knowledge of Thomas's faith but in the end this was taken from her. Once that was gone, the entire journey seemed almost fruitless, at least for her personally. What she knew was that he left her with huge difficulties to face on her own and when he returned from being among the Mormon people, the one comfort she had during the entire episode was gone. This probably caused Elizabeth to feel more negatively towards the Mormons than she may have otherwise been. It also spurred her to think about them and what they stood for, particularly since Thomas continued his work for them even more intensely. He did not feel negatively towards the people of Utah; if anything, he liked them even more than before.

Conclusion

Elizabeth and Thomas seemed to settle back into a fairly peaceful life and marriage after Thomas returned from the Utah War and rejected her faith. She still thought about the loss in the months afterward and wished Tom were a Christian, but in the years that followed, it is clear that she gave up the fight to make Thomas follow her faith.[78] Elizabeth did continue in her own faith, however. For example, in April 1859 she wrote that she had believed that it was God's will for Thomas to go to Utah, and she also

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[78]E. Kane, 1858-1860 Journal, April 10 and November 13, 1859.

believed that God wanted Tom to be in Elk County, Pennsylvania at that time.[79] Thomas continued to respect Elizabeth's faith and see value in it, although he did not accept it as his own. In late 1860 he thought of moving the family to Minnesota after they were having some financial difficulties. "He asked me to pray for guidance, and devote this Sunday to thoughts upon the subject," Elizabeth wrote. She decided that they should stay in Pennsylvania: "'No,' I say. 'Let us go on.' and I am sure God will help us, as He has done, if we only trust Him."[80] It was not until their 1872-73 Utah visit that Elizabeth truly began to accept Thomas's form of religiosity, which will be addressed later.

Regarding the Mormons, it is clear that Elizabeth did not support their cause as her husband did but she did, in general, passively support her husband. She did not often write disapprovingly of his efforts. When Thomas was asked if he could give any facts in favor of the Mormons in the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857, Elizabeth wrote, "I think he ought to write anything he can say."[81] She also wrote of a famous Latter-day Saint prophecy that Thomas became acquainted with during the Civil War without any kind of commentary. While visiting Thomas after he was wounded, he told her that the Utah delegate to Congress, John Bernhisel, had also visited him

> showing in a pamphlet printed in Liverpool in 1851, a prophecy of Jo. Smith's dated Dec. 25, 1832 foretelling a rebellion of the south against the north beginning in S. Carolina, followed by an appeal to Great Britain, arming of the Indians against both North and South, and rebellion of the negroes armed and trained

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[79]Ibid., April 3, 10, 1859.

[80]E. Kane, 1860-1863 Journal, October 14, 1860.

[81]E. Kane, 1858-1860 Journal, November 13, 1859.

against their masters, followed by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc."[82]

These passages seem to indicate that Elizabeth was not overly bitter, nor did she seem to feel the need to attack the Mormons. She even wrote somewhat sympathetically of them on occasion.[83]

However, she did have reservations about Thomas's work for them, particularly as the issue of polygamy gained more national attention after the Civil War. The Republican party had asserted the need to rid the nation of the "twin relics of barbarism," meaning slavery and polygamy, and once the slaves had been freed, many of the Radical Republicans who controlled Congress turned their efforts to the abolition of polygamy. In this climate, new anti-polygamy legislation was debated in Congress, keeping Thomas busy with his work of lobbying government officials in the Mormons' behalf.[84]

In 1870, an anti-polygamy bill, the Cullom Bill, which would have made all polygamy cases prosecuted by federal judges with juries chosen by federally appointed officials, came close to passing. At this time, Elizabeth wrote, "The Mormons sorely wanted Tom's influence . . . [but] I thought Tom might overbear his personal influence . . . I have an idea that sometimes God allows us to turn Him from His purpose where our hearts are so set on a thing that we ask it without a reference to His wiser judgement of

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[82]E. Kane, 1860-1863 Journal, December 27, 1861; and Doctrine and Convenants 87 (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981 edition).

[83]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, October 4, 1870.

[84]James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 351-352.

what is right, and that we are punished by the consequence of our granted prayer."[85] Thomas wanted to prevent any kind of anti-polygamy legislation from passing in Congress, but Elizabeth was not sure that that was God's will. It seemed to her that stamping out polygamy was the right thing, not protecting it, as her husband attempted to do.

Elizabeth's religiosity was a strong influence in her life. It provided meaning for her, as it did for other religious people. One of her life's greatest disappointments was Thomas's refusal to follow her religion, as it prevented them from sharing something that was so important to her. After they went to Utah in 1872-73, she was able to come to an acceptance of the Mormons and Thomas's faith. This change in Elizabeth will be looked at in a later chapter. Until 1873, however, she only provided passive support for her husband's work for his Utah friends because their beliefs seemed antithetical to her own. Even as Thomas rejected her faith, he embraced the Mormon people, and she was forced to tolerate it. But she did not actively support them herself. In fact, some of these reservations would lead her to spell out her views on the role of women in society, which were influenced by her religious faith.

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[85]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, April 10, 1870.

CHAPTER FOUR

ELIZABETH KANE'S BRAND OF FEMINISM

When Elizabeth Kane was only seventeen years old and had been married less than a year, she wrote of having seen two female dancers: "Why will people cry out at women working in a respectable manner, and drive them to such trades as these? . . . When women have more influence will they be more merciful, than they are now, and will they do something for these women to save them?"[1] At this early age, she was aware of the issue of women's employment and she had already formed the opinion that women should be allowed to work in "respectable" occupations. She also expected that the time would come when women's influence in society would increase. By the time she was in her thirties and beyond, she had thought even more about women's role in society. Among the reasons she thought about these things were her husband's interest in women's rights and the existence of polygamy among the Mormons, whom her husband had befriended.

Elizabeth and Thomas were both very interested in women's rights issues such as education and suffrage. He had fostered Elizabeth's interest on the subject, encouraging her to educate herself and to become an activist on behalf of women. He even hoped that she would be a force in shaping public opinion regarding these issues. But the Mormons, to whom he was so devoted, seemed to Elizabeth to oppress women. Like many others she was repulsed by their practice of polygamy and, largely because of Thomas's influence, she felt a need to explain why it was wrong. She looked at "the Mormon question" (meaning the problem of Mormon polygamy in America) in a more personal

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[1]E. Kane, 1854-1857 Journal, March 9, 1854.

way than others who were opposed to polygamy, because her own husband was so closely connected with them.

Early in her adult life Elizabeth was interested in the role of women and she showed herself to be a pioneer in women's higher education by attending medical school. She associated with at least one prominent female reformer of the day, Lucretia Mott. But it was not until the late 1860s that she explained her beliefs on feminist issues in detail. Specifically, she wrote a long essay that she called her "Theory" in her journal. Both her feminist leanings and the urging of her husband, as well as Thomas's relationship with the Mormons, caused her to want to respond to polygamy in a feminist context. And finally, Elizabeth's own religious beliefs influenced her feminist beliefs, both in the way she responded to the issue of polygamy and in the context in which she described women's roles.

This chapter will address Thomas's influence over Elizabeth's feminist ideas, but it will show that she was not influenced solely by him. It will also discuss Elizabeth's feminist "Theory" in detail, showing her particular concerns and ideas. The issues Elizabeth addressed were similar to issues being discussed by others at the time. She was aware of and concerned with many of the same things that other nineteenth-century feminists were concerned with.

Thomas's Influence

During their engagement, Elizabeth wrote to Thomas, "As to Women's Rights, if

my husband treats me as his equal and his friend, I cannot see what more I could desire."[2] However, over the next few years, Elizabeth would discover that she did desire more as a woman than having her husband treat her as an equal and friend. Her consciousness was raised to the problems facing women of the day. This came about in large part because of Thomas's influence over her, in that it was often he who introduced her to new people and ideas, which encouraged her to think about women's status.

For example, as noted in a previous chapter, within a few months of Elizabeth's marriage her husband wanted to "make a doctor" out of her.[3] Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman in the United States to receive a degree from a medical school had graduated in 1847. Thomas suggested medical school to his wife in 1853, only six years later, and Elizabeth had expressed an interest in medicine even earlier.[4] Medical colleges specifically for women began to open in the United States in the 1850s and 1860s. Elizabeth's attendance at the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1854 made her one of the school's earliest students.[5] As a corporator of the college, Thomas had a definite interest in the higher education of women. He wanted his wife to be one of these educated

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[2]Elizabeth D. Wood, [New York], to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], May 15-16, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

[3]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, August 25, 1853.

[4]William Wood, [New York], to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], October 13, 1851.

[5]The Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania was established in 1850, See Mary Roth Walsh, *"Doctors wanted, no women need apply": Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 180; and Regina Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 76.

women, and he wanted the college he helped to back to be a success. Elizabeth's attendance at the college furthered both of Thomas's goals. She wrote years later that she "matriculated . . . in order to help the college by the influence of her social position and name on the list of students."[6]

Elizabeth's father, William Wood, was another influential person in creating her desire for an education as he also believed in higher education for women. As a member of the New York City Board of Education, Wood actively worked to open a normal or high school for the higher education of women. When writing about its establishment, Wood commented that the president of the normal school, Thomas Hunter, "looked far ahead, and saw the absolute necessity of providing thoroughly educated female teachers for our common schools . . . He forsaw, too, that, above and beyond providing competent teachers for our common schools, the higher education of women would provide educated wives and mothers for the future citizens and children of New York."[7] Since Wood admired Hunter's attitude towards female education, he must have had similar feelings. The Normal School for Females opened in 1870, well after Elizabeth first went to college herself, but if her father was so supportive of female education in the 1870s, he may well have been at the very least open to the idea in the 1850s.[8] It is likewise possible that

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[6]"Biographical Sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane"; and E. Kane, Biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[7]William Wood, *The Autobiography of William Wood, 2 Volumes* (New York: J.S. Babcock, 1895), 2: 370-371.

[8]Ibid., 2:369-373; and E. Kane, "Continuation by Mrs. E.D. Kane," in Wood, *Autobiography*, 2: 404, 419-420, 449.

Elizabeth's educational pursuits had influenced her father to view female education positively.

It is interesting to note, however, that even though she had the support of her husband and probably her father, Elizabeth still felt the criticism of "going against the grain." The winter that Thomas was involved in the Utah War, for example, Elizabeth stopped her medical study partly because of her mother-in-law's disapproval, or her anticipated disapproval. "You will wonder why I did not quietly stick at Medicine. Well, Tom, my excuse is this. . . To study it for any time, I have to absent myself from the household. Mother neither knows, nor would approve my course of study. This makes me liable to constant calls on my time."[9]

Elizabeth's attendance at medical school, for whatever reason she went, no doubt influenced her feminist beliefs greatly. Feminism was a common ideology of women studying medicine at this time because it gave them support in a very hostile environment. The medical establishment made a conscious effort to minimize the number of women physicians and undermine their schools. Therefore, women who were able to face this societal disapproval usually had strong feminist beliefs. They believed that they had a right to participate in the public world and that they could contribute in the medical field. They also rejected notions of women's intellectual inferiority.[10]

Elizabeth began attending lectures at the Female Medical College in early 1854. She decided to study medicine because Thomas wanted her to, but she was also very

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[9]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, February 5, 1858.

[10]Morantz-Sanchez, 50-56.

interested in the field. She felt that it would provide her with a way to help others and be useful in society. She also thought that attending medical school would give her time to grow up, mentally and physically, so that she would be better able to have children. After the miscarriage she had early in her marriage, she wrote in her diary, "God help me to gain strength first to complete my course at college and know medicine as a means of usefulness to my fellows, and meanwhile to strengthen body and educate mind till I am a full grown woman. And then I pray that He will grant us the great blessing when I am fitter to be so infinitely blessed."[11]

Elizabeth hoped that her attendance at medical school would encourage an increased acceptance of women in college. She, like Thomas, saw herself as an example to other women. For example, she wrote that one of the main objections to women studying medicine is that it took them away from their household duties:

> I have no children, so that I shall not be able to be a very good example of the contrary. But my health is as delicate as most women's and if I can only prove that I am happier, and stronger, and that my household find no diminution in my cares, and that I can perform those duties of society and hospitality which fall to my share, I think my example will be worth something as an argument.[12]

She mentioned her hope that she would be stronger because of her education, which was a response to the conventional wisdom of the day that said women were physically unable to withstand the rigors of higher education. "Experts," such as doctors and psychologists, asserted that people had only a certain amount of energy for all activities and if too much energy was used in one activity, another would suffer. Therefore, if women were using

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[11]E. Kane, 1854-1857 Journal, January 19, 1854.

[12]Ibid., January 3, 1854.

energy in study, they would have less energy for their important reproductive role. Or, if the female brain was used too much, the uterus would suffer.[13]

Elizabeth was aware of these popular arguments against women going to college, but she felt that she could prove them wrong. However, it was also feared that women in college and professional life would neglect their children.[14] After she became a mother, she was not as confident that this argument was wrong. She was unsure about the wisdom of going back to medical school after the births of her children, although Thomas wanted her to. She wrote, "Now a question arises-Ought I to be so much away from my children?"[15] Despite her concerns, she decided to return to school in the fall of 1860. However, she became pregnant again at this time and she did not go back until her four children were grown, graduating in 1883 at the age of 47.[16]

Another way that Thomas influenced Elizabeth's feminism was by introducing Elizabeth to women's rights activists such as Lucy Stone and Lucretia Mott, Philadelphia residents. In January 1854 Elizabeth wrote of an announcement that Lucy Stone was going to lecture in Philadelphia on Women's Rights and that Tom said they had to go.[17]

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[13]Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978), 113-118.

[14]Morantz-Sanchez, 51.

[15]E. Kane, 1858-1860 Journal, September 18, 1859.

[16]Ibid., Feb 12, 1860; and "Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[17]E. Kane, 1854-57 Journal, January 20, 1854. Elizabeth also wrote in this entry that they were unable to attend the lecture because of a prior obligation.

Thomas and Elizabeth were well enough acquainted with Lucretia Mott, who had been one of the organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, that when their first child was born in 1855, she sent them a note of congratulations.[18] Elizabeth also wrote in her journal of visits to "Mrs. Mott."[19] She did not record what occurred at these visits but it is certain that she and Thomas knew this well-known feminist personally.

Perhaps Thomas had become acquainted with Mott in the Philadelphia abolitionist movement. Lucretia Mott was a leader in this movement and Thomas was also involved in it.[20] According to Elizabeth, Thomas had worked for the abolishment of slavery and, in fact, had resigned his "lucrative position" as U.S. Commissioner rather than enforce the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law.[21] He was also an early leader in the Free Soil Party and acted as an agent on the Underground Railroad.[22] Whatever the specifics of their relationship, Thomas did associate with Mott and he agreed with her feminist and abolitionist views.

During the 1860s Thomas began to form plans of Elizabeth becoming a political

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[18]Lucretia Mott to Thomas L. Kane, July 26, 1855, Kane Papers, BYU. The Seneca Falls Convention was an 1848 mass meeting of women in Seneca Falls, New York which is considered to be the first gathering of women to discuss women's rights and liberation.

[19]E. Kane 1857-1858 Journal, February 5, 10, 1858.

[20]Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 55.

[21]E. Kane, "Continuation," in Wood, *Autobiography*, 2:394; and E. Kane, Biographical Sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[22]Leornard J. Arrington, "'In Honorable Remembrance': Thomas L. Kane's Services to the Mormons," *Brigham Young University Studies* (Fall 1981), 395; and Richard D. Poll, "Thomas L. Kane and the Utah War," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 61 (Spring 1993), 115.

writer to promote women's rights. He started directing Elizabeth's studies with the purpose of improving her writing and political knowledge.[23] But she worried about spending too much time on her outside interests and not enough time on taking care of her home and family. However, Thomas argued that her intellectual pursuits were also important and sometimes more important than some home responsibilities.

In September, 1857, she wrote, "What a mistake I might have made in falling entirely into outdoor work and overlooking home duties. I must be careful not to become absorbed in Photography, to the detriment of nearer things."[24] But Thomas did not think that she should worry so much about housework, "Tom says my time is far more valuable to him if I devote it to intellectual work and that he must get some farmer's family, no matter at what cost, to do the housekeeping."[25] Later Thomas told her that "it was a far more important thing to [assist him with his work], than to care for a neatness which any servant could attend to."[26] It is not certain that they ever did get a "farmer's family" to do the housekeeping, however, Elizabeth does not mention such a family in subsequent diary entries.

If Thomas was interested in guiding Elizabeth in her pursuits, he was not always content with his own. He always seemed to be looking for some other kind of work that

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[23]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, November 24, December 12, 1869, and January 18, 1870.

[24]E. Kane, 1857-1858 Journal, September 20, 1857.

[25]E. Kane, 1858-60 Journal, August 13, 1858.

[26]Ibid., September 21, 1858.

he could do. Before the Utah War in 1858, he had worked as a law clerk and afterwards he was employed by the McKean and Elk Land Improvement Company as a manager in its development of the lands in northwestern Pennsylvania. His work with McKean and Elk had many ups and downs, however, in that he invested his own money in the company and land, which was not always profitable. So he frequently looked elsewhere for possible employment.

In 1868 he thought about applying to become the territorial governor of Washington and he told Elizabeth that it would provide her with a good position for establishing herself as a writer.[27] He also said seeing the world would be useful to her writing. But when someone else was nominated, she wrote,

> For my part, I am thankful not to go, and besides, I think there will be other work to do . . . I think he esteems my mind more highly than he should, but if I can do any good by writing I would be so glad. My thoughts turn towards the 'Woman Question,' [moved] thereto my certain perplexities of my own. My dearest Tom thinks of being moved by the Spirit, but I dare hardly hope to do any service by so poor a pen as mine.[28]

The next year, 1869, Thomas Kane made some overtures to become the governor of the territory of Utah. She wrote in April 1869 that she received a letter from Thomas, who was away from home, instructing her to telegraph her consent to his applying for the position. She did consent, but she also wrote, "Why should this letter make me so very sad! I was prepared to go with him to Washington Territory . . . It is only because it contains the assurance that . . . He cannot be contented here, and I must bid farewell to

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[27]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, December 6, 1868.

[28]Ibid., April 6, 1869.

hopes of a happy life."[29] Later Thomas told her that he had wanted the position because it would give her a better place to write on the subject of women's rights.[30] Thomas had made plans for Elizabeth to become a political writer, and in this instance he tried to combine his desire for a new occupation with his plans for his wife's role in society.

Elizabeth's "Theory"

When Thomas told Elizabeth that he had applied for the governorship of Utah because he thought it would be a useful place for Elizabeth to "be of service to her sex as a writer upon the great question of Woman's Rights," she changed her mind about moving there. In her journal entry of July 11, 1869, she wrote that she was perfectly willing to go.[31] She then went on to write, under the same date, her "Theory" on women, which was spurred by questions of polygamy, although, she already had formed opinions regarding women's rights. This essay was written in her diary as one document just under 3500 words in length. It was dated July 11, 1869, and the next diary entry is dated October 18, 1869. She may not have written journal entries during this three-month period because she was working on the "Theory" as it was unusual for her to have such a long gap between diary entries. Her essay ends with "Is it worth while to construct from the Woman's Rights point of view an explanation of the story of the fall? Let me think that

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[29]Ibid., April 14, 1869.

[30]Ibid., July 11, 1869.

[31]Ibid. Of course it is possible that Thomas told her he wanted to go to Utah for her writing so that she would change her mind about going.

out."[32] She did not come back to write that explanation. There is no evidence that she ever attempted to publish this essay, or that she even wrote any other drafts.

Elizabeth's theory was written at a time when the woman's suffrage movement had been revived, and the two women's suffrage organizations, the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association, had begun their campaigns with Congress and the States. Although there is no evidence that Elizabeth ever joined either of these organizations, she was concerned about the same issues these organizations addressed, such as the double moral standard, women's health, education, employment and suffrage. In her essay she reflected the thinking of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who wrote the "Declaration of Sentiments" for the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, which listed the grievances and resolutions of female reformers.[33]

Elizabeth was heavily influenced by the polygamy controversy as well. She was very opposed to polygamy, and thus to Mormonism. The possibility of moving to Utah and becoming a political writer on women's rights made her think about polygamy and she began her essay by addressing this issue in relation to women's rights. She wrote at a time when members of Congress had begun attempting to pass bills to destroy polygamy, and the courts also were making a vigorous effort to enforce anti-polygamy laws in Utah. With the end of the Civil War and the Radical Republicans controlling Congress, there was a desire to reform Southern society and with that came a similar interest to reform

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[32]Ibid.

[33]Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments," Seneca Falls Convention, 1848.

Utah society. Elizabeth was perhaps quietly in favor of harsh anti-polygamy laws, while Thomas, of course, worked against such laws.[34] Because of this difference of opinion between them (although Thomas also disagreed with the practice of polygamy), perhaps Elizabeth wanted to explain her objections.[35]

She must have discussed her ideas with Thomas, because she wrote that he told her "half-jestingly" that he was afraid of the conclusions she might come to because, as she wrote,

> Absurd as this seems, it is certain that the trains of thought I have been pursuing lead logically to Polygamy–if we are to admit what most people seem to admit-that men are not made to be as chaste as women. Then-if men are not made so that it is within the bounds of their human capacity of virtue-to be either absolutely chaste, or the faithful husband of one woman-it seems to me that we are thrown upon one of two conclusions-either Christ did not mean by his teachings to prohibit Polygamy, and in that case the teachings-I know nothing yet of their results-of Brigham Young are correct-or else Christ is proved to be no God by his preaching what a God would have known to be an impossibility.
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> As both of these conclusions are simply hideous to me a Christian, and the single wife of a faithful husband, I must either close my mind to the subject, or *prove to my own satisfaction that God did not make man less chaste than woman.* Were it possible to prove this--then I might hope to teach something that would be useful to women, but without proving this, I should find myself forever arriving at

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[34]E. Kane, 1869-70 Journal, April 10, 1870. After 1867, Thomas worked closely with George Q. Cannon (first a Utah lobbyist and then official delegate) in formulating Mormon policy and public positions. See Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999), 174-176, 189-190, 194, 226, and 259.

