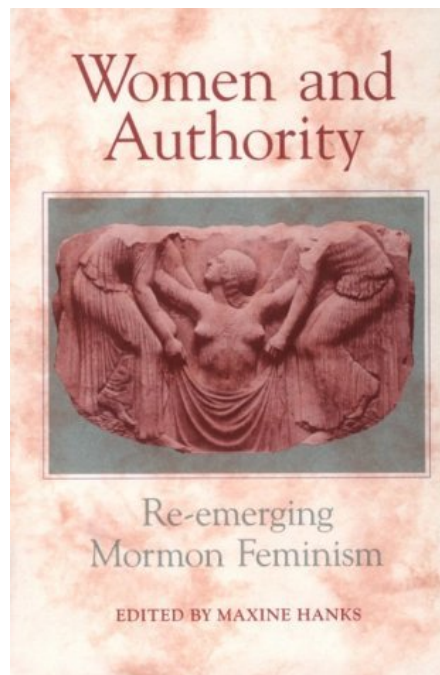




Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism

Maxine Hanks (Editor) , Patricia Hopkins (Prologue by) , Sherry R. Anderson (Prologue by)

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Utah women today might be surprised to learn their grandmothers' views on feminist issues, according to Maxine Hanks. LDS Relief Society co-founder Sarah Kimball referred to herself as "a woman's rights woman, " while Bathsheba Smith was called on Relief Society mission in 1870 to preach equal rights for women. The society editorialized that females belonged not only "in the nursery" but also "in the library, the laboratory, the observatory." Sisters sent east to study medicine were assured that "when men see that women can exist without them, it will perhaps take a little of the conceit out of some of them." Temple officiators were called "priestesses, " Eliza R. Snow the "prophetess, " and women were discouraged from confessing to bishops on grounds that personal matters "should be referred to the Relief Society president and her counselors." Women were set apart as healers "with power to rebuke diseases."

In addition, Mormon theology spoke reassuringly of a Mother God of the divinity of Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Eve. No wonder Relief Society president Emmeline B. Wells could write with confidence: "Let woman speak for herself; she has the right of freedom of speech. Women are too slow in moving forward, afraid of criticism, of being called unwomanly, of being thought masculine."

Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism Details

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From Reader Review Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism for online ebook

Mehrsa says

Very interesting essays on Mormon feminism, but most of the essays took doubt and questioning a little farther than I wanted to go, but the ideas are all interesting and the breadth of contributors and topics is a real draw.

Amber says

While I can't agree with all of the conclusions drawn by this book, there were actually few conclusions drawn. Instead, there were articulate and well researched essays and historical writings that promote honest communication regarding gender. Interestingly, I found this month's visiting teaching message among the writings published from The Exponent.

James says

Great collections of essays and thoughts from a veritable all-star lineup of Mormon intellectuals.

Really good insight, especially for a male who was raised and indoctrinated in the patriarchal order of the LDS church, to see these perspectives and understand at a deeper level the effect the Church can have on females.

Glad I read it. Would highly recommend it.

Luna Lindsey says

A profound view of feminism within Mormonism. This is a collection of essays, poems, and research papers dealing with various women's issues in the church, including the historical perspective, ERA fights, views of Mother in Heaven, etc. I have purchased copies of this book to give to my family members. Very enlightening.

Twila Newey says

This was an informative and often beautiful collection of essays, as well as a couple sections of excerpts from Mormon Women's Publications. I was tickled and a bit shocked to see Cixous and Kristeva mentioned in the introduction. I like the French as far as theory is concerned. My favorite essays in the body of the book were "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and Priesthood", Linda K. Newell, "Mormon Women Have Had The Priesthood Since 1843", D. Michael Quinn and "Women as Healers in the Modern Church", Betina Lindsey. It's interesting to me that after the excommunications in the nineties the same sorts of

discourse seems to have resurfaced without much shift in 22 years. As I've moved away from the idea of an anthropomorphic God, Heavenly Mother is less resonant, though there is some beautiful writing on the idea. Priesthood is also much more fluid and broad for me than the Orthodox Mormon definition, so while it was extremely interesting reading I didn't connect in the way I might have 5 or 10 years ago. Still, well worth reading if you claim the label Mormon Feminist or if you are at all interested in Mormon Women in non-correlated historical context.

Rae says

A provocative (and yet "whiny") collection of essays on subjects such as the worship of a Mother in Heaven, priesthood and women, and healing by women. The best essay is D. Michael Quinn's "Women Have Held the Priesthood Since 1843." This is a book to be read carefully, looking for hidden truths and enlightenment. Definitely not mainstream stuff.

Noelle says

A couple of the articles/essays I probably would have only given a three, but loved the rest/found them to be well-written, insightful, and uplifting. First time I think I've actually enjoyed reading about the history of Relief Society.

(Just FYI, the whole book is available online for free, just Google it)

Kaylana says

While I was reading this I went through many stages in my faith. From a questioning believer to a non-believer in the space of about 8 months. I think it provides some thought-provoking essays on the place of Mormon women in the early part of the Church as well as on women in the church now.

