

Bridges

Bob McCue

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My two youngest children, aged 9 and 11, and I just returned from their first reasonably long bicycle ride. We went perhaps 5 kilometres to the playgrounds at the schools they attend, had fun playing tag and other similar games for about an hour, and then road home.

Between our home and the schools lies the TransCanada Highway, a four lane divided road that on this long weekend was jammed with traffic. As we road over a bridge that crosses that road, I thought about the nature of bridges, and that one in particular.

Were it not for that bridge, it would likely not be feasible for us to make the pleasant little trip we did this evening. The highway is too busy, and we are too small and slow to contend with cars and traffic travelling at highway speed. Were we to step out into traffic, we would likely be run down by vehicles that intended us no malice. We would simply be in their way and they would have little choice but to hit us.

Another possibility is that we might get on the road and move with the traffic as fast as we could, waiting for an opening that was large enough to allow us to skip through it to the other side of the road. There, we would have to get going with traffic in the opposite direction while waiting for the same chance. The fact that we would be flowing with the traffic would give us more time to make our move to the other side when an opening came. But doing this would still be risky, and who knows how far down the road we might be before a good chance to cut across presented itself?

On the whole, I found myself feeling grateful for those who had invested the time, resources and energy required to build that bridge. I go over it in my car almost every day, and take it for granted most of the time. But tonight, while peddling over it with my children in tow, I came to appreciate it.

I then began to think about other bridges that I have made use of, and particularly of late, the bridges of vision and faith that have allowed me to make fundamental changes to my belief system and hence to my life. It occurred to me that these bridges, and the people who have built them, have much in common with the bridge over which I was peddling as these thoughts occurred to me.

The Mormonism in my life was like a busy highway, running in one direction, that I did not know how to get past until I came across a number of people who first, showed me what was on the other side and so provided more motivation to get there, and second, gave me an intellectual superstructure that performed the bridging function. This assistance was useful in all of the ways in which the bridge I used this evening was. Most of all, it enabled me to avoid an area where a great deal of energy is being expended that is inimical to what I want to do, and could either crush me or carry me far from

where I want to be were I forced to descend into it. As it is, I now have both the vision and the means to peddle calmly above the fray, well beyond the influence of a stream of humanity travelling in a direction that makes little sense to me.

The bridge builders to whom I owe the most are Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, who showed me how to have a kind of faith that embraces the best of my heritage while drinking deeply from many other fonts as well, and Joseph Campbell who although long dead, infused me with the wonder of life as I teetered on the brink of nihilism after watching my Mormon belief foundation turn to ash. To them, and many others, I owe a debt of gratitude that I intend to repay by building little bridges of my own, and leaving them scattered behind me as I go in case someone comes along behind me with a similar perspective and needs.