[35]Elizabeth wrote, "For a long time [Thomas] did not believe that the Mormons practiced polygamy, and when he could no longer disbelieve, he tried hard to have them give it up." E. Kane, Biographical Sketch of Thomas L. Kane. Also, Thomas wrote that when he learned the Mormons were practicing polygamy it was "a discovery similar to discovery of wife's infidelity." T. Kane, 1851-1852 Journal/Notebook, December 27-28, 1851, Kane Papers, BYU.

the end of blind alleys.[36]

She felt the need to prove that polygamy was not a correct principle because men were physically capable of being as chaste as women. Conventional wisdom said they were not, but Elizabeth did not believe it.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was concerned about the same issue, the double moral standard that held women to a higher level of chastity than men.[37] Most other feminists advocated strongly against this double standard. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's feminist journal, *The Revolution* (which they edited from 1868-1870, precisely the time when Elizabeth wrote her theory) often argued that the sexual double standard was to blame for women's social problems, such as illegitimate pregnancies or prostitution.[38] Stanton came to link the sexual double standard and "legalized prostitution," or a man having the legal right to sexual relations with his wife, with or without her consent. She also fixed the blame of woman's basic oppression to man's sexual power over her.[39] Elizabeth Kane similarly believed that there were problems related to the sexual aspect of marriage which needed to be addressed.

Elizabeth believed that "man was created to be the partner of one woman." But all of humanity was in an abnormal state after generations of over sexualization that began with "ages of sinful indulgence" among men. Women followed men in order to attract

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[36]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, July 11, 1869.

[37]Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments," 1848.

[38]DuBois, 75-76.

[39]Ibid., 77-78.

them and so learned to become less chaste with their husbands, which in turn fostered the men's sexual propensities. It was unnatural and unnecessary for husbands and wives to engage in sexual relations as often as they generally did, in her opinion. Sin and weakness had caused the popular belief that men were less chaste than women. She wrote, "Since Christ taught, it is become general among Christians to consider monogamy right, without ceasing to act as they did when polygamy had become the rule."[40] Elizabeth thought that when polygamy was prevalent (before Christ), men and women encouraged sexual desires rather than controlling them, and after monogamy was established, they did not restrain themselves as they needed to.

A major focus of Elizabeth's theory was the health of women. With her medical background, she felt that the biggest problem in society's over-sexualization was the physical toll that it took on women. For women sex meant pregnancy, which could be dangerous, and repeated pregnancies could ruin a woman's health. Other writers (usually male physicians) who took up the topic of sexual relations between couples also focused on women's health. But the "health" concerns they emphasized differed from Elizabeth's. While Elizabeth was worried about the physical dangers of excessive pregnancies, others were worried that too much sexual stimulation would harm female reproductive organs and interfere with successful childbearing.[41]

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[40]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, July 11, 1869.

[41]John S. Haller, Jr., "From Maidenhood to Menopause: Sex Education for Women in Victorian America," *Journal of Popular Culture* 1972 6(1), 52, 55-57; and Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Under the Shadow of Maternity: American Women's Responses to Death and Debility Fears in Nineteenth-Century Childbirth," *Feminist Studies* 12 (Spring 1986), 135-140.

In the context of sexual relations between married couples, Elizabeth wrote that there were four classes of women. The first class, which was the most morally correct, consisted of women who felt that they had to give in to their husbands' sexual desires and did not attempt to prevent conception by any means. "There is no lie in the sneering accusation made that good men, clergymen particularly, kill their wives or ruin their health by excessive childbearing, and the better, the purer, the more saintly a married woman is, the sooner she falls a martyr to her marriage vow." She felt that these women were correct in not wanting to artificially prevent pregnancy but their husbands were wrong to be so demanding, thereby causing "excessive childbearing," which was detrimental to their health. Elizabeth wrote that of these women, most did not reach the age of forty without contracting one of the "diseases of women."[42]

The "second class" of women were those who tried to prevent conception to protect their health and "who would rather die . . . than have their unsatisfied master unfaithful to them." To protect their lives, they used some kind of birth control method, but they would not refuse their husband's advances. In the nineteenth-century there was some information about artificial birth control, and although it was not openly talked about, there were many couples who used these methods, as Elizabeth was aware. These (artificial) methods included douching, pessaries (a vaginal suppository that kills sperm and/or blocks the cervix), and rubber condoms. These methods, along with withdrawal (coitus interreptus) and periodic abstinence, were effective for the purpose of limiting families to three or four children, which was what nineteenth-century birth control

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[42]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, July 11, 1869.

advocates desired.[43] Elizabeth believed, however, that the women who used birth control also fell prey to disease as a result of the devices.

"Far below" the second class women were the third class, who would rather have their husbands unfaithful than "submit their tortured bodies wholly to them." The fourth class were the women who were willing to abort unwanted babies. Even though she judged these women as much lower morally, Elizabeth still showed sympathy for them, however. She put all of the blame for excessive sex, which caused excessive pregnancy, on husbands. Their wives were victims who coped with their husband's demands in different ways, some better than others. Elizabeth was not alone in her attack on men. Other feminists also were angry about men's lustful desires which caused women so many problems.[44]

"This is not an exaggerated statement, Is there no remedy? Must we die or drag on lives of pain–or submit to have our husband's love cease for us, or he become unfaithful?" Elizabeth demanded. The answer to these problems was not polygamy but demanding self-control and changing societal attitudes about sex. She hoped that "the Marriage Vow may no longer be felt by the best women to bind upon them the absolute giving up of their bodies to their husbands' control." Society must change its attitudes first, "for it will be long after that before they [the best women] will learn to believe that Divine Law does not

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[43]James Reed, *From Private Vice to Public Virtue: the Birth Control Movement and American Society Since 1830* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 6; and Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1976), 40-44.

[44]Gordon, 104.

require that absolute self sacrifice."[45]

Elizabeth's writing about women being forced to give up their bodies refers to the issue of "legalized prostitution" that Stanton and other feminists were talking about. She also was obviously supportive of the concept of "voluntary motherhood" that most feminists of the time embraced. Women activists with differing concerns all agreed that women should not be forced into pregnancy. And, like Elizabeth, most of these activists did not think artificial birth control was the answer to preventing pregnancy. Instead they simply wanted it accepted by society that women had the right to refuse sexual relations with their husbands and thus refuse to become pregnant. These women believed that women should be allowed to make that choice because they had to face the dangers of pregnancy and the burdens of child care. Even the most conservative of feminists agreed with this concept and felt that it was a fundamental part of their larger commitment to women's rights.[46]

Elizabeth exercised her belief in "voluntary motherhood" when she and Thomas consciously decided to prevent conception at least two times in their marriage. After Elizabeth's miscarriage in July 1853, it seems that they made a decision to postpone having children. Their method of birth control was probably abstinence. In February 1854, Elizabeth wrote that she had decided about the "G.W." It is not clear what she was referring to but the rest of the entry sounds as though she was writing of having children:

I tried to determine as one unconcerned. Medicine, Health, and self with some

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[45]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, July 11, 1869.

[46]Gordon, 103-106, 109.

> reasons or fears rather on the score of Religion, Education, etc., arrayed themselves against Pleasure to the Kanes; a yearning in myself that grows constantly stronger, and most of all Tom's happiness...I think and hope I came to the right decision before I slept. I told Tom in the evening, and the unexpected happiness it gave him made me quite sure I was right. But I will decide more fully on the anniversary of my wedding day, and then . . . I will wear some of those pretty French Calicos that Tom likes "[47]

She may have planned to wear "pretty French calicos" for Thomas because she wanted to be attractive to him once again, possibly because they planned to resume sexual relations. Also, she had written in her journal previously that she planned to wait to have children until she was stronger and older.[48] There was more than a year between her miscarriage and her next pregnancy and it is unlikely that this was achieved by chance.[49]

The second time they consciously tried to prevent pregnancy lasted much longer. Elizabeth had her second child, Elisha, in November 1856 (Harriet was born July 1855). Her third child, Evan, was not born until April 1861, meaning she became pregnant around July 1860, nearly four year after her last pregnancy. In this case, she clearly wrote that they were avoiding pregnancy by abstinence.

> I love Tom with all my heart and soul, and would so desire (I can't think that blameable. Any wife would) to be charming in his eyes. I used to try, particularly I remember during the years immediately after Harry's birth to dress in colors and a style that pleased him. [But after his father's death and the Utah war] for many reasons [we decided] to have no children for some years. To help him I wanted to avoid anything like coquetry . . .. Well, we have lived temperately, have had no child, and though Tom thinks he loves me as intensely as ever, I never see, as I

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[47]E. Kane, 1854-57 Journal, February 5, 1854.

[48]Ibid., January 19, 1854; and E. Kane, 1853 Journal, July 16, 1853.

[49]E. Kane, 1854-1857 Journal. In the cover of this journal Elizabeth pasted a calender on which she kept a record of her pregnancy. It shows that she became pregnant in October 1854.

> sometimes did when ... I dressed to please him, his eyes fixed on me with the old loverlike intensity. I wanted to be his sister, yet I don't like it now. Now we think that we may righteously be united again, and I am going this summer to put off mourning."[50]

Elizabeth felt that it was acceptable to avoid sexual relations in order to prevent pregnancy and it seemed to be a mutual decision between her and Thomas. She advocated against men being too sexually demanding in order to preserve women's health and prevent unwanted pregnancies, and she did not believe in the morality or safety of artificial birth control. Apparently she and Thomas practiced what she preached.

Elizabeth's solution to the problem of men's insatiable desire for sex was to train boys to believe that they ought to be as chaste as women, and that "if women bear the pain of child-bearing as their trial–they on their side have to fight harder to be chaste." She believed that married couples should be "temperate," and not prevent pregnancy except "by fasting and prayer compelling themselves to live together like brother and sister when it is expedient that they should not have children, and coming together again when they feel that they may." This way they would protect the wife's health and when pregnancy did occur "it will not be a source of dread, for its place in the home circle has been already decided to be ready."[51]

Most sex manuals advocated that sexual relations take place only when couples wished to conceive as Elizabeth advocated. However, once again Elizabeth's main concern was the woman's health and the family's ability to care for a child, while other

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[50]E. Kane, 1858-1860 Journal, March 2, 1860. Elizabeth wore mourning for Thomas's father, John K. Kane, who died in February 1858.

[51]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, July 11, 1869.

writers emphasized the higher morality of limiting sexual relations.[52] Elizabeth was more practical and specific in her concerns than other writers were. Their concerns were, as historian John S. Haller, Jr., put it "pseudo-scientific" and based upon myths of the possible risk of weakness and nervousness. These writers were not worried about the dangers and discomforts of pregnancy and childbirth, except that sexual relations during pregnancy would harm the developing fetus, both physically and morally.[53]

Along with "temperate living" Elizabeth hoped that an increase in female doctors would result in better health care for women, as they were better suited to caring for women. Elizabeth maintained that these doctors should encourage mothers to educate their daughters about sex in relation to their health. She believed it was quite acceptable and necessary for young women to know what to expect upon marriage. She wrote,

> God must have thought Mary a virgin in mind and soul as well as body and therefore ours must be a conventional idea of delicacy which yet would most certainly be shocked should our maiden daughter be capable of making the answer Mary returned to Gabriel. Now we train our sweetest flowers of womanhood to such delicate purity that marriage is a fearful shock to them, and every wife struggles thenceforward to reassert to herself that she is as pure and honorable in her matronhood as in her virgin innocence.

It would perhaps violate "conventional delicacy" but it would not truly hurt the purity of the young women to have some kind of knowledge about sex before marriage.[54]

Authors who attempted to educate women in sexual matters in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not concerned with giving women details about sexual

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[52]Haller, Jr., 57-61.

[53]Ibid., 62-63.

[54]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, July 11, 1869.

relations, as Elizabeth advocated. They were concerned with women's health too, but again the "experts" worried about a completely different aspect of women's health. These writers were worried about the possible negative psychological and physiological effects of too-frequent intimacy, but they did not count pregnancy as one of these. It was well-accepted at the time that sex could cause innumerable physical and mental disorders and it was feared that women who engaged in the act too often would become more masculine while men would become more "fretful and peevish." Intemperance in sexual relations was also felt to be a waste of "vital energy" needed for other bodily functions, such as thought or reproduction.[55]

Continuing with her concerns for female health, Elizabeth asserted that she would have "every syphilitic man castrated, every prostitute separated for life from the world." Elizabeth believed divorce should be available to every wife whose husband was unfaithful, but neither should marry again. If these guidelines were followed, the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases would decrease greatly, she believed.

Another important part of her theory was the education of women. She felt that young women should not be taught to look anxiously towards marriage but instead they should be trained for a career. Marriage should take place only after they were fully grown and mature, well past the late teens. A well-educated woman would be intellectually charming to her husband, not only physically attractive. Better education for women meant allowing boys and girls opportunities to go to school together as peers, where "the boys will see you pink dunces at the foot of the class as we always saw you

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[55]Haller, Jr., 50, 55, 57-58.

and rated you accordingly." Elizabeth asked that husbands tell whether their homes were happier

> when they have wives in whose intelligence they can so thoroughly confide as to make them aware of all their business troubles. Are their homes less well managed when the Minister of the Interior knows why, when and where she must spend or spare? Is it no comfort for a man to turn his weary steps homeward sure of sympathy when he recounts his troubles? Or is sympathy less comforting in proportion as it is more intelligent![56]

Women should be allowed and encouraged to pursue outside occupations. "We shall be trained by our parents as our brothers are to the calling best suited to our nature. Trust Americans to put their girls, when they find out they can be useful, to useful employment." Elizabeth made the point that having a wife trained in medicine, law, politics, or bookkeeping would benefit a household greatly. The only danger would be that "men will find it pays better to have their wives continue the practice of their profession, and be unwilling to relinquish them to the duties of maternity." But, even in those possible cases, if a woman was happier in some kind of outside occupation, rather than at home, the entire family would be better off.[57]

Elizabeth may have not been aware of the fact that she shared these ideas with Mormon Church leader Brigham Young. He certainly supported higher education for women, encouraging Mormon women to attend medical schools in the east (most notably the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania) as well as opening the University of Utah to women from its establishment in 1850. Brigham Young argued that women's

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[56]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, July 11, 1869.

[57]Ibid.

contributions were needed in the larger community. ". . . they should stand behind the counter, study law or physic [medicine], or become good bookkeepers and be able to do the business in any counting house, and all this to enlarge the sphere of usefulness for the benefit of society at large."[58] When Elizabeth went to Utah in 1872, she saw for herself that Utah women were involved in public affairs and working outside the home.[59]

Stanton addressed the issues of women's education and employment. In her "Declaration of Sentiments," which consisted of the resolutions passed by the women who met at the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, she wrote that women had not been allowed profitable and honorable employment, and that women should be allowed to occupy "such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate."[60] Elizabeth also believed this. Women should be given as good an education as men and allowed to pursue honorable professions. This way dishonorable professions or menial labor would not be the only options for women who had to work.

Finally, Elizabeth addressed the issue of woman's suffrage. In her essay she mocked arguments made against woman's suffrage.

> We are told that if Woman's Suffrage and its attendant duties come upon us we shall lose our delicate pink and white colour, our softly flaccid muscles, all that lovely languor which at once attracts and retains the affections of our males. . .

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[58]Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:61, as quoted in James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 390.

[59]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey through Utah to Arizona*, (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1974), 4-5.

[60]Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments," 1848.

> [but] there are so many of us who are plain nowadays, and never were pink, or cushiony or golden-haired. May we vote?[61]

She also rebutted the argument made that women did not have the time needed to spend on politics to enable them to vote intelligently. Elizabeth said that "The lives of our upper-class women are so denuded of occupation that they would go mad for want of something to do . . . On the contrary they are studiously taught to waste time slowly." She felt that even advocates of the "feminine woman" could not assert that a woman's time was well spent in "what are called 'morning calls,' shopping, 'fancy work,' balls and parties." And, poorer women, who had less leisure time, could still read the newspapers with their husbands in the evening.[62] Of course many of those who were prominent in the woman's suffrage movement felt, as Elizabeth did, that "it [was] the duty of the women of this country to secure themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."[63]

Conclusion

Thomas Kane may have been the spark that led his wife to think about the issues of women's rights and polygamy, but Elizabeth Kane's opinions were her own, influenced by contemporary feminists and social reformers, as well as Thomas and her own experience. She was encouraged by her husband to write on the subject of women's rights and she was stimulated by the Mormon practice of polygamy. Different factors in her life, including her husband's relationship with the Mormon people and her own background in

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[61]E. Kane, 1868-1870 Journal, July 11, 1869.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments," 1848.

medicine, brought about her essay, which was mainly concerned with the physical and intellectual health of women. It is interesting that when Thomas wanted her to become a political writer, she was somewhat passive, but when she wrote about women's health and sexuality, she became much more assertive and passionate. It is clear that these were the issues that she cared most about, more than purely political ones.

Elizabeth's marriage to Thomas L. Kane gave her a unique perspective on Utah polygamy, or at least it put her in a sort of awkward position. If not for Thomas, she may have been an active crusader against the Mormons. But because she was married to a champion of their cause, she could not actively fight against them. She may have been as adamantly opposed to polygamy as any Radical Republican or moral reformer, but had she joined the crusade against polygamy, she would have been fighting her own husband.

Thomas's Mormon cause resulted in an 1870 invitation to the White House by President Ulysses S. Grant. The Grants had stayed a weekend at the Kanes' home in Pennsylvania in the summer of 1869, just after the time in which Thomas was lobbying Grant for the governorship of Utah. Utah was still a territory, and so its governors were presidential appointees, and except for Brigham Young, all had been non-residents, like Thomas. In the spring of 1869, Thomas had written letters to Grant asking for the job, but when the President talked of visiting the town of Kane, Thomas decided to withdraw his application.[64] He wrote, "A visit from General Grant is a higher honor than his

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[64]Thomas L. Kane, [Kane, PA], to U.S. Grant, [Washington, D.C.], April 10, 1869; Eli K. Price to Thomas L. Kane, [Kane, PA], April 14, 1869; and Thomas L. Kane, [Kane, PA] to Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, April 17, 1869, Kane Papers, BYU.

commission to an office."[65] Perhaps Thomas felt that it was improper to ask Grant for a job after he became a personal guest because it would appear that the visit was in exchange for a political appointment.

When the Grants invited Thomas and Elizabeth to visit them at the White House a year later, they declined for various reasons. One factor in favor of their going was Thomas's desire to use his influence on behalf of the Mormons, but other problems and reasons outweighed that. Elizabeth wrote that she regretted their decision a little. "I confessed that I was strongly tempted by ambition, and the desire to meet political celebrities. . . . I listened and was tempted, but Common Sense inexorably interposed. She (Common Sense) said we could not afford to be active in Washington without obtaining a Foreign Ministry to live on, and then where was our Home Influence?"[66] Thomas thought that this visit to the White House could have been a turning point in his career, "There might be a field of national importance before us, for Grant and Cameron [Pennsylvania senator] counseled with him. Yet neither is unspotted. . ." It seemed that both Thomas and Elizabeth did not view this invitation as a simple visit but a decision about whether or not they should "be active in Washington." They may have been unsure about Thomas being associated with men who were "unspotted, " which was perhaps a reference to Grant and Cameron's reputations as government officials. Elizabeth and Thomas decided they wanted to have "home influence" instead and Thomas's position as President of the

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[65]Thomas L. Kane, [Kane, PA], to John A. Rawlins, Secretary of War, [Washington, D.C.], April 26, 1869, Kane Papers, BYU.

[66]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, January 25, 1870.

State Board of Charities would give them that.[67]

Later she wrote that she was glad that they had decided not to go, although "The Mormons sorely wanted Tom's influence." Elizabeth felt that perhaps Tom's desire to prevent anti-polygamy legislation was not God's will. Regarding Thomas's lobbying for the Mormons she wrote, "I have an idea that sometimes God allows us to turn Him from His purpose where our hearts are so set on a thing that we ask it without a reference to His wiser judgement of what is right, and that we are punished by the consequence of our granted prayer."[68]

Elizabeth did not entirely support Thomas's desire to defeat anti-polygamy bills because she felt that God probably approved those very bills. No doubt Elizabeth approved of them as well as she felt that polygamy was an evil that needed to be stamped out. Her desire to see polygamy ended conflicted with her husband's desire to protect Mormon interests and their way of life which were threatened by anti-polygamy legislation.

At the end of the 1860s, Elizabeth had a desire to help improve the status of women by increasing sexual morality in society, educating women, and allowing them the right to vote. It was her husband's influence and his relationship with polygamous people that spurred her to spell out these beliefs and desires for women. Her theory on the role of women was in part a response to Mormon polygamy, which her husband defended. Up to 1872, Elizabeth had to deal with the people of Utah through her husband's constant

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[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid., April 10, 1870.

contact and work for them, which was difficult enough considering her views about them. But she was soon going tocome face to face with them and their practice of polygamy. In the fall of 1872, Thomas and Elizabeth went to Utah, when she made first contact with the Mormon people themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND: ELIZABETH VISITS

TWELVE MORMON HOMES

On November 19, 1872, Elizabeth and Thomas, along with their two youngest sons, Evan and Willie, left Pennsylvania for an extended visit to Utah as guests of Brigham Young.[1] The primary purpose of their journey was to improve Thomas's health, which was particularly poor "after the rigors of an unsuccessful Congressional campaign."[2] Elizabeth was very reluctant to go to Utah and associate with the people there, but because of her worries for her husband's health and the hope that the trip would do him good, she finally consented.[3] The family arrived in Salt Lake City on November 26, 1872. After spending a few weeks there and several weeks in St. George, Utah, they left Utah on March 5, 1873. Because Elizabeth agreed to go, and subsequently wrote about her experiences, there are two very valuable accounts of Mormon life in the early 1870s.

Elizabeth Kane was an observer and a writer. She had kept a diary regularly since her marriage and she had written a 136 page account of President Ulysses S. Grant's weekend visit to their home in August 1869, as well as histories of their settlement of

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[1]E. Kane, 1872-1873 Journal, November 19, 1872.

[2]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*, 1909.

[3]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal*, eds. Norman R. Bowen and Mary Karen Bowen Solomon (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1995), 177.

Kane, Pennsylvania.[4] It was only natural that when she left Salt Lake City on December 12, 1872, to undertake an eleven-day journey through the heart of Mormon country, she would take her pen and paper and record her experiences. Most of the recording she did was in letters to her family, which became the privately printed travel account, *Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey from Utah to Arizona* (1874). This is strictly an account of her journey from Salt Lake City to St. George, Utah. It consists of letters written to her father and other family members. Her other account, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie, 1872-73: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal*, is the record of her eight-week stay in St. George. Whether or not her St. George journal was ever intended for publication is not known, but it was not published until 1995, well after her death. That account will be covered in the next chapter.

