

# *How Dead Cats, Your Siblings, Eighteenth-Century English Clergy, Making Lists, TED Talks, Evolutionary Biology, Susa Young Gates, and My Mom Can Save the World from Being Utterly Wasted*

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I am going to tell you two stories today: a short one about dead cats and a long one about dead people.

## **Dead Cats**

First, dead cats. Now, I know you might be tired of so many talks beginning with stories about dead cats, but bear with me.

My parents' views on pets—cats or otherwise—could not have been more different. My mother grew up in a household that didn't allow animals in the house; my dad grew up in a home where pets, at one point even including a monkey, were allowed inside. Over their sixty-some-odd years of marriage, my parents struck a bit of a compromise about pets in our home. Smaller cage-bound animals such as hamsters, snakes, frogs, toads, and fish were allowed inside, but larger animals such as cats, dogs, and any animal destined to become dinner stayed in the garage, the doghouse, or the chicken coop. Dogs were confined, but cats were free to roam. Well, they were free to roam as long as I didn't pick them up and dress them in my dolls' clothing—a fate most of them contemplated with a mixture of trepidation and resignation.

When I was very young, we lived on a busy intersection with constant traffic. The combination of this location and the pet policy meant

that cats—and there seemed to be an endless parade of them that somehow ended up at our house—rarely died of old age. I liked the cats and mourned their loss, and at some point I began to memorize the names and faces of all the cats who had lived, loved, and then shuffled off their mortal coils at our house. Eventually I was unable to keep all of the memories and names straight, and, concerned, I asked my mom whether all those cats would meet us in heaven and whether they would recognize us and we them. She assured me that they would—that the cats would remember me and I them. Forever.

Now, the impact of that story isn't so much about the cats, but it *is* about my mother's assurances that relationships last, much like photographs of the two of us have lasted far beyond the moments they captured. Relationships are durable and meaningful—even beyond death. This idea was central to my childhood. As the youngest of nine children, I arrived after three of my four grandparents, a handful of cousins, and my brother had died. Knowing that death would not forever prevent me from knowing those people was deeply comforting and grounding.

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*Amy Harris, BYU associate professor of history, delivered this forum address on July 18, 2017.*

In a way, that early understanding about relationships has shaped my professional pursuits. I have spent my entire adult life studying relationships, particularly family relationships, and the power they have—for good or ill—to shape social, economic, religious, political, material, and emotional possibilities and realities. My research focuses mostly on eighteenth-century England. This means I study dead people and what they can teach us. As Thomas W. Laqueur put it:

*The history . . . of the dead is a history of how they dwell in us—individually and communally. It is a history of how we imagine them to be, how they give meaning to our lives. . . . It is a history . . . of how we invest the dead . . . with meaning.*<sup>1</sup>

My research has taught me much about the meaning found in social and familial relationships in the past and today as well as about their undervalued potential to positively influence society and afford solutions for vexing problems.

### **Dead People**

So let me talk about some of those dead people. I am going to begin with the story of a particular dead person: William Dade. He was born in late 1740 or early 1741 in Yorkshire in northern England. His parents, who married in their early thirties, already had three children when William was born.<sup>2</sup> His father was the local vicar and had a handful of additional livings (or parishes that supplied his employment and income), so William and his siblings—a sister and two brothers—were raised in the relative comfort that typified the genteel “middling sort” of England, as the phrase went.<sup>3</sup>

William was educated in Yorkshire schools, which required him to live away from home for long stretches of the year. Once they reached their late teens, both William and his eldest brother, Thomas, followed their father’s path—first to the University of Cambridge and then into the church.<sup>4</sup> Their mother died when William was twelve, and their father died when William was eighteen, around the time he entered Cambridge.

Two years later their brother John died at age twenty-two and was buried alongside their parents in the parish church where their father had been vicar. A monument to their collective memory, likely commissioned by William and his surviving siblings, hangs in the church to this day.<sup>5</sup>

At the time of his father’s death, Thomas, twenty-four and single, had been ordained, and his sister, twenty-three-year-old Mary, who was also single, presumably lived with him—or perhaps with William, who left Cambridge that same year. Within two years William had his own living in the city of York, when he was only twenty-two.

