



Falling in Love with Joseph Smith: My Search for the Real Prophet

Jane Barnes

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When award-winning documentary film writer Jane Barnes was working on the PBS Frontline/American Experience special series *The Mormons*, she was surprised to find herself passionately drawn to Joseph Smith. The product of an Episcopalian, “WASPy” family, she couldn’t remember ever having met a Mormon before her work on the series—much less having dallied with the idea of converting to a religion shrouded in controversy. But so it was: She was smitten with a man who claimed to have translated the word of God by peering into the dark of his hat.

In this brilliantly written book, Barnes describes her experiences working on the PBS series as she moved from secular curiosity to the brink of conversion to Mormonism. It all began when she came across Joseph Smith's early writings. She was delighted to discover how funny and utterly unique he was—and how widely divergent his wild yet profound visions of God were from the Church of Latter-day Saints as we know it today. Her fascination deepened when, much to her surprise, she learned that her eighth cousin Anna Barnes converted to Mormonism in 1833. Through Anna, Barnes follows her family’s close involvement with Smith and the crises caused by his controversial practice of polygamy. Barnes’ unlikely path helps her gain a newfound respect for the innovative American spirit that lies at the heart of Mormonism—and for a religion that is, in many ways, still coming into its own.

An intimate portrait of the man behind one of America’s fastest growing religions, **Falling in Love with Joseph Smith** offers a surprising and provocative window into the Mormon experience.

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