Like other nineteenth-century travel accounts dealing with Utah and the Mormons, *Twelve Mormon Homes* is an important source for students of Latter-day Saint history. This chapter will analyze the book by comparing it with other travel accounts of the time period. Elizabeth's travel account was very different from any other, however. She was in Utah as a prominent personal guest of Brigham Young, not a traveler who came from curiosity or who happened to be passing through. She was also the wife of a man highly regarded by the locals. And, instead of writing about Salt Lake City, Elizabeth chose to focus on rural Utah where she spent the bulk of her visit and where she was most impressed with the people. These are some factors that make Elizabeth's account unique

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[4]E. Kane, "Story of the Mother of the Regiment,"1869; "Account of President Grant's Visit," (unpublished manuscript, August 1869); and "Settling Kane and our Family Life There," 2 vols., (unpublished manuscript, 1870), Kane Papers, BYU.

and one of the most valuable travel accounts written.

Twelve Mormon Homes reveals Elizabeth's values and beliefs through her reactions and responses to Mormonism. Important themes from her life are reflected in her travel accounts and in letters she wrote during the trip. Her relationship with Thomas, her religious values and beliefs, and her feminist leanings all influenced the things that she noticed and chose to write about.

Elizabeth Kane came to Utah with definite opinions on the Mormons and polygamy. She saw polygamy as an immoral lifestyle, but she came to dwell among polygamists. Elizabeth did not like the people when she arrived, but during her visit her attitude toward them softened significantly. She came away with not only a changed opinion of the Mormons, but also having been spurred to think about her own views on religion, marriage, and feminism. The stated purpose of *Twelve Mormon Homes*, printed in 1874 by William Wood, was to "[command] sympathy for the Mormons."[5] However, when the letters were first written it is doubtful that she had too much interest in this cause. The next two chapters will show the changes that Elizabeth went through that made her want to help her husband's Utah friends by the time her book was published over a year after she returned home.

Twelve Mormon Homes came from Elizabeth's letters home, but she also kept an actual travel diary while on her journey, which is erratically dated and contains many miscellaneous notes and jottings throughout. Only one of the original letters written on

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[5]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormons Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey through Utah to Arizona*, (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1974), xxi.

her journey through Utah is extant. However, in comparing places where the same episodes are recorded in both her actual travel diary or the letter and in the finished book one does not find significant differences. Therefore, the finished product was probably true to what she wrote while in Utah. This chapter will be heavily based on *Twelve Mormon Homes*, but it will also use her original journal kept on the journey and the letters she wrote in Salt Lake City during the family's two-week stay there before traveling to St. George.

The Kanes in Salt Lake City

The Kane family was in Salt Lake City from November 26 to December 12, 1872. In Elizabeth's letters to her family from Salt Lake City, she wrote of the people she met and parties she attended. She also wrote of how the Mormon people felt about Thomas. During this time, Elizabeth spent much time with her "interpreter friend," Dimick Huntington, learning more about the Native Americans in whom she was quite interested.[6] Huntington also spoke to her so much about the Mormon religion that she wrote, "If I am not converted it won't be for want of preaching to 'Sister Kane.'"[7]

One thing that impressed Elizabeth during those first few weeks in Salt Lake City, and would continue to impress her throughout their Utah visit, was how highly regarded Thomas was. She wrote to her daughter Harriet, "Father is like another man here. It

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[6]E. Kane, Salt Lake City, to Elisha Kane, [Philadelphia], December 4, 1872; and E. Kane, [Salt Lake City], to Harriet Kane, [Philadelphia], December 11, 1872, Kane Papers, BYU. Huntington was a brother-in-law of Brigham Young and a Mormon Indian interpreter.

[7]E. Kane to Elisha Kane, December 4, 1872.

would delight you to see how this people worship him! How I wish you and Elisha were with us to listen to the things they tell us of him. He has kept so quiet that we know nothing about him except what we have seen."[8] She wrote that Thomas sometimes felt that they were overwhelmed by visitors, but "I am sure it does him good, and it does me good to [see him respected]."[9] Elizabeth had been concerned with Thomas's reputation before and had been upset for the lack of recognition he received for his work, but in Utah she saw people who truly appreciated him.

An amusing incident that Elizabeth recorded illustrates the respect that the people of Utah had for Thomas. She wrote that her son, Willie, "pointed to the cupola of the city hall and said 'There's where Thomas L. is going to take me,'" and that she replied, "'There, Willie! You're dreaming! Father never could get up the stairs.' 'Oh,' says [Willie], 'I mean Thomas L. Kane Little. They call him Thomas L. at home.'"[10] It was not the first time that Elizabeth would run into a namesake of Thomas's in Utah.[11] This Thomas L. Kane Little was the son of Jesse C. Little, who was the first Mormon that Thomas came in contact with back in 1846 in Philadelphia.[12]

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[8]E. Kane, [Salt Lake City], to Harriet Kane, [Philadelphia], November 29, 1872, Kane Papers, BYU.

[9]E. Kane, [Salt Lake City], to Elisha Kane, [Philadelphia], December 7, 1872, Kane Papers, BYU.

[10]E. Kane, [Salt Lake City], to Harriet Kane, [Philadelphia], December 5, 1872, Kane Papers, BYU.

[11]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 58.

[12]Family Search, Ancestral File v.4.19, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and Leornard J. Arrington, "'In Honorable Remembrance': Thomas L. Kane's Services to

Although they were invited to several dinner parties while in Salt Lake City, Thomas and Elizabeth attended only two: one at William C. Staines's home and one at Brigham Young's home, the Lion House.[13] Thomas was well-acquainted with William C. Staines, who had nursed him while in Utah in 1858, and so was willing to be his guest.[14] And of course, Brigham Young was his main host in Utah, which meant that he would definitely accept his invitation. Each of these two parties Elizabeth described in letters to her daughter. The first was at Staines's house and Elizabeth wrote about their home, the other guests, the food, and the interaction between his two wives. The home was "tiny but in good taste," "the tablecloth was exquisitely fine and the silver and glass both good in quality and beautifully kept," and the dinner fare included "all of the very finest."[15]

She was very complimentary about the actual dinner, but when writing about Staines's two wives, Elizabeth was amused and curious. Conversation at dinner turned to the upcoming trip to St. George, and Staines's younger wife, about twenty-eight years old, urged his older wife "with affectionate earnestness" to go with Staines on the trip. Elizabeth commented on this interchange in a letter to her daughter, "Fancy . . . Margaret

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the Mormons," *Brigham Young University Studies* (Fall 1981), 389-390.

[13]Perhaps Thomas did not want to attend a lot of social functions because he hoped to keep his visit to Utah low-key. See Everett L. Cooley, "Introduction," in E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, xvii.

[14]William C. Staines (1818-1881) was a prominent member of the Mormon Church who had worked as a gardener for Brigham Young as well as holding the positions of Territorial Librarian, Salt Lake City Councilman, and Church Emigration Agent. Andrew Jensen, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jensen History Company, 1901), 2:513-517.

[15]E. Kane to Harriet Kane, December 7, 1872.

[Elizabeth's father's second wife] pressing [Elizabeth's mother] to go away for the winter with my Father. Latter-day Saints indeed, these women must be, or else little must they care for their husbands!"[16] This is one of the first times on this trip that Elizabeth marveled at how the Mormon women could share their husbands with seeming ease. This did not mesh with Elizabeth's own notions of marriage and love and she came back to it time and time again.

The second dinner party they attended was given by Brigham Young. Elizabeth focused mainly on the Young family when reporting this event to Harriet. She wrote that Brigham Young introduced her to

> a crowd of ladies who all rose at once. That untimely and uncontrollable grin of mine twitched my mouth when I came to the fifth 'My wife Mrs. Young.' However rescue came to my aid by a change to daughters, and of these he had all the married ones present who were in the city and well enough to be there. Short and tall, young and middle-aged, ugly and pretty; there were loads of them![17]

Unlike the Staines's party, at the Lion House Elizabeth was mostly interested in or shocked by the sheer size of Brigham Young's family. She asked one of his wives how many daughters he had, and was surprised when all the woman could tell her was that he had "over twenty married."[18] The workings and implications of polygamy were naturally of interest to Elizabeth, as well as nearly all other travelers who came to Utah, but few were able to observe first hand Brigham Young's family in his own home.

Brigham Young usually entertained official guests at his official residence, the

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[16]Ibid.

[17]E. Kane to Harriet Kane, December 11, 1872.

[18]Ibid.

Beehive House, but Elizabeth wrote that she attended this dinner party at the Lion House.[19] It is possible that Elizabeth was mistaken about which house she went to. It is probable, however, that she and Thomas were considered less as "official" guests and more as friends, and so were entertained in a less formal way. Young usually had his family dinners at the Lion House and, after dinner, the entire family would kneel for family prayer. After Thomas and Elizabeth's dinner with the Young family, she wrote that the family, including younger children who had not been at the dinner, kneeled for prayers.[20] So perhaps it is more likely that they were, in fact, at the Lion House.

In her letters from Salt Lake City, Elizabeth was not overly negative about the Mormons. She really seemed to enjoy her time there and the opportunity it gave her for seeing polygamy and those who practiced it in person. One interesting thing about this period is the fact that the family stayed at a hotel instead of with Brigham Young or any other of Thomas's Utah friends. Elizabeth wrote that they stayed at a hotel "where we preferred to be" which implies they had a choice to stay somewhere else.[21] She does not say why they preferred the hotel, but given comments made after returning to Salt Lake City from St. George, it is clear that she did not feel comfortable staying with the Mormons. When they returned to Salt Lake from St. George in February 1873, they

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[19]Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 329-330.

[20]Ibid., 331; and E. Kane to Harriet Kane, December 11, 1872.

[21]E. Kane to Harriet Kane, November 29, 1872. The Kanes stayed at the American Hotel in Salt Lake City. See Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999), 174.

stayed at the Lion House for a few days before heading home to Pennsylvania. She wrote that her willingness to stay there was "a public testimony to the little circle of those to whom my name is known, that my opinion of the Mormon women had so changed during the winter that I was willing to eat salt with them."[22]

Comparison with other Travel Accounts

St. George (established in 1861) was Utah's southernmost colony, located at a much lower elevation than the other settlements of the territory.[23] These factors account for its mild winters and very hot summers. The area was a desert which made it very difficult to farm and the settlers were always trying to find some industries that would support their community.[24] By the time that the Kanes came, it was relatively well-established, although not prosperous, and Brigham Young regularly took advantage of its warm winter weather. The town was very different from Salt Lake City, as it consisted of only about 1100 people (Salt Lake City's 1870 population was 12,900), had a completely different climate, and was much more isolated from the rest of the country than Salt Lake was.[25]

The journey from Salt Lake to St. George was approximately 300 miles, and

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[22]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 177.

[23]Larry M. Logue, *A Sermon in the Desert: Belief and Behavior in Early St. George, Utah*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 1.

[24]Richard H. Jackson, "Utah's Harsh Lands, Hearth of Greatness," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 49 (Winter 1981), 17-22; and Logue, 64, 87.

[25]Logue, 1, 10; and Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1984), 85.

nearly all of the trip was made in carriages. They were able to travel from Salt Lake City to Lehi, approximately thirty-five miles south, by train, but at that point the railroad stopped. Although over the next few years the railroad line would gradually extend until in 1880 it reached Milford (240 miles south of Salt Lake City), it did not go any further south until after the turn of the century.[26] Therefore, Elizabeth's journey took eleven days with the party stopping for meals and lodging in Mormon settlements along the way. It was mainly from these stops that Elizabeth wrote her account.

Elizabeth added her own voice to the field of travel literature which became quite popular in the nineteenth-century. Travelers to Utah tended to be influenced by the very prevalent negative stereotypes of the Mormons, but oftentimes they saw the Mormons in a more positive light. Travelers also tended to make a conscious effort to be objective in their descriptions. British travelers, for example, attempted to study and evaluate the Latter-day Saints, not ridicule or deride them.[27] Elizabeth's account, although not British, fits with this assessment. She did try to be objective, and she was oftentimes responding to stereotypes that she herself carried.

Craig S. Smith recently studied published travel accounts regarding Utah and the Mormons. He also concluded that travelers' writings, unlike the popular media of the day, were generally positive towards the Mormons. Smith identified characteristics of the

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[26]Janet Burton Seegmiller, *A History of Iron County: Community Above Self* (Utah State Historical Society, Iron County Commission, 1998), 381-383.

[27]Edwina Jo Snow, "Singular Saints: The Image of the Mormons in Book-length Travel Accounts, 1847-1857," (Master's thesis: George Washington University, 1972), 1-3; and "British Travelers View the Saints, 1847-1877," *Brigham Young University Studies* 31 (Spring 1991), 64-65.

travel accounts and their authors that were widely shared. The writers themselves tended to be well-educated and sophisticated (like Elizabeth), and usually presented themselves as objective and sincerely searching for knowledge, not sensation. In eighteen travel accounts studied, which were dated between 1849 to 1867, Smith found seven themes that they all dealt with. These were Salt Lake City and its surrounding area, the Mormon people, Brigham Young, sermons in the Tabernacle and Bowery, local attractions (such as the Great Salt Lake), polygamy, and the "Mormon question," meaning the political issue of what should be done about the Mormons by the United States government.[28]

Eric A. Eliason has argued that Mormon travel accounts were an entirely new form of literature, which tried to be objective and informative, but was not necessarily designed to persuade readers. Travel writers were in large part responding to sensational and baseless anti-Mormon accounts of Utah, Mormons, and polygamy. They tried to present themselves as non-partisan and "They attempted to establish a point of view on the 'Mormon Question' that was neither apologetic nor detracting but interactive and dialogic."[29] He argues that these travel accounts were ground-breaking works, in that they attempted to give a voice to the subjects of whom they wrote by presenting the point of view of those subjects. This was done by recounting what the Mormons themselves thought of their religion and their situation.[30] Elizabeth's account followed this pattern:

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[28]Smith, Craig S., "The Curious Meet the Mormons: Images from Travel Narratives, 1850s and 1860s," *The Journal of Mormon History* 1998 24 (2), 156-158.

[29]Eric A. Eliason, "Curious Gentiles and Representational Authority in the City of the Saints," *Religion and American Culture* 2001 11(2), 156-157.

[30]Ibid., 164-165, 176-177.

she had personally observed and interviewed the people of whom she wrote, she was "willing to listen to and respectfully engage with the observed group's portrayal of themselves," and she kept up a "form of critical detachment" from the Mormons.[31] None of these researchers felt that the negative travel accounts of the Mormons were significant, but they did exist.

Although Elizabeth wrote in a similar style and addressed similar concerns as other travel writers, *Twelve Mormon Homes* was different from other travel accounts. For example, Elizabeth's book focused on rural Utah, while nearly all other accounts were taken from Salt Lake City. Also, *Twelve Mormon Homes* did not deal with just one or two settlements. She provided information on a variety of settlements visited as they traveled through a significant portion of the territory. Also, the "local attractions" that Smith wrote of in his article were not discussed and neither were sermons in the Tabernacle and Bowery, although she did write of going to church. *Twelve Mormon Homes* was not about a visit; it was about a journey. There was no time to go to local theaters and parties, although she had attended some in Salt Lake City and would go in St. George. Other important differences were Elizabeth's inclusion of early pioneering and settlement accounts and Mormon relations with the Native Americans.

Elizabeth's Observations

Elizabeth came to Utah at a pivotal time in the territory's history. The Mormons were being subjected to a judicial and political crusade, which had intensified at the end of the 1860s. Legislation against polygamy had been debated nearly every year from 1866

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[31]Ibid., 157.

until the time that Elizabeth was in Utah in 1872-1873. During Elizabeth's stay, the people of Utah were very concerned about the possible effects of anti-polygamy legislation.[32] Judges had been appointed in Utah who were very vigorous in their attempts to root out polygamy by strict enforcement of the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Law of 1862, and some of these judges seemed to cross the line from enforcing the law to harassing the Mormons.[33]

The women of Utah were keenly aware of the controversy surrounding them during this time. They became politically active as they felt a need to defend their right to participate in plural marriage. While anti-polygamy crusaders in the East sympathized with Mormon women and thought they were tragically under the thumb of domineering men, Mormon women responded to the perceptions by affirming their commitment to religion and plural marriage. While the Cullom Bill was being debated in the U.S. Congress in 1869 and 1870, the women held a mass meeting in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. This was known as "The Great Indignation Meeting," and there Mormon women publically declared their support for plural marriage. Soon after this meeting, Mormon women were given the vote and thus voted before any other women in the nation.[34]

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[32]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 18, 70, 105-106, and 129-130.

[33]James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 353-354, 362.

[34]Lawrence Foster, "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979), 1; and Allen and Leonard, 352. Wyoming granted women the right of suffrage before Utah did, but the Utah women actually voted first.

The Mormon Church's women's organization, the Relief Society, had been revived in 1867 and it was an important part of Utah life at the time of Elizabeth's visit. Mormon women were encouraged to be actively involved in the community, both religiously, through the Relief Society, and economically, by participating in outside occupations to strengthen struggling communities. Brigham Young was worried at this time about Latter-day Saints becoming economically dependent on resources outside of Utah and the Church, particularly with the coming of the railroad in 1869. To counteract this possibility, he and other Church leaders emphasized the need for self-sufficiency and the contributions of all members of the community. It was thought that if women were able to operate businesses, stores, and telegraph offices, more men would be available to build communities by participating in activities such as farming and building houses.[35]

Against this background, Elizabeth made the trip to St. George with a party of sixteen to eighteen people. Besides the Kane family and their one servant, others on the trip included Brigham Young; his wives, Lucy Bigelow Young and Amelia Folsom Young; Lucy's daughter; and perhaps one other wife, "Mrs. Em" (possibly Emmeline Free Young).[36] Other travelers were William C. Staines; Lorenzo Dow Young, one of his wives and one son; A. Milton and Mary Musser; Elijah Sheets; and possibly William A.C.

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[35]Foster, 9; and Allen and Leonard, 345-347.

[36]E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, December 20, 1872. This entry says that in Parowan, Brigham Young and "Mrs. Amelia," stayed in one room, "Mrs. Lucy" and her daughter in one and "Mrs. Em," in another, indicating that Young brought three wives with him.

Bryan.[37] They made their way south along a well-traveled corridor from Salt Lake City to St. George, making stops at the following communities and outposts along the way: Lehi, Provo, Payson, Panyan Springs, Santaquin, Nephi, Chicken Creek, Scipio, Fillmore, Cove Creek Fort, Prairie Dog Hollow–Indian Creek, Beaver, Buckhorn Springs, Red Creek, Parowan, Cedar City, Kannarra, and Bellevue.

Other travel accounts focused on the characteristics of the Mormon people and so did Elizabeth Kane's. And, like other writers, Elizabeth was impressed by their high standards. Visitors used terms such as "industrious, frugal, peaceable, orderly, moral, fair dealing, and hospitable" to describe the Mormons and they often challenged prevalent stereotypes regarding them.[38] Elizabeth did the same in her book, writing of cleanliness, hospitality,

practicality, industriousness, and kindness.[39] She also wrote of miners and soldiers so unfavorably that she gave a clear contrast to what she thought of the Mormons.[40]

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[37]L. D. Young was Brigham Young's brother. His wives were Persis Goodall, Harriet P. Wheeler, Hannah I. Hewitt, Eleanor Jones, and Joanna Larson. The wife who accompanied him may have been Joanna Larson, whom he married in 1863. Elizabeth called her "Jane" and she tended to use aliases which were similar to the person's real name. She also said that "Jane" was a handcart pioneer and L. D. Young's other wives married him too early or too close to the time of the handcart companies (1856-1860) to have been in those companies. See Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 419. Musser was the "traveling bishop" of the Mormon Church and Superintendent of the Deseret Telegraph Company, Sheets was a "close business associate of Brigham Young" and Bryan was a telegrapher who may or may not have been on this journey. See E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 1 n.1. and 85.

[38]Smith, 167.

[39]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 8-10, 25-31, 55-56, 75-77, 95.

[40]Ibid., 20-21, 24, 38-39, 91, 107-110.

For example, Elizabeth wrote of a group of "half tipsy" travelers they met near Santaquin, 69 miles south of Salt Lake City, "where the Mormon travel coincides with that of the Nevada mining regions." The driver of this party "steered his heavy wagon right against the hub of our front wheel and then drove off laughing."[41] Elizabeth associated these travelers, who were rude and drunken, with mining and miners. She was surprised to find a saloon at Beaver (100 miles north of St. George) until she found out it was there because of a nearby army post, and she wrote of her disgust at "the moral law our soldiers teach in their intercourse with the Indians."[42] Elizabeth found that Utah was no longer home to just Mormons. There were army posts, such as Camp Douglas, which were manned by soldiers, whose more rowdy behavior she did not compare favorably with the Saints' humble and hardworking family lifestyle.

Elizabeth found the Mormon people full of contradictions. She thought that they seemed backward in some ways, and "the most forward children of the age" in others.[43] While staying at Cove Creek Fort, she wrote, "Prayers after the patriarchal Hebrew manner; a shot-proof fort; an electric battery clicking in the latest New York news; armed men; unarmed women with little children; a meal served with dainty precision in a refectory walled with rough-hewn stone: this medley of anachronisms is Mormon all

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[41]Ibid., 20-21.

[42]Ibid., 91 and 39.

[43]Ibid., 5.

over."[44]

Travelers at the time were very interested in Brigham Young, leader of the Mormons. Most travelers did not find Young to be at all like the negative image portrayed in the mainstream media: "hypocrite, swindler, forger, murderer."[45] Instead, they usually found he was "courteous, unpretentious, warm, kindly, frank, and intelligent."[46] In *Twelve Mormon Homes* Elizabeth mostly gave incidental comments regarding Young, but many of her observations were insightful and interesting. She was rather disgusted and angered by his role in leading his people into polygamy, but she found that he possessed some praiseworthy qualities, to which she gave begrudging respect.

Elizabeth wrote of Brigham Young inspecting the carriages at Lehi, as he did every morning on their journey:

> He was peering like a well-intentioned wizard into every nook and cranny, pointing out a defect here and there with his odd, six sided staff . . . He wore a great surtout, reaching almost to his feet, of dark-green cloth . . . lined with fur, a fur collar, cap and pair of sealskin boots with the undyed fur outward. I was amused at his odd appearance; but as he turned to address me, he removed a hideous pair of green goggles, and his keen, blue-gray eyes met mine with their characteristic look of shrewd and cunning insight. I felt no further inclination to laugh. His photographs, accurate enough in other respects, altogether fail to give the expression of his eyes.[47]

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[44]Ibid., 75. Cove Creek Fort was built between the communities of Kanosh and Beaver, which were fifty miles apart, with the purpose of deterring Indian attacks and providing a stopping place for travelers. E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 76, n.44.