So far, this a rather unremarkable story of an eighteenth-century English family. Their parents’ marrying in their early thirties was not unusual for those who came of age in the early 1700s. On average women married at age twenty-six and men at age twenty-eight in that period.<sup>6</sup> It was not unusual for children to die before their parents, though it was more common for them to die in infancy or in childhood than in young adulthood, as in William’s brother’s case. In some places a third or more of children did not survive to see their tenth birthday.<sup>7</sup>

Children of most classes, no matter their wealth, left home for employment or schooling in their mid-teens, as the Dade brothers did.<sup>8</sup> This included most young women—though not usually women of the gentry or aristocracy. That the Dade siblings were not married in their mid-twenties was also not unusual for their cohort, which also coincided with large numbers of people who never married—somewhere between 15 to 20 percent in the middle of the eighteenth century. (For comparison, current UK statistics suggest that as little as 4 percent and perhaps no more than 9 percent of the population never marries or partners.)<sup>9</sup>

That the brothers followed their father’s occupational path into the church is similarly unremarkable: between a quarter and a third of eighteenth-century English clergymen were the sons of clergy. This was typical of the eighteenth century, in which were perpetuated—often with great vigor—socioeconomic distinctions and inequalities.<sup>10</sup>

Also, typically, sibling relationships were important, including to the Dade family. Their parents' marrying later and dying relatively young meant that, for the Dade siblings—and for many people in this period—siblinghood was the most central and durable family relationship. People depended on siblings for a host of material, social, and emotional supports. Siblings were close, or not, in ways that might look familiar to you. These relationships had great solidarity and great power that few other relationships did.<sup>11</sup>

They continue to have great power and influence today. If you ever search for photos of siblings on Google, you will find an array of images of siblings who, even as adults, are dressed in matching outfits—a tradition not usually practiced beyond athletic teams. Let's just say that if any other adult suggested that you wear matching outfits, get matching haircuts, and have your picture taken, the happiness depicted in some of these photos would not be the likely outcome.

Like they are today, eighteenth-century siblings were lifelong, but unlike today, they were often on their own at the center of family relationships. Siblings came before spouses and children—who arrived late in life, if they arrived at all—and they outlasted parents who often died before all of their children reached age thirty.

These relationships weren't perfect; siblings fought and struggled with each other. Like it is for some of you and your siblings, it was not always easy for siblings to navigate a relationship that they did not choose but which was freighted with so many lifelong expectations. As one eighteenth-century man wrote to his brother:

*Three wise words from your lips made me think you an inhabitant of another country. . . . You have the art to set me at a distance by three words when I am with you, and to draw me to you at a hundred miles off by the same method.*<sup>12</sup>

To return to William Dade, his story to this point—his late twenties—was unremarkable and like thousands of others. But in 1770, as he entered his thirties, William made a remarkable decision.

He decided that Church of England parish registers should contain more information than they typically did. He wanted, in his words, to improve “the imperfect method hitherto generally pursued.”<sup>13</sup> If you think that doesn't sound all that earth-shattering, just be patient with me, because this was an astounding development—a development with untapped potential to better the world today.

### Dade's Parish Records

First I need to put William Dade's parish registers into a bit of context. English church registers began after Henry VIII's break with Rome and the establishment of the Church of England in the 1530s. From then until the eighteenth century, entries for baptisms, marriages, and burials typically had limited information. Baptism records might record only the name of the child, the date of the baptism, and the name of the child's father. Compared to continental registers, for example, English registers contained paltry information. For comparison, a Spanish record from 1764 contains not only the child's and father's names but also the mother's (including her original, or maiden, name), both sets of grandparents', and the godparents' names.<sup>14</sup> Even in the first half of the eighteenth-century, English registers became only marginally better: mother's first names, for example, were increasingly included. Sometimes extra bits and pieces might be included, such as the birthdate of the child or the occupation of the father.

William Dade himself benefited from an unusually detailed entry for his christening. Because his father was a vicar, the priest who christened William in a different parish took the time to include William's father's occupation and residence, but his mother was not named.

Dade followed common practice when he first became a curate, and he recorded the limited information that other parish priests did. But then in 1770 he began to record more information, such as the father's occupation, residence, and family connections. He also encouraged other vicars and rectors to follow suit. Some did, but the real boost

to his scheme came when the archbishop of York encouraged the practice throughout the diocese in 1777. Some vicars obeyed, many did not, and many resented it and gave up after a short time. William's brother Thomas might have been in one of those latter groups, as the registers in his parishes show no such effort to record additional information.

