

# A Uniform and Common Recollection: Joseph Smith's Legacy, Polygamy, and the Creation of Mormon Public Memory, 1852-2002

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## INTRODUCTION: A THEORY OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND PUBLIC MEMORY

HISTORIANS HAVE LONG BELIEVED that history does not consist simply of recounting the past according to the Rankean ideal of telling it "as it really was."<sup>1</sup> The process of researching, selecting, and emplotting historical evidence within a narrative structure is often idiosyncratic, and may be employed to further a host of goals. Within communities, history represents a way of appropriating the past in order to serve the needs of the present. Maurice Halbwachs's<sup>2</sup> work emphasizes the role history plays as the "collective memory" of a community. Halbwachs argues that "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by the people living in so-

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1. Leopold Von Ranke, *Fürsten und Völker*, ed. by W. Andreas (Wiesbaden, Germany: 1957), 4. In the original German, Ranke's famous phrase is rendered "wie es eigentlich gewesen."

2. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Halbwachs (1877-1945) was among the most influential students of sociologist Emile Durkheim. A Frenchman of German extraction, Halbwachs attended the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure and later occupied a professorial chair at the Sorbonne.

ciety to determine and retrieve their recollections."<sup>3</sup> This process involves the retention of useful historical emplotment points coupled with the suppression of those "facts" which threaten to undermine a community's structures.

Halbwachs views "collective memory" as a social process in which memories serve to "express the general attitude of the group; they not only reproduce its history but also define its nature and its qualities and weaknesses."<sup>4</sup> As will be argued below, this process is much more complicated than simply "reproducing" the past. Indeed, the process of creating a historical consciousness, or public memory, derives from a variety of impulses designed to serve the immediate needs of the community; the need to capture the past for its own sake is not important to the functionalistic creation of historical consciousness.

Religious communities in particular tend to be quite rigid regarding their official interpretations of the past. Halbwachs notes:

[W]hat is peculiar to the memory of religious groups is that, while the memories of other groups permeate each other mutually and tend to correspond, the memory of religious groups claims to be fixed once and for all. It either obliges others to adapt themselves to its dominant representations, or it systematically ignores them; contrasting its own permanence with the instability of others, it relegates them to an inferior rank.<sup>5</sup>

As this paper will show, this process becomes even more complicated when the "permanent" collective memories of these groups present a challenge to the current situation in which a group finds itself.

While Halbwachs's approach is useful, it does have some serious limitations, including the idea that a "collective memory" can actually exist in which certain knowledge is actually lost. The research presented here indicates that communities often construct a "historical consciousness," or "public memory,"<sup>6</sup> in which a certain emplotment scheme is agreed upon or enforced by a group of elites, but which exists in tension with competing public and private memory systems.

The idea of emplotment is borrowed from Hayden White. White argues that "historical discourse should not be regarded as a mirror image of the set of events that it claims simply to describe." Rather, it should be viewed as "a given set of events, arranged more or less chronologically

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3. *Ibid.*, 43.

4. *Ibid.*, 59.

5. *Ibid.*, 92.

6. Throughout this article, I use the terms "public memory" and "historical consciousness" interchangeably. I do this for two reasons: first, they are repeated so often that the use of one term tends to weary both author and reader; second, both terms help carry the true meaning of the concept better than either one alone.

but encoded so as to appear as phases of a *process* with a discernible beginning, middle, and end, [which] may be emplotted as a Romance, Comedy, Tragedy, Epic, or what have you, depending upon the valences assigned to different events in the series as elements of recognizable archetypal story-forms.”<sup>7</sup> While no attempt will be made herein to classify the various public memories discussed in this article as specific story forms, my theory of historical consciousness depends upon the idea, articulated by White, that events are selected, arranged, and emplotted, rather than “discovered and recovered.” Historian James Deetz made a similar observation when he wrote, “[W]hat we do is construct [rather than reconstruct] the past, and in so doing, decide what is important and what is not. . . . [S]uch constructions invariably reflect the values and biases [and, I would add, goals] of the time they were written.”<sup>8</sup> The most important point here is that history and the past are not the same thing. The literal past is, of course, completely inaccessible; it is fixed and unchangeable. History is fluid, malleable, infinitely changeable, and open to a myriad of potentially conflicting interpretations.

The theory of historical consciousness developed and applied herein consists of six basic elements. First, as is the case with collective memory, a discourse develops from which certain historical elements are dropped and others emphasized. Second—and this is where my theory diverges from Halbwachs’s—the discourse community does not literally forget its own past. Rather, the community agrees upon an “official” history which exists in tension with the public memories of other communities and the private memories of individuals. Third, when the historical consciousness narrative is imposed from above, institutional sanctions are often imposed upon those who openly criticize or seek to undermine the discourse of historical consciousness while at the same time rewards are parceled out to those who reinforce the historical consciousness. Fourth, historical consciousness is both functional and heavily presentist. In other words, the narrative is designed to serve the needs of the community as defined by the controlling parties at the time the narrative is constructed. Thus, the emplotment points of the historical consciousness narrative shift as the needs of the community change. This approach often puts the creators of the historical consciousness at odds with liberal or intellectual forces which profess to find the value of history in studying the past “for its own sake” rather than seeking to further the goals of community elites. Fifth, historical consciousness is defined in many

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7. Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 106.

8. James Deetz and Patricia Scott Deetz, *The Times of Their Lives: Life, Love and Death in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 11.

ways by what is left out of the narrative; these remnants are frequently emplotted in counter-narratives which function as public narratives for competing communities. Finally, people may inhabit multiple communities simultaneously and in the process partake of multiple, discrete, and sometimes competing historical consciousness narratives. Attempts by such individuals to harmonize the varying public memories are often met by resistance from elites who seek to punish such behavior.

This paper is a study of how one community, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has constructed public memories and a historical consciousness of its past. The object is to apply the principles described above to the study of the creation of public memories within various Mormon discourse communities over the issue of plural marriage. While plural marriage is the general issue around which this article revolves, the historical consciousness narratives emerging from this context touch on a wide range of issues, not all of which may be dealt with here. Among these are the "ownership" of history, the need to appropriate and carefully sculpt the image of Mormonism's founding prophet Joseph Smith, the role of women in the church, the part played by popular culture in the Mormon community, and the importance of public history (especially historic sites) in the construction of historical consciousness narratives.

We will begin by recounting the "facts" relative to the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage and its demise, followed by an exploration of the creation of related narratives and how public memories have changed from 1852 to the present. As a member of this particular religious tradition, I am sensitive to the importance of historical consciousnesses in the minds and hearts of believers. As a believer myself, I accept doctrinal interpretations as determined by those whose right it is to do so. However, as a historian, I am interested in understanding how public memories are constructed and how religion stays relevant and vibrant—or stagnates and atrophies—in response to constructed public memories.

#### EMPLOTMENT POINTS: LDS HISTORY, 1820-1890

According to Joseph Smith, it was in the spring of 1820 when he first saw God. Confused by the "war of words and tumult of opinions" raging among various revival groups in and around Smith's home in western New York state, the teenager retired to a stand of trees near his family's farm to ask God which church was right. What happened next has been narrated in a number of different ways, but the story is consistent on several points. Depending on the account, either God the Father or Jesus Christ—or in the official account, both—appeared to Smith, indicated that Smith's sins were forgiven, and told him not to join any church then in existence because "all religious denominations were believing in-

correct doctrines, and none of them was acknowledged of God as his church and kingdom."<sup>9</sup>

This experience apparently had little immediate impact on Smith's life. He continued his usual pursuits as the son of a poor, hard-scrabble farm family for the next three years. In 1823 he again recorded an experience with the divine, in which an angel visited him and told him of a book buried in a hill near Smith's home. This book contained the text of what is known as the Book of Mormon, which Smith translated "by the gift and power of God" between 1827 and 1830. On April 6, 1830, Smith and six followers organized the Church of Christ (later renamed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) in Fayette New York.

Over the course of the next fourteen years, Smith's church grew to include tens of thousands of members, many immigrating thousands of miles over sea and land to "gather" with the church. During this period, the church's headquarters moved from New York to Ohio to Missouri and—following their violent expulsion from that state—to a small town on the Mississippi River in west central Illinois. Smith dubbed this city "Nauvoo," and from his arrival there in 1839 until his murder in nearby Carthage in 1844, he introduced radical new doctrines which enraged and inspired religious and non-religious alike. Among these was the doctrine of "plurality of wives."

A central tenet of the Mormon faith was the doctrine of "restoration." Smith believed God had called him to restore the true ancient religion, including the practices of the Old Testament patriarchs. Among these was polygamy. Early in his prophetic career, Smith had demonstrated an intense interest in the Bible, undertaking an "inspired revision" of the King James text in the summer of 1830. He had been confused over the apparent contradiction between the biblical injunction against adultery and the practice of polygamy among some Old Testament figures. Following his usual course, he asked God for clarification on the matter. The answer, referred to as the "revelation on plural marriage," was committed to paper in July 1843 although Smith apparently had been practicing this style of marital relationship from the early or mid-1830s.<sup>10</sup> This document announced that Abraham and the other ancient patriarchs were under no condemnation for taking "many wives and concubines" because "the Lord commanded it."<sup>11</sup> As part of the "restoration of all

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9. Joseph Smith, "Church History," *Times and Seasons* 3 (March 1, 1842): 707.