[45]Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 264, as quoted in Smith, 169.

[46]Smith, 169.

[47]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 5-6.

Here she described Brigham Young as intelligent, shrewd, and insightful, certainly someone to be taken seriously. She wrote of reading the book of a notorious gunman, Bill Hickman, entitled *Brigham's Destroying Angel*, in which Hickman accused Brigham Young and other Mormons of taking part in several murders. This book had just been published in 1872 and Young was indicted on murder charges based on Hickman's accusations, although the indictment was later dropped.[48] Elizabeth made it clear that she did not accept Hickman's story, "I did not believe one word of Hickman's accusations."[49] Elizabeth also noticed that Young was very open and accessible to his followers, and in the communities they visited, he would listen to their concerns and give advice "about every conceivable matter." At first she thought that he was wasting his power by his accessibility, "but I soon saw that he was accumulating it."[50] Like other travelers, Elizabeth challenged popular notions of Brigham Young by giving her personal experiences with him which were not consistent with the idea of his being a "hypocrite, swindler, forger, murderer."[51]

It is interesting that when Elizabeth wrote of Brigham Young negatively, she did not give his name, and it is only with her travel diary that we can ascertain of whom she spoke. In that diary, she wrote that Young's oldest wife, Mary Ann Angell, had told her that one of his youngest wives, Harriet Amelia Folsom, had "much trouble in polygamy . .

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[48]Ibid., 51-52, and 52, n.28; and Allen and Leonard, 354-355.

[49]Ibid., 51-54.

[50]Ibid., 101.

[51]Burton, 264, as quoted in Smith, 169.

because she could not see it at first-but became satisfied at last that it was her duty."[52] In *Twelve Mormon Homes*, she wrote the same thing about "Delia," who was on the trip with them, indicating that "Delia" was an alias for Amelia. She went on to say "How I detested her [Delia's] husband . . .I felt sure that he [Brigham Young] could not believe that that was a divine ordinance which sacrificed those women's lives to his."[53]

Elizabeth viewed Brigham Young as a perpetrator who deceived his people into an immoral lifestyle. Although at times she almost appeared to admire Brigham Young in his leadership ability and his intelligence, she still could not forgive him for polygamy. Elizabeth was sympathetic to polygamous wives, even though she knew they had entered polygamy willingly, but she blamed their husbands and particularly Brigham Young. It was similar to her negative attitude toward men's alleged intemperate sexual behavior which she felt caused women so much trouble physically and emotionally.[54] Women suffered because of the desires of men. And, even if men did not have impure motives for living in polygamy, they still did not suffer for it as women did, in Elizabeth's view.

Another popular topic in travel accounts was sermons in the Tabernacle and Bowery, but since Elizabeth's account was not about Salt Lake City, she did not mention the Tabernacle. Instead, she wrote about attending church in the small town of Nephi, 90 miles south of Salt Lake City. Nephi, settled in 1851, was one of the more significant communities along the Mormon Corridor. At the time of Elizabeth's visit, it boasted a

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[52]E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, undated entry, after March 9, 1873.

[53]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 106.

[54]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, July 11, 1869; see chapter four

Social Hall, a brass band, and local choir. She probably went to church in the Juab Stake Tabernacle, which had been completed in 1865.[55]

Other travelers were usually not impressed with the sermons, which seemed long, rambling, and more informal than outsiders were used to.[56] Elizabeth's experience was similar to this as she also found the service informal. She wrote that there was, "a certain unceremonious manner, not irreverent, but which somehow seemed to be protesting against formalism."[57] Mormon meetings did not consist of any costumes or elaborate prepared prayers and texts, as mainstream Christian, or at least Presbyterian, meetings did. Elizabeth did not mind the lack of formalism at all, and as her own father was opposed to formal and elaborate religious services, she was probably favorably impressed.[58] Unlike many travelers who did not like Mormon sermons, however, Elizabeth was touched by a sermon given during this particular service by William C. Staines (called Potto in *Twelve Mormon Homes*), "We often heard him preach afterwards; and my children grew so fond of his quaint picturesque eloquence, that they were eager to go even to 'week-day meeting,' on the chance of hearing Elder Potto. . . .I wish that I had taken notes of his

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[55]Pearl D. Wilson, with June McNulty and David Hampshire, *A History of Juab County* (Utah State Historical Society: Juab County Commission, 1999), 84-88.

[56]Smith, 171.

[57]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 43-46.

[58]E. Kane, "Continuation," in William Wood, *The Autobiography of William Wood, 2 Volumes* (New York: J.S. Babcock, 1895), 2:391.

sermon."[59]

As Elizabeth had the opportunity of close and prolonged access to Mormons, she heard and recorded several early pioneering stories. This is one way that her account differed greatly from other travel writers, as they generally did not give this kind of information. For example, when talking with sister-wives, Mary and Sarah Pitchforth in Nephi (called the "Steerforths" in the book), they told her about the first year in the Salt Lake Valley (1847) when provisions were very scarce. The Pitchforth women were married to Samuel Pitchforth, a leading resident of Nephi. He and his first wife, Mary Mitchell Pitchforth, came to the Salt Lake Valley in the second pioneer company of 1847.[60] After describing what little they ate, Elizabeth remarked, "'I call that suffering.' 'Not what a Mormon would call by the name,' answered little Mrs. Sarah's quiet voice."[61] Elizabeth did not speculate on Sarah Pitchforth's meaning, but perhaps she meant to emphasize the persecution that the Mormons had gone through and were continuing to go through. A year with little food was perhaps not such a hard trial when compared to being driven from their homes or being the target of Congressional action meant to destroy their families.

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[59]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 44-45; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, December 17-18, 1872. Elizabeth changed Staines's name in her book to William C. Potto or Potteau. She also changed the names of most of the other people she wrote of, perhaps to protect them from anti-polygamy legislation.

[60]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 27 n.19 and 28; and Wilson, 87, 89. Although the Pitchforths lived in Nephi, Samuel was president of the Levan (or Chicken Creek) Branch and one of his wives was the Levan Relief Society President from1869-1872. See Wilson, 89.

[61]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 30.

Elizabeth wrote that Brigham Young's brother, Lorenzo Dow Young, told her that his deceased wife, Harriet, upon arriving in the Salt Lake Valley and seeing only a few small cottonwood trees said, "'. . . we have come fifteen hundred miles in wagons, and a thousand miles through the sage-brush; and I'd get into the wagon tomorrow, and travel a thousand miles farther, to see shade-trees instead of these rocks and sands.'"[62] In Elizabeth's published account Harriet was given the alias "Helen," but her unpublished travel diary reveals that the woman who made this statement was in fact Harriet Decker Young, who was one of only three women who came into the Salt Lake Valley in July of 1847 with the first party of Saints.[63]

These pioneering experiences touched Elizabeth because of the many hardships the Mormons had endured. She was impressed by people who lived in harsh conditions yet felt that they were blessed. Of a settlement between Cove Creek Fort and Beaver, she wrote,

> But for signs of encampments and the passing wagons looks as if the last day had come. The folk were gone, and the littered dust and worthless chips of creation alone left-but wherever water is to be found there these Mormons have irrigated, ditched and drained ploughed and fenced, planted and built out of the very dust their pretty villages where they all kneel morning and evening to implore the protection of that Spirit by whose breath they live.[64]

An elderly couple whom they met at Buckhorn Springs, just south of Beaver, were,

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[62]Ibid., 86; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, December 24, 1872.

[63]Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 145.

[64]E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, December 19, 1872. This was probably Prairie Dog Hollow-Indian Creek. Elizabeth wrote "Dog Valley" in her diary, but Prairie Dog Hollow is in the vicinity of where the party was on this date, just north of Beaver. Elizabeth wrote of Prairie Dog Hollow-Indian Creek in E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 81-89.

according to Elizabeth, "wearing out the evening of their days in comfortless desolation."[65] Elizabeth was not alone in feeling sorry that the Mormons somehow had to scratch out a living in the most remote and desolate of places. Richard Jackson showed in his study of Mormon settlements in "harsh lands" that the settlers themselves were often reluctant to go and they knew first-hand how difficult it was. While the leaders were optimistic about the settlement's prospects, their followers tended to be pessimistic.[66]

Elizabeth heard settlers in the unproductive lands of Utah chastised (she does not say by whom) because they did not have faith enough to see a way to make the land productive.[67] Mormon Church leaders often told people in the unproductive Southern settlements that if they would work harder and have faith, their land would be as productive as that in Salt Lake City. Jackson also described how the settlers tried different kinds of industries, most of which failed, when it was apparent that agriculture alone could not support the community.[68] Elizabeth witnessed first-hand this struggle for survival that the settlers experienced and she felt that the chastisement was unfair.[69]

Elizabeth pitied these people, but she also began to admire them for the difficulties

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[65]E. Kane, 1872-1873 Journal, December 20, 1872; and E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 97. Buckhorn Springs was a watering place for travelers, and not a permanent settlement. According to a local history the first person to live there was John Eyre in 1887. Perhaps this couple Elizabeth met did not actually live there, but were also stopping while traveling somewhere else. Seegmiller, 169.

[66]Jackson, 10.

[67]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 107-109.

[68]Jackson, 12-15, 17, 20.

[69]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 107-109.

they had gone through because of their devotion to their faith. For example, a man in Cedar City (50 miles north of St. George), Bishop Henry Lunts, had lost his sight and financial troubles had followed.[70] She watched him sit down with her son, Evan, on his knee "and passing his hand over the child's curling locks, and the fine cloth of his jacket, said to his own sons, 'Lads, when I was your age I was dressed like this, and a servant waited upon me. When you grow to my age, remember I never grudged what I have undergone for my faith.'"[71]

Latter-day Saints were "quite unreasonable in matters of faith" Elizabeth found.[72] This was why they were willing to persevere in trying to make lands produce that were not suitable for production.[73] They also were not "inconvenienced by [a] story turning on a miracle," meaning they were not uncomfortable with miraculous manifestations as many mainstream Christians were.[74] They firmly believed that God was not silent, but was revealing himself in many different ways to those who had faith in him. When Elizabeth mentioned to "Mrs. Lucy," Lucy Bigelow Young, wife of Brigham Young, that "the days

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[70]Henry Lunts was bishop in Cedar City and also was made stake president of the Cedar Stake in 1859. He served in both positions until 1869, when he was released as stake president. See Seegmiller, 69 and 269, and E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 110, n. 56.

[71]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 111-112; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, December 21, 1872.

[72]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 68.

[73]Ibid., 68, 90, 107-109.

[74]Ibid., 45.

of miracles are over," Lucy replied that miracles ceased only when faith ceased.[75]

Elizabeth's own religious beliefs were affected by what she saw among the Mormons. She commented several times on their manner of prayer, which was simpler and more faithful than she was used to. She wrote, "I do not think they as often say, 'If it be Thy Will,' as we do, but simply pray for the blessings they want, expecting they will be given or withheld, as God knows best."[76] She also felt that Mormon prayers were more personal than she was accustomed to.

> At home, when, for no greater audience than my children, I venture to extemporize the prayer at family worship, I am sometimes puzzled whether to introduce the names of individuals, or to adhere prudently to generalities. But the Mormons take it for granted that God knows our familiar names and titles . . . I liked this when I became used to it.[77]

Right after she arrived in St. George, Elizabeth wrote to Harriet about the Mormon prayers, which included Harriet and Elisha by name, "it makes me feel very kindly to the people who pray so much."[78] Elizabeth probably focused more on actual religious practice and beliefs than other travelers because she herself was a religious person who was already very interested in the Mormons' religious practices. Also, she had the opportunity to see them worship in a personal way, such as prayer inside their homes, and not just at public services.

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[75]Ibid., 78-79.

[76]Ibid., 18.

[77]Ibid., 17-18 and 112.

[78]E. Kane [St. George, Utah], to Harriet and Elisha Kane, [Philadelphia], December 24, 1872, Kane Papers, BYU.

Another way Elizabeth Kane's account differed from most other travel writers was that she wrote about the Native American population of Utah. Perhaps others did not give this topic the time she did because she was the only one who spent a significant amount of time in rural Utah, where Mormon/Indian relations were so important.[79] Elizabeth recorded many stories told by the Mormons about Indian leaders Wahkara and Kanosh, as well as various other accounts. Most of the stories she heard and recorded included sensational accounts of killings of children and settlers. She felt that the Native Americans were savage and cruel, or at best ignorant and lazy. Elizabeth also thought that the Mormons were too tolerant of the Indians' behavior.[80] This was probably because Brigham Young pursued a policy of tolerance and charity toward the Native Americans. He felt that it was more productive to feed the Indians rather then fight them. The Mormons' belief that the Native Americans were the descendants of the people in their book of scripture, The Book of Mormon, also disposed them to be more tolerant of them than other white Americans were.[81]

Observations on Polygamy and Women

Not surprisingly, the most often discussed topic in *Twelve Mormon Homes* was polygamy. Craig S. Smith points out that travelers who came to Utah were extremely

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[79]Craig S. Smith does not put Native Americans on his list of common topics found in travel literature about Utah. Likewise, Eliason does not address this issue in his study. This, of course, does not mean that other travel writers did not write about Native Americans, but it was not a typical topic.

[80]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 12-15, 31-40, 64-67, 71-73, 87-88, 94-96, 113-114, 119-122, 134-135; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, December 22, 1872.

[81]Allen and Leonard, 279-281.

curious about polygamy, as it was the most publicized and sensational practice of the Mormons. However, it was extremely difficult for visitors to learn much about polygamy from a female perspective, as they were usually "outsiders" and men. Therefore, they often fell back on generalizations, as well as simply giving their own opinions of the practice without any information from the women who practiced it. There were some who met with Mormon women and stayed in Mormon homes, but few had the access that Elizabeth Kane had, and probably no other travel writer stayed in the number of homes that she did.[82]

Elizabeth could not imagine how a woman could be happy sharing a home and a husband with one or more other women. But she found that many Mormon women were happy, or at least content. She observed of one polygamous woman, Eliza Burgess Young, a wife of Brigham Young: "I must admit that she appeared to be a happy and contented woman."[83] And it seemed that all of the other polygamous wives that she met on her journey were satisfied with their situation, although she found that "Delia" (Harriet Amelia Folsom Young) had had problems at first, as mentioned previously.[84] Elizabeth also remarked that when she was among a congregation of Mormons, she looked at the women for the "'hopeless, dissatisfied, worn' expression travelers' books had bidden me

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[82]Smith, 172-177.

[83]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 11; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, December 12, 1872. Elizabeth never used Eliza Young's name in *Twelve Mormon Homes* nor gave her an alias. She does write her name in her unpublished travel diary.

[84]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 61, 47-48, 105-106, 129; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, undated entry, after March 9, 1873.

read on their faces. But I found that they wore very much the same countenances as the American women of any large rustic and village congregation."[85]

Despite the apparent contentment of those she met, Elizabeth still felt sorry for them because of their positions as plural wives, mainly because it seemed to her that they missed out on the joys of romantic love and the constant companionship in monogamous marriage.[86] Also, Elizabeth could not imagine a couple feeling romantically towards each other in a polygamous marriage. Romantic love, she believed, could occur only between one man and one woman; there could be no sharing. Eliza Burgess Young lived alone in Provo, as her only son was already grown and away from home and her husband, Brigham Young, lived in Salt Lake City. Elizabeth thought "how solitary her life must be when each day's work was done; how much more solitary it would be when the evening of her life closed in."[87]

Although plural wives assured Elizabeth they were satisfied in polygamy, she was probably not altogether mistaken in her sympathy for them. Mormon women tended to give outsiders assurances that they were perfectly willing and happy to live in "the principle," but their personal accounts were much more candid about the hardship that came with sharing a husband. They almost always truly believed in the rightness of plural marriage but they were not necessarily happy living it. It was often considered an earthly

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[85]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 41-42.

[86]Ibid., 10-11.

[87]Ibid., 11.

sacrifice of happiness in return for a greater reward in heaven.[88]

The Mormon women spoke openly to Elizabeth about polygamy, at least about the positive aspects of the practice. They were anxious to show her their willingness to practice it. She wrote that Zina Huntington Young, plural wife of Brigham Young and prominent female leader in the Latter-day Saint Church, reported that she had long known that polygamy was the result of a divine revelation given to Joseph Smith, and that "she had proved its wisdom since."[89] Other women told Kane that the relationship between plural wives was closer than that of sisters, because they truly share everything, and that women in plural marriage were able to help each other in household duties.[90] Of these assertions, and of hearing women talk of other aspects of polygamy, Elizabeth wrote that her reaction was that "some chord . . . would be struck which moved anything but a smile."[91]

The Pitchforth wives, who greatly influenced Elizabeth's feelings towards the women of Utah, displayed a "tender intimacy" between themselves, and they were the "first Mormon women who awakened sympathy in my breast, dissociated from an equally

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[88]Paula Kelly Harline, "Polygamous yet Monogamous: Cultural Conflict in the Writings of Mormon Polygamous Wives," in *Old West-New West: Centennial Essays*, Barbara Howard Meldrum, ed. (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1993), 116; and Van Wagoner, 90-96, 100-102.

[89]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 3; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, December 12, 1872. Zina Young had sat next to Elizabeth on the train from Salt Lake City to Lehi, although she did not continue on the trip to St. George.

[90]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 47-48.

[91]Ibid.

strong feeling of repulsion."[92] She did not have the same sympathy for Mormon men.[93] She saw the women as participating in polygamy out of religious conviction, but the men, particularly the leaders, were the perpetrators. Elizabeth did not accuse the men of insincerity, however, except perhaps Brigham Young himself.[94] But, even if the men were sincere in their belief in polygamy, she felt that they did not have the same hardship in it that women did.

In the one extant letter she wrote while on the journey between Salt Lake City and St. George, Elizabeth told her daughter that while they were in Provo and Brigham Young was sick, Mrs. Eliza Young

> jestingly remarked to K. as she bustled about her duties of housekeeping that it was the advantage of their system that while she was too busy to attend to him, he had others ready to wait upon him. I should not have been willing to be Martha while Mary took the pleasanter part! Much of the ordinary husband and wife love in our system is simply habit, and everyone knows how much one misses a person whose daily life fits in with ours . . . Among Mormon households the master of the house cannot be much missed in its daily life, and the wife cannot rely upon him as her intimate counsellor as I do on Tom."[95]

One way that the wives helped each other in polygamous families was by acting as mother to all the children of the family, not just their own. Elizabeth asked the Pitchforth wives which of the seven children belonged to each wife and was surprised to find that they were all the children of one of the women. "'Aunt Mary' was childless in name, but I

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[92]Ibid., 48.

[93]Ibid., 48-49, 106.

[94]Ibid., 106.

[95]E. Kane, Nephi, Utah, to Harriet Kane, [Philadelphia], December 15, 1872, Kane Papers, BYU.

never saw a mother of whom children seemed to be fonder, or who took more pride in the promising future of her natural offspring."[96] Women having large numbers of children was common, however, although Elizabeth noted that large numbers of children died as well.[97]

Elizabeth's observation that Mormons had a high birthrate is consistent with historians' findings. Even though there is some debate over whether or not polygamous families ultimately produced more children, Logue demonstrated that in St. George, Utah, at least, fertility rates were well above the national average (nearly nine births per woman).[98] He also asserts that Latter-day Saints in general had higher birthrates than the rest of the population.[99] Other scholars have pointed to the importance of the desire for progeny in the high birth rate of nineteenth-century Utah.[100] Regarding the high death rate for children, Logue's findings contradict Elizabeth to some extent. Infants in Utah were more likely to survive when compared to the rest of the United States, but in St. George, after the age of one, death rates for children rose dramatically. This did not occur in the

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[96]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 46-47.

[97]Ibid., 77 and 68-69.

[98]For information on the debate over the fertility rates of polygamous versus monogamous families see Anderton, Douglas L. and Rebecca Jean Emigh. "Polygamous Fertility: Sexual Competition Versus Progeny," *American Journal of Sociology* 4 (January 1989): 832-855; L.L. Bean and Geraldine Page Mineau. "The Polgyny-Fertility Hypothesis: A Re-evaluation," *Historical Methods* 40 (1986): 67-81; and Geraldine Page Mineau, L.L. Bean, and M. Skolnick, "Mormon Demographic History II: the Family Life Cycle and Natural Fertility," *Population Studies* [Great Britain] 1979 33(3): 429-446.

[99]Logue, 73, 86-87.

[100]Anderton and Emigh, 852; and Bean and Mineau, 79-81.

rest of Utah, however, and Elizabeth was not in St. George when she wrote of the prevalence of death among children.[101]

Elizabeth's feminist background came through in her account when discussing Mormon women. She was impressed to see female telegraph operators, and wrote "They close no career on a woman in Utah by which she can earn a living."[102] Female employment was an issue that Elizabeth addressed in her "Theory," and she approved of the Mormons' handling of the issue. She was surprised that Mormons seemed to value daughters as much as sons, and she found that "They honestly believe in the grand calling their theology assigns to women; 'that of endowing souls with tabernacles that they may accept redemption.'"[103] They valued females, but their main value was to bear children. According to Elizabeth, "Nowhere is the 'sphere' of women . . . more fully recognized than in Utah; nowhere her 'mission,' according to Susan B. Anthony, more abhorred."[104] Even though Utah women were able to work outside of the home and they had the vote, Elizabeth felt that they were not liberated from the pressure of bearing children. As she had made the issue of excessive childbearing one of the most important in her theory of women's role, it is not surprising that she was negative about the high birthrate.[105]

Even though Utah women voted, Elizabeth pointed out that they were not

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[101]Logue, 94-97.

[102]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 4-5.

[103]Ibid., 70.

[104]Ibid.

[105]See chapter four.

necessarily more interested in politics than other women, or that they were such radical feminists.

> . . . if the matter on which your vote was required was one which might decide the question whether you were your husband's wife, and your children legitimate, you would be apt to entertain a determined opinion on the subject. . . Nobody thought us unfeminine for being absorbingly interested in our national affairs during the [Civil War]. The Utah women take a similar interest in the business of the world outside that concerns them; and pray over congressional debates as we prayed for our armies.[106]

Elizabeth approved of their voting and activism, but she saw a difference between their political activity and the political work being done by women such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. They were not radical feminists for the most part, but the were active out of concern for their domestic lifestyle. Because the political situation affected them in such a personal way, as Elizabeth noted, and because they felt the need to defend themselves from Eastern reformers who wanted to "liberate" them from polygamy, women in Utah had become assertive and public in their activities. Also, by this time, anti-polygamy legislation included the repeal of female suffrage, so they were defending their right to vote.