Dade was also interested in local history—but that interest seems to have come later than did his scheme to improve parish registers. It was perhaps his exposure to the old records stored in parish churches that inspired his interest in historical research. He was inducted into the Society of Antiquaries in 1783, and he began two books: one detailing the local history of Holderness, where he had attended school as a boy, and the other listing the births, marriages, and deaths of prominent people.<sup>15</sup>

It wasn't recording extra information or being a better record-keeper that set Dade apart—other clergy had similar inclinations.<sup>16</sup> For Dade, the switch to record more information did not come from a historical interest or passion for the past so much as it came from a concern for the future. As he wrote in the register when he began his efforts, "This scheme if properly put in execution will afford much clearer intelligence to the researches of posterity than the imperfect method hitherto generally pursued."<sup>17</sup> He reasoned that families in the future would want to know more about the past, particularly their personal past. What motivated him were future people and their needs; Dade was thinking of how his actions would echo beyond his lifetime into strangers' lives.

At its heart, this is what Ari Wallach, in a recent TED talk, described as "transgenerational thinking."<sup>18</sup> Wallach referred to an ethic that thinks beyond one's own comfort and considers how actions ripple into the future, long beyond an individual lifespan.

### Two Aspects of Human Instinct

Implicit in Dade's actions and Wallach's argument are two aspects of human instinct: first, the ability to think about, imagine, and plan for the future, and second, the impulse and capacity to

think of strangers—to think beyond ourselves. The ability to plan for the future and to think about how today's actions will shape tomorrow is unique to humans.<sup>19</sup> It is an ability that separates us from all other living creatures.

Psychologist Daniel Gilbert nicely summed it up by saying, "We think about the future in a way that no other animal can, does, or ever has, and this simple, ubiquitous, ordinary act is a defining feature of our humanity." According to Gilbert, no chimpanzee "weeps at the thought of growing old alone, or smiles as it contemplates its summer vacation, or turns down a Fudgsicle because it already looks too fat in shorts."<sup>20</sup> Only we have that honor—even though we aren't always very good at using that skill to best serve ourselves and others.

We have another distinguishing characteristic that has great power, though we don't always use it powerfully or for good either: the ability to cooperate with strangers and to act in their best interest even in contradiction of our own interests. In fact, the ability to act cooperatively and even altruistically is one of the greatest achievements of humanity. Evolutionary biologists remark on this and assert that we are literally built to cooperate with others—not just with those we know or are related to but with innumerable strangers.<sup>21</sup> And it isn't just cooperation; humans have evolved a unique capacity to *care* about and have compassion for strangers—to take responsibility for strangers.<sup>22</sup> We are built, in other words, to belong to one another.

In fact, without this ability, we could not form effective groups much larger than 150 people, but with this ability we harness the power of millions and billions. In such large groups, when we ignore this capacity for caring, then suicide, addiction, unhappiness, and avariciousness expand. But when we act on this impulse, large groups of humans are capable of—and are biologically built for—great goodness.<sup>23</sup> I don't think I need to detail the ways in which we have clearly not fully tapped into this goodness. Though we are built for compassion, for care, and for love, we are also—in King Benjamin's formulation—fallen, weak, incapable of acting on our best instincts, and enemies

to all our best, even divine, impulses.<sup>24</sup> But the fact remains that we are built to cooperate with and belong to not just our kin but to all humanity.<sup>25</sup>

Atheists, philosophers, historians, podcasters, Holocaust survivors, writers, therapists, military veterans, ministers, and psychologists concur with biologists: building lasting relationships and connections with other people is the only way to live happy and meaningful lives. Author and atheist Alain de Botton, whose essay on marriage relationships was the most-read article on the *New York Times* website in 2016; *On Being* podcast host Krista Tippett; concentration camp survivor Viktor Frankl; Christian social worker Brené Brown; war veteran and journalist Sebastian Junger; historian of Mormon theology Samuel Brown; Congregationalist historian and archivist Margaret Bendroth; Methodism's founder John Wesley; and BYU's own psychology professor Brent Slife do not, on the surface, seem to have much in common. But they all landed in the same spot: asserting that building relationships with others, loving others, is the most important work of humanity—not the byproduct but the purpose of life. In Slife's words at a recent forum, loving others must be "an end, not . . . a means."<sup>26</sup> And in John Wesley's words, "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness."<sup>27</sup>

