MORMON WORLD VIEW AND AMERICAN CULTURE

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Neither the scholars nor the Mormons themselves have been able to come to agreement about the relationship between the life of the LDS people in this country and American lifeways. The views of outside observers range all the way from supposing that Mormonism "has rightly been called an America in miniature"[1] to the idea that the Mormons bear a distinct culture of the same order as Navaho or Zuñi Indians.[2] At the same time Mormon views of their own life cover a similar

spectrum, from super-patriotism to a substantial sense of autonomy from American life. These days, when an increasing number of Latter-day Saints are self-consciously re-examining the question of what it means to be Mormon and an increasing number of scholars are examining the Mormons as subjects, a critical review of the relation of the life of the Saints to other patterns for living seems desirable.

"Mormon culture" is an expression used frequently enough that one would suppose it to have an explicit denotative meaning. Instead a look at usage suggests that whatever concept lies behind the term is vague at best.

Thomas F. O'Dea considered that "the Mormon way of life" evolved within "a native and indigenously developed ethnic minority," while he emphasized that the Mormons really represent "America in miniature."[3] Evon Z. Vogt, whose views developed through participating in the same project as O'Dea (the Harvard Comparative Study of Values in Five Cultures), termed Mormonism a "subcultural continuum" in American society, comparable in distinctiveness to the Texans.[4] Later, however, he followed Clyde Kluckhohn's usage in considering the Mormons as one of five "distinct cultures" in the Southwest which the Harvard project examined.[5] In fact Kluckhohn's systematic formulation of the value of these cultures showed that the Mormons shared only a small number of "value-orientations" with white American (Texan) immigrants to the project area while a much larger number were shared with the Zuñi Indians.[6] Mark P. Leone refers to Mormon culture in eastern Arizona in the title of his recent article in the *Utah Historical Quarterly*,[7] but he does not exploit the concept beyond speaking of "the goal of removing or freeing a population from mainline American culture." (In unpublished writings, however, Leone treats the Mormons of the Little Colorado as possessing substantial cultural distinctness.)

In a lecture at BYU in 1959, I examined Mormon society in terms of the framework of "functional prerequisites" of society developed by Marion J. Levy and other sociologists.[8] My conclusion was that despite early Mormonism's approach to that independence in form and style which the terms "society" and "culture" convey, it never crossed the threshold to autonomy implied by the usual sense of the term "culture." My later work on the effects of industrialization and urbanization in two Utah communities made clear that all the essentials of social change manifested in the modernization process elsewhere had occurred here too, colored, to be sure, by unique values and history.[9] Research by Armand Mauss, J. Kenneth Davies, and Wilford Smith,[10] among others, supports this view. More recently, however, I have held that in "perceptual" terms the Mormons constitute a unique group which can be termed a culture in one specific sense.[11] I have also discussed the notable degree of lexical distinctness which has come to characterize the Saints.[12]

The literature of the social sciences seems to suggest that when Mormons are viewed in terms of their overt behavior, as the sociologists (e.g. O'Dea, Mauss, Nelson[13]) tend to view them, they appear quite thoroughly American. Anthropologists on the other hand (e.g., Vogt, Kluckhohn, Leone, Sorenson), who look more at symbols than behavior, see a much greater difference prevailing.

Observers of Mormon artistic and humanistic life have often felt that a distinctive Mormon essence does exist, or at least ought to. *Dialogue's* statement of its aim has from the first referred to "Mormon culture" and the "cultural

heritage" of the journal's contributors and staff, although these terms seem to have been used in the narrower sense of the word culture (meaning "the best expressions which a people have produced") rather than in the sense familiar to social scientists.[14] Lorin Wheelwright and Lael Woodbury have focused explicitly on "Mormon artistic culture" throughout most of their volume on *Mormon Arts*,[15] yet at one point (p. 68), they imply a wider meaning of cultural difference as they discuss the worldwide nature of the Church. Dale T. Fletcher has argued for a distinctive artistic expression of Mormonism using visual symbols.[16] Others, however, have challenged the idea that an aesthetic expression unique to the Mormons (as against, say, a Utah or American style or tradition) can be delineated at this time.[17]