But the last few essays had me scratching my head. So many of the women had to jump through so many hoops to try and reconcile their place within the church and their place within Mormonism's theology.

I, for one, cannot believe in the Mormon God that tells me my only role is to bear children, not only in this existence, but in the existence to come and that tells me polygamy is the higher law. Ugh. Can't do it.

But overall, a great collection of essays from many types of women and a few men on Mormonism and what it means for women in the church.

Anna says

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this exploration of Mormon feminism and authority. This collection of essays is thought-provoking and empowering and I absolutely loved it. It gave me a lot to ponder and provided lots of discussion topics in my home.

Now that I've done a decent amount of reading and study on the history of Mormon women (especially in regards to exercising priesthood powers), many of the stories related here weren't new and didn't rock my world. But for anyone who hasn't done much studying on this topic yet, this book is the perfect start.

I especially appreciated that there are some sections that are full of thoughts of modern (well, modern when this book was written) Mormon folks grappling with some difficult topics. It's empowering to see how other people born into the same traditions and church are approaching and understanding some aspects of their religion. And it helps put things into a more practical and approachable context for those of us still working through various thoughts and ideas.

I really enjoy reading about feminism within the LDS church and I'm excited to continue doing that. But I feel like all my Mormon feminist reading and study so far has largely ignored intersectionality, which may have been okay when this book came out, but which needs to be a bigger part of future conversations within this movement. I'm holding out for a book discussing intersectionality in the church (or at least acknowledging it more).

Highly recommended for anyone interested in Mormon women's history or feminism in religious communities. Available online [here](#).

Heather says

It's interesting to think this was compiled almost 20 years ago- if someone ventured to do such a compiling now, would it be possible?

I found the histories fascinating. Various essays followed the history of women healing in the Church, sister missionaries, how the Church discusses our Mother in Heaven, the ERA, and even feminism at BYU. Reading about the experiences and excitement of the women working when the WRI was first established made me sad. Here I am in 2010, knowing that as of December 2009, the WRI no longer exists.

And I'll admit- I do find the "explanations" we are given as to why women cannot actively use their priesthood to be just as reaching and condescending as the "reasons" that black men could not hold the priesthood. And the discrepancy between, "Look at how awesome it is to have knowledge of a Mother in Heaven" and "But you can't talk about Her or wonder what sort or being She is or attempt a relationship with Her at all," is disheartening.

Tonia says

My Aunt gave me this book back in the early 1990's. which is when I read it. For me it was the beginning of University, independence, individual thought, and a fascinating collection of essays based on the gender inequities in a modern day Church. (These were the growing pains of many Christian churches at the time.) I had grown up within the LDS Church able to see the gender inequities others did not acknowledge, and here was a group of women and men who helped me name them. (It also helped that my cousin was quoted in the book: Catherine Johnson.) With a new love of Feminism and a connection to the church of my birth, this book helped me walk through the next 15 years of religion with a broader perspective and the language required to discuss what I had always seen.

Maxine Hanks was not treated well by the church for her publication and was excommunicated, along with five other prominent BYU educated intellectuals (later dubbed 'The September Six' by the Salt Lake Tribune.) It is sad when the fear of free-thought is so harshly judged and quickly stamped out. If one cannot be critical of one's own community in order to improve it, then how does progress occur? Maxine Hanks is a brave woman and I deeply appreciate her words as they altered my thoughts, ideas and beliefs for the better.

Just Me says

I started reading this a couple days ago. I am getting close to the halfway point. Much of the material is not new to me, but things I have read in various other articles in the past year or two. However, reading so much of it all in one place is making me angry and sad all over again.

I like the format of articles and chapters by different people and the inclusion of articles written for the women's publications of so long ago. It helps make it more readable.

Just finished the book. I really liked it. There was some repetition since it is really a compilation of articles and historical information. There was a LOT of food for thought.

Reading this book has hardened my resolve to get involved in women's rights issues.

Emily says

A must read for all aspiring Mormon feminists

Courtney says

Mormon Feminism seems like a blatant oxymoron. However, I'm curious about this book. The author was excommunicated for writing it, so I'm hoping it contains subversive interpretations of how women OUGHT to be treated in Mormon culture. hmmm

Natalie says

I read this book very slowly, bit by bit, over a long period of time. I found it to be very powerful.

Some chapters (like the one on sister missionaries) didn't particularly communicate with me. But many, many, many of them affected me a great deal. I wish I could see a book like this, written today, talking to today's women, 20 years later.

I feel such a longing to develop a kinship with my foremothers in the LDS tradition. I want to sit down for lunch with Eliza R. Snow and Emmeline B. Wells. I want to read the diaries of the women who stood in the circles of healing blessings. I want to write for an independent women's publication. I want to see female leaders regarded as equal to their male counterparts. I want an anointing at the hands of the Relief Society before I give birth.

Parts of this book made me angry. Parts of it fascinated me on an intellectual level. But mostly, it just filled me with longing.

Highly recommended.