### **Genealogical Consciousness**

This winding through fields decidedly not related to my research, experience, and training may seem like a long sidetrack, but it demonstrates that when William Dade stated his reasons for adding more information to parish registers, he tapped into the apparently universal human ability to think about the future and the inclination to belong and connect. In that respect, he may not have been so exceptional, as his actions are ones that we could replicate. But it was his combination of these two human behaviors that made him exceptional. The social scientists, authors, and journalists I listed have emphasized the importance of relationships or have discussed the ability to plan for the future, but Dade did

both simultaneously. He was thinking about relationships *across time*—across vast stretches of time—and he was thinking beyond the barrier of personal acquaintance to encompass strangers.

Many people before him thought about their famous ancestors or about their posterity or about enforcing rules of who constituted sufficiently illustrious ancestors and sufficiently legitimate posterity. Dade, on the other hand, stitched together his interest in the past to the lived, daily lives of the people whose details filled the books he kept and then stitched that to the concerns and desires of future strangers. That is not just transgenerational thinking; that is what I call genealogical consciousness. Genealogical consciousness is an ethic, a moral way of behaving based on seeing oneself and one's actions as inextricably linked with past, present, and future people's lives and hopes. Hoping future genealogists would have "clearer intelligence" in their research doesn't sound like much of a gift, but the real power in Dade's actions is that he considered himself and all those future strangers to be connected—and he could do something for them, something that came with no possibility of reward for himself, something they would be grateful for. He saw them, frankly, as people, not as objects, not as abstractions, not as something unimportant to himself.

Genealogical consciousness means seeing how past, present, and future are connected—again not in an abstract sense but in the lived reality of actual thinking and feeling people—and how they and we are connected over time and space. This echoes an idea from Margaret Bendroth, the archivist at the Congregational Library:

*Instead of defining ourselves through associations with once-famous people, or taking our ancestors too lightly by assuming they were not as complex as we are, we should want an encounter with the past that will challenge and deepen [us].<sup>28</sup>*

Similarly, we need an encounter with the future that challenges and deepens us.

### A Need to Be Remembered

Most humans want to be remembered, to leave something that lasts beyond their lifespan, no matter the scale of that remembrance. In the words of Umberto Eco, “We [make] lists because we don’t want to die.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, what are the book of Chronicles and all the pyramids, tombs, and masses for the dead if not hopeful expressions that we will be remembered? What else would have motivated the builder of my home in 1951 to write his name on plaster that was about to be canvassed and painted over, if not some vestigial hope that the recording of his name would grant him a measure of immortality that the bricks he used and the walls he built could not?

But Dade wasn’t thinking of himself; he wasn’t clamoring to be remembered. He was thinking of, well, us—of future strangers whom he would never know and of our need to belong and be connected to something larger and longer-lasting than ourselves.

The posterity William Dade imagined appreciating his efforts was not his own. He remained childless until his death in 1790, as did his sister, who died in 1782, and his remaining brother, who died in 1806.<sup>30</sup> The detailed forms Dade created and which recorded his and his sister’s deaths versus the sloppy but more typical account of his brother’s burial show that Dade’s innovation had limited reach. He and his family passed into obscurity. In fact, despite his importance to English genealogy, his family did not appear as a group on either of the two largest collections of online family trees until this summer, when in researching this talk I organized and grouped together the Dade family files on FamilySearch’s family tree.

It wasn’t just the knowledge of Dade’s family that died out. Despite additional Church of England clergy adopting Dade’s pattern, his remarkable idea did not survive long. The practice largely disappeared after 1813, when regulations about Church of England registers changed. Parish registers were then required to be kept in preprinted books that limited the flexibility that had allowed Dade to think of registers more

expansively. Some vicars continued to squeeze the extra bits of information into the printed boxes, even into the 1840s. But the practice largely disappeared, never to return. And other than the people who research their ancestors in these records, no one knows about William Dade anymore—well, except now all of you.