Mormon women were like other women in another way, Elizabeth concluded. She found that "a religious faith that animates the whole being, enabling a woman to be cheerful in spite of adverse circumstances, industrious in spite of sickness, loving God and her neighbor; and showing it by charity in word and deed; this faith above doctrine I have found quite as often among Mormon as among other Christian women."[107] In this

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[106]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 70.

[107]Ibid., 60.

assertion, Elizabeth explained that even though the Mormon women believed in some radical doctrines, such as the existence of prophets and new scripture, not to mention their practice of plural marriage, their behavior otherwise was upright and moral. This almost made up for their strange and offensive beliefs. The Mormon women themselves would no doubt have argued that it was their faith in their doctrine that led to their moral behavior, but Elizabeth felt that their morality existed because of their general religious faith. She could not bring herself to credit Mormons with a legitimate theology, however, she also could not ignore their good behavior.

This admission that Mormon women were as faithful as other Christian women was a big change for Elizabeth who had previously not given the Mormons any credit for their religious faith. Other Presbyterian women who came to Utah, mainly as missionaries, would not budge from their belief in the Mormons' un-Christian religion and uncivilized practice of polygamy.[108] However, Elizabeth emphasized in her travel account that Mormon women were just as faithful and moral as any mainstream Christian, and perhaps even more so. Other travelers also addressed the apparent contradiction between the immoral practice of polygamy and the extremely moral people who practiced it.[109]

Elizabeth tried to explain how the Mormons could be such moral, upright people while living in a sinful lifestyle. She could not accept polygamy as either a good or benign institution but she could not ignore the lack of corruption and immorality among the

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[108]Jana Kathryn Reiss, "'Heathen in Our Fair Land': Presbyterian Women Missionaries in Utah, 1870-90," *Journal of Mormon History* 26 (Spring 2000), 168-174.

[109]Smith, 175.

Mormons. Elizabeth tried to explain and reconcile the contradiction of moral people committing immoral acts by reasoning that the Mormons' strong faith in God lifted them above the fallacies of their theology. Because they lived pure lives in other ways and because they were willing to sacrifice so much, they had to be given credit for being good and pious people. Their faith meant more than their erroneous doctrine.

In Smith's study of travel accounts, he found that almost all of the accounts he looked at addressed the issue of the "Mormon question," or the question of what should be done about the Mormons and their polygamous lifestyle, not to mention their theocratic governing system. Different writers had different opinions on the subject. Some felt that the Mormons should be left strictly alone while others advocated destroying their entire community.[110] Elizabeth wrote of the Mormons being very anxious at the time of their visit regarding what Congress was going to do about polygamy.[111] She asked several women what they thought about the issue and suggested that Congress should legalize the marriages already made so that those wives and children could retain their status as legitimate, but outlaw any further polygamous marriages which "seemed to me both just and merciful."[112] Kane's account tells that one plural wife opted not to opine on Elizabeth's suggestion: "she said she would rather not be asked."[113] But another woman,

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[110]Ibid., 177-179.

[111]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 18, 70, 105-106, and 129-130.

[112]Ibid., 105.

[113]Ibid., 129; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, undated entry, p. 101 of typescript. This woman was "Mrs. Gates," fourth wife of Jacob Gates, bishop of Bellevue. See E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 126, n. 61.

Brigham Young's wife Amelia, or "Delia," defended plural marriage by asserting that it was God's will and they would obey God's laws before they obeyed Congress's laws.[114]

Before traveling to Utah, Elizabeth did not think that the national crusade against polygamy was such a bad idea. But after seeing the Mormons and understanding how the women and children would suffer from anti-polygamy legislation, she tried to think of some kind of compromise. She came to understand, however, that the Mormons were not necessarily willing to compromise on a matter of such religious importance to them.

Conclusion

The traveling party arrived in St. George on December 23, 1872, and by that time Elizabeth's attitudes towards the Mormons had already changed significantly. She had made friends with Mormon women, polygamous women, and she believed that they were good people. She was not a believer in polygamy, of course, but she had changed enough to believe that others could believe in polygamy and Mormonism and still be good people. One reason she felt positively toward the Mormons was that they were so sincere in the faith. This faith was illustrated by the stories they told of hardships they endured for their beliefs and also by the hardships they were still going through, trying to build Zion in a harsh climate and landscape.

Twelve Mormon Homes was printed in the spring of 1874 at the time when Congress was debating the Poland Bill, which extended federal jurisdiction in criminal and

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[114]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, 105-106; and E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, undated entry written after March 9, 1873.

civil court cases, thus easing the way for prosecution of polygamists in Utah.[115] Thomas and Elizabeth hoped that her book would cause people in positions of power to feel more sympathetically towards the Mormons and perhaps come to share Elizabeth's feeling that nothing should be done about the "Mormon problem." Thomas even offered to send copies of the book to members of Congress and asked Utah territorial delegate, George Q. Cannon, for a list of Congressmen to send it to.[116]

There were at a least a few newspaper articles which mentioned Elizabeth's book, so it received some publicity. All of the articles regarding *Twelve Mormon Homes* were very complimentary and one reporter even wrote, "I have just read a book which makes me think that our Government had best let alone the vexed question of polygamy as practiced in Utah."[117] Another reader, Eli K. Price, who read a copy sent to him by Elizabeth wrote to her in response saying, "You have made a daguerreotype that will be looked at many years hence by the descendants of the people described, and the historian as well. . . . you cannot know the good you may have done. You will remove much prejudice; allay hostility; may even prevent war, and save many lives. I cannot but wish therefore, that the book were given more fully to the public." Regarding the Mormons, Price had come to the conclusion, after reading *Twelve Mormon Homes*, that it was not

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[115]Allen and Leonard, 363.

[116]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes*, xxi; and George Q. Cannon to Thomas L. Kane, June 4, 1874, Kane Papers, BYU.

[117] "The Polygamy Problem," *Courier-Journal*, June 5, 1874; "Some New Books," *The Republican*, undated; and "New Books," *The Capital* July 5, 1874, Kane Papers, BYU.

right to "persecute or destroy the Mormons, who are devout Christians."[118]

Although Elizabeth's travel account did not engender widespread recognition, it was still read and appreciated by some. It also proved to be persuasive to those who read it, which was the purpose. The three major themes in her life, her marriage relationship, her feminist beliefs, and her religious beliefs all played a large role in the writing of *Twelve Mormon Homes*. It was a book that could not have been written except through her husband's friendship with the Mormons and it may not have been circulated at all without his influence. In spite of Thomas's role in the printing of the book, however, it was Elizabeth's independent work. Her feminist beliefs influenced what she observed and wrote, as did her religious beliefs. During her lifetime she did not become famous from this travel account, but over a hundred years later her work is recognized by historians as a very important account of Mormon life in the nineteenth-century, just as Eli K. Price predicted.

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[118]Eli K. Price to Elizabeth D. Kane, June 8, 1874, Kane Papers, BYU.

CHAPTER SIX

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS: *A GENTILE IN DIXIE*

A few weeks after the Kane family arrived in St. George, Utah, Elizabeth wrote to her daughter about the activities of her two young sons, Evan and Willie. The boys had been to a party, each dancing a few cotillions, and they were quite comfortable among the Mormons. She wrote that they went up to Indians to admire their paint and that, "Evy asks every one right and left for autographs, and Master Will and he drop in at the blacksmith's and wheelwrights' shops or join 'President Young' with serene confidence that they are welcome."[1] It seems the entire family enjoyed their visit immensely.

In 1872, the community of St. George was just over ten years old and numbered approximately 1100 people.[2] It was located in the southwestern Utah desert at the lowest elevation in Utah. This accounted for its very hot summers and mild winters. Early settlers had trouble with sickness, such as malaria, and lack of water was always a problem. Irrigation was no simple matter and many attempts at building canals failed. During its ten-years existence before Elizabeth came to St. George, the community had endured floods, drought, extreme sickness, and severe food shortages.[3] But by 1872, the

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[1]E. Kane, [St. George, Utah], to Harriet Kane, [Philadelphia], January 6, 1873, Kane Papers, BYU.

[2]Larry M. Logue, *A Sermon in the Desert: Belief and Behavior in Early St. George, Utah,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 1, 10.

[3]Logue, 3; John Taylor Woodbury, *Vermilion Cliffs: Reminiscences of Utah's Dixie* (Published by Woodbury children, 1933), 9-10; and Andrew Karl Larson, *"I Was Called to Dixie" The Virgin River Basin: Unique Experiences in Mormon Pioneering* (Deseret News Press, 1961), 49-51, 101-105, 107, 118-125, 185-186.

pioneer settlement was relatively well-established, although it was nowhere near as stable and prosperous as the towns of Northern Utah.[4] The residents found that there was a continuous struggle for survival, even if their situation was not quite as precarious as it had previously been. Most of the men of the community were farmers, with the main crops being cotton, alfalfa, fruit trees, and sorghum cane.[5] Besides the typical household work required of women (such as cooking, cleaning, and child care), they spent a significant amount of time spinning cloth from cotton and wool, and many participated in raising silkworms and producing silk.[6]

The people of St. George were almost exclusively Mormon, and the Mormon Church was the focus of their lives and the community. The building of the St. George Tabernacle and later the St. George Temple provided public works projects which allowed the town to survive in its early years. The bank and general store were combined with the Church's tithing office and even recreational activities such as dances and plays were often sponsored and strictly regulated by the Church.[7] While in St. George, Elizabeth Kane became part of this Mormon society, visiting "sisters" in the community, attending church, and going to social functions.

When Elizabeth Kane arrived in St. George on December 23, 1872, she was still

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[4]Logue, 8-10.

[5]Woodbury, 17-22.

[6]Ibid., 18; Larson, 279-282; and Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Washington County Chapter, *Under Dixie Sun* (Salt Lake City: privately published, 1950), 79-82, 97.

[7]Logue, 10, 17-19.

somewhat contemptuous of the Mormons, although she had had positive interactions with them on her journey there. And yet by the time she left, she admired them for what she saw as their sincerity of belief and for their kindness to her and her family. She came to St. George with an attitude of condescension towards the Mormons and she left with an honest concern for their welfare and happiness. The eleven-day journey from Salt Lake City was the beginning of her change of heart towards the Mormons, but it was the St. George visit that was the true turning point for her. It was there that she left her old ideas and feelings behind and began to relate to and understand the Mormons for what she found them to be, not for what they were said to be.

Elizabeth came to a new appreciation and understanding of Mormons through several avenues. First of all, her stereotypical notions of Mormons were challenged and she saw that the negative image of the Mormons was not the reality she observed. Secondly, she observed polygamous women in their homes and families and came to an understanding of what their life entailed. She saw that they were people, not caricatures, trying to live their lives according to their beliefs without outside interference. Finally, she came to respect and admire the strong religious conviction that the Mormons held, which caused her to make allowances for their different religious beliefs. After becoming convinced of their sincerity and the morally strict way in which they lived their lives, she was able to accept them as fellow Christians.

Elizabeth's marital relationship, her feminist beliefs, and her religious values all played a significant role in the way she perceived her experience in St. George. Her St. George experience influenced her thinking in these areas, particularly her religious

thinking. As has been noted, her attitude toward and her personal experience of marriage played a large part in her aversion to polygamy. Also, it was in a large part the love she had for her husband that helped her to accept the Mormon people because she saw they loved him too. With Elizabeth's feminist beliefs, she was impressed by the Mormon women's independence. Her religious beliefs also came into play because, as on the journey to St. George, it was the Mormons' religious faith that gave her reason to reevaluate her own Christian faith.

During her visit to St. George, Elizabeth spent personal time with Mormon women in which they were eager to share their stories of lives that had been changed and were continually shaped by their faith in Mormonism. As she observed the harsh experiences they had been through in moving across the Plains, attempting to build a community in the desert, and living in polygamy, her attitude toward them softened. She came to admire and respect them because of what they were willing to go through for their faith, and even came to feel that they were better people than many mainstream Christians.[8]

Stereotypes Challenged

On the journey from Salt Lake City to St. George, Elizabeth had come to know the Mormons much better. She was friendly with some and she came to believe that nearly all were very earnest in their faith. However, in spite of the credit she began to give them, during her St. George visit she still responded to stereotypes, or perhaps she was testing those stereotypes. She was surprised when aspects of polygamy did not measure

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[8]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal*, eds. Norman R. Bowen and Mary Karen Bowen Solomon (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1995), 176.

up to reports or when the Mormon people acted differently than conventional wisdom indicated they would.

Negative stereotypes of Mormons were perpetrated by anti-Mormon and anti-polygamy novels that were so popular in the nineteenth century. The images they portrayed included drunkards, white slave procurers (missionaries kidnaping young girls), seducers, lustful Turks (with large harems), and cruel Southern slave holders (wives being slaves). Other images were those of a secret society and a sinful fallen city (Salt Lake City). Most of these stereotypes were based on perceptions of the Mormon practice of polygamy. Even drunkenness was thought to be related to licentiousness and thus to polygamy.[9] These images would have been familiar to Elizabeth Kane, an educated upper-middle class woman who was very aware of the Mormons and who had a special reason to consider what was being said about them. However, as her husband was so well acquainted with the Mormons, it is unlikely that she really believed all of the misconceptions about them.

Along with anti-polygamy novels, religious tracts "educated" the public about the evils of polygamy. This literature focused on comparing Mormon polygamy with "uncivilized" Eastern polygamy. Anti-polygamy crusaders attacked Mormonism and polygamy by associating it with "un-American" religions, which was fairly easy to do

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[9]Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," *Western Humanities Review* 22 (Summer 1968), 243-260.

given that the practice was unheard of in western cultures.[10] Elizabeth herself made the comparison. But she found that there was not much similarity between the two.[11] She wrote, "A curious difference between Mormon women and those of an Eastern harem appears in their independence," and she gave as evidence the fact that many ran their households and outside businesses because their husbands were gone on missions or lived in different households.[12]

The independence that Elizabeth found among female polygamists has been noted by historians as well. Vicky Burgess Olson's 1975 dissertation on Mormon polygamy finds that plural wives were more likely than monogamous women to share in financial management and participate in outside occupations.[13] Jessie Embry concurs that plural wives were more likely to work outside the household, but she points out that it was generally not by choice, but for survival.[14] However, even though the large majority of polygamous women did not work outside the home, they were more likely to do so than

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[10]Jana Kathryn Reiss, "'Heathen in Our Fair Land': Presbyterian Women Missionaries in Utah, 1870-90," *Journal of Mormon History* 26 (Spring 2000), 168-174.

[11]Ibid., 168-174.

[12]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 39.

[13]Vicky Burgess Olson, "Family Structure and Dynamics in Early Utah Mormon Families, 1847-1885," (Ph.D. dissertation, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1975), 111-112.

[14]Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 95-98.

monogamous wives.[15]

Elizabeth realized that polygamous women's increased independence came from necessity. She pointed out that many women ran their households and businesses because their husbands were absent. But she still liked the idea of women being independent, whatever the reason for it. Elizabeth had previously, particularly in her "Theory," been very supportive of women's financial independence so it is only natural that she noticed this aspect of polygamy and applauded it.[16] Also, Elizabeth herself had been upset about her lack of independence from her husband in the past.[17] It must have been interesting for her to see women who managed homes and businesses with little or no help from a man.

Another common Mormon stereotype was that Mormon women were very ignorant to have been tricked into Mormonism and polygamy. Elizabeth believed this stereotype and admitted she was wrong. Describing a "Mrs. Lange" she says, "Mrs. Lange is ... stout, shrewd and hard-headed as Susan Anthony herself. I often wondered how in the world she came to be a convert to Mormonism. It seemed as if no delusion of the senses or the imagination could have come over her."[18] She observed that English and Scottish converts are mostly of the "small shop-keeping class.... But they are thoughtful and intelligent women, and express themselves clearly and sometimes eloquently on the

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[15]Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 90.

[16]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, July 11, 1869.

[17]E. Kane, 1857-58 Journal, October 6, 1857.

[18]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 67. Mrs. Lange may have been the wife of William Lang, who was one of the original settlers of St. George. See Larson, 109 and 354-355.

subject of their faith."[19] Elizabeth gave credit to the women for being intelligent and making their own decisions, rather than being deceived or tricked. Nevertheless, to some extent she would always believe that they had been deceived, as she never changed her view that the Mormon doctrine was incorrect.

Elizabeth explained that this "small shop-keeping" class was educated enough in the Bible to see the difference between primitive Christianity and the Anglican Church. Therefore, they accepted Mormonism as a return to Biblical Christianity. They were easily disillusioned with the Anglican church because of what they saw as inconsistencies with scripture. The British higher classes, Elizabeth believed, did not accept the new religion because they were soothed by "placebos" while the very low classes were not familiar enough with the Bible to be aware of any problems between scripture and the English church.[20] Elizabeth found that she could not explain the people's acceptance of Mormonism by simple ignorance, as they were not ignorant, as least in regards to the Bible.

Interestingly, here Elizabeth showed her own class-consciousness by identifying the Mormon converts by their class or social status. She equated ignorance with the lower classes, but when she found the Mormon women were generally not ignorant, she did not give them the same standing that she herself held, but instead called them the "small shop-keeping class", meaning, it seems, somewhat below her own class. It was probably the first and only time that Elizabeth would spend so much time, as a guest, among people

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[19]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 150-151.

[20]Ibid.

who were not of the same class as herself.

The "lower-class" status that she assigned the Mormons may have played a large part in her original disdain for them. Elizabeth was quite aware of her own social superiority over the vast majority of the Mormons, who were constantly classified as poor and uneducated. Before she went to Utah, she did not associate socially with anyone who was at the socioeconomic level of most of the Mormons. However, Thomas did not just help them as a charitable project, but he was genuinely good friends with them, as if they were equals. This may have been an annoyance to Elizabeth.

Throughout her St. George visit, Elizabeth reassessed her previous beliefs and tested the Mormon stereotypes. She found that love, intelligence, independence, and other admirable characteristics of individuals and families were not lacking among Mormons.[21] For her it was a time of reevaluating her own beliefs, as she did when she wondered who were better people, Mormons or mainstream Christians, or when she compared their faith to her own.[22] It was the first time she was exposed in such a personal way to people so different from herself, and she came away with a broader view of the value of people regardless of religion or class.

Home and Family Life Among the Mormons

While Thomas was outside with Mormon men, Elizabeth was inside with Mormon women. If we had an account from Thomas Kane, we would no doubt read of economic ventures, community planning, and leadership. From Elizabeth's standpoint, we can learn

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[21]Embry, xvi.

[22]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 176.

much about Mormon homes and families because it was the homes and families that surrounded her. The practical aspect of polygamy was curious to her, and she commented many times on occurrences in these homes which seemed to her unusual either because of polygamy or because she did not expect to see them in polygamy.

To her surprise, Elizabeth found that some husbands treated their wives individually rather than as a group. For example, the Kanes' host, Erastus Snow, an apostle in the Mormon Church and leader of St. George and surrounding colonies, brought each of his wives into the room where Elizabeth was, one after another, and introduced them separately to her. He referred to each as "my wife," and Elizabeth was surprised that he did not say "one of my wives."[23] This show of individuality is notable. Perhaps it was considered more respectful and dignified. A man entering a room followed by several women may have conjured up images of a harem. Snow's behavior in this situation suggests that Mormons may have been very uncomfortable with this image. Elizabeth's surprise shows both that she was "not yet used to polygamy" and that she thought that wives would be considered together, which was the popular perception in the United States.[24]

This also could have been a manifestation of one family's practice of Victorian culture. Even though they practiced polygamy, which was out of step with their native culture, they were still Americans. Therefore, they adapted polygamy to their own cultural expectations. Of course, this was one incident and it was not necessarily common

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[23]Ibid., 3-4.

[24]Ibid.

protocol. While in Salt Lake City, Elizabeth was introduced to Brigham Young's wives a little differently. They were all together in the same room, but each was introduced individually as "My wife, Mrs. Young."[25] At another point in her account, Elizabeth mentioned that sometimes (but not always) multiple wives sat next to their husbands at dinners or other social functions.[26] Embry also found that this occurred but that whether a husband went out with one wife or several varied from family to family.[27]

Elizabeth was interested in how wives behaved and felt toward one another, as well as how their husbands treated them. To Elizabeth, it was inconceivable that women could share a husband without a great deal of jealousy and conflict, but she found that women were generally willing to work out differences. Sister-wives and their joint husbands had a religious commitment to polygamy and usually wanted to make their marriages work. For the Mormons, plural marriage was an investment where individuals accepted a difficult marriage arrangement in return for heavenly rewards. Most felt that entering into polygamy would bring an elevated status in the next life.[28]

One way that sister-wives worked together was by helping each other in daily tasks. Elizabeth went to visit the previously mentioned Mrs. Lange and found that her sister-wife was there. She watched the two women examining their mutual husband's

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[25]E. Kane to Harriet Kane, December 11, 1872.

[26]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 68.

[27]Embry, 84-87.

[28]Logue, 64; Olsen, 69-74; and Embry, 42-47.

clothes to prepare them for his upcoming mission.[29] Women were individuals, but they did share a husband. Therefore, the responsibility for his domestic needs rested with all the wives. Also, in some families, plural wives shared a household which meant that they had to work together in completing household tasks.[30]

Another bit of evidence showing the nature of wives' relationship to each other is found in Elizabeth's account of a dinner party at the home of Erastus Snow's first wife, Artemisia. What was unusual to Elizabeth was the fact that, along with Artemisia's daughter, Snow's second wife helped to serve the dinner. "Fancy a first wife's tranquilly permitting a second to rummage her closets and inspect her housekeeping; and a second wife's being willing to stand behind the first wife's chair." She commented that "rival wives" each attending to their husband would seem to be a comical situation, but "the second wife [behaved] to the elder precisely as a married daughter would have done."[31] Elizabeth had already encountered similar behavior in polygamous families, but she still was surprised that the Mormon polygamists conducted themselves with dignity in what would generally be regarded as awkward situations.[32]

Elizabeth noted how the situation should have been according to her perception and her experience with marriage, but she recognized that it was not that way. The term

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[29]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 68.

