

My Life Among Earthlings

True Stories

Joseph Smith and Me and The Mormons

[excerpt]

Shuffling back to my couch, the morning's first cup of coffee in hand, I pass the front window, but then step back to look out. I'm not 'seeing things' I assure myself, but the mind takes a few seconds to make sense of the scene. In our front yard – already drenched in potent mid-summer sunlight – four young men toil with the landscape. Shovels and rakes in hand, yet neatly attired in dark dress pants and short sleeved dress shirts buttoned all the way up, they shift and level dirt. Following the pattern I began a few weeks prior, one worker thoughtfully places the salvaged paving stones, then the others fill the spaces between the pavers with pebbles I've purchased for a few dollars per bag. It will be a patio on a shoe-string budget, and now the final hours of labor – the big finishing push – costs me nothing.

These Mormons impress me with their follow-through. It is a truly honorable gesture, one that

repairs a bit of my faith in humankind. While small, this repair is desperately needed. "Of course you mean well," I'd told them during our typically fervent discussion the previous day, "but I don't really need advice from you about God. You know, what I really need is some help." I was thinking "God, Damn, Fucking help!" but I held my tongue, as our relationship had evolved upon mutual respect.

That's how much rage pulses through me these recent months, yet these are among the few souls who bear witness to me and my current life without judgement. My marriage is in serious jeopardy, my husband and I argue over big things, a lot, and the two of us argue with his mother over big things, a lot. Yet, unlike other well-meaning people, the Mormons do not proclaim if, or to what degree, I or my husband is wrong or broken. They do not suggest the latest popular psychological condition or disorder, or what pharmaceutical miracle pill of modern medicine might fix me, and thus my most important relationships. Instead they asked yesterday, "What can we do to help you?"

I'd pointed to my patio project, only ten feet from where we sit several times a week, in plastic lawn chairs, in front of my home, conversing and

debating about religion. “I *need* help getting that done,” I’d said about my unfinished patio, utterly exasperated. When they said they’d do it, it came as a bit of a surprise. “You will?” I probed, with skepticism, “for free?”

“Yes,” the leader-of-the-pack answered as the others chimed in to confirm.

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