But all was not lost for genealogical consciousness. Joseph Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and Susa Young Gates took their personal religious and spiritual experiences and used them to think about all of humanity across all time and about our connections to one another and to God.<sup>31</sup>

### Susa Young Gates

We should pause here and recognize Susa Young Gates’s remarkable work, which is often less well known than Joseph Smith’s or Wilford Woodruff’s. Prominent in late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century Mormon leadership, central to the creation of the *Young Woman’s Journal* and the *Relief Society Magazine*, and active in the struggle for women’s suffrage, Gates was also passionate about genealogy. In the 1890s she collected information from living relatives and traveled to archives in the East to conduct research.

In 1902 she fell seriously ill and received a blessing. In the blessing she was told that she would continue to perform temple work but that she would also “do a greater work than [she had] ever done before.”<sup>32</sup> Her understanding of this blessing turned her from someone acquiring genealogical knowledge for herself and her family to someone deeply committed to genealogical consciousness. She wrote that while she had already been interested in temple work, she now “felt that I must do something more, something to help all the members of the Church.”<sup>33</sup> After this, Gates became a formidable force in genealogical efforts for others.

Though the Church had established the Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU) (now the Family History Department of the Church) in 1894 and had genealogical libraries housed at temples, there was no Church-wide effort for genealogical education and training at the turn of the twentieth

century. Gates worked with the GSU, published genealogical articles, worked to improve the indexing of temple ordinances, founded the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, wrote genealogy lessons, wrote the first genealogical how-to manual in the United States in 1912, and made family history work central to the work of the Relief Society. She did this for two decades, until the Church gradually assumed greater involvement and centralization of genealogical efforts after the 1920s—which was her hoped-for goal all along.

Gates's perseverance is partly attributed to her strength of character, but I would assert that it was powered by genealogical consciousness—a power that came when she felt called to do something more to benefit people beyond her own kin.

### **Genealogical Knowledge and Identity**

So what is genealogical consciousness for us? Some would claim that a largely Mormon audience is full of genealogical consciousness, but I want to push that idea a bit further and assert that a largely Mormon audience is full of genealogical knowledge and perhaps even a genealogically based identity, but those aren't the same as genealogical consciousness. Genealogical consciousness brings along with it an empathetic wisdom that knowledge alone cannot possess.

For me, genealogical knowledge is intriguing and thrilling. I have been filling out pedigree charts since I learned to write, and finding genealogical information is satisfying and exciting on its own terms. I dare say some of you find it equally satisfying and exciting—probably about 2 to 5 percent of you (if my ward's statistics on family history work are typical). And while that group can and should expand—which is, frankly, what my colleagues and I who teach family history majors hope will happen—it is unlikely that it will ever be the majority of people.

The good news is that though a passionate interest in gathering genealogical knowledge itself is far from widespread, a much larger group is interested in what genealogy can do for them and their families. For example, it is estimated that a third of adults in the United Kingdom have been

online to look for their ancestors.<sup>34</sup> Most argue that this prevalent interest comes from genealogy's ability to give people a sense of identity. Undoubtedly, the focus on identity is the current obsession in Western genealogy, in the marketing schemes of the three-billion-dollar-a-year genealogical industry, and even in some aspects of Mormon genealogical practice.

But William Dade and Susa Young Gates didn't stop with personal identity. Finding an anchor for identity is valuable because it gives a sense of roots in a time that feels rootless—even replacing religion, in one Englishman's estimation, as something one can believe in.<sup>35</sup> But on its own, the search for identity can bring only partial belonging.

Rattling on about “endless genealogies” in order to prove our special status is not only a tedious thing to do; it is, if we take Paul literally, a destructive practice.<sup>36</sup> And the Savior Himself warned that being Abraham's seed was as meaningless as being a rock if it was not accompanied by a humbler way of living.<sup>37</sup>

If genealogy stops with individual identity, it will never fully jettison its exclusionary tendencies. Genealogy's historical association with elitist and racist claims shows that it is too easy to slip into tribalism, eugenics, racism, rabid isolationist nationalism, and us-versus-them-ism. If we focus solely on our own identity, it is easy to myopically think that only *our* ancestors matter. We become all “manner of -ites,” to borrow a phrase.<sup>38</sup> A genealogical understanding based solely on personal identity inevitably leads to excluding others' identities, whether they are based in race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, DNA, nationality, or any other category. Genealogical consciousness, on the other hand, doesn't just avoid these pitfalls; it prevents them. It has the power to obliterate them, to completely dissolve the destructive boundaries between us and them, to starkly remind us that there is no “them” and that there is only “us,” and to pull people together *despite* differences.