[30]Embry, 98-99. Embry found that sixty-eight percent of plural wives ran their homes separately while thirty percent did some work together.

[31]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 68-69.

[32]E. Kane to Harriet Kane, December 7, 1872.

"rival wives" revealed her concept of multiple wives inherently being in competition for their husband's attention and affection. But she found that instead of rivalry, in this situation there was harmony and respect.[33] Olson points out that generally polygamous families followed a hierarchical pattern with the husband as the head of the family and the first wife second in command. Additional wives' status was determined by the order of marriage.[34] The wives at the Snow home seemed to follow this protocol and Elizabeth found that other families did as well.

Elizabeth recounted how "Maggie McDiarmid" addressed the issue of conflict and hierarchy.[35] Maggie claimed that in "well-governed households," where the husband and the wives lived the gospel properly, things ran smoothly and they were all happier living together. It was the husband's business to deal with a wife who was "covetous or overbearing," and in a righteous family, things worked out. "Governing" was the responsibility of the husband and it was the duty of the wives to follow him. According to

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[33]Historians have shown that rivalry, jealousy, and hurt feelings were common in polygamous marriages, however. See Paula Kelly Harline, "Polygamous yet Monogamous: Cultural Conflict in the Writings of Mormon Polygamous Wives," in *Old West-New West: Centennial Essays*, Barbara Howard Meldrum, ed. (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1993); and Van Wagoner, 89-103.

[34]Olson, 104-105.

[35]"Maggie McDiarmid" was probably an alias. Elizabeth wrote that her husband was a bishop, and she may have actually been Matilda McArthur, wife of Daniel McArthur, bishop of the St. Geroge Third Ward. Larson, 117, n. 47. However, both "Maggie" and her husband were born in Scotland, and this Matilda McArthur may have been born in New York. Another possibility is that Maggie was the wife of another St. George bishop, Robert Gardner, who was born in Scotland. See E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 110; and Family Search, Ancestral File v.4.19, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Maggie, this meant that the husband was the head of the household, followed by the first wife: "A man gives information concerning the family affairs, and directions about them to his first wife, and she rules and issues directions in accordance. There would be endless difficulties otherwise."[36] In this case, Maggie was the first wife, and was respected as such, as her family followed this pattern. She was quite confident that it was the way to have a happy polygamous home, though her sister-wives may have been less satisfied with this arrangement.

The matter of children was raised by Elizabeth to Maggie McDiarmid. Elizabeth asked if a wife would ever punish a child of another wife, to which Maggie replied, "I think that you will understand how things stand with us best, if you consider how you would act with your own sisters' children. You may feel free to do it with those of one and not with those of another." She also said that in her household the children did not feel as though one child belonged to one wife and one to another, but that they were all "ours."[37] Children were different from the husband, in that all the wives were not responsible for all of the children, but they still interacted with each other. Maggie's statement also was probably a good explanation of the relationship between wives. It was undoubtedly true that relations differed between wives just as between sisters, although in polygamy there was much more to have conflict about.

Elizabeth briefly mentioned childbearing in St. George. Her friend "Louisa" had eleven children, which Elizabeth saw as contradicting the Mormon theory of childbearing

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[36]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 120-122.

[37]Ibid., 120.

and polygamy. She wrote that the Mormon theory was that polygamy was fore-ordained for the proper regulation of the family, as women should avoid sexual intercourse during pregnancy and lactation, while men "have proved incapable in a state of monogamy of the requisite self-denial." However, "Theory has failed if one may judge from the relative ages of children in most Mormon families. All the wives who have any children have quantities of them."[38] Elizabeth's idea that polygamy would help women have fewer children would have been, for her, an argument in favor of polygamy, as she felt that it was very important for women's health to have fewer children. It was part of her feminist "Theory," and she brought up the same issue regarding polygamy.[39]

It is interesting that Elizabeth pointed out the high birthrate among polygamous women. Many present-day explanations for polygamy have included the rationale Mormons used to proliferate, and there is usually no mention of "proper regulation of the family." Some historians have argued that polygamous wives actually had fewer children then monogamous wives, which contradicts Elizabeth's anecdotal evidence.[40] However, other scholars have argued that the evidence supporting that claim of lower fertility among polygamous wives has been weak and inconsistent.[41] When looking specifically at St.

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[38]Ibid., 67.

[39]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, July 11, 1869.

[40]Olson, 101-104; and Embry, 35.

[41]L.L. Bean and Geraldine Page Mineau, "The Polgyny-Fertility Hypothesis: A Re-evaluation," *Historical Methods* 40 (1986), 79.

George, it appears that plural wives did have as high a birthrate as single wives.[42]

The high birthrate can be explained by Mormon theology. It considered child-bearing as an extremely important religious duty, as the belief in a life before birth meant there were spirits waiting in heaven to be born on earth. It was important that couples create as many bodies as possible so that more spirits could be born in Mormon homes. While mainstream Christians also believed in the importance of childbearing, they did not believe, as the Mormons did, that the larger one's family, the greater one's reward in heaven.[43] Elizabeth was aware of this attitude towards childbearing, as she wrote, "They [the children] are deemed a woman's crown of glory, and she is proud of their number and what is more to the purpose her husband is proud too."[44]

Besides the practical aspects of polygamy, Elizabeth wondered whether or not polygamous women were happy as plural wives. Her definition of happiness in marriage and family included the existence of romantic love, meaning intense emotional attachment between husbands and wives. She found that some polygamous women seemed to have that kind of relationship with their husbands, but most did not. Perhaps the polygamous women themselves did not expect it, particularly if they were not the first wife. According to historian, Richard Van Wgoner, women were even told by their leaders to forget about

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[42]Logue, 76.

[43]Ibid., 72-73; and Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 190.

[44]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 67.

romantic love, which would just cause problems of jealousy and anger.[45] For example, Zina Huntington Young reportedly said, ". . . a successful polygamous wife must regard her husband with indifference and with no other feeling than that of reverence, for love we regard as a false sentiment; a feeling which should have no existence in polygamy."[46]

Evidence shows that women in polygamy were probably more often than not conflicted about the institution. While they publically defended polygamy, privately they agonized over the hardships of sharing a husband. These polygamous women came from a monogamous culture, and attitudes about marital fidelity, romantic love, and a husband as provider and protector did not seem to fit in the polygamous lifestyle. When women found themselves in a situation which did not conform to their expectations, it caused them confusion and unhappiness.[47] Most of these women believed that polygamy was a sacrifice for which they would be rewarded. Earthly happiness was not as important as eternal happiness, as one woman told Elizabeth.

This woman had said "don't you ever consent to give your husband another wife! It's a perfect pleasure to see one woman as happy as you are." Later, the same woman regretted the statement and wanted Elizabeth to understand that she was "perfectly satisfied" with her status as a plural wife and she went on to make a distinction between earthly happiness and eternal happiness. This, of course, suggested that her earthly happiness was not overwhelming and she admitted that, as a monogamous wife, she may

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[45]Van Wagoner, 101-102

[46]*New York World*, November 19, 1869, as quoted in Van Wagoner, 101.

[47]Harline, 116, 122-126; and Van Wagoner, 90-101.

have been happier. In her journal, Elizabeth commented that she thought Mormon women knew that "intimate friendship" was possible in marriage but not plural marriage.[48] This she wrote early in her stay.

Later, she found that the idea that "intimate friendship" was not possible in polygamy did not always hold up. "Maggie McDiarmid" and her husband seemed very much in love, and Elizabeth was astonished to learn that they were polygamists. Elizabeth had already heard Maggie's story of falling in love with and marrying her husband and had observed their manner towards each other as proof that "after twenty years of wedlock there could still be married lovers" before realizing that they were involved in plural marriage.[49] "Louisa," who was also previously mentioned, was very devoted to her husband, and Elizabeth was very surprised when she found out that she was also a plural wife and, in her case, not even the first wife.[50] Elizabeth was forced to reconsider her own ideas of romantic love and friendship between husband and wife when she found that kind of love and friendship in circumstances in which she had thought them impossible. If nothing else, she could no longer say that "intimate friendship" was not possible in polygamy, even if it was perhaps less likely.

Religiosity in St. George

There is no doubt from Elizabeth's account that religion dominated the lives of the Mormons of St. George. She found that religion came into play in most of their decisions,

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[48]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 21.

[49]Ibid., 119, 123.

[50]Ibid., 62-66.

in their conversations, and basically in all of their daily activities. They were not afraid to share their faith and it seemed to have been second nature for them to see the world in a religious light. This was to be expected, of course, as it was a community established and governed by a religious organization for the purpose of building Saints. Historian William Mulder wrote that Mormondom "was a common-wealth making no distinction between temporal and spiritual affairs . . ." and the individual villages combined civic and church affairs without a second thought about [separation of Church and State].[51] This statement accurately describes St. George's relationship with the Latter-day Saint Church.

When Elizabeth first arrived in St. George, she was not overly positive about the Mormons' religious feelings. In one example she wrote:

> The Mormons believe that it is owing to their prayers that we escaped the storm which threatened us all the way down . . . They look upon all the strange atmospheric disturbances of the last year or two as tokens from the Lord, given to warn the world that these are the Latter Days. One of the "sisters" here asked me whether it had never occurred to me that the Lord was vexed with us for analyzing His ways.

The "sister,"of whom Elizabeth wrote, was criticizing a man known as "Old Probabilities," who attempted to predict the weather in Eastern newspapers. Elizabeth responded in her diary rather mockingly, "A new element for O.P. to ponder on, that he is furnished with an extra supply of storms to punish his inquisitiveness!"[52] She was not really impressed with the "sister's" interpretation.

Then again, she sometimes wrote neutrally about Mormon stories and practices.

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[51]William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandenavia*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 191-194.

[52]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 6.

Most comments on doctrine or practice were more benign, such as, "Among the Mormons, children are baptized at about eight years of age," or "The Mormons baptize [for their ancestors] only in the Temple."[53] In these kinds of comments she fell back into her role of the observer who is simply recording what she sees and hears. She wrote as if she had no opinion or feelings towards these practices. Other times, however, her observations became more revealing. At a dinner party, she was told several stories about Joseph Smith and early Mormon history, regarding which she wrote: "The most curious thing was the air of perfect sincerity of all the speakers. I cannot feel doubtful that they believed what they said."[54] This was a turning point where she realized that the Mormons truly believed in Mormonism, which obviously surprised her as she felt their sincerity was "curious." Here, she wrote about their beliefs and practices but she also wrote about the way that the Mormons felt about them and she described her reaction to those feelings.

She was even surprised by Brigham Young's belief in himself as a prophet. She had heard stories about an Indian prophet and asked Brigham Young if he thought that the man was a true prophet. Elizabeth wrote about Young's reply: "If he was genuinely inspired-of course he would have been inspired to come at once to him, Brigham Young." This answer shocked Elizabeth, who wrote, "Brigham Young is so shrewd and full of common sense that I keep forgetting he is a Mormon himself, and this answer, so natural a one from his point of view took me completely aback. I felt as if I had asked one lunatic

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[53]Ibid., 12, 19.

[54]Ibid., 70.

his opinion of another!"[55] However, Elizabeth had learned that Brigham Young was not a lunatic; he was an intelligent person who could not be dismissed as fanatical or crazy. She learned the same thing about other Mormons.

Elizabeth found that the St. George Mormons were normal people doing their best to support their families and live their lives free from persecution. They raised their children to be good citizens and hard workers, and they had stable family-centered lives. She became friends with many of them, yet it was strange for her to think about what Mormons actually believed. Elizabeth had seen this sincerity and faith on her journey to St. George as well, and by the end of her visit to Utah, they were no longer curiosities to her. By that time she had seen so much of them that she accepted them as genuine. She was convinced of their belief by their manner and also by the continual economic and emotional sacrifices they made for their faith.

An example of how she grew not only to believe their sincerity but also to respect it is found in the account of the man whose wives (one of whom was the previously mentioned "Mrs. Lang") were getting his clothes ready for his mission. This man was the educated son of a rich man in Massachusetts, Elizabeth reported, and he lost twenty thousand dollars when he joined the Mormons. "I must say I respected him for that patched great coat. He knew enough of the old "Gentile" society in which he had moved to feel how much caste he lost by wearing it."[56] Here she saw the man's sacrifice in losing his inheritance for joining the Church and in being willing to go back to his old world as a

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[55]Ibid., 96.

[56]Ibid., 68.

poor man to teach Mormonism.

Elizabeth was surprised and a little saddened by the faith shown by the Mormons in their willingness to settle in St. George, part of "Utah's harsh lands."[57] For example, an elderly woman told Elizabeth of her gardening abilities which were wasted in the St. George desert. "I asked her why she came, and her beautiful eyes flashed as she said, 'Because I have Hope and Faith.'"[58] Another woman described what life was like in St. George when they had first come, living in wagons and dealing with the summer heat and sand. "It was hard, but it had been taught them to appreciate the contrast. Look now at their green tree-shaded streets, and the thick adobe or sandstone walls of their houses. . . . Poor dear woman, I thought she was thankful for small mercies!"[59]

Elizabeth admired these attitudes of faith but she still felt sorry for the trials that the people were going through. She began to worry about the economic conditions of the Mormons who always seemed to be looking for some kind of profitable industry.[60] "I wish the time had come when the profitable industry was found. . . . This people is lavishing labor for too trifling a return."[61] Elizabeth was probably right about her assessment of the dim prospects of the town. Of all the nineteenth-century Mormon

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[57]Richard H. Jackson, "Utah's Harsh Lands, Hearth of Greatness," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 49 (Winter 1981), 17-22.

[58]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 89.

[59]Ibid., 45.

[60]Jackson, 17-22.

[61]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 89.

settlements, St. George was one of the most difficult to establish, as water was very scarce and irrigation difficult. The settlers did not have expertise in farming desert land and, as Elizabeth mentioned, they looked for some kind of industry that was suited to the geography of the settlement. They were encouraged at different times to raise cotton, sorghum cane, fruit trees, grapes, peanuts, bees, alfalfa, and silk worms. Although some of these products were more successful than others, none brought St. George real prosperity.[62]

In a letter home, Elizabeth wrote about the troubles of irrigation in the St. George area. She and Thomas had gone on a fourteen-mile drive with Brigham Young and several other people "through Washington Fields and back, " and on that drive they noticed the irrigating channels. "What labor these people have put in here! $30,000 in day's works these St. George men have put in their channels and fences and the tormenting Virgin has overflowed her banks, broken away the tiny dams, and worn away her own bed so much deeper that many channels have to be dug over again."[63]

Her responses to the hardships of the Mormons show that she did not consider the results worth the effort. But the return that the Mormons received or anticipated was not necessarily prosperity or a life that would become easier over time. They believed they would be blessed for their attempt to scratch out a living in the St. George desert, whether in this life or the life to come. Elizabeth did not fully realize that the Mormons did not

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[62]Jackson, 20-21; and Larson, 334-356.

[63]E. Kane, [St. George], to Harriet Kane, [Philadelphia], January 19, 1873, Kane Papers, BYU.

move to St. George primarily for economic opportunities, but they moved there out of a sense of religious obligation.[64] Because Elizabeth did not feel this obligation from her own religion, she pitied their hard lives. But her pity did not stand in the way of her respect for their meeting that obligation.

Elizabeth Crusades for the Mormons

Several times in both Elizabeth Kane's St. George diary and in *Twelve Mormon Homes*, she wrote of the political problems facing the Mormons. The first anti-polygamy legislation, the Morrill Act, which outlawed bigamy, was passed in 1862, but it was not strictly enforced. After the Civil War, however, there was a renewed emphasis on abolishing polygamy. Beginning in 1869 with the Cullom Bill (which was defeated), anti-polygamy legislation was introduced in Congress annually. In February 1873, while Elizabeth was in St. George, the Frelinghuysen bill passed the U.S. Senate, although it did not pass the House of Representatives.[65] But in 1874, the Poland Act passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant. It extended federal jurisdiction in criminal and civil court cases, thus easing the way for prosecution of polygamists in Utah.[66] It was eventually followed by the Edmunds Act of 1882 and the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, which would seriously threaten the Mormon Church's existence, not to mention denying women and all polygamists their civil rights.

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[64]Logue, 2-5.

[65]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 107, n. 103.

[66]James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 363.

The Mormons were understandably very worried about the Frelinghuysen bill being debated in Congress during Elizabeth's visit. As she came to sympathize with the Mormons, she also began to worry over their fate at the hands of Congress. Only a week after Elizabeth arrived in St. George, she began a letter to Simon Cameron, a Pennsylvania senator who was acquainted with Thomas Kane. She wrote at least three drafts of this letter, in which she gave a history of her own change in views toward the Mormons. She hoped that her personal testimony, having been among the Mormons, would do some good for them.

In 1870, Elizabeth had written that perhaps Thomas was preventing "God's will" by lobbying government officials in behalf of the Mormons. At that time she felt that it was God's will that polygamy be abolished.[67] Then, on her trip to St. George, she wrote that Congress should prohibit any further polygamous marriages, while legalizing the current ones.[68] In St. George, she dramatically softened her position by advocating that Congress should simply do nothing about polygamy and leave the Mormons alone.[69]

Elizabeth wrote that she wanted to give Cameron "a small contribution towards a knowledge of [the Mormons'] character." She felt that she was perhaps the only non-Mormon woman "of respectability" who knew the Mormon women and "My testimony

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[67]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, April 10, 1870.

[68]E. Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey through Utah to Arizona*, (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1974), 119.

[69]E. Kane, [St. George], to Simon Cameron, [Washington, D.C.?], December 29, 1872, Kane Papers, BYU.

therefore ought to be worth something to you." Although she "went to Utah with great reluctance expecting to feel myself in a sink of corruption" she was pleasantly surprised that the women were "modest quiet housewives . . . I find them to be, like the model woman of Paul, 'discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their own husbands'." Not only were they basically good, moral women, they were the kind of women whom the United States needed "to carry out the republican theory under which it was established."[70] Here she referred to the popular idea that mothers were responsible to teach their children to be honest, patriotic, and active citizens. Elizabeth also rebutted the argument that Mormons were un-American by claiming that the Mormon women were just the sort of women America needed to stay strong.

Elizabeth wrote of the sufferings of the Mormons in their exodus from the East, which was "a training of endurance which has fitted them [the older women] to be the mothers of heroes." She felt that the younger women displayed "a hard working, baby-tending, housewifeliness that recalls the Puritan woman of old New England." She wrote that she did not understand their patience with polygamy, but in talking privately and openly with many and staying with over twelve families in various settlements, she had not found one woman who did not seem well-satisfied. The Mormon women spoke to Elizabeth of the comfort in sharing labors of housekeeping "and it was of course easy for me to understand the relief to a hard worked mother of having another whose interest it was to have the household prosper, share her labors."[71]

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[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid.

Elizabeth concluded her letter by advocating that Congress do nothing about polygamy, because

> it is better to let polygamy die on its own, for persecution will make them cling to it more. . . . the suffering the women and children will undergo you men cannot imagine, but if they are forced to choose between their faith and their homes they will go out to die by thousands and the administration of Grant will be known as that of the most infamous persecution that has disgraced humanity.[72]

The result from Congressional action against the Mormons, she wrote, would be that anti-polygamy crusaders would "have [their] mortified vanity soothed, but the United States will have suffered the loss of the best class of pioneers she has ever had." Elizabeth also predicted that if the Mormons were driven out of Utah, it would become a barren desert.[73]

Elizabeth's letter shows the extent to which her attitude and opinions changed from those she held before coming to Utah. After becoming friends with Mormon women and understanding what government action could do to them, and after becoming convinced that Utah was not a "sink of corruption," Elizabeth came to believe that no action against polygamy was needed. It would die on its own if the Mormons were left alone. Action by Congress would cause more damage than the benefits were worth, particularly since those benefits could be achieved by patience. There is no record of Cameron's response or lack thereof to Elizabeth's letter.

Elizabeth's lobbying for the Mormons finally put her in agreement with her husband, who had been lobbying for the Mormons for over twenty years. It is unlikely that she felt resentful of them any more, but instead wanted to help them, just as Thomas

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[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid.

did. Before meeting the Mormons herself, she assumed her husband was crusading for an immoral people. Now, however, she accepted them as good people and so deserving of help. The "Mormon problem" in their marriage could now be put to rest.

Conclusion

While reading Elizabeth's diary, one sees how her attitude toward the Mormons changed. She was more sympathetic and wrote of the many surprises she was confronted with while among them. She found that Mormons were generally pleasant, intelligent, faithful people. However, it was after her husband's illness that Elizabeth's turn from suspicion and contempt towards friendship and respect was complete. Her entries after this period are dramatically different than those written before. Whereas before she wrote sympathetically of the people, afterwards she passionately defended them.

There is a break in Elizabeth's journal from February 13 to March 3, 1873.[74] The March 3 entry explained that Thomas had been very ill, "at the point of death." She also wrote that "I think that, under God, I am indebted for his recovery to the kind and able nursing of the Mormons. I shall not forget it. . . . I write this Memorandum in red ink-'If I had entries in this diary to make again, they would be written in a kindlier spirit.'"[75] Years earlier, at Winter Quarters in 1846, the Mormons had cared for Thomas while he was gravely ill, and this task was undertaken by them once again.

Elizabeth even found that because of his behavior during Thomas's illness, she

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[74]Elizabeth's erratic dating in the journal is not correct, probably because she put in dates after she had returned to Pennsylvania. See E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, xiii and 168, fn 141.

[75]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 167-168.

began to like Brigham Young himself. At one point, at the beginning of Thomas's recovery, she went out for a walk with her children.

> When I came home, I stepped softly to the open door and peeped through. Father was lying in a sound sleep, and a bulky figure that I recognized knelt beside a chair, praying. I stole back and rejoined the children on the porch, and we re-entered the house with sufficient noise to make the watcher aware of our presence. He came out into the parlour to give me the good news that Father had slept almost ever since we left. . . I find myself thinking kindly of this man, too![76]

The Mormons' role in Thomas's recovery was not forgotten by Elizabeth and she came out of the ordeal more dramatically changed than she had been in the weeks before. Her love for her husband made her love the people that loved him and aided him so much. Elizabeth had already begun to respect the Mormons for their religious faith. But after her debt to the Mormons had been incurred, she was contrite for her previous feelings towards them and she became upset at the injustices they faced.