10. It is not clear exactly when Smith began taking additional wives, or how many women he married during his lifetime. The most recent estimate places the date of the first marriage in 1833 and the number of wives in the low 30s. See Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1997).

11. D&C 132: 35.

things," Smith was commanded to enter into this practice, something he later claimed he was reluctant to do. Smith kept this practice to himself until the early 1840s when he introduced several key advisors to the concept of plural marriage and used their reaction to gauge their loyalty. Among those who resisted was Smith's first wife Emma. The actual text of the document cited above was committed to writing in a vain attempt to convince Emma that the doctrine was of God.

Smith's clerk noted that when Emma was presented with the revelation, "she said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious," a turn of events that "much troubled" Joseph.<sup>12</sup> Emma vacillated throughout the early 1840s, variously refusing to countenance even the thought of plural marriage, and at other times actively participating in her husband's plural marriage ceremonies. One thing is clear: Emma Smith knew that her husband taught and practiced the doctrine of plural marriage during his lifetime, a fact that would later carry great importance.

In the 1840s, Smith introduced at Nauvoo a new doctrinal complex, closely related to plural marriage, centering around what came to be known as the "temple endowment." This ceremony represented (and continues to represent) a process of initiation in which faithful Mormons are instructed in what they believe are the most sacred rituals connecting God and man. The ultimate goal of these rituals is to guide the participants along the path to godhood.<sup>13</sup> This period marked a major shift in Mormon cosmology. Previous Mormon teachings throughout the 1830s, including those found in the Book of Mormon, were actually quite similar to those being taught by other Protestant sects of the time. The major difference was not in the message, but in the delivery: Mormons believed that God continued to communicate with people on the earth and that the canon was not closed, but beyond that they preached a rather straightforward brand of Protestant Christianity.

The introduction of the endowment rites and plural marriage at Nauvoo changed everything. Smith kept his teachings on the subject of plural marriage close to his vest. Throughout the 1840s, he maintained the public fiction that accusations of polygamy represented "false epithets and charges," and as late as 1844, people were standing trial in Nauvoo for "falsely" charging Smith with this practice.<sup>14</sup>

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12. William Clayton's Nauvoo Journal Two, July 12, 1843, MS LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, also in ed. George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 110.

13. David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994). The doctrine of human divinization is spelled out in D&C 132.

14. For example, a "Dr. Foster" stood trial in 1844 for accusing Smith and others of

Before Smith could fully explore and develop all the theological implications of these new teachings, he and his bother Hyrum were murdered while in jail at Carthage, Illinois. Following some confusion, the church eventually came under the control of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, headed by Brigham Young, who had come to fully embrace the doctrine of plural marriage. Young and Smith's widow, Emma, had never cared for one another, and in the months following Smith's murder, the tension between the two became palpable. Emma regarded her husband's successor as a profane, loutish brute while he accused her of being a greedy, conniving thorn in the side of the church. Emma and Young wrestled over Joseph's estate and the feelings of bitterness thus engendered grew deeper as the situation in Nauvoo grew bleaker. In late 1845, facing invasion by armed groups laying siege to the city, Young agreed to leave Nauvoo, along with most of his followers. In February 1846 the first company of Mormons struggled across the frozen Mississippi River toward Iowa and from there to the Great Basin to rebuild their promised land, this time in the American West. Noticeably absent from the pioneering party were Emma Smith and her children, who remained in Nauvoo.

By 1852 Young had made considerable progress in taming the harsh wilds of what was then known as Utah Territory. In August of that year, safely ensconced behind the Wasatch mountains, Young directed apostle Orson Pratt to announce to the world at the church's general conference that plural marriage was, in fact, an important element of LDS doctrine and that the chief design of this principle was to allow for a "numerous and faithful posterity to be raised up and taught in the principles of righteousness and truth."<sup>15</sup> Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, polygamy came to be regarded as the centerpiece of Mormon theology. By the 1870s the U.S. government had grown tired of the practice, embarrassed by the "immoral" conduct of the Mormons, and began exerting legal pressure on the Mormons to abandon it. The Edmunds Act (1882) and the Edmunds-Tucker Act (1887) served to disenfranchise Mormon women and threatened to confiscate church property.<sup>16</sup>

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various bad acts, including plural marriage. See entry for 27 April 1844 in Scott Faurling, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Journals and Diaries of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1989), 474.

15. *Deseret News Extra*, September 14, 1852.

16. Several academic histories of plural marriage have been published over the last twenty years, including: B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), Richard S. Van Wagner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1989) and Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

In 1890, after nearly a decade of living "on the underground" to hide from U.S. marshals, President Wilford Woodruff, prompted by prophetic visions, came to the conclusion that Utah statehood and the future ability of the church to own and operate temples depended upon the abolition of plural marriage. In September of that year, he issued a declaration known as the "Manifesto."

This is the skeleton of the story. Now we will consider how these events have been emplotted to construct public memories.

#### PUBLIC MEMORY PHASE 1, 1852-1890: THE RLDS CHALLENGE

In 1860, Joseph Smith's oldest son, Joseph Smith III (then 28 years old) agreed to assume leadership over a group of former Mormons who had rejected the teachings of human divinization and the related doctrine of plural marriage. This group, officially known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, maintained that the elder Joseph Smith had had nothing to do with temple rites and plural marriage, charging Brigham Young with inventing these blasphemies after Smith's death. Emma Smith, still bitter about her late husband's polygamous relationships and Young's successful appropriation of her late husband's role as president of the church, had always told her children that their father was completely innocent and had never had another wife. She maintained this position until the end of her life. In 1876 a Mormon from Utah paid Emma a visit. During their conversation he asked Emma if her husband had had "any more wives than you" and if she believed that "he received the revelation of plural marriage." To both queries she responded, "not to my knowledge."<sup>17</sup>

As president of the RLDS church, Joseph Smith III actively preached against Brigham Young and the Utah church, charging Young with soiling the good name of Mormonism's founding prophet by associating him with the doctrine of plural marriage. In the RLDS newspaper and in public speeches, the younger Smith and his associates continually strove to separate the name of their father from the "Brighamite" wickedness being practiced with such abandon in Utah. In the process, they created a public memory in which Joseph Smith, Jr., had had nothing to do with any of the doctrinal innovations of the 1840s. The RLDS public memory effectively froze Mormon history in 1839, before the troublesome doctrines of the Nauvoo period appeared. As early as 1855, Joseph Smith III asserted that "the Mormons of Salt Lake City are not the Mormons of my

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17. Statement of Nels Madsen, LDS Archives, reproduced in Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 298.



father's faith. They teach doctrines which are bound to carry those believing and practicing them to eventual destruction, but my father never taught or believed them."<sup>18</sup>

The combined charges of lying and defiling the memory of Joseph Smith enraged Brigham Young, and when young Smith came of age to take over the RLDS church, Young set out to counter his assertions. When the practice of plural marriage was officially announced in August 1852, Brigham Young mentioned, almost in passing, that after Smith received the revelation justifying the practice, "sister Emma burnt the original" text in anger.<sup>19</sup> Over the next twenty-five years, Young repeatedly pointed out Emma Smith's flaws and her "rebellious" nature. In October 1866, Young told the assembled Mormons that "Emma has made her children inherent lies [sic]. . . . [T]o my certain knowledge Emma Smith is one of the damnedest liars I know of on earth. . . . [Joseph himself] told me that she was a child of hell, and literally the most wicked woman on this earth."<sup>20</sup> Six years later, more than a decade after the organization of the RLDS church, Young took on Emma and her sons publicly:

As for the doctrine that is promulgated by the sons of Joseph, it is nothing more than any other false religion. We would be very glad to have the privilege of saying that the children of Joseph Smith, Junior, the Prophet of God, were firm in the faith of the Gospel, and following in the footsteps of their father. But what are they doing? Trying to blot out every vestige of the work their father performed on the earth. Their mission is to endeavor to obliterate every particle of his doctrine, his faith and doings. These boys are not following Joseph Smith, but Emma Bideman. Every person who hearkens to what they say, hearkens to the will and wishes of Emma Bideman. The boys, themselves, have no will, no mind, no judgment independent of their mother. I do not want to talk about them. I am sorry for them.<sup>21</sup>

Young's assertion notwithstanding, he continued to speak on the subject frequently until his death in 1877. As strong as this rhetoric was, his effort to discredit Emma and her sons represented only one prong of the creation of historical consciousness by the second LDS president. In an attempt to remind his followers and the RLDS church that Joseph Smith was involved with plural marriage, he and other leaders spoke often on that very topic. Several of Joseph Smith's plural wives traveled

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18. Joseph Smith III to Emma Knight, 24 May 1855, Utah State Historical Society.

19. *Journal of Discourses* 6:281.

