

# Interview with Eliza Campbell

BY GIDEON BURTON



## **What is the relationship between your faith and your writing?**

I think writing and faith are deeply connected to each other—they're both concerned with expression of the divine in the self. When we write, we catalogue and search for what we believe about ourselves. My experiences with faith and writing have made me believe that everyone should have the opportunity and desire to write.

## **Why are you expressing yourself in both a personal and public way through this genre?**

LDS writers are kind of singular in this way. As Mormons, we bear our testimonies to each other, we are encouraged to keep journals, we are encouraged to share sacred texts with each other and our children. The LDS doctrine almost demands that we all be writers. As an LDS writer, I've come to see how personal expression is both public and private. It's kind of like giving a prayer aloud—in sharing my deepest personal reflections in a public way, I'm coming closer to God and closer to those around me.

**It's been said that literature is "equipment for living." How well does this work for you? What metaphor would you apply to refer to writing?**

Literature in all its forms—meaning not just the written word, but music, poetry, different kinds of art, and almost any other form of expression—seems to be essential for humans who are working to understand each other, and yes, who are living. In my life, literature has come to hold significance from a social justice perspective: by promoting the ability for everyone to create literature, we are promoting the ability for others to have more productive and peaceful lives. Literature is at once absolutely personal and absolutely political.

## **What was your writing process like? Do you keep a diary or journal? Is this essay stemming from journal entries, for example?**

I actually wrote "Faith" about a year ago, as my first Honors University Writing assignment, a personal narrative. I found, as I think a lot of people do, that the feelings and experiences I had after leaving home and coming to college were overwhelming, and I wasn't able to express them in a journal. They kind of spilled out through this essay. I sat down one day feeling very polarized by two worlds—two worlds that I think I write about in the essay itself. For me, writing usually comes at moments like these—moments of separation, when binaries are failing to justify my actions and I need some way to give a voice to the gray area in my life. ■