If instead we see genealogical knowledge and even identity as tools, as means to an end, then we are on the way to genealogical consciousness.

We often reverse this, prizing knowledge over the wisdom of consciousness. We race to find more names and make the consumption of more information more important than getting to know those who held the names we seek. This is meaningless and exhausting as we chase after ever more elusive proof of our righteous genealogical knowledge, as we constantly learn but never come to a knowledge of the truth.<sup>39</sup> We tire ourselves endlessly in the doing and miss the opportunity to become, thinking we can save getting to know them for “later.” But getting to know them is the point. It is where the real power lies—not the other way around. To quote from Philippians, “If . . . there is . . . any consolation from love” or “any compassion and sympathy” in Christ, we need to also find them in one another. We should “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than [ourselves].”<sup>40</sup>

### True Genealogical Consciousness

Genealogical consciousness goes beyond mere knowledge or pursuit of personal or group identity. Instead it makes us stop to consider and to reckon both with others’ lives and choices and with our own. We can also imagine our shared humanity with people in the past and the choices they confronted.

I remember sitting in an English archive reading the papers of the Travell family. One day, while reading Anne Travell’s diary from August 1780, I discovered that her “dear sister[-in-law] and friend” Martha had died suddenly at the age of forty-one.<sup>41</sup> I teared up, mourning the loss of Martha. I stopped myself when I realized that *everyone* from 1780 is dead. But then as I considered my response further, I realized I was not shedding tears for Martha’s death as much as I was for the pain her death had caused her family and friends. Anne wrote that she spent the rest of that evening writing twenty “dreadful” letters informing friends and family of Martha’s death.<sup>42</sup> I could imagine how dreadful that was, and I could imagine the pain of losing a lifelong friend and a much-loved sister-in-law—a person

I too had grown to love as I had read her letters. I further considered what a devastating blow it would be to me to lose a sibling or a sibling-in-law. It was as if, in that moment, time and distance between Anne and me collapsed and virtually disappeared, replaced with a brief moment of connection and empathy.

If, like Dade, we pause to consider the long-since dead, we can pivot to considering present and future relationships. As Margaret Bendroth put it:

*The choice is not to load our ancestors down with honors or run away from them as fast as we can—our . . . faith requires us to take the past seriously and to receive its people warmly and wisely. It requires us to be generous, and in a fundamental way truly inclusive.*<sup>43</sup>

I would say it doesn’t stop there. Because developing genealogical consciousness requires that we think about strangers in the past, it develops the possibility of thinking about strangers in the present and strangers in the future and about how our relationships and actions will last beyond death and echo into future strangers’ lives. In doing so, genealogical consciousness makes heavy demands: it demands that we act more compassionately and more Christlike.

In conclusion, I am going to explain my title. As a historian of the eighteenth century, I have grown accustomed to the long, narrative titles typically used by that century’s authors. And as a lover of fine children’s literature, I am amused by E. L. Konigsburg’s title of one of my favorite children’s books: *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, William McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth*.

But while those facts explain the long, narrative style of my title, they don’t explain the content. And they certainly don’t explain the dead cats. Why didn’t I just entitle the talk “Developing a Genealogical Consciousness,” since that’s the *point* of the talk? I did not title it that because I had the suspicion—backed by decades of personal experience—that if any words resembling *genealogy* or *family history* were used to describe something to be presented to an audience of Latter-day Saints,



attendance would either be virtually nonexistent or would consist entirely of those already seriously, passionately, and rabidly interested in family history. And as much as I love that latter group—and in fact count myself among them—I wanted to reach an audience of people who might not think they have anything to learn about the reasons for genealogical pursuits or who feel guilty or overwhelmed when the words *family history* are uttered. I did not want to burden that group any further; I wanted to offer an additional perspective or alternative approach.