20. Brigham Young Address, 1 October 1866, MS LDS Archives, Brigham Young Collection.

21. *Journal of Discourses* 15:126. Emma Smith married Lewis Bidamon in late December 1847. The scribe misspelled her new surname in the above account.

to Utah, where little effort was made to hide their connection with him. His most famous wife—a poet and one of the few prominent female leaders, Eliza Roxy Snow—was identified as Eliza R. Snow Smith in official church publications throughout the Utah period.<sup>22</sup> Young and other leaders rarely made a reference to plural marriage without recounting that it was Joseph Smith who received the revelation from God on the topic, and it was he who took the first plural wife. For example, in a short address given in Provo, Utah, in 1855, Young reminded the audience no fewer than five times that it was the “Prophet Joseph [who] revealed this holy law and order to the Latter-day Saints” as he “received it from Israel’s God.”<sup>23</sup> In response to the counter-narrative being offered by Smith’s sons and widow through the medium of the RLDS church, Young made every effort to link Joseph Smith and plural marriage.

The third prong of the nineteenth-century historical consciousness tactic was the increasingly important role played by plural marriage in Mormon theology. During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, the question of whether or not plural marriage was required for exaltation remained ambiguous. This may have stemmed from Smith’s attempts to keep the practice secret from the general public as well as from rank-and-file Mormons. His own references to the practice, as recorded by those closest to him, were always veiled and often parabolic. A fine example of this is found in a letter Smith wrote to Nancy Rigdon. Apparently Smith had approached Rigdon about becoming one of his plural wives, but she rejected the notion out of hand. In his letter to her, Smith never mentioned polygamy, or even marriage. Instead, he explained, “[T]hat which is wrong under one circumstance, may be and often is, right under another.” In a curious parable, Smith added that “a parent may whip a child, and justly too, because he stole an apple; whereas, if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, would have eaten it with a better appetite, there would have been no stripes—all the pleasures of the apple would have been received, all the misery of the stealing lost.”<sup>24</sup> Smith intentionally wrote such letters in an obscure style and often instructed the recipients to burn the letters once they had been read.

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22. See Augusta Joyce Crocheron, *Representative Women of Deseret: A Book of Biographical Sketches* (Salt Lake: J.C. Graham & Co., 1884), 1-9, for an example of Eliza Snow being known as Eliza Snow Smith. Also in this book, the author writes that after Smith’s murder in 1844, “Eliza, widowed, turned again to the work Joseph had established” (3).

23. *Journal of Discourses* 3:266.

24. Joseph Smith to Nancy Rigdon, no date, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Dean C. Jessee ed., 2d ed., (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 2002), 538-539. This letter first surfaced in the *Sangamo Journal* in Illinois on 19 August 1842, and was probably written in 1841. The

Another example of this ambiguity may be found in an incident recorded by William Clayton, an English convert to Mormonism who served as Smith's personal secretary and close friend from 1842 until Smith's death in 1844.<sup>25</sup> On 16 May 1843, Smith and Clayton stayed at the home of another Mormon (and the brother of one of Smith's plural wives), Benjamin F. Johnson. In the evening the men engaged in a discussion of the afterlife, and Smith gave "some instructions on the priesthood." During the course of this conversation, Smith "put his hand on [Clayton's] knee and said. . .nothing but the unpardonable sin<sup>26</sup> can prevent him from inheriting eternal glory for he is sealed up by the power of the priesthood unto eternal life having taken the step which is necessary for that purpose." Clayton had yet to receive the temple endowment and gain admittance into Smith's elite "anointed quorum" (he would be admitted on 3 February 1844), but he had taken his first plural wife on 26 April 1844. Thus, it seems logical that the only "step" Smith could have referred to was Clayton's entrance into the practice of plural marriage. The matter is complicated, however, because Smith then told the group that "except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood they will cease to increase when they die."<sup>27</sup> Smith made no mention of the need to take plural wives, mentioning only the authorized sealing of a man and a woman as a requirement for exaltation. Clayton's account is extremely valuable because it provides one of the few contemporary records of Smith's teachings on this subject. As demonstrated below, later reminiscences of Smith's teachings on this subject were more specific and placed a heavier emphasis on polygamy than did earlier, contemporary accounts of his teachings.

Although Smith never made the point specifically, Young and others interpreted the revelation on plural marriage to mean that, at least theoretically, the practice was required for exaltation.<sup>28</sup> Especially after 1852,

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newspaper received the letter from former Smith confidante and ex-Mormon John C. Bennett. Research and witness testimony have demonstrated that the letter, despite being published by Bennett, was in fact written by Joseph Smith.

25. For an excellent biography of this important witness to the behind-the-scenes events in Nauvoo, see James B. Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2002.)

26. According to Mormon theology, "if ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, and ye know that ye deny it, behold, this is a sin which is unpardonable" (Alma 39:6). Joseph Smith gave further meaning to this term in a revelation from 1832 which stated that the unpardonable sin consists of "having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame" (D&C 76:35).

27. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1995), 102.

28. In Mormon theology, "salvation" is offered to nearly everyone regardless of

Young drew a hard line, asserting that “the only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.”<sup>29</sup> On another occasion, after reminding the audience that “Joseph received a revelation on *celestial marriage*,” Young told those who were “determined not to enter into a plural marriage” that they could look forward to an eternal life lived “single and alone, for ever and ever, and be made servants, while others receive the highest order of intelligence and are bringing worlds into existence.”<sup>30</sup> The emphasis on the phrase “celestial marriage” is mine, and it is important. As the context of this passage clearly illustrates, Mormon doctrine after 1852 equated “celestial” marriage with plural marriage. When the practice was officially acknowledged in the fall of 1852, Young oversaw the publication of the text which served as the basis for Mormon temple and sealing theology (now D&C 132).<sup>31</sup> Although the revelation never had an official title during Smith’s lifetime, it was published in the *Deseret News* as “The Principle and Doctrine of Having Many Wives and Concubines, A Revelation to Joseph Smith, Jr., 12 July 1843.”<sup>32</sup>

From this point forward, Brigham Young made a concerted effort to associate exaltation with polygamy, based largely on this text. In a later address, Young related an incident which typified his public discourse during this period. According to Young, Joseph Smith told him that those who did not enter polygamy would have no spouses in the hereafter, indicating that the only eternal marriages would be polygamous marriages performed by authorized individuals in connection with special temple rites. Again, there are no accounts from Smith’s lifetime specifically indicating that Smith connected polygamy with exaltation. Such accounts enter the historical record only after 1852.

Heavily influenced by Young’s interpretation of section 132, accounts of Smith’s Nauvoo teachings related by Smith’s former associates have no trace of the ambiguity found in earlier, contemporary writings. For example, in 1874, William Clayton wrote, “[F]rom him [Smith] I learned that the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most important doctrine ever revealed to man on earth and that without obedi-

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behavior during life. “Exaltation,” however, is defined as “life with God as God,” and is reserved for those who strictly adhere to Mormon teachings and covenants.

29. Brigham Young address, 19 August 1866, *Journal of Discourses* 11:272. In this address, as in many others during this period, Young used language drawn directly from Smith’s revelation on marriage, which also promised that men could become “gods, even the sons of gods.”

30. Discourse by Brigham Young, 17 August 1873, MS LDS church Archives.

31. Unless explicitly stated, all references in this paper to the Doctrine and Covenants refer to the 1981 edition.

32. *Deseret News Extra*, 14 September 1852.

ence to that principle no man can ever attain to the fullness of exaltation in the celestial glory."<sup>33</sup> Yet nowhere in Clayton's earlier writings from the Nauvoo period was such a stern statement from Joseph Smith actually recorded. Although some of Smith's followers may have reached such a conclusion, there is scant evidence that Smith himself made this explicit point.

More evidence for this ambiguity may be found in another statement recorded by Clayton one night in March 1843 at Benjamin Johnson's home. Clayton recorded Smith as saying, "In the celestial glory there was [sic] three heavens or degrees, and in order to obtain the highest a man must enter this order of the priesthood and if he don't [sic] he can't obtain it." Just before recording this statement, Clayton wrote, "I feel desirous to be united in an everlasting covenant to my wife and I pray that it may soon be."<sup>34</sup> Apparently, Clayton viewed plural marriage as possible without an eternal sealing, since he was already a polygamist though not yet sealed to any woman for eternity.

In 1856, four years after the official announcement of plural marriage, the *Deseret News* published a version of this same entry from Clayton's diary which had been modified and combined with various other statements made by Joseph Smith. In the 1856 version, a bracketed insertion was added: "[I]n the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [*meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage*] and if he does not, he cannot obtain it."<sup>35</sup> This bracketed material remained when this revelation was included in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

This article was apparently an attempt to convince the LDS membership that polygamy was central to Mormon theology. In April 1856, only a few months before the *Deseret News* published the entry from Clayton's journal, Apostle Wilford Woodruff wrote of a meeting he attended with Brigham Young in which they read again "the revelation on patriarchal marriage [section 132]." During the course of the discussion, they pondered, "[W]hat does the saying mean that sayes [sic] all shall be damned that does not keep this law unto whom it is revealed? Does it mean that they shall take more wives than one or be damned?"<sup>36</sup> Woodruff

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33. Statement by William Clayton made on 16 February 1874, reprinted as "William Clayton's Testimony," *Historical Record* 3 (6 May 1887): 225-26.