For example, it was after Thomas's illness that Elizabeth wrote about Congress "bullying" the Mormons: "I could see no prospect before these people but one of wretchedness–and it will be in the name of the Law that our President and Congress will bully and terrify these helpless women and innocent little children! Though I had no vote, I felt as if I could not free myself from blood-guiltiness."[77] These are much different comments about Congress's actions towards the Mormons than her previous ones, which mentioned them only in passing, such as "The Mormons are much afflicted [by] the animus

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[76]Ibid., 170. Elizabeth does not say specifically that this was Brigham Young, but it is likely that it was him because of her description and also because he was the only Mormon man whom she had ever really expressed dislike for.

[77]Ibid., 170.

against them in Congress."[78]

At the end of her diary, Elizabeth wrote of the peace she had felt in St. George.

As she was leaving the Mormons, she reflected on the time she had spent there.

> Erring as they may be from what I think the truth, still I cannot forget what rest and peace of soul I have enjoyed among them, and when I go back to the theoretically orthodox society of the East . . . I shall look back with tender feelings to St. George. . . I mean to remember that I felt that it was right and not wrong to worship with the Mormons as with Christians.[79]

Elizabeth also questioned whether the Mormons were actually better people than mainstream Christians. The Mormons, she reasoned, were more faithful in their beliefs, which were in error, while most Christians were not as dedicated to living religious lives based on sound doctrine. Most Christians believed the right things, but did not act upon them, while Mormons believed incorrectly and were strict and faithful in their faith.[80] As Elizabeth was a Christian, she questioned her own faithfulness along with Christians collectively, as she did when she wondered if her faith would be as strong as a newly called missionary facing the prospect of leaving his family unattended for a significant period.[81]

After seeing the Mormons, whose religion prompted them to make such extreme sacrifices, Elizabeth wondered about her own faith and religious commitment. She had not been called upon to sacrifice for her faith as the Mormons had, and perhaps it made

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[78]Ibid., 167. See also Ibid., 107.

[79]Ibid., 175-176.

[80]Ibid., 176.

[81]Ibid., 90.

her own religiosity seem a bit shallow when compared to that of the Mormons. She also found that they easily accepted spiritual manifestations and they wholeheartedly believed that God would take care of them in the face of extreme hardship. These attitudes were not part of Elizabeth's own spirituality. Their beliefs took religious sentiment and action much further than Elizabeth ever had. Because she had always considered herself a religious woman, she had to wonder about the differences between the Mormons' religion and her own. She showed her inner reflection by writing, "I . . . have been a member of the Presbyterian Church since I was 15 and may say of all my life since that after the strictest sense I lived a Pharisee."[82]

Combining her religious reflections with her feelings towards her husband, she also came to a new appreciation of his type of religiosity. In an undated entry in her unpublished travel diary, probably written after leaving St. George, she wrote:

> By one of the odd contradictions of which . . . my world is so full, I married at sixteen my opposite in every respect. We pull along the road of life marvelously well considering that our team is made up of a one race & [one] plough horse. My husband's life has been full of adventure and while I have long professed Christianity he has practiced it so literally as to be considered eccentric putting himself in the fore-front of every movement for the benefit of humankind until it had passed through the approbation of its early growth.[83]

Elizabeth had not considered her husband to be a Christian because he was unwilling to profess faith in Christ. However, after seeing how important his work was to the Mormons and coming to know them for herself, she changed her views on Thomas's religiosity. She now saw his "Christian" behavior as more important than a verbal

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[82]E. Kane, 1872-73 Journal, undated entry, p. 90 of typescript.

[83]Ibid., undated entry, pp 88-89 of typescript.

confession or attendance at a church service.

At the close of her diary, Elizabeth noted the change she had gone through. In a letter to her daughter which was transcribed into the journal, she wrote: "You will not understand how I have come to pity this people; for you know how hard it was for me to make up my mind to come among them and associate with them. . . I have written to you as a sort of penance for the hard thoughts and contemptuous opinions I have myself instilled into you."[84] She also claimed that her willingness to stay at Brigham Young's Lion House in Salt Lake City after they returned from St. George was "a public testimony to the little circle of those to whom my name is known, that my opinion of the Mormon women had so changed during the winter that I was willing to eat salt with them."[85]

During his illness, Thomas had been worried about the possibility of dying so far from home where Elizabeth and their children would be left among people who were "alien in all their sympathies." But she wrote that "I was able to reassure him on this head. I already feel far more at home here, and have learned to know and appreciate his poor friends . . . as he does himself."[86] Before her St. George visit, the Mormons were her husband's strange project and probably not worth the work he did for them. By the end of her visit, she felt that she had finally come to understand and agree with his concern for them.

However, Elizabeth did not have the same "tender feelings" for Salt Lake City as

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[84]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 170.

[85]Ibid., 177.

[86]Ibid., 168.

she did for St. George. She wrote that, "Its wealth has spoiled it for me . . . The passing traveler who halts a few days in Salt Lake City . . . foresees their religious decay as clearly as I can do from what he sees of their growth in material prosperity and worldly spirit"[87] Unlike St. George, Salt Lake City in 1872 was a bustling city of about 13,000 people, a significant portion of whom were not Mormon. There were many prosperous businesses including grocery stores, milk shops, drapery makers, and millinery shops. Although not everyone in the city was well-off, they did not have the same severe physical trials that the St. George Mormons had. Salt Lake City Mormons were not isolated and they were not on the brink of disaster, as those in St. George were.[88] She had been won over by the Mormons in a large part through the economic sacrifice they had made for their religion and the more prosperous Latter-day Saints were not making the same sacrifices that the Saints in St. George made. Thus they were not as deserving of admiration.

Perhaps Elizabeth's most convincing statement regarding her newfound admiration and friendship for the St. George Mormons is this:

> I found the best men and women, the most earnest in their belief, the most self-denying and "primitive Christian" in their behavior clad in the homespun garments of the remote settlements. . . . It will all pass away soon enough . . . Such industry as the Mormon religion inculcates . . . will too soon bring corrupting Wealth. . . No use for us to "put down the Mormons." The World, the Flesh and the Devil sap earnestness soon enough. And I for one shall say, Alas![89]

Elizabeth predicted that the faith and simplicity of the rural Mormons would not last, but

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[87]Ibid., 178.

[88]Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1984), 85-123.

[89]E. Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 178-179.

she was sorry to make that prediction. She did not believe that such faith and sincerity could remain long in such a materialistic world, and it was only a matter of time before the world reached the remote Utah settlements, changing what was good about Mormonism - simplicity and wholehearted faith. But while the rest of the world may applaud Mormonism's fall (or perhaps just a future loss of "earnestness"), and while Elizabeth herself may have once done the same thing, she could no longer do so. She was now a friend of the Mormons, like her husband, and she felt the sorrow of their afflictions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LIFE AS AN INDEPENDENT WIDOW

Elizabeth Kane's 1872-1873 trip to Utah was a life-altering experience. It was there that she came to understand and accept her husband's morality and goodness, something she had previously been unable to do. Before they went to Utah, she wished that he would "become Christian" but by the time they returned to Pennsylvania, she believed that he *was* a Christian. She had also come to agree with his work for the Mormons, which had previously been a sore point in their marriage. Finally, Elizabeth began to scrutinize her own religious views by comparing them to those of the Mormons. While in Utah, she began to wonder if she needed to have the same kind of firm religious commitment that she felt the Mormons had. Elizabeth came away from this visit to Utah more understanding and respectful of her husband. She also was more tolerant of differing religious beliefs.

The Kanes returned to Pennsylvania in March 1873 and had just over ten more years of married life together. Thomas died in 1883, but Elizabeth outlived him by twenty-six years, dying in 1909 at the age of 73. The last twenty-six years of her life were very productive and during them she became much more of a reformer than she had been during Thomas's life. It was during her widowhood, in fact, that Elizabeth's feminism and religious beliefs, as well as the results of her lifetime pursuits such as writing and medicine became public. It was as if all of the previous aspects of her life culminated in her development from the immature "child-wife"of Thomas L. Kane that she was to the very independent, confident, and productive woman she became.

Life after the Utah Trip

After Elizabeth's 1872-73 travel diary and her St. George journal, there is a twenty-two year gap without any diary. Either she did not keep a diary, none of her journals from this time survived, or else their whereabouts are simply not known. It is unlikely that she did not keep a journal during this long period of her life because she had been so consistent in her record-keeping for so many years. Also, her 1895 journal begins as if there had been no break at all. Whatever the reason for the missing diaries, without them, details of Thomas and Elizabeth's life from 1873 to 1895 are somewhat sketchy. There is some correspondence, business papers, and their daughter, Harriet's diaries, but when compared to Elizabeth's full journal accounts previous to 1873, these materials are quite sparse.

When Thomas and Elizabeth returned home from Utah, they were beset with new financial difficulties. According to Elizabeth's obituary, when they arrived home in March, 1873, they found that someone had forged a $1,000 check on their bank account, causing an overdraft. Elizabeth was able to cover the overdraft by pawning their silver but they then had to deal with economic troubles caused by the Panic of 1873. It took them about six years to recover from these financial problems.[1] It was probably during this time of financial difficulty that Elizabeth began a children's novel. At other times in her life when she was worried about money, she had wished that she could contribute to the family finances.[2] She felt the same way during this crisis, but this time instead of just

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[1]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[2]E. Kane, 1857-58 Journal, February 2, 1858.

worrying and hoping that Thomas would be able to do something to fix their problems, Elizabeth took matters into her own hands. She was no longer willing to be so dependent on him, especially since she had learned years before that he was not always so dependable. Perhaps her experience with the Mormon women, who were often forced into economic independence, also inspired her to be more proactive.

Elizabeth was not yet a "medical" doctor, although she did provide medical services in Kane until other doctors came into the area.[3] But she did not attempt to use her medical skills to earn money. A biographical sketch written by an unknown author claimed, "Her work, though active, was entirely gratuitous."[4] Perhaps she felt that her medical work was charity and did not feel comfortable charging money for it. Another possibility is that she was not comfortable with the idea of having a career outside the home when she was married and still had minor children, as she did in the late 1870s.

Elizabeth was certainly not opposed to earning money in some way, however, especially during the difficult times of the 1870s. Instead of selling her medical skills, she decided to see if she could sell a book. A note made by Elizabeth which accompanied her manuscript says that she began the novel in the interest of earning money, but it does not give any reason for not completing it. The novel she began may have been loosely based on Elizabeth's own family. It was about four children who lived near the woods and

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[3]During the nineteenth-century, male "doctors" with the same or less education than Elizabeth often practiced as doctors, but women were generally not allowed this freedom. They usually had to prove their credentials by a medical degree. See Mary Roth Walsh, *"Doctors wanted, no women need apply": Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 11-15.

[4]"Biographical sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane."

whose father was involved in the Civil War. These characteristics are consistent with Elizabeth's family. However, she wrote only four chapters before giving the work up without attempting to have it published.[5]

During the Utah War of 1858, Elizabeth had been financially strapped, but at that time she felt rather helpless. Other than suggestions for Thomas's work and reducing her own expenses, she did not know what else to do. A second financial crisis they went through was during the Civil War when Thomas spent a great deal of money in outfitting his regiment. At that time, Elizabeth showed an increased ability to be proactive and she was probably not confident in Thomas's ability to provide for her. She sold their farm stock as well as personal items to meet their obligations. By their last economic emergency in the 1870s, Elizabeth had become experienced in having a lack of money, and she was more than willing to do something about it, such as pawning the silver and attempting to write for money. What she was not willing to do was wait for Thomas to work it out. She had learned that even though husbands were "supposed" to provide, she could not always rely on hers to do so.

Even though they continued to have serious financial problems during the 1870s, Thomas refused to let his aunt, Ann Thomas, will a portion of her fortune to him. So before her death, she used the money she intended to leave to him to build a Presbyterian chapel in Kane, which was completed in 1878. Thomas placed a window in the building "to remember the text 'Consider the Lilies How They Grow,'" a reference to a religious

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[5]E. Kane, note accompanying unpublished and untitled manuscript, September 20, 1881, Kane Papers, BYU.

text and scripture with which Elizabeth would often comfort Thomas during their trials.[6] Thomas obviously had an affinity for religion, or at least Biblical sentiment, even though he continued to be a non-professing Christian. If this was a favorite text of Thomas's, it may also explain his lack of keeping the family financially solvent. Perhaps he had the attitude that God would take care of them and he should not worry about pecuniary issues.

Because Thomas felt comforted by Elizabeth's religiosity and her sharing of religious texts, it would seem religion was not the conflict it had been in the 1850s. Although Elizabeth seemed to let the issue die after the Utah War, it was clear that she was not satisfied with his level of spirituality or religion up until their Utah visit. However, after she spent time among the Mormons, Elizabeth broadened her notions of Christianity so that she came to include both Thomas and the Mormons under the title of "Christian." Before their Utah visit, she had not considered either of them to be true Christians. Elizabeth may have still wished that Thomas would join her Presbyterian church, but she no longer felt that he was non-Christian.

Thomas's aunt, Ann Thomas, gave him and Elizabeth a chapel to worship in, and another of Thomas's aunts, Alida Constable, also gave Thomas a large gift. She left her Philadelphia home to Thomas and Elizabeth when she died (probably in late 1881).[7] This proved to be very useful for the family, who lived in the home during the winter months so

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[6]Matthew 6: 28-34 KJV; and "Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[7]Elizabeth's daughter, Harriet, pasted a newspaper article about Alida's will, dated January 8, 1882, in her journal. Harriet A. Kane Journal, 1879-1882, January 7, 1882, Kane Papers, BYU.

that Elizabeth and Harriet could finish medical school. They both attended school at the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, and Elizabeth graduated in 1883, nearly thirty years after she began her first courses.[8] Harriet graduated two years later (1885). By this time, Elizabeth's reasons for attending medical school had no doubt changed. She did not need to go to help the school establish itself and provide an example of a respectable woman attending medical school which had been the two main purposes in attending in the 1850s.[9] Those reasons for attending were largely Thomas's reasons, but when she went back to school in the 1880s, she did it for herself only. She had perhaps felt the need to complete her medical training with all of the medical work she had done in Kane, so she decided to go back to medical school and finish what she had started thirty years earlier.[10] By the 1880s, female medical schools had become much more popular than they were in the 1850s.[11] More and more women attended, and many of them were second-generation doctors, as Harriet was.[12]

Thomas went West two more times in his life. In 1876 he went to Mexico because he was interested in a "union" between Mexico and the United States, and he published a

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[8]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[9]E. Kane, 1854-57 Journal, January 3, 1854; and E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[10]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*; and "Biographical sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane."

[11]Walsh, xvi-xvii.

[12]Regina Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 93.

pamphlet entitled *Coahuila* (a Mexican province) from this visit.[13] He also went back to Utah in 1877, as soon as he heard of Brigham Young's death, to assure the Mormons that even with Young's death, he would continue to assist them in any way he could. Thomas was also concerned with what would happen to the Mormon Church without Young's leadership, but found "the Lord has made ample provision for the preservation of that cause which lies near to my heart."[14] Neither of these trips were meant to be vacations which may be why Elizabeth did not accompany him.

She probably did not begrudge Thomas these trips (as she had in the past), at least not the Utah trip. Obviously, he went to Utah under serious circumstances - the death of his friend, Brigham Young. Thomas's 1858 Utah trip had been a serious matter as well, but many things had changed since then. For one thing, she was no longer a twenty-one year old wife with two small children who were dependent on Thomas. Elizabeth was older and much more confident than she had been in 1858. She stayed in their own home instead of Thomas's parent's. Her children were also much older and not so dependent. The trip was far less dangerous in 1877 than it had been in 1858. In 1858 Thomas made the Utah trip by ship and then on horseback. It took him over a month to travel from Philadelphia to Salt Lake City. In 1877, he only had to take a three-day train ride to get to Utah. Thomas's desire to go alone to Utah was much less of a sacrifice in the 1870s.

Aside from Thomas's trips West and their time spent in Philadelphia, Thomas and

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[13]Leornard J. Arrington, "'In Honorable Remembrance': Thomas L. Kane's Services to the Mormons," *Brigham Young University Studies* (Fall 1981), 400.

[14]Statement of John Henry Smith, as quoted in Arrington, "'In Honorable Remembrance,'" 400.

Elizabeth continued to make their permanent home in Kane, where Thomas was involved in land development and other businesses. During this time, Thomas and Elizabeth became actively involved in the Temperance Movement, as they "worked to exclude liquor from Kane."[15] This is the first hint of Elizabeth taking part in public reform activities, even though Thomas had wanted her to do so much earlier in their marriage. The Kane family also continued their relationship with the Mormons during the 1870s and early 1880s. Mostly their contact was with Utah territorial delegate to Congress, George Q. Cannon. George Q. Cannon had become a very close friend of Thomas Kane's and the two met often during the years between Thomas's Utah visit and his death.[16]

It was on December 26, 1883, that Thomas's lifelong frailty finally caught up with him and he died of pneumonia at his Philadelphia home. He was surrounded by his wife and four children, Harriet (age 28), Elisha (27), Evan (22) and Willie (20).[17] Elizabeth wrote that he "suffered intensely until a few hours of his release; his mind was wandering from the outset of the attack. Yet in the intervals of consciousness he was fully persuaded

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[15]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[16]Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999), 189, 194, 226, and 261. Cannon wrote of Thomas L. Kane, "He is a dear friend and if I were his brother in the flesh he could not feel and act more warmly towards me." George Q. Cannon Journal, June 26, 1879, as quoted in Bitton, 226. See also Harriet A. Kane, 1882 Journal, March 3 and October 25, 1882, Kane Papers, BYU, for references to Mormon contact.

[17]Harriet A. Kane, 1883 Journal, December 25, 1883, Kane Papers, BYU. Thomas and Elizabeth's son, Willie, changed his name to Thomas L. Kane, Jr., after his father's death. Also, upon Thomas's death, none of the children were yet married.

of the approach of death, and made efforts to give us counsel and bid us farewell."[18] Thomas was sixty-one years old, and Elizabeth was forty-seven.

After Thomas's death, Elizabeth wrote of the work he had done throughout his life. She claimed that many of the Mormons' economic practices were originally Thomas's ideas: "much of the Mormons' prosperity, such as their ZCMI Stores, Order of Enoch, Communal ranches, and so forth sprang from Kane's ideas transmuted to Brigham Young's brain."[19] The ZCMI (Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution) stores were cooperative stores run by the Latter-day Saint Church that began in 1869 with the purpose of keeping the Mormons independent from "Gentile" or non-Mormon businesses. The "Order of Enoch" referred to the United Order of Enoch which was established in several Mormon communities starting with St. George in 1873. This was a cooperative system in which all members gave their productive property to the Order and promised to trade only with other members of the order. It also had the purpose of promoting self-sufficiency for Latter-day Saints. There is no hard evidence for Elizabeth's assertion that these practices were Thomas's ideas, although it is very likely that Thomas did discuss matters such as this with Brigham Young. It is interesting, however, that the "Order of Enoch" was instituted in St. George in 1873, less than a year after Thomas and Elizabeth's visit there.[20]

Elizabeth wrote that Thomas worked for abolition of capital punishment and

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[18]E. Kane, [Philadelphia], to George Q. Cannon, [Washington?], December 30, 1883, LDS Church Archives, as quoted in Arrington, 401.

[19]E. Kane, "Biographical Sketch of Thomas L. Kane."

[20]Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 350-351, 377-381.

slavery, improvement of Prisons, and higher education of women. He was a manager of the House of Refuge (for troubled girls), and established and maintained "at own expense an Infant School [an orphan asylum] on the model of the French "Salles d'Asile" and the modern kindergartens."[21] She also paid Thomas a great tribute, showing that their conflict over religion had ended:

> He never united with any religious denomination but held an earnest practical affection for the Savior as one still living and to be followed and served. The promptitude with which he would abandon some cherished plan, when the test of its righteousness was applied, struck many a professing Christian as odd and Quixotic. Yet the conviction of his absolute sincerity made men in deep perplexity appeal to him for counsel and follow his advice in the most trying passages of their lives.[22]

Her assertion that Thomas loved Jesus Christ "as one still living," is similar to an argument she had made in favor of the Mormons' religiosity. She felt that mainstream Christians did not love Christ in the way they should, "To too many Christ is dead because we are dead in trespasses and sins."[23] She came to that conclusion after visiting the Mormons, whose faith was much stronger, in her opinion, than most Christians. She attributed to Thomas the same kind of religious feeling, which she came to feel was an acceptable alternative to a profession of faith, after her Utah visit. It seems that the influence of the Mormons helped her to come to this acceptance of Thomas's virtuousness, even though he did not belong to a church, which lasted at least until his death.

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[21]E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane; and Richard D. Poll, "Thomas L. Kane and the Utah War," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 61 (Spring 1993), 115.

[22]E. Kane, biographical sketch of Thomas L. Kane.

[23]E. Kane, "Argument," undated, after 1873, Kane Papers, BYU.

Elizabeth, who had become a wife at sixteen years of age, was now a widow thirty years later. She had become much more independent before Thomas's death but it still must have been a terrible blow to her, as she had relied on him as "intimate counsellor" for so many years.[24] Unfortunately, she left no real evidence of the emotional impact of his death. One study of Pennsylvania widows found that Elizabeth's situation upon her husband's death would have been quite typical had she been widowed between the years 1750-1850. During that time period, the average widow's husband died while she was in her late forties, just like Elizabeth. And, like Elizabeth, the majority of widows did not marry again. Elizabeth's widowhood brought upon her the responsibility to financially support herself, although she did not have minor children to worry about. A nineteenth-century widow was forced to take on the male role of provider but she had to do it in a world that did not allow her the same freedoms it did a man.[25]

Activities of Elizabeth's Later Years

Nineteenth-century widows such as Elizabeth were faced with the constraints of femininity which prescribed that a woman's place was in the home. However, most felt that societal concerns about their behavior were secondary to the needs of providing for themselves and their families. They were willing to step out of conventional roles in order to preserve their lifestyle and sometimes even in order to survive.[26] Elizabeth had shown a

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[24]E. Kane to Harriet Kane, December 15, 1872.

[25]Lisa Wilson, *Life After Death: Widows in Pennsylvania, 1750-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 1-2.

[26]Ibid.

willingness to step out of conventional roles even before her husband's death, as in the case of going to medical school. Therefore, she was probably even more likely to successfully take on the new role of provider upon Thomas's death. It seems that Elizabeth did well in this role, although exact details of her economic circumstances are not known. Like many other widows, she had been well aware of their financial circumstances before her husband's death so it was probably not a shock to her to have to manage them on her own.[27] In fact, she may have been a better financial manager than her husband who had many problems in this area of his life.