Historians treating the Mormons have dealt overwhelmingly with the 19th century. In dealing with that period the concept of culture has proved neither popular nor especially useful. While these scholars have on occasion used the concept in reference to the Mormons in recent generations, almost always they use the term without clear explication of its intended meaning. Leonard Arrington occasionally speaks of Mormon culture,[18] but only in a generic sense. Marvin Hill and James B. Allen do not exploit the concept significantly despite the title of their recently edited volume, *Mormonisms and American Culture*.[19] Elsewhere, Allen seems to feel more comfortable with the idea of "Mormon community."[20] Klaus Hansen's treatment of "Mormonism and American Culture"[21] displays vividly the problems encountered in trying to use the idea of Mormon culture without systematic explanation of its intended meaning. What he labels the culture certainly revolves around "theological" matters as well as "doctrines and practices," for on the basis of supposed changes in these areas, he asserts that "Mormonism has undergone a major cultural transformation." In the same piece he refers to "Mormon metaphysical assumptions," the "ideological force" behind the Church, "social and political arrangements," Joseph Smith's "ideology of power," "intellectual" and "anti-intellectual" characteristics of the Mormons, and of a "blueprint for a social, economic, and moral reorganization of society." Moreover, he draws attention to a picture of the putative social psychology, personality characteristics, class structure (the Mormons were "radical social and political dissenters" led by a "hard-core cadre" of "revolutionary elite"), internal power structure, status system, and even ethos. Hardly a concept in the historian's and behavioral scientist's armamentarium is omitted, all somehow part of or related to "Mormon culture." Yet we never learn what that elusive thing is. When we reach the concluding query ("Is it possible that as a distinct cultural entity, Mormonism has more or less ceased to exist?") the vagueness of "cultural" and "Mormonism" has robbed the question of meaning.

The view that Mormons are mainly a special sort of American has been accepted by a substantial number of Latter-day Saints, especially in the decade just past. A vociferous LDS minority under the influence of the dying Cold War came to identify American nationalism and anti-communism with defense of the faith, while monolithic communism and "unamerican" activities were seen as "satanic." In the last year or so this viewpoint has lost some of its popularity.

In the nineteenth century most Mormons took a far different view of American society. Out of basic doctrinal elements, the persecutions of the Church in Missouri and Illinois, and confrontation with the U.S. government and the

respectable society which that government represented, the Latter-day Saints sought, for some decades, substantial sociocultural, and even political, autonomy. Several statements by Brigham Young underline this position.

> We do not intend to have any trade or commerce with the Gentile world. For as long as we buy from them we are in a degree dependent on them. The Kingdom of God cannot rise independent of the Gentile nations until we produce, manufacture and make every article of use, convenience or necessity among our own people. We shall have elders abroad among all nations and until we can obtain and collect the raw materials for our manufactures, it will be their business to gather in such things as may be needed.

> I am determined to cut every thread of this kind and live free and independent, untrammeled by any of their detestable customs and practices.

> If it is time for the thread, in a national capacity, to be severed, let it be severed. Amen to it.

And a few days later:

> The thread is cut that has hitherto connected us, and now we have to act for ourselves and build up the kingdom of God on the earth, which we will do by the help of the Lord; for he has decreed that his kingdom shall take ascendency over all other kingdoms under heaven.[22]

This attempt at cultural autonomy, particularly in its politically significant aspects, was a challenge which American society through its state organization would not countenance. The dispatch of Johnston's army to Utah Territory in 1857 was viewed from Washington as a response to rebellion. The Republican party in 1856 had linked polygamy with slavery as manifestations of "barbarism" which had to be destroyed. The key issue involved was usually phrased as that of sovereignty, both in the case of the South with slavery and of polygamy among the Mormons. An observer in 1885 claimed:

> It is the general sentiment that religion has nothing to do with the Utah question—that it is simply a matter of law and government. There is no hostility against the common people who call themselves Mormons. The hostility is against their illegal system of government. (Larson, p. 243)

But more pervasive issues were actually involved. The prevailing degree of Mormon uniqueness was seen as intolerable within the American system. Marriage relations, economic exclusiveness, social and economic cooperation, and judicial procedures and principles all challenged American norms. Justice T. J. Anderson, in an 1889 case, was more to the point:

> The teaching, practices and aims of the Mormon church are antagonistic to the Government of the United States [and] utterly subversive of good morals and [the] well being of society. (Larson, p. 250)

The resolution required both political and cultural surrender by the Mormons. And that is, of course, what happened. "Absentee, individualistic, non-sectarian capitalism began to envelop the Mormon economy," and then with the Manifesto and the formal abandonment of polygamy went "the apparent promise of Mormon leaders, in return for statehood, to be 'loyal' to American institutions generally."[23]