34. Smith, *Journals of William Clayton*, 102, emphasis added.

35. *Deseret News*, 24 September 1856. Beginning with the 1876 edition and continuing to the present, this text was known as section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

36. The text of the revelation paraphrased by Woodruff reads: "[P]repare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have

recorded the group's decision that this law consisted of "the whole law with its covenants."<sup>37</sup>

Apparently Young and his fellow leaders were still puzzled by the ambiguity of this revelation, but were taking rapid action to provide a more concrete interpretation—hence, the decision to add the bracketed material to section 131 just five months later. It seems strange that Young and Woodruff still felt section 132 needed clarification, especially given the tone of Apostle Orson Pratt's address given in August 1852, in which Pratt forcefully argued that plural marriage was required in order for Mormons to "inherit the blessings and promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." (The promise of these blessings remains a central part of the sealing ceremony in LDS temples today.) Significantly, Pratt believed the only possible way to receive those blessings was to engage in plural marriage. According to the revelation on marriage, godhood consisted chiefly of the "continuation of the seeds forever and ever"<sup>38</sup> in order that these gods "shall be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all."<sup>39</sup> Pratt interpreted this to mean that gods would need multiple wives in order to fulfill such a requirement. With this interpretation of the link between polygamy and the promised fecundity of those covered by the Abrahamic covenant, the use of the term "everlasting" in this context would logically refer also to polygamy. From 1852 on, this became the accepted interpretation of what it meant to live a life as god—the kind of life promised in the revelation to all who "entered into the new and everlasting covenant."

Further evidence linking the "new and everlasting covenant"<sup>40</sup> with polygamy in the post-1852 era may be found in Pratt's 1852 warning that "there will be foolish among the wise who will not receive the new and everlasting covenant in its fullness; and they will never attain their exal-

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this law revealed unto them must obey the same. For behold, I reveal to you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant ye are damned."

37. *Journals of Wilford Woodruff*, 4:411.

38. D&C 132:19.

39. D&C 132:20-21.

40. Since 1843, the term "new and everlasting covenant" has been most closely associated with marriage and LDS temple theology. However, it was not a new term for Mormons. The first recorded occurrence of its use was in a revelation received by Smith in April 1830, indicating that the entirety of the doctrines and ordinances of the new church would constitute this new covenant. Frequently in the 1830s, Mormon leaders would end correspondence with the phrase "yours in the new and everlasting covenant." Such references stopped after the term took on a new meaning in the 1840s. For a more in-depth treatment of the meaning of covenants in Mormon theology, see Thomas G. Alexander, "'A New and Everlasting Covenant': An Approach to the Theology of Joseph Smith," in Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, eds., *New Views of Mormon History: Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington* (Salt Lake: University of Utah Press, 1987), 43-62.

tation; they will never be counted worthy to hold the scepter of power over a numerous progeny, that shall multiply themselves without end, like the sand upon the seashore."<sup>41</sup> Pratt also spoke of exaltation granted only to those who obeyed the "new and everlasting covenant in its fullness."

One of the first major attempts to make the case for the exalting nature of plural marriage came in 1853, when Brigham Young sent Orson Pratt to Washington, D.C., to publish a periodical called *The Seer*. In the paper's prospectus, Pratt promised to "fully publish" the "views of the Saints in regard to the ancient patriarchal order of matrimony, or plurality of wives, as developed in a Revelation, given through Joseph, the Seer."<sup>42</sup> Young chose the nation's capital as the publication site for this periodical because it was intended to function as a lobbying device. Perhaps, Young thought, if a strong enough case could be made for the morality of plural marriage, the government would leave the Mormons to enjoy their desert solitude unmolested.

While this did not happen, *The Seer* nevertheless shed light on the central role polygamy was beginning to play in LDS theology. Pratt republished Smith's revelation on marriage under the title: "Celestial Marriage: A Revelation on the Patriarchal Order of Matrimony, or Plurality of Wives."<sup>43</sup> He also devoted hundreds of pages to demonstrating that polygamy was not inconsistent with Christian principles, again placing heavy emphasis on Abraham and the promises of "eternal increase" which Mormons associated with the Abrahamic covenant. In a series of rhetorical questions, Pratt asked his readers, "[I]f plurality is offensive in the sight of God, why was Abraham, who practiced it, called a Friend of God? Why require all the families of the earth, to be adopted into the family of a polygamist in order to be saved? Why choose a polygamist to be the Father of all saved families?"<sup>44</sup> *The Seer* clarified that plural marriage was part of the "restoration of all things" and those who have lived the "law of the gospel" in its entirety have been polygamists. In addition to the ubiquitous references to Abraham, Pratt cited the forty-fifth Psalm as evidence that "the great Messiah who was the founder of the Christian religion, was a polygamist, as well as the patriarch Jacob and the prophet

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41. Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," delivered 29 August 1852, published in *Journal of Discourses* 1:58-62.

42. *The Seer* 1, no. 1 (January 1853): 1. Photo reprint editions of *The Seer* have been in and out of print on a regular basis for decades. In this paper, I refer to the 2000 photo reprint edition produced by Eborn Books of Salt Lake City, Utah. In the notes, I have supplied the original publication information, as well as the page numbers corresponding to the photo reprint compilation.

43. *Ibid.*, 1:7.

44. *The Seer*, 1, no. 12 (December 1853): 187.

David from whom He descended according to the flesh." More dramatic still was Pratt's claim that "God the Father had a plurality of wives."<sup>45</sup> The implication of these and similar passages was that full integration into celestial life in the hereafter involved polygamous marital relationships.

In an 1856 journal entry, Wilford Woodruff referred to the necessity of keeping "the whole law." Apparently, during this period the Saints had begun to believe that a partial fulfillment of the law could be achieved through monogamous temple marriages for eternity. However, the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom would only be achieved by those who obeyed the whole law, meaning polygamy. Further evidence for this interpretation may be found in a sermon delivered by then-Apostle Joseph F. Smith: "The marriage of one woman to a man for time and eternity by the sealing power is a fulfillment of the celestial law in part—and is good as far as it goes." Smith reminded his listeners, however, that monogamous marriage in the temple represented "only the beginning of the law, not the whole of it," and "whoever has imagined that he could obtain the fullness of blessings pertaining to this celestial law, by complying with only a portion of its conditions has deceived himself; he cannot do it."<sup>46</sup> Apostle Orson Pratt similarly remarked in 1880 that "if a man has no divine right to marry two wives or more in this world, then marriage for eternity is not true, and your faith is all vain, worthless, good for nothing; for as sure as one is true the other must be true."<sup>47</sup>

This evidence points to the fact that Young and his fellow leaders were actively engaged in altering the historical consciousness of the Mormon people by linking the theology of exaltation and endowment with plural marriage. By the mid-1850s, Brigham Young believed the "new" covenant of marriage to be the same as celestial marriage, which was, in turn, coterminous with plural marriage. Based on the statements and publications of LDS leaders during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, section 132 undoubtedly referred to plural relationships, and LDS leaders, furthermore, believed this requirement was mandatory.

Young's attempts to define and strengthen the connection between plural and celestial marriage succeeded extremely well. In 1881, for example, Artemesia Beman Snow wrote, "I have lived in the order of Celestial marriage thirty-five years; I have no wise—I have no desire—to have it changed or abolished." Thirty-five years earlier, Snow's husband "first asked my consent to take other wives [and] I freely gave it, believ-

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45. *The Seer*, 1, no. 11 (November 1853): 172.

46. *Journal of Discourses* 20:24.

47. *Ibid.*, 21:296.



ing such an order of marriage to be a pure and holy principle."<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Zina D. H. Young, one of Brigham Young's plural wives, reminisced in 1874 about the early days when she and her "sister wives" had "bravely commenced to live in the newly-revealed order of celestial marriage."<sup>49</sup> Only in her 1874 account, not in any earlier accounts, does she refer to this kind of marriage as "celestial." In 1859, John D. Lee, an adopted son of Brigham Young, recorded in his diary that "Mary Ann Lee. . . was the 16<sup>th</sup> Woman [sic] that was seald [sic] to me in the New & Everlasting covenant."<sup>50</sup>

In 1879, Wilford Woodruff provided evidence in a speech at the St. George, Utah, temple that Young's vision of the meaning of section 132 and the link between polygamy, the Abrahamic covenant, and godhood had firmly taken root. Joseph Smith, said Woodruff, had received a revelation from God in which He had commanded the Saints to:

[h]ave our wives and children sealed to us for time and eternity that we may have them with us in our family organization in the resurrection to dwell with us forever in the eternal worlds that we may have an increase of posterity forever in connection with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the ancient patriarchs. God our heavenly father, knowing that this was the only law ordained by the Gods of eternity that would exalt immortal beings. . . commanded Joseph Smith the Prophet and the Latter-day Saints to obey this law or you shall be damned.<sup>51</sup>

Although some may argue that Woodruff could have referred to either monogamous or plural marriages performed in LDS temples, later that year he clearly referred to polygamy when he wrote that "God says we shall be damned if we do not obey this law, Congress says we shall be damned if you do obey it."<sup>52</sup> Congress never opposed monogamous Mormon marriages, so there is no question but that the "law" referred to by Woodruff is plural marriage.