Our shared theology is replete with genealogical consciousness and its potential to create meaningful change for the better. As Patrick Q. Mason has put it:

*This [Mormon] image of being knit together, with the children of God in all our diversity inextricably and intricately interwoven, is at the heart of Mormonism's social ideal. It reflects a life-affirming theology predicated on the notion that the entire family of God can and will be eternally bound together—that heaven is less about where we are than who we are with and the quality of our relationships.<sup>44</sup>*

Genealogical consciousness is merely a label meant to underscore that relationships with other people in the past, present, and future are durable—built for the eternities—and that from them we can access previously untapped mines of divine power. Simply put, we cannot afford to treat genealogy the way we have—as something, to quote an acquaintance of mine, “that dude in the Third Ward does” or as something that is satisfied by producing stacks and stacks of temple names in order to show them off or to rattle off numbers during Sunday School to impress or guilt others. If that is why we do it, then doing so is the only reward we will ever have.

More than something that that dude in the Third Ward or your great aunt does, genealogical consciousness is a way of being, a way of thinking about your place within and responsibility to the generations surrounding you. It holds a promise

to erode racism and sexism; to reduce to rubble centuries of hatred and discrimination; to bind us together when all other ways of connecting only seem to drive us ever farther apart; and to take our instinct to belong, shatter its tribal proclivities, and replace them with inclinations to Zion. If Elijah was meant to return in order to save the world from being an utter waste, then there is more for us to do with the manifestation of the Spirit that bears his name.

### Notes

1. Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 17; see Peter LLC, “Naming the Dead,” *By Common Consent* (blog), 27 June 2017, [bycommonconsent.com/2017/06/27/naming-the-dead](http://bycommonconsent.com/2017/06/27/naming-the-dead).

2. See baptism of Thomas Dade, 22 September 1736, Yorkshire, bishop’s transcripts of baptisms, Church of England, Rillington, Borthwick Institute for Archives, [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk); baptism of Mary Dade, 12 October 1737, Yorkshire bishop’s transcripts of baptisms, Church of England, Rillington, Borthwick Institute for Archives, [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk); baptism of John Dade, 6 February 1740, Yorkshire bishop’s transcripts, Church of England, St. Michael-le-Belfry, York, FHL film 7574348; baptism of William Dade, 26 January 1741, Yorkshire, bishop’s transcripts of baptisms, Church of England, Burton Agnes, Borthwick Institute for Archives, [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk).

3. W. M. Jacob, *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century 1680–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39.

4. See entries for Thomas Dade and William Dade in J. A. Venn, comp., *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, part 2, from 1752 to 1900, vol. 2 (Cambridge: University Press, 1944), 210; also available at [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk).

5. See “Rev. Thomas Dade,” St. Martin’s Church, Burton Agnes, Yorkshire, England, memorial #102828684, [findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=102828684](http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=102828684).

6. See Amy M. Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

7. See Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England 1760–1830: Emotion, Identity, and Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 39.

8. See Patrick Wallis, Cliff Webb, and Chris Minns, “Leaving Home and Entering Service: The Age of Apprenticeship in Early Modern London,” *Continuity and Change* 25, no. 3 (December 2010): 377–404.

9. I arrived at the 4 to 9 percent figure by using the UK Office for National Statistics 2014 report, specifically, “Marital Status by Age Group (Age 16 and Over), 2014,” which covered England and Wales. For those over the age of seventy-five, 4 to 4.6 percent were listed as single. For those between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-five, 8 to 10.4 percent were listed as single. If most of that latter group remains unmarried the rest of their lives (which is the most likely trajectory), then the percentage of those never marrying or partnering will inch up closer to 9 percent. (See “Population Estimates by Marital Status and Living Arrangements, England and Wales: 2002 to 2014,” Office for National Statistics, 8 July 2015, [ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationestimatesbymaritalstatusandlivingarrangements/2015-07-08](https://ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationestimatesbymaritalstatusandlivingarrangements/2015-07-08)).

10. See Jacob, *The Clerical Profession*, 38–41.

11. See Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); also Amy Harris, *Siblinghood and Social Relations in Georgian England: Share and Share Alike* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

12. George Cumberland to Richard Cumberland, 18 October 1778, in *The Cumberland Letters: Being the Correspondence of Richard Dennison Cumberland and George Cumberland Between the Years 1771 and 1784*, ed. Clementina Black (London: Martin Secker, 1912), 214.

13. William Dade, St. Helen’s, York, parish register, 1770; cited in FamilySearch Wiki, s.v. “Dade parish registers,” [familysearch.org/wiki/en/Dade\\_parish\\_registers](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Dade_parish_registers).