A seminal study by Yehudi Cohen provides us with a broad anthropological perspective on the failed attempt of the nineteenth century Latter-day Saints to attain cultural autonomy. He examines the full range of historically-known societies to demonstrate that what he terms "incorporative states," such as the United

States, move from "inchoate" to "successful" status by the progressive exten-sion of their coercive power over all issues they consider significant. This "verti-cal" entrenchment of authority is particularly challenged by lineage and locality groups and religious bodies which claim the right to establish norms. At a certain point in the process of a state's establishing its authority, control of deviant sexual norms—adultery, incest, celibacy, premarital sex—tends to be relentlessly pressed by the state. Once the principle of state dominance in this behavioral area is firmly established, the government "can afford to give up many of its strictest controls" on sexual norms, as seems to be happening nowadays.[24] Following Cohen, we may interpret the USA vs. Mormon conflict in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a typical manifestation of the inherent power conflict between an incorporative state and a localized corporate group over the degree of autonomy to be permitted the latter in setting behavioral norms.

After the basic surrender to American ways was made, the Great Basin Saints moved rapidly into full participation in American life. The patriotism they dis-played in World War I was emblematic of the degree of their acculturation. *Laissez faire* capitalism ran rampant in Utah, and some of the businessman's viewpoints were increasingly heard in Church circles. The symbolic culmination of this flight into American ways may have come in 1932 when, over the ex-pressed opposition of the Church's leaders, the people's role made Utah the deci-sive 32nd state to vote for repeal of prohibition. The great depression too was fully shared; the Utah economy suffered as severely as almost any other section of the country.[25] Ultimately, the Saints have become difficult to distinguish from the Gentiles with whom they live, and Salt Lake City looks, smells, sounds, and is very much like any other urban American city.

The picture just drawn seems to agree with sociological observers that Mor-mons in the Utah heartland have become essentially similar to Americans at large, yet this cannot be so in fact. Mormons are now spread throughout much of the world, and in rather exotic milieus the growth in Church membership greatly exceeds the rate in the U.S. Can it be merely "America in miniature" which attracts tens of thousands of Guatemalans, Colombians, Brazilians, Ital-ians, Samoans, Koreans and Filipinos to adopt the Mormon faith each year? Moreover local cultural variants of Mormonism are found in many nations which differ in substantial detail from the Utah version.

At an official level of explanation there is no question that the prime factors which unite Mormons across national boundaries are qualitatively different from the observable cultural differences which separate the diverse congregations. The whole record of the Book of Mormon, the scriptural foundation of the Church, may be read as a commentary on the irrelevance of any one culture to successful gospel living, for the historical accounts therein of the Nephites and Lamanites as well as the prophecies about the Gentiles and descendants of Lehi combine to teach that the gospel is one thing while the cultural forms within which it has its human expression are quite another. Furthermore, Mormon identification with historical Israel also points to the primacy of "essential spiritual teachings"[26] over patterns of custom as providing the central element unifying ancient believ-ers and contemporary Latter-day Saints.

Perhaps the clearest statement to this point by a Church leader in modern times is a talk given by Elder Bruce R. McConkie (then of the First Council of

Seventy, subsequently made an Apostle) to Korean students and friends in Provo, Utah, on March 5, 1971. In part he said:

> . . . We're coming into a period of time where for the first time in the history of the Church . . . we're beginning to get the strength to . . . take the gospel to all the people . . .
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> It is in our day that we're beginning in Asia, and it is in Asia where the people are. We haven't realized this in the Church for the obvious reason that our ancestry derives from Western and Northern Europe. We have been a European-centered culture as it were. And predominantly, the influence of the Church has been expended in that field.
>
> Now I'm not intending to indicate that there'll ever be a day when there will be a total swing away from the culture that we have and the influence that has so far been spread. But I do . . . indicate that there is going to be a major shift in emphasis as other nations come in and make their influence felt in the gospel. . . .
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> [There are] three distinguishing characteristics of Koreans . . . [which] ought to be distinguishing characteristics of Latter-day Saints everywhere—which to my mind means that Koreans, through their customs, traditions, background, social and cultural, and otherwise, have been preparing for Church membership. These are the characteristics: (1) hospitality; (2) family-centeredness; great love for children; (3) love for learning and education. Those are the characteristics which we ought to possess, aren't they? They have a different background than we have, of course they have, which is of no moment to the Lord. We've got a different social and cultural background than the Jews have or than Abraham or Moses . . . The cultural background that you've had is of no moment. What counts is whether you get the gospel of Jesus Christ and live its laws. We're not trying to change the cultural background of anybody. . . .
>
> Our customs are good for us and we've been trained in them. It is no different to have different social customs than it is to have different languages. You speak the language that you inherit. . . . On this basis, we are only trying to take truth to people over there, truth in addition to what they have.[27]