From the 1850s on, Snow, Zina Young, Lee, and Woodruff—reflecting Young's interpretation, as did the majority of Mormons—had come to see celestial marriage and the "new and everlasting covenant" as plural marriage; such a thorough indoctrination would soon prove a difficulty which twentieth-century LDS leaders would have to negotiate.

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48. "Artemesia Beman Snow on Polygamous Marriage," reproduced in Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church* (Salt Lake: University of Utah Press, 1971), 747.

49. Zina D.H. Young, as quoted in Edward Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge & Crandall, 1877), 327.

50. Robert Glass Cleland and Juanita Brooks, eds., *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1955), 1:191.

51. *Journals of Wilford Woodruff*, 22 February 1879 7:456.

52. *Ibid.*, 7:457.

After Young's death in the late summer of 1877, his successor, John Taylor, continued to maintain the public memory just as Young fashioned it. As noted earlier, from the 1870s on the church faced increasing pressure from the federal government to abandon the practice of polygamy. The Edmunds Act, passed in 1882, landed more than 1,300 Mormon men in prison for "unlawful cohabitation." Failing to break the back of the Mormon practice with the Edmunds Act, the government tried again, and in 1887 passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act which disenfranchised Mormon women, declared the children of polygamous unions to be legally illegitimate, and authorized the seizure of all church holdings valued at more than \$50,000. The Mormons responded to these actions by sending leaders "underground" while simultaneously challenging the legitimacy of the laws. This forced the public memory of the importance of polygamy and its association with the beloved Joseph Smith even more firmly into Mormon thought. During this period, John Taylor spoke at length of the necessity of practicing polygamy at all hazards because "if they would not enter into this covenant, then the kingdom of God could not go one step further." As Young had done so many times, Taylor emphasized that, "It was the Prophet of God [Smith] who revealed that to us in Nauvoo, and I bear witness of this solemn fact before God, that He did reveal this sacred principle to me and others of the Twelve, and in this revelation it is stated that it is the will and law of God that 'all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.'"<sup>53</sup>

When John Taylor died, in hiding, in July 1887, Wilford Woodruff assumed leadership of the church. Another Mormon of long standing and a friend of Joseph Smith from the 1830s, Woodruff was also an ardent polygamist who faced a grave dilemma. The U.S. Supreme Court had finally ruled on the Edmunds-Tucker Act and had directed law enforcement officials to seize more than \$3 million worth of church property, including their temples. They also emphasized that if Woodruff wanted statehood for Utah, and he clearly did, he would have to abandon polygamy. To the shock and horror of many Mormons, Woodruff declared in his "manifesto" of 1890 that, "we are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice."<sup>54</sup> However disingenuous this claim may have been, it soon became clear that Woodruff was serious, at least about slowing down the number of authorized plural marriages.

For the next decade the church struggled with its identity. Despite the manifesto, half the members of the Quorum of the Twelve took additional

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53. *Journal of Discourses* 24:229.

54. D&C, Official Declaration 1.

wives within one year.<sup>55</sup> In 1904, Joseph F. Smith (Joseph Smith, Jr.'s nephew and church president) was called before a Senate committee investigating the continued practice of polygamy in connection with the seating of a Mormon senator, Reed Smoot. Humiliated by the experience, Smith issued the so called "second manifesto," again decrying plural marriage, and announced to the church that "all such marriages are prohibited, and if any officer or member of the Church shall assume to solemnize (perform) or enter into any such marriage he will be deemed in transgression against the Church. . .and excommunicated therefrom."<sup>56</sup> The most prominent casualty of this new policy was John Taylor's son, apostle John W. Taylor who refused to abide by the new law and was excommunicated in 1911. As the Mormon polygamous chapter slowly and painfully came to a close, Mormon public memory had to be re-fashioned.

PUBLIC MEMORY PHASE 2(A), 1904-1933:  
THE RISE OF MORMON FUNDAMENTALISM

While the church undertook to find and excommunicate people practicing and sanctioning polygamy during the early decades of the twentieth century, it was left to deal with a public memory that held that polygamy was a doctrine essential to the success of the church and to the exaltation of individual members, which had been revealed to and practiced by Joseph Smith, Jr. If the task of recasting that public memory were not difficult enough at this point, another counter-narrative arose from an unexpected source. The RLDS church had grown far more slowly than its Utah-based cousin, and by the turn of the century, it became clear to many RLDS members that their ideas about Joseph Smith, Jr.'s involvement with plural marriage were off base. The LDS church did not need to compete with the RLDS counter-narrative anymore, and after 1904 it had become a moot point anyway. What did emerge, however, was the so-called "Mormon fundamentalist" movement. During the second decade of the twentieth century, as the church began to track down and punish polygamists, a group introduced a secret revelation supposedly received in 1886 by then-church president John Taylor. The first mention of this revelation actually came in February 1911 when church leaders convened to discuss the fate of John W. Taylor, son of John Taylor. The younger Taylor told the assembled leaders that "my father received a revelation which however was never presented to the Church."<sup>57</sup> The

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55. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 1 (Summer 1985): 9-105.

56. Conference Report, 6 April 1904, 75.

57. Minutes of Council of Twelve Meeting concerning fellowship of John W. Taylor, son of John Taylor, and Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, held in the Salt Lake Temple,

text of this “revelation,” which John W. Taylor claimed he had discovered in the church’s vault, consists of God telling John Taylor that

my son John, you have asked me concerning the New and Everlasting Covenant, how far it is binding upon my people. Thus saith the Lord, All commandments that I give must be obeyed by those calling themselves by my name unless they are revoked by me or by my authority. And how can I revoke an everlasting covenant; for I the Lord am everlasting and my everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with; but they stand forever.

Following this statement, the revelation reiterates the necessity of obeying the principle: “[A]s I have heretofore said by my servant Joseph, All those who would enter into my glory must and shall obey my law.”<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, Joseph Smith’s name emerged yet again in close connection with plural marriage, and the “new and everlasting covenant of marriage” clearly meant plural marriage, just as it did in the earlier LDS public memory.

According to the fundamentalist narrative, after this 1886 revelation President Taylor ordained a number of men to carry on the practice of plural marriage when the church did away with it (a development supposedly foretold to him). These men and their plural wives started their own church and created their own public memory.

The historical consciousness created by the Mormon fundamentalists posed a unique challenge to mainstream Mormons. After all, the fundamentalists were using a narrative consistent with nineteenth-century mainstream Mormon ideals. For example, the fundamentalists continued to identify the “works and blessings of Abraham” and the promise of “eternal increase” with polygamy as had the mainstream church after 1852. After quoting the LDS temple marriage ceremony in which participants were promised “the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,” one leading Mormon fundamentalist asked, “[I]f it is not expected that the contracting parties shall live the law by which Abraham received his promise of countless and eternal increase, why promise them the blessings of Abraham?”<sup>59</sup>

To counter this narrative, church leaders, exercising the prerogatives of prophets, seers, and revelators, set out to redefine the connection between plural marriage and celestial marriage, and the relationship between the Abrahamic covenant, eternal increase, and polygamy. As late

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February 22, 1911, at 10 am, at which were present: President Francis M. Lyman, Heber J. Grant, Hyrum M. Smith, Charles W. Penrose, George F. Richards, Orson F. Whitney, David O. McKay, Anthony W. Ivins, and Joseph F. Smith, Jr. Original in LDS Archives.

58. “Revelation given to John Taylor, September 27, 1886, copied from the original manuscript by Joseph F. Smith, Jr., August 3, 1909,” John Taylor Papers, LDS Archives, copy in author’s possession.

59. B. Harvey Allred, *A Leaf in Review* (Caldwell, Ind: Caxton Publishers, 1933), 187.

as 1898, church leaders were teaching that Mormons “believed in and practiced plurality of wives—more properly celestial marriage.”<sup>60</sup> However, the first hint of a change in the definition of celestial marriage came just one year later. In 1899, Dr. James Talmage, a leading Mormon intellectual and future apostle, published a “series of lectures on the principle doctrines” of the LDS church. Collectively entitled *The Articles of Faith*, this book became (and remains) a profoundly influential expression of LDS belief. In it Talmage defined celestial marriage as “the system of holy matrimony, involving covenants as to time and eternity,” which represents “the order of marriage that exists in the celestial worlds.”<sup>61</sup> He skillfully avoided mentioning plural marriage, emphasizing instead the eternity of the marriage covenant. In October 1901, Talmage further revised LDS ideas about celestial marriage when he wrote in an official LDS publication that in celestial marriage “plurality of wives was an incident [sic]—never an essential.”<sup>62</sup> Talmage—the first Mormon to earn a Ph.D.—was also one of the first influential Mormon thinkers to remain a monogamist.<sup>63</sup> Faced with the clear scriptural statement that in order to enter the “celestial glory” one must enter into “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage” and coming of age in an era when polygamy was forbidden, Talmage saw the necessity to alter the old definition.<sup>64</sup> This new definition began to appear more frequently. Six years after the publication of Talmage’s article, a brief sketch of Joseph Smith’s prophetic career appeared in which the author explained that “in connection with the ordinances performed in the temple is another very important principle—the eternity of the marriage covenant—commonly referred to as ‘celestial marriage.’”<sup>65</sup>

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60. B. H. Roberts, “Comment on Dr. Reiser’s Letter,” *Improvement Era* 1 (May 1898): 7.

61. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1899), 458. This book has remained in print and relatively unchanged for more than one hundred years, and is not likely to go out of print soon. It is one of only a handful of books, along with Talmage’s biography of Christ, *Jesus the Christ*, which LDS missionaries are permitted to read while on their missions.

62. James E. Talmage, “The Story of Mormonism,” *Improvement Era* 4 (October 1901): 12.

63. Talmage received a Ph.D. from Illinois Wesleyan University in 1896. He married his first and only wife in 1888. In 1926, another Apostle, John Widtsoe, edited a volume of the *Discourses of Brigham Young*, which contained no references to plural marriage. Widtsoe and Talmage were used by the church to shape and implement the new public memory partly because both were brilliant and eloquent spokesmen and first-generation European converts to Mormonism who had no personal or sentimental ties to plural marriage. This background made them unusual in LDS leadership circles at this time and unusually well qualified to dismantle the historical consciousness of an earlier age. Unfortunately, these two men and their contributions to LDS history have gone largely unstudied.

64. D&C 131:2.

65. William Halls, “The Mission of Joseph Smith,” *Improvement Era* 6 (December 1907): 2.

That this concept was new and needed reinforcing is evidenced by the fact that any mention of celestial marriage in official LDS publications between 1901 and the early 1950s included the new definition. For example, Charles W. Penrose of the church's first presidency wrote in 1920 of "the heavenly order of celestial marriage; that is, matrimony for time and all eternity."<sup>66</sup> Similarly, J. M. Sjodahl wrote in 1927 that the "revelation of celestial marriage" dealt solely with the "eternal duration of the marriage relation."<sup>67</sup>

With this new definition in wide use, LDS leaders decided to make an official statement on the subject. In 1933 President Heber J. Grant declared, "[C]elestial marriage—that is, marriage for time and eternity—and polygamous marriage are not synonymous terms. . . . Monogamous marriages solemnized in our temples are celestial marriages."<sup>68</sup> Unlike nineteenth-century sermons on the plurality of wives, Joseph Smith's name was infrequently mentioned in this statement. From the time the First Presidency made this statement, it quickly became a central pillar of the twentieth-century Mormon historical consciousness. In 1948 a book of quotes from LDS leaders on a variety of topics reprinted Grant's 1933 statement under the heading, "The Nature of a Celestial Marriage."<sup>69</sup>

After the 1950s, no explanatory notes accompanied the term "celestial marriage" in LDS publications; it simply had come to be understood as an eternal union between a man and a woman solemnized in an LDS temple.<sup>70</sup> This redefinition required a change in Mormon exegesis of the revelation on plural marriage (section 132). In an official book of commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants published in the 1920s, this new interpretation emerged for the first time. In nineteenth-century context, section 132 had been known as the "revelation on plural marriage."<sup>71</sup> It is not surprising that early interpreters reached this conclusion, especially

66. Charles W. Penrose, "The Edict of a Century," *Improvement Era* 23 (April 1920): 6.

67. J. M. Sjodahl, "Temple Marriage an Antidote Against Divorce," *Improvement Era* 30 (October 1927): 12.

68. "Official Statement From the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," reprinted in the *Deseret News*, Church section, June 17, 1933.

69. Daniel H. Ludlow, *Latter-day Prophets Speak* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1948), 301.

70. For examples of the new definition of celestial marriage, see the following: Ernest Anderson, "What a Chance You Take," *Improvement Era* 53 (July 1950): 7; A. C. Lambert, "The Book of Doctrine and Covenants," *Improvement Era* 54 (October 1951): 10; Hugh B. Brown, "The LDS Concept of Marriage," *Ensign* (January 1972): 60; Spencer W. Kimball, "The Importance of Celestial Marriage," *Ensign* (October 1979): 3; N. Eldon Tanner, "Celestial Marriages and Eternal Families," *Ensign* (May 1980): 15; Dean L. Larsen, "Marriage and the Patriarchal Order," *Ensign* (September 1982): 6; Robert L. Millet, "The Ancient Covenant Restored," *Ensign* (March 1998): 36.

71. For evidence of this association between section 132 and polygamy, see *Journal of Discourses* 6:362, 13:194, 16:166, 17:360-61, 21:10-11, 22:127, 25:309, 26:122, 26:340.

considering the context: It was written down in order to convince Emma Smith of the divine origin of the doctrine of polygamy. This new commentary divided the revelation up, noting that the first half of the revelation “deals with celestial marriage—marriage for eternity. . . . [I]n the sections following, plural marriage is the subject.”<sup>72</sup> Notice again that at this early stage in the creation of the new public memory, each mention of “celestial marriage” was accompanied by a new definition—“marriage for eternity”—indicating that the writers were keenly aware of lingering vestiges of the old public memory. This commentary also offers no explanation of the context of the revelation, which would obviously tie the revelation, and Joseph Smith, closely to plural marriage. At about the same time church historian (and later president) Joseph Fielding Smith, son of Joseph F. Smith, published a textbook on LDS history for use in church schools. *Essentials in Church History* remained in print for the next fifty years and exerted tremendous influence on countless Mormon readers. As in the exegetical work noted above, Smith dealt with the revelation in sections. The primary point of the revelation, according to Smith, was to teach that marriage between a man and a woman can be eternal, and that people may become like God in every way. In a separate section, Smith notes that “this revelation also contains the doctrine of plural wives.”<sup>73</sup> Smith makes very little mention of Joseph Smith’s involvement with plural wives, and no mention is made of Emma Smith.

In 1930, B. H. Roberts, a church leader and historian, published his six-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.<sup>74</sup> This massive work added further support to the new public memory. Roberts himself had expressed tremendous shock and confusion over the manifesto, but had since accepted it and worked to help other Mormons do the same. Roberts took pains in his history to point out that what nineteenth-century leaders had referred to as the revelation on plural marriage had as its “primary principle. . . .the eternity of the marriage covenant,” which had been “obscured by the discussion of and the popular clamor concerning the plurality feature of the new marriage system” (emphasis in original).<sup>75</sup> Roberts argued that plural marriage was a conditional, temporary, and relatively minor aspect of “celestial marriage” which he defined—in step with the statement that would be

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72. Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *The Doctrine and Covenants With Historical and Exegetical Notes* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book Company, 1921, 1978), 831.

73. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (Salt Lake: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1921), 341.

74. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Six Volumes* (Salt Lake: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1930).

75. *Ibid.*, 2:95.

issued three years later—as “the marriage system that obtains in the celestial worlds.”<sup>76</sup> He held that plural marriages may fit under this rubric, but they are secondary to monogamous marriages performed by proper authority in LDS temples.

During this early period of the second phase of Mormon public memory, many Mormons still living were the offspring of polygamous unions and had been raised to believe firmly in the older public memory. However, as time passed, fewer and fewer Mormons came to identify personally with polygamy. By the 1950s Mormons had become thoroughly Americanized and tended to display a split opinion about polygamy. On one hand, they were immensely proud of the sacrifices made by their pioneer ancestors, but as modern Americans and the very model of American family values, they were also uncomfortable with their heritage of socio-sexual experimentation. Raised on *Essentials in Church History* and similar volumes and never hearing of Joseph Smith’s own plural relationships in general conferences or in other official publications, the new public memory began to take root.

PUBLIC MEMORY PHASE 2(B), 1933–PRESENT:

JOSEPH AS MONOGAMIST AND THE REDEMPTION OF EMMA SMITH

Although fundamentalist groups continued to thrive on a small scale, their ability to convert mainstream Mormons to their cause eventually diminished, and the church’s emphasis on debunking the 1886 revelation likewise stopped. With the fundamentalist threat minimized, Mormons were now competing with the public memory created by their own spiritual ancestors in the nineteenth century. Historians became the new target of church suspicions when they began to unearth the Young-era public memory, particularly the close link publicized by the earlier Mormons between Joseph Smith and plural marriage as well as Young’s vilifications of Emma. As the first part of this second phase took hold—and with it a new interpretation of section 132 and the nature of celestial marriage—the employment of the new Mormon public memory took another turn.

Interpretations of section 132 tended to repeat the exegesis laid out by Smith and Sjodahl in the 1920s. The official 1981 commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants (which is still in wide use) quotes Smith and Sjodahl verbatim regarding the division of the revelatory text, adding that the main portion deals with “the everlasting covenant of marriage,” with a small aside covering “plural marriage within the new and everlasting covenant.”<sup>77</sup> In this publication the new and everlasting covenant

76. *Ibid.*, 93.