14. See Pasquala Francisca Jacinta Alarcon Y Briz, 11 September 1764, baptism, “España, Diócesis de Albacete, registros parroquiales, 1504–1979,” FamilySearch.org; citing Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, Jorquera, Albacete, Spain, Archivo Histórico de Archidiócesis de Albacete, Albacete (Albacete Archdiocese Historical Archives, Albacete); FHL microfilm 1,279,590.

15. See William Joseph Sheils, “Dade, William (bap. 1741, d. 1790),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004–16), [oxforddnb.com](https://oxforddnb.com).

16. See Ackworth, Yorkshire, parish registers kept by Timothy Lee, 1744–77, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield, Yorkshire, D 77/3, in “West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1512–1812,” [ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com).

17. Dade, St. Helen’s, York, parish register; cited in FamilySearch Research Wiki, s.v. “Dade parish registers.”

18. Ari Wallach, “Three Ways to Plan for the (Very) Long Term,” Tedx Mid-Atlantic talk, October 2016, [ted.com/talks/ari\\_wallach\\_3\\_ways\\_to\\_plan\\_for\\_the\\_very\\_long\\_term](https://ted.com/talks/ari_wallach_3_ways_to_plan_for_the_very_long_term).

19. See Daniel Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 21–25.

20. Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness*, 4.

21. See Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (New York: Harper, 2015), 25, 38.

22. See Sebastian Junger, *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* (New York: Twelve, 2016), xvi.

23. See Junger, *Tribe*, 25–27.

24. See Mosiah 2–4.

25. See Dacher Keltner, *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009); also Christopher Bergland, “The Evolutionary Biology of Altruism,” *The Athlete’s Way* (blog), Psychology Today, 25 December 2012, [psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201212/the-evolutionary-biology-altruism](https://psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201212/the-evolutionary-biology-altruism).

26. Brent D. Slife, “The Experience of Love and the Limitations of Psychological Explanation,” BYU forum address, 16 May 2017.

27. John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: Strahan, 1743), preface,

page v. My thanks to Rachel Cope, who exposed me to this line of Methodist thinking.

28. Margaret Bendroth, *The Spiritual Practice of Remembering* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2013), 10.

29. Umberto Eco, from an interview with Suzanne Beyer and Lothar Gorris, "We Like Lists Because We Don't Want to Die," Spiegel Online, 11 November 2009, [spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/spiegel-interview-with-umberto-eco-we-like-lists-because-we-don-t-want-to-die-a-659577.html](http://spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/spiegel-interview-with-umberto-eco-we-like-lists-because-we-don-t-want-to-die-a-659577.html); quoted in Laqueur, *Work of the Dead*, 374.

30. See death of William Dade, 26 July 1790, Yorkshire burials transcription, Church of England, Barmston, East Riding Archives and Local Studies Service, PE6/4, [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk); death of Mary Dade, 20 April 1782, Yorkshire burials transcription, Church of England, St. Mary Castlegate, Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR Y/MC 138, [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk); burial of Thomas Dade, 24 November 1806, Yorkshire burials transcription, Church of England, Burton Agnes, East Riding Archives and Local Studies Service, PE60/2, [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk).

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32. "Susa Young Gates," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 24, no. 3 (July 1933): 98; cited in Lisa Olsen Tait, "Susa Young Gates and the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead: D&C 138," *Church History: Revelations in Context*, 14 August 2015, [history.lds.org/article/susa-young-gates-vision-of-redemption?lang=eng](http://history.lds.org/article/susa-young-gates-vision-of-redemption?lang=eng).

33. "Susa Young Gates," 99; also in Tait, "Susa Young Gates."

34. See Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 258.

35. See Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 264.

36. 1 Timothy 1:4; see Titus 3:9.

37. See Matthew 3:9; John 8:33.

38. 4 Nephi 1:17.

39. See 2 Timothy 3:7.

40. Philippians 2:1, 3 (New Revised Standard Version).

41. Anne Travell, day book, 27 August 1780, Lloyd-Baker Family of Hardwicke Court Collection, Gloucestershire Archives, D4582/4/17.

42. Travell, day book, 27 August 1780.

43. Bendroth, *The Spiritual Practice*, 97.

44. Patrick Q. Mason, *Planted: Belief Belonging in an Age of Doubt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 171.