In many ways, Thomas's death marked Elizabeth's coming out into society. She was the head of a very successful and prominent family. She continued to pursue interests which she may have shared with Thomas but she now fulfilled on her own. When Elizabeth was a young bride, she was very immature and dependent on Thomas, although she had always had her own opinions and ideas. As she grew and matured, she became more independent and vocal in their marriage. By the time Thomas died, however, she had clearly become her own woman. She had a very successful and fulfilling life without his guidance and direction. In fact, it was now Elizabeth who took on the role of the head of the family and it was she who guided her children and led her community.

Sometime after Thomas's death, Elizabeth sold their Philadelphia house (which no doubt helped her economic circumstances) and she spent the remaining years of her life in Kane. By the 1890s, it had become a well-established rural community. There were two local newspapers, the *Kane Leader* and the *Daily Kane Republican*. In 1899, however,

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[27]Ibid., 115.

Kane still had only one paved street, and only a few houses had access to electricity. On the bright side, Elizabeth presented the community with a "handsome new drinking fountain" which was placed at the corner of Bayard and Hacker Streets in August of that year.[28] Her daughter and three sons also lived their adult lives in Kane and the surrounding area. All three of her sons married in the 1890s, but Harriet remained single until her death in 1896.[29]

Elizabeth continued to write during her widowhood. In fact, Elizabeth's main occupation throughout her life was writing, although generally she was not paid for it. She wrote the final chapter of her father's autobiography after he died in October 1894.[30] She also wrote a biography of her ancestor, John Kane, as well as various speeches and papers for her work in temperance reform.[31] In 1896 she wrote letters to the *Kane Leader* regarding her trip to Mexico with her son, Evan, for the Pan-American Medical Congress meetings. These letters became another brief travel account which was compiled into a pamphlet entitled, "Trip to Mexico: Short Notes in Letters to the *Kane Leader*."[32]

After Elizabeth graduated from medical school she did not go into active

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[28]"Kane's History 100 Years Ago," compiled by Tim Casey, www.rootsweb.com/~pamckean/mckeangenealogy.html

[29]Jana Darrington, compiler, "Ancestors and descendants of Thomas L. Kane and Elizabeth W. Kane," BYU.

[30]E. Kane, 1895 Journal, January 1 and 24, 1895, Kane Papers, BYU.

[31]E. Kane, "Biography of John Kane," Kane Papers, BYU.

[32]E. Kane, "Trip to Mexico: Short Notes in Letters to the *Kane Leader*," published by *Kane Leader*, 1896, Kane Papers, BYU.

professional practice, but she did consult with her sons, Evan and Thomas, and her daughter, Harriet, all three of whom were doctors.[33] Elizabeth, Evan and Thomas, Jr. established the first hospital in 1887, the Woodside Cottage Hospital, which was later expanded to become Kane Summit Hospital and Sanitarium and Training School for Nurses.[34] In 1897, at nearly sixty-three years of age, she assisted her son Evan with an operation. A few weeks later, she went to Chicago for a "Railway Surgeon's Association" meeting.[35] She maintained her interest in and increased her activity in medicine, particularly with her support of the local hospital. In fact, in 1901, Elizabeth donated a building and land "to become a modern treatment facility" for the hospital.[36] Kane, Pennsylvania, no doubt had a hospital much sooner than it would have had because of Elizabeth and her family. They clearly had a great influence on the small town of Kane. That three of her children followed in Elizabeth's footsteps to become doctors shows the influence she had over them as well.

During Elizabeth's marriage, Thomas had encouraged her to be publically active, but she did not follow his advice. It was not until his death that she truly became a publically active person, perhaps because it was then that Elizabeth was no longer under Thomas's shadow. While she did not want to become a public person or a public reformer

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[33]"Biographical sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane."

[34]"A Brief History of Kane's Hospitals," Kane [Pennsylvania] Community Hospital Homepage, www.kanehospital.com/history.htm.

[35]E. Kane, 1897 Journal, April 24, 1897, Kane Papers, BYU. Elizabeth probably just accompanied Evan as she never practiced as a surgeon.

[36]"A Brief History of Kane's Hospitals."

during her married life, in her widowhood, she was quite willing to become involved in her community, as seen by her support of the local hospital.

Elizabeth's medical background and knowledge contributed to her work in another field: temperance reform. This work was another important way that she influenced her community. She was an active member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union which, by the 1890s, was one of the largest woman's organizations in the United States. In the 1870s and 1880s, its membership had swelled. It was a feminist organization in that it consisted of women and worked for causes important to women. It also worked for female suffrage and a greater public influence for women. However, the WCTU was different from the two suffrage organizations, the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association. Instead of arguing for female public activism and suffrage on the basis of justice as these other organizations did, the WCTU argued that female public activism and suffrage were important because females were needed to protect homes and families from evil influences. The WCTU agreed with arguments of separate spheres, but said that women had to leave their sphere to protect it.[37]

Elizabeth's interest in Temperance reform probably was influenced by both her interest in woman's rights and public morality. The suffrage and temperance movements of the late nineteenth-century were intertwined. For example, Alice Stone Blackwell, daughter of Lucy Stone, thought that "in the main, suffrage and prohibition have the same friends and the same enemies." Blackwell wanted clergymen to give their support to

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[37]DuBois, 38-39.

women's suffrage in order to increase the power of women and thus of churches in the fight for Temperance reform.[38] The leader of the WCTU, Frances Willard, publically supported female suffrage and many suffrage leaders were strong supporters of the WCTU. Participation in the WCTU was political participation and many women involved in the group began to realize, whether they had initially supported female suffrage or not, that voting was the way to have a say in liquor laws and other issues they cared about.[39] Years earlier, Elizabeth had showed interest in woman's rights and suffrage.[40] Perhaps one reason for her involvement in Temperance reform was to exercise political power and to effect political change in the only way she could.

Of course, Elizabeth's religiosity was also extremely influential to her Temperance activities as the entire movement had a religious bent to it. The WCTU was made up largely of Protestant Christian women who were worried about social evils such as alcohol, prostitution, and divorce. They engaged in social purity politics, meaning they wanted the government to legislate Christian religious values. They backed Bible education in public schools, laws requiring businesses to close on Sundays, and laws raising the age of consent. Many of these Christian reformers who were involved in the WCTU were also anti-polygamy, so it is interesting that Elizabeth became so involved

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[38]Alice Blackwell Stone, as quoted in "The Progressive Impulse," 271.

[39]Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 181-185.

[40]E. Kane, 1868-70 Journal, July 11, 1869.

with the organization.[41] However, even if she did not agree with all of the WCTU's ideas, she was very committed to the cause of Temperance, and she most likely agreed with most of the other measures that the WCTU backed.

One specific issue Elizabeth worked on as a member of the WCTU was that of "non-alcoholic medication."[42] The state WCTU president even asked her if she would accept a nomination as State Superintendent of Department of Non-alcoholic Medication, if one was created.[43] (It is not known whether this post was ever created). At a local convention in 1893, Elizabeth gave a paper entitled, "Scientific Temperance Instruction."[44] "Scientific temperance" referred to the scientifically proven health benefits of abstaining from alcohol, which the WCTU promoted to advance its cause of temperance. Scientific temperance instruction referred to teaching scientific temperance in local schools, a goal of the WCTU from the 1870s until after the turn of the century. The WCTU launched a major campaign to convince states to require temperance education in public schools.[45] Apparently, Elizabeth was one of the advocates of scientific temperance instruction, and her medical degree probably gave her more authority to speak on the subject.

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[41]Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 168-169.

[42]E. Kane, 1898 Journal, January 18 and March 30, 1898, Kane Papers, BYU.

[43]Ibid., January 18, 1898.

[44]"Program for 20th Semi-Annual McKean WCTU Convention," 13-14 Apr 1893, Kane Papers, BYU.

[45]Andrew McClary, "The WCTU Discovers Science: The Women's Christian Temperance Union, Plus Teachers, Doctors, and Scientific Temperance," *Michigan History* (January/February year?),

Elizabeth was continually a leader in her local chapter of the WCTU. In 1895, she was chosen as a delegate to the state convention and in 1897 she wrote that she was "reelected" president of the Kane WCTU and vice president of the state WCTU.[46] She presided at the McKean County convention in 1898 and wrote that when they held elections for local WCTU president "pretty much as a matter of course I was reelected president."[47] When the group had local meetings, Elizabeth was always heavily involved. She had been a member of the WCTU at least since 1891, but it is likely that she joined well before that date.[48]

Elizabeth expressed feminist sentiments from the early 1850s and, by 1869, was well-versed in the issues facing women. Her husband wanted her to become active in causes that promoted women's rights, and she believed in those causes. Yet she did not become involved until years later. Perhaps she took up reform at this point in her life because she found a cause she believed strongly in and there was more opportunity to be involved. By the 1890s, however, she was more comfortable in public as an independent woman and not an appendage to her husband. The WCTU, a more conventional group than the suffrage organizations, may have been more attractive to Elizabeth to join. Despite Elizabeth's internal beliefs regarding the role of women, it is possible that she did not feel comfortable in the suffrage movement as she did in the temperance movement.

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[46]E. Kane, 1895 Journal, September 12 and 13, 1895; 1897 Journal, August 20 and September 22 and 23, 1897.

[47]E. Kane, 1898 Journal, April 21-22 and August 19, 1898.

[48]"Program for 17th Semi-Annual McKean Co. WCTU Convention," September 17-18, 1891, Kane Papers, BYU.

Another factor in her new activism may have been her experience with the Mormon women. She felt that they were truly active in their faith, while she was not. Elizabeth may have seen Temperance as a way to put her faith and religious views into action.

Elizabeth did not become an active crusader for the Mormons as her husband had been, but she remained friendly with the Mormons and, after Thomas's death, kept in occasional contact. For example, in 1887, Harriet recorded that "the boys" (Elisha, Evan, and Thomas, Jr.) went to the train to see John W. Young, Brigham Young's son and a Mormon lobbyist in Washington.[49] Also, Elizabeth and her family met with George Q. Cannon at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Of the meeting, Cannon wrote, "To no other family outside the Church am I more warmly attached than to this."[50] It does not appear that Elizabeth kept in contact with any of the Mormon women she had come to admire so much on her trip to Utah, however. Even though her Utah trip was a very important part of her life, she never came to have the close relationship with them that Thomas did.

Even though she was no longer a wife, Elizabeth's family continued to be the most important part of her life. Elizabeth remained extremely close to her children, and she also developed a close relationship with one of her grandsons. Evan's wife, Blanche, died within a few weeks of giving birth to their first child, Elisha, in 1894, and Elizabeth took

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[49]Harriet A. Kane, 1887 Journal, March 19, 1887, Kane Papers, BYU; and James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 412.

[50]George Q. Cannon Journal, September 9, 1893, as quoted in Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999), 343.

over as the mother of the new baby. She and her grandson Elisha were very close, and their special relationship was even mentioned in Elizabeth's obituary. It said that "he went with her on her journeys, worked and studied beside her and knelt by her bedside at night," and also that he "habitually called her mother."[51]

Besides her family, medical, and reform activities, Elizabeth had numerous other side interests and hobbies that she pursued in her later years. She was interested in botanical drawing "being a learned botanist," wood carving, "microscopic picturing," and photography.[52] She also continued her "life amusement of linguistics" until the end of her life. She spoke French fluently, had fair speaking and reading knowledge of Swedish and Italian, and was just completing a Spanish course when she died.[53] She had also studied German years earlier.[54] Elizabeth had a strong desire to learn that lasted throughout her life. From her early marriage until her death, she had many interests and hobbies.

After Elizabeth's 1898 journal there is another long gap between journals. The final diary available began on January 1, 1908 and was kept sporadically. In this journal she wrote of being in Florida and California often as she had been spending her winters in those two places "which made her think of heaven."[55] One biographical sketch asserted, "Her brain was unclouded and her faculties, seeing and hearing both being as good as in

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[51]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[52]"Biographical sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane."

[53]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[54]E. Kane, 1853 Journal, May 13, June 6, and July 20, 1853.

[55]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

youth to the very last," which seems a fair assessment of one who kept a diary up until a few weeks before her death.[56] However, about the last five years of her life, her health had begun to fail and she began to gradually give up activities.[57]

Elizabeth was not willing to give up writing, however, until the last weeks of her life, as illustrated by the following incident. Elizabeth was operated on for "gangrenous appendicitis" at about 70 years of age, and a few months later an attack of "virulent streptococcus synovitis" occurred in her right wrist which had to be operated on "roughly and hurriedly." This second operation put her right hand out of use. In a biographical sketch, it says, "Finding herself crippled and unwilling to give up [writing] the left hand was immediately put into requisition."[58] In her 1908-1909 journal, it is clear that many of the entries were made with her left hand.

Finally, Elizabeth had to give up even writing as her health failed her completely. She wrote in her diary that 1908 was "a detestable year," most likely because of her operations and health problems.[59] At the beginning of April 1909 she became ill and never recovered. She died on May 25, 1909.[60] She was seventy-three years old. After her death, the local newspaper printed an obituary in pamphlet form. It referred to Elizabeth as "The Mother of Kane," and noted that, although she had a private funeral, the town

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[56]"Biographical sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane."

[57]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[58]"Biographical sketch of Elizabeth D. Kane."

[59]E. Kane, 1908-1909 Journal, Kane Papers, BYU.

[60]Ibid., April 3-May 25, 1909.

businesses closed in tribute to her. It also described her life as consisting of a youth surrounded by "refinements of wealth," a married life characterized by "perils and privations of the frontier," and that in her later years she enjoyed "growing comforts of one whom the Lord has blessed."[61] She was obviously well-thought of in the community where she had acted as a local leader and where she and her husband had been the founders.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Kane's life ended with "growing comforts." She did quite well financially after Thomas died, having enough money to make loans to her family and donate to community needs.[62] She had money from the sale of their Philadelphia house and she inherited money upon her father's 1894 death.[63] Elizabeth was very active in community life and was respected for her medical knowledge and her work for Temperance reform. Although not practicing medicine professionally, Elizabeth still worked for the Kane hospital and helped her children with their practices.[64] She was an active matriarch of a growing family (when she died she had sixteen grandchildren, all of whom lived nearby).

In her later years, it is not difficult to see that her religious feelings continued to

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[61]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*.

[62]E. Kane, 1895 Journal, April 3, 1895; and E. Kane to Elisha Kane, September 20, 1892, Kane Papers, BYU.

[63]"Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane," *Kane Leader*; and E. Kane 1895 Journal, April 3, 1895.

[64]E. Kane to Florence Bayard Kane, January 12, 1898, Kane Papers, BYU

guide her life. Her work for Temperance was in the context of a religious organization, for example, and she was active in her church.[65] She did not take an active role in the suffrage movement, per se, which was very prominent during these years, but she still held her feminist beliefs and worked publically in reform. She also still advocated feminist positions, as in a letter to a friend, where she wrote, "I think few men recognize that a woman has any rights in her own income."[66]

In these later years, Thomas's influence was not so heavily felt as he was no longer her constant companion. However, her life continued in the way that it did because she had been married to him and because he had led her to that kind of a life. She was interested in reform because of Thomas Kane and she became active in Temperance reform with Thomas before he died. Elizabeth was a community leader in the little town of Kane because Thomas had decided to settle the family there years before when it was just a wilderness. But although Thomas had led the way, Elizabeth had worked to build the community as he had, and it was she who kept him there when he wanted to try something new. After Thomas's death she enjoyed the fruits of their joint labors in that community. Even though Thomas was gone, Elizabeth chose to continue as an active member of the community, instead of settling down to a quiet life.

Her marriage went through a very obvious development in which Elizabeth grew from a "child-wife" to a mature woman. Then, even though she did not experience an "independent adulthood" before her marriage, she experienced a long and full

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[65]Ibid.

[66]E. Kane to Mary Field, December 4, 1893, Kane Papers, BYU.

"independent adulthood" after her husband's death in 1883.[67] At the beginning of their marriage, Thomas was the father-figure. Elizabeth was extremely dependent on him and he acted as a mentor to her, encouraging her to study and write. She grew up, became more educated, more mature and confident in her abilities. He had started her out on that path by encouraging her to become this way, and because she did, she changed from adoring teenage bride to mature independent wife. After Thomas's death, she was no longer an independent wife but she became an independent woman.

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[67] Anya Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 20.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Elizabeth Kane's life tells the story of the emergence of a young, dependent bride to a strong and independent woman. It also tells the story of the evolution of her marriage to Thomas L. Kane. Over the years their marriage gradually changed from a teacher-student type of relationship to a more egalitarian one. Elizabeth was an important woman of her time, as she was influenced by some very historically significant people and movements, such as Lucretia Mott, the women's suffrage movement and the temperance movement. Not only was Elizabeth exposed to these and other movements, but she was also an important observer of the growth of Mormonism under Brigham Young. It was often her marriage to Thomas, a progressive man who liked to be among the "forward thinkers" of the time, that brought her into contact with these important aspects of the nineteenth-century. But, as shown in this thesis, although she was often introduced to new people, ideas and movements by her husband, she formed her own opinions regarding them.

It is mainly Elizabeth's increased willingness to hold her own opinions and disagree with her husband that gives evidence for her growth from a "child-wife" to a "woman-wife."[1] This independence of thought no doubt came from the increased confidence that came from age and experiences such as medical school and being separated from Thomas during the Utah War. Their marriage did not suffer from Elizabeth's independence, but

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[1]Elizabeth D. Wood, [New York City], to Thomas L. Kane, [Philadelphia], May 15-16, 1852, Kane Papers, BYU.

was probably helped by it, as it enabled Thomas to draw on Elizabeth's counsel and opinions for help in his business and other non-domestic pursuits.

The greatest tension in Elizabeth and Thomas's marriage proved to be his work for the Mormons. For years Elizabeth struggled with his most beloved cause because she did not agree with it, particularly because of the vast resources he devoted to them rather than the family. However, when Elizabeth spent a significant amount of time with the Mormons herself in 1872-1873, she had a change of heart about them and Thomas's efforts in their behalf. Elizabeth's time among the Mormons was perhaps the only time in her life that she was among a group of people who were so different from herself. Not only did the Mormons have very different religious beliefs, they were also from a variety of social classes (mostly below her own upper-middle class status) and geographic regions. This difference may partially explain why she initially disdained the Mormons.

Before her Utah visit, Elizabeth disapproved heartily of the Mormons, but while in Utah, she found that she could not continue her disapproval of them after she came to admire their simple faith and religious earnestness. It is interesting, however, that after what was such a profound experience for her, she apparently did not continue her relationship with the Mormons, individually or as a group, after her 1872-1873 visit to Utah. While Thomas remained close to the Mormons until his death in 1883, continuing his lobbying work and growing especially close to Utah territorial delegate to Congress, George Q. Cannon, there is no evidence that Elizabeth ever corresponded or visited with

any of her female Mormon friends.[2]

Of course, there is little evidence that throughout Elizabeth's life, she had any close female friends other than her family members. She never wrote regularly to any women she was not related to, even after she and Thomas settled in McKean County, Pennsylvania, hundreds of miles from her previous homes in New York and Philadelphia. Elizabeth probably made friends during her time at medical school, but she did not keep in contact with those women either. Her lack of continuing communication with the Mormons may therefore have been part of an already established personality trait. It is also possible that her involvement in the Women's Christian Temperance Union at the end of the century had a dampening effect on her enthusiasm for the Mormons. The WCTU was very anti-Mormon, or at least anti-Polygamy, and Elizabeth was very much involved in the organization. However, at the time that Elizabeth was a member of the WCTU (the 1890s), polygamy had been officially abandoned by the Mormon Church.

Of course, Elizabeth may have in fact had contact with the people she met in Utah, but the evidence for it simply is not available at this time. For example, her St. George diary is the last one available until 1895, but it is unlikely that she suddenly stopped writing a journal for twenty years, as her 1895 journal begins apparently without a break. Perhaps letters and journals she wrote are simply missing and some day their discovery will reveal a continuing relationship between herself and the Mormons.

This study has focused on Elizabeth's marriage, religion, and feminism as well as

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[2]Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999) 343.

her dealings with the Latter-day Saints. However, there are many other interesting questions that could be asked and answered regarding her life. For example, her time in medical school as well as her later life as a physician could be examined more closely to provide insight to the motivations and experience of one pioneer of women's medical education. Other aspects of Elizabeth's life that would be valuable for further study are her work in temperance reform and her experience as a wife on the home front during the Civil War. She wrote many letters to Thomas while he was away during the Civil War which need to be looked at more carefully. Perhaps the most important future work dealing with Elizabeth Kane would be a more in-depth analysis of her marriage with Thomas L. Kane, who was certainly a significant figure in Western and Mormon history. This thesis has shown how Thomas's work for the Mormons affected his marriage to Elizabeth, but a future study could focus on how Thomas's marriage affected his public career.

When examined together, Thomas and Elizabeth's individual lives become more interesting. Thomas married Elizabeth with the idea of training her to be a companion in his humanitarian work and social reform. She took advantage of his progressive attitude by obtaining an education, but she did not follow all of his plans for her life, thereby asserting her own independence. Although she did not join him in his reform work, she was profoundly affected by it, mainly because of the time and energy he spent on it. However, she affected his pursuits as well by keeping him in one place and convincing him to follow through on their decision to settle and develop McKean County, Pennsylvania. Thomas came to value Elizabeth's judgment and spiritual guidance, while Elizabeth

continued to value Thomas's desire to help others, even while sometimes trying to temper that desire.

Elizabeth Kane had the ability to change her views as she did about the Mormons and about her own husband. Her life is worth remembering because of what she did, thought, and wrote about the changes and developments that she went through. These changes and developments are in some ways representative of what other women of the time were going through, as they increased in independence and became involved in non-domestic pursuits. It is because of her writings that we know much of what she did and thought, and they provide much information about her relationship with her far-better-known husband, Thomas Kane. Elizabeth's records also provide information about Thomas's work for the Mormons and other causes, including his motivations and the affect that his philanthropic work had on his personal life that will be essential to any future study of Thomas L. Kane.

The written records that Elizabeth left behind give a valuable glimpse into the world in which she lived. Her life was one where new ideas were discussed, thought about, and often embraced. Because she wrote so much of what she thought and participated in, we now know how women like Elizabeth Kane responded to some of the major certain movements and ideas of the nineteenth-century, such as women's rights, anti-Mormonism, and Temperance. This study of her life can be considered as a kind of case study that helps to increase our knowledge of the past and provide evidence for generalizations that historians have made about the times she lived in.

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