77. *The Doctrine and Covenants: Student Manual* (Salt Lake: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 327



is clearly not the same as plural marriage, and because polygamy is identified as a smaller part of the larger system, monogamous eternal marriages are viewed as normative. A BYU professor of LDS history and doctrine reiterated this view in a recent volume of commentary: "The plurality of wives is an appendage to the greater principle of eternal marriage."<sup>78</sup> This represents a clear departure from Young's interpretation equating plural marriage and the "new and everlasting covenant of marriage."

The context of the revelation was also revised during this period. In a teacher's manual on the Doctrine and Covenants and church history published in 1984, it is suggested that Joseph Smith had many questions when he read in the Bible about "the life of Abraham, not only regarding Abraham's having more than one wife, but also on the very nature of the marriage relationship."<sup>79</sup> Little evidence exists to suggest that Smith had anything on his mind except the plurality issue, but if section 132 is read in a way to emphasize monogamy, it may be reasonable (perhaps even necessary) to conclude that marriage in general was a concern. During this same time, attempts were made to write histories minimizing the importance of polygamy to nineteenth-century Mormons. One example of this trend should suffice. In 1950 a widely distributed book appeared in which apostle LeGrand Richards claimed that "only a few of the members of the Church ever lived the principle of plural marriage—never over three percent."<sup>80</sup> Although subsequent research has proven this a gross underestimation, this book has remained continuously in print for more than fifty years and is required reading for many LDS missionaries.

In addition to the issues relating to section 132, a newly refurbished portrait of Emma Smith began to emerge. Until the 1970s, Emma Smith's name had fallen out of Mormon history. While she was no longer the villain of the early public memory, she had also ceased to play any other role. Joseph Smith's family life was rarely mentioned during this period. This began to change in the 1970s, when the LDS church staged a massive campaign to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment. Part of their desire to do this stemmed from the fear that the liberal forces at work in the movement would unduly influence Mormon women.<sup>81</sup>

Soon, official church publications carried stories about Emma's life,

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78. Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Revelations of the Restoration: A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants and Other Modern Revelations* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 2000), 1058.

79. *The Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Supplement* (Salt Lake: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984), 159.

80. LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1950), 401.

81. For an account of church opposition to the ERA, see D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1997), 373-406, passim.

always emphasizing her loyalty to Joseph. No longer the "most wicked woman on earth," she was now referred to as the "elect lady." In the late twentieth century, references to Emma Smith have almost always used this title in official and popular LDS literature. This phrase originally appeared in a revelation recorded by Joseph Smith in the summer of 1830, in which Emma was told that her "sins are forgiven thee and thou art an elect lady."<sup>82</sup> This occurred more than a decade before the troubles at Nauvoo over polygamy, yet it is the image to which the architects of the new Mormon public memory gravitate. They overlook a later and much harsher treatment that is found, not surprisingly, in section 132. In a seldom-quoted reference, Emma is told to "receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph. . .to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph and to none else." This instruction came with the ominous warning that "if she abide not this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord. . . I will destroy her if she abide not in my law." The definition of "my law" is made clear earlier in the document where Joseph Smith is instructed in the principle of plural marriage and commanded to "receive ye therefore my law."<sup>83</sup> Brigham Young clearly drew from this threat when measuring the character of Emma Smith. Emma obviously did not obey the law of plural marriage, yet no mention of this is made in the more recent, official church commentaries on this revelation.

Thus, Emma once again became part of the Mormon public memory, but mainly as a character witness for her husband and as a model for proper womanly behavior. No recent mention has been made of Emma's refusal to accept polygamy or the tension it caused between her and Joseph. In a 1979 article in the church's official magazine, the *Ensign*, only this cryptic evaluation of the conflict is offered: "[T]he tumultuous events of the last few months before Joseph's death put additional strains on Emma and Joseph" followed immediately by the ameliorating assurance that, as ever, "love and consideration are evident."<sup>84</sup> In 1976, the church's historical division published a one-volume history of the church designed to replace *Essentials in Church History*. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* makes no mention of Emma's reaction to polygamy, and the only post-1839 references to her include her position as head of the women's auxiliary, her attempt to hide the body of her dead husband after his death in order to discourage relic seekers, and her decision to stay in Nauvoo rather than head west with Young.<sup>85</sup> None of these ac-

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82. D&C 25:3.

83. D&C 132:24, 52-54.

84. Valeen Tippetts Avery and Linda King Newell, "The Elect Lady: Emma Hale Smith," *Ensign* (September 1979): 65.

85. James Allen and Glen Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1975; 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed., 1992).

counts mention Emma throwing pregnant plural wives down stairs or attempting to poison her husband in retaliation for his marriages to other women—all stock stories from the nineteenth-century public memory. Instead a story of loyalty despite hardship has emerged. In a recent address to Mormon women, the leader of the female auxiliary said, “[I]n a very literal way, Emma Smith’s influence [for good] continues to ripple through generations.”<sup>86</sup> In order to fully redeem Emma, her story usually ends around 1839, much like the RLDS public memory, while she was still the “elect lady” and before God had threatened her with destruction.

With Emma back at his side, Joseph has taken on a new role as well, which is one of the main reasons for Emma’s reappearance in the public memory. Joseph is now, as always, portrayed as an exemplification of Mormon virtues except that that now consists of living with one wife and devoting his life to her. Part of this involved a further diminution of the importance of polygamy in interpretations of section 132 and of Smith’s connection with the practice. In 1994 a chronology appeared in the church’s official magazine listing “key events in the life and ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith.”<sup>87</sup> Included on the timeline are Joseph’s reception of “the revelation on celestial marriage” and his “sealing to Emma Smith for time and eternity.” Section 132 is referred to, naturally, by its twentieth-century name—the revelation on celestial, rather than plural marriage. Furthermore, plural marriage is never mentioned, nor are any of Joseph’s other marriages listed although his sealing to Emma is featured prominently.

More in-depth pieces revealed the same public memory. In 1989, the church published an article celebrating the most important doctrinal contributions made by Joseph Smith. Included are “priesthood, the word of God, and temples.” The discussion of temples in this article centers on “the eternal sealing of families,” including the sealing of husband and wife. The authors point out that “Joseph and Emma Smith were sealed for time and eternity on 28 May 1843,” but make no mention of Smith’s other eternal sealings or of polygamy in general.<sup>88</sup> Two years later another article appeared in the *Ensign*, stating that “the Prophet had seen in vision that marriage should be for eternity. It is no wonder that he so vigorously taught the Saints to love their spouses fully, to be tender and faithful. His own love for Emma and the children illustrated his firm

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86. Virginia U. Jensen, “Ripples,” *Ensign* (November 2000): 78.

87. “Highlights in the Life of the Prophet,” *Ensign* (June 1994): 24.

88. Donald Q. Cannon, Larry Dahl, and John Welch, “The Restoration of Major Doctrines Through Joseph Smith: Priesthood, the Word of God and the Temple,” *Ensign* (February 1989): 7.

conviction that families can be forever." Adding that Smith often exhorted his followers to treat their families with kindness, the author writes, "Joseph certainly practiced what he preached. He knew the importance of a loving marriage that would endure eternity. His concern for Emma was revealed in the vigils he kept over his wife when she was sick, attending to her needs and praying for her health."<sup>89</sup> It is significant that Emma is painted in both accounts as a sympathetic character in order to illustrate Joseph's devotion and concern for her. Like the first article, the second piece makes no mention of plural marriage. It would have been unthinkable for an architect of nineteenth-century Mormon public memory to ignore plural marriage and celebrate Joseph's marriage to Emma, yet such is the very core of the new public memory.

In an interesting twist, the church decided in the late 1990s to publish a volume of teachings from church presidents to be used in church classes. Inexplicably, they skipped Joseph Smith and went directly to Brigham Young. In the chronology of Young's life, the manual lists his first marriage, but no others. Several of the selections in the manual have been altered from "wives" to "wife" in an effort to remove references to polygamy. The manual for the following year, on the teachings of Joseph F. Smith, displays marks of the same editorial techniques. One could read either of these books in their entirety and never know these men were polygamists. Similarly, there has been little mention of Joseph Smith's plural marriages in official church publications since at least the 1950s.

This new public memory is also evident in Mormon popular culture. In the 1990s a Mormon artist, Liz Lemon Swindle, became famous for her paintings of figures from church history. One of her favorite subjects is Emma Smith. In a number of paintings, she portrays Emma and Joseph together, enjoying an obviously close, loving relationship. There is no evidence of other wives or of tensions between Joseph and "the wickedest woman that ever lived" as Brigham Young dubbed her. Using Swindle's art on the cover, a number of books emerged furthering this picture of monogamous wedded bliss. Written by Gracia N. Jones, the books were titled *Joseph and Emma: Their Divine Mission* and *Priceless Gifts: Celebrating the Holidays with Joseph and Emma*. Of Emma Smith, the author writes, "[T]here is no doubt that Emma put her whole soul into the effort of helping to lay the foundation of the kingdom of God. Her faith in the truthfulness of (Joseph's) mission caused Emma to turn her back on parents, social position, security and all things a girl holds dear, to share a beggar's life with her prophet husband, whose entire energy was

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89. Brent L. Top, "I Was with My Family: Joseph Smith—Devoted Husband, Father, Son and Brother," *Ensign* (August 1991): 22.

directed toward fulfilling God's commandment to take the message of the Restoration to the whole world."<sup>90</sup> Along with these paintings and books, a number of statues, medallions, and decorative plates depicting Emma Smith are available, all of which are extremely popular among Mormons.

In this same period, Mormon seminary teacher Gerald Lund began publishing what would become the most popular fiction series in LDS publishing history. *The Work and the Glory* follows the fictional Steed family from their conversion to Mormonism in the early 1830s through their emigration to the Salt Lake Valley under the direction of Brigham Young. In the process, the characters rub shoulders with Joseph Smith and other church leaders and witness the most dramatic events in church history. Throughout, the narrator provides helpful interpretive explanations for "difficult" areas of church history (meaning points that do not comport with Mormon public memory). Polygamy is mentioned, and it is tied to Joseph Smith, but again in the broader context of monogamous marriage and the importance of temple rites. Joseph's relationship with Emma is likewise portrayed sympathetically, even sentimentally, especially in the volume covering the period in Nauvoo. Emma's conflicts with other plural wives are never discussed. In fact, the author takes tremendous liberties with the historical record, and occasionally disregards facts altogether. For example, Lund describes a scene in which Joseph Smith organizes the female Mormon auxiliary, the Relief Society. Emma Smith is placed at the head of the organization and her assistants are announced. One of them is Eliza R. Snow. Lund, in the voice of one of the main characters, notes that "Eliza. . . was not married. . . [T]his would tell the sisters that this was an organization of sisters, not just of wives."<sup>91</sup> Eliza Snow actually became a plural wife to Joseph Smith, a fact which Lund never mentions.

*The Work and the Glory* books have reached a tremendous number of Mormons, and the books are frequently mentioned in LDS meetings. Typical responses to the books indicate that the reader's faith has been strengthened; they also often claim to have gained new insights into LDS history. For example, readers responding on Amazon.com noted, "Brother Lund has made church history come alive for me. I've read many different church history books. These I can relate to. It's like I'm there living it as it happens" and "my Sunday school teacher read us part of this one. It included the martyrdom [of Joseph Smith]. It was extremely sad. If you want a kid to really understand the concept of hatred

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90. Gracia N. Jones, *Joseph and Emma: Their Divine Mission* (Alpine, Utah: Covenant Communications, 1999).

91. Gerald N. Lund, *The Work and the Glory*, vol. 6 (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 2001) 289-90.

and how truly evil the mob was, this is the book to read. It hit me over the head like a club just what the Saints went through."<sup>92</sup> Many similar responses are recorded, all of which support the notion that these books work effectively to support the Mormon public memory regarding plural marriage. The entire series of nine volumes has been reprinted in paperback, an extremely rare occurrence in the field of Mormon fiction.

#### CONCLUSION

At the outset of this paper, I listed six basic elements in the theory of public memory. The first element held that a discourse develops in which certain emplotment points are dropped and others emphasized. This has clearly been the case with Mormon perspectives on plural marriage. The second element of the theory was that members of the community do not literally forget their collective past, they simply agree upon an official memory. Most Mormons know that polygamy played a central role in the lives of their predecessors in the church. They certainly know that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other leaders had multiple wives, yet the church still publishes material which blots out these facts, and the church membership largely accepts this public memory without comment.

The third point of my theory of public memory held that institutional sanctions are placed on individuals who seek to undermine the public memory while rewarding those who help build it. In September 1993, six Mormon scholars were excommunicated from the church for publishing material the church deemed "faith destroying." Among these scholars was historian D. Michael Quinn, whose work on LDS leaders and post-manifesto polygamy presented an open challenge to the new Mormon public memory. On the other hand, Gerald Lund, author of *The Work and the Glory Series*, was sustained as a General Authority of the church at the April 2002 LDS general conference. In his first speech in this position, Lund referred specifically to his research on the life of Joseph Smith for the books, commenting that "it was my privilege to spend about 10 years in an intensive and extensive study of his life, of his writings, of his teachings, and of those who knew and loved him, and I came to know that here is a prophet of prophets."<sup>93</sup> Clearly he viewed his task as helping to build the public memory of Joseph Smith, rather than to simply explore his life in an "academic" fashion—and the church has rewarded his efforts.

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92. These responses can be found at [http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0884949990/ref=pd\\_sim\\_books/102-4672136-5584904](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0884949990/ref=pd_sim_books/102-4672136-5584904). Although these reader responses are far from definitive, they accurately reflect those I have personally witnessed in LDS meetings on dozens of occasions.

93. Gerald Lund, "The Opportunity to Serve," LDS General Conference Report, April 2, 2002.

The fourth element of the theory held that public memory was functional and presentist. Clearly, the key elements of the church's public memory—which events are to be plotted and which are not—have been determined based upon the needs of the church at the time the memory narrative is constructed. This was true in the case of Brigham Young's response to the RLDS challenge, in Joseph F. Smith's effort to recast the public memory after the manifesto, and in the church's current attempts to emphasize the "family values" platform in the life of Joseph Smith.

Fifth, the emplotment points left out of public memory narratives often turn up in counter-narratives produced by competing communities. This has been most clearly illustrated in the cases of the fundamentalist counter-narrative that emerged in the second decade of the twentieth century and in the academic counter-narrative currently emerging. In both cases, elements of the story which tend to disrupt the mainstream LDS public memory are discarded, and in some cases hidden, but these bits play central roles in the counter-narratives.

The final element of public memory, as I defined it, held that individuals may be members of many discourse communities and as such they may take part in varying, even competing, public memory systems. Any attempt to harmonize these systems often leads to institutional punishments. In early 1981, a member of the faculty at church-owned Brigham Young University attempted to explain why some statements from church leaders in the nineteenth century conflicted with statements made by current leaders. In a pointed response to these efforts, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, leading Mormon theologian and son-in-law/protégé of Joseph Fielding Smith, warned the professor that "there is no need to attempt to harmonize conflicting views," suggesting instead that he "echo what I say or remain silent." McConkie also reminded the professor, "I hold over you the scepter of judgment," strongly suggesting the consequences of further attempts to harmonize conflicting public memories.<sup>94</sup> In the same year, Apostle Boyd K. Packer delivered an address to Mormon educators. In this speech, Packer castigated historians for telling the whole truth about their past, noting that "some things that are true are not very useful."<sup>95</sup> This philosophy is evident in the various phases of Mormon public memory. Packer made the case that historians should write "faithful history," which essentially consists of emplotting only those events from the historical record that mesh with the current public memory. Packer's speech was in direct response to Mormon

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94. Bruce R. McConkie to Eugene England, 19 February 1981, copy in author's possession.

95. Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 259-78.

scholars who sought to harmonize their academic research and the public memory of their religious community.

Historical consciousness has clearly been an important element in the history of the LDS church. It remains to be seen just where the next constructed historical consciousness will take the church, but several things are clear. The historical consciousness of the LDS church will change as the institution's interests and needs shift. The architects of historical consciousness will continue to re-plot historical events and re-interpret historical texts according to current imperatives. Jan Shipps, the most prominent non-Mormon student of LDS history, has argued that those narratives which I call historical consciousness narratives represent denominational, confessional, or apologetic histories. According to Shipps, the authors of these narratives have considerable latitude to emplot events as long as they use "what amounts to a canonized body of evidence composed of the testimony believers have left behind."<sup>96</sup> Shipps suggests that as long as the evidence comes from "faithful" Mormons, it will fit comfortably into devotional narratives. I have attempted to demonstrate in this essay that some of the evidence most potentially damaging to the historical consciousness actually comes from "faithful" Mormon sources. Material clearly coming from an anti-Mormon source is much more easily explained than are dissonant statements from the likes of Brigham Young.

On June 27, 2002—the anniversary of the murder of Joseph Smith—the LDS church dedicated a temple in Nauvoo, Illinois. Some 300,000 Mormons and interested non-Mormons toured the building between May and June, and the dedication services were broadcast live via satellite to meeting houses all over the world. The original temple in Nauvoo was burned by a mob in 1846. The new temple is a replica of the old one, and the church and its members celebrated their return to Joseph Smith's "city beautiful." It was also a celebration of the triumph of historical consciousness; in all of the festivities, no one mentioned plural marriage or the close relationship nineteenth-century Mormons saw between polygamy and temple rituals. Clearly, history may be emplotted and told in such a way that it eclipses the "real" past with a constructed history which is much more useful. For groups anchoring their present authority to an epic past, such constructions are not only useful, but necessary.

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96. Jan Shipps "Remembering, Recovering and Inventing What Being a People of God Means: Reflections of Method in the Scholarly Writing of Religious History," in *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 184.