We need to explicate at this point some concepts prerequisite to clarifying the meaning of "Mormon culture." Traditionally Mormons have held that Joseph Smith "restored the gospel," not a culture. That is what he himself claimed. The gospel, Mormons claim, is a body of knowledge essential to man's ultimate well-being. That knowledge has existed among different peoples in the past, each of which has expressed it in somewhat differing forms. Thus Nephi (2 Nephi 25:1-7) spoke of the "manner," "works," and "doings" of the Jews and of the need for a reader to be taught "after the manner of the things of the Jews" in order to understand the cultural expression of that gospel knowledge in their possession. Christ distinguished between the "new wine" of principles which could not be held by "old vessels" of existing Jewish customs and institutions. That institutions and customs are inescapable facts of human life is granted in the Scriptures, but the distinction between them and gospel principles is maintained consistently.

This basic distinction is repeatedly confused among Mormons themselves. "Mormonism," "the Church," "the order of the Church," "the gospel" and other terms, including "Mormon culture," are frequently used without any systematic attempt to delineate the distinctions which clear discourse demands be made among them. Historians and other scholars are not the only offenders. Missionaries, for example, frequently fail to appreciate, let alone explain, how the principle of faith in Jesus Christ differs in significance from the practice of abstaining from the use of alcoholic drinks or of attending conference. In fact most Latter-day Saints continue in the same quandary which Peter faced in his

dispute with Paul over circumcision: what are the key elements of knowledge, and which are the modifiable practices which do not necessarily compromise the true basics? Elder McConkie was emphasizing the importance of recognizing this type of distinction.

Sociocultural patterns, while distinct from universal principles, are influential upon the recognition or expression of those principles. Nor are all types of customary social and cultural patterns equally influential. Some important differences among types of these patterns are easily grasped in terms of a recently-developed classification based on a theory of "emergent evolution."[28]

This scheme identifies ten "emergent levels" or "emergent systems" which not only provide a means for sorting all data about human activity but also relate those activities according to systematic principles. The ten levels form a hierarchy, from "higher" to "lower":

10. Ideology (explanations of why things are as they are)
9. Values (judgments of what is desirable)
8. Knowledge (description of how things are)
7. Communicative symbols (language, in the broadest sense)
6. Social organization (interaction patterns)
5. Population distribution (population in its spatial aspect)
4. Demography (population in its temporal distribution)
3. Technology (external means for energy processing)
2. Human biology (somatic features and processes)
1. Natural environment (the residual environment)

The highest levels consist of concepts for the most part. The lowest levels are mainly "physical." Among other significant relationships which tie these levels together is the principle that higher level phenomena change more rapidly than do those on lower levels. Furthermore changes taking place on the lower levels are more likely to be irrevocable and to entail long-range effects. Also, lower-level features tend to set limits to the variations possible at levels above.

It appears that the essence of "Mormonism" or of "Mormon culture" is at the higher levels—in the conceptual, not the social or physical realms. This is certainly what Mormon missionaries teach: God is the Father of Christ and Man, Jesus is the Redeemer of men, there is a Plan to glorify men, Joseph Smith revealed that plan in the restoration, etc. Knowledge of the essential ideology, values and knowledge is all that is required of proselytes. They learn the crucial communicative symbols and social organization soon enough, usually after baptism.

To be sure, there are settlement, demographic, technological, and biological features characteristic of Mormon life, but they are derived and secondary. The ending of the "gathering" and the establishment of stakes in many parts of the world has had interesting demographic and social organizational consequences, but the effects of such changes—even many such changes—have not particularly changed the ideology. Not that the ideology is wholly fixed, of course, and individual variation in ideology and values frequently occurs.

The core of Mormonism in its most basic expression is clearly found in the upper levels of the scheme of emergents. Elaborated, it might be called "theology" or "doctrine." Or it might be termed "world view." If there has indeed been a "major cultural transformation" (as Hansen asserts), we would expect to find

this Mormon world view now substantially different from what it was in Joseph Smith's time. The evidence for such a drastic change has not been brought forward yet, so far as I am aware. Instead there exists a strong continuity with the past.[29]

Technology, demography, settlement arrangements and social organization (all on the lower levels of the scheme) have indeed changed markedly, even shockingly, in the United States and among the Mormon majority. In the long run these features of a people's life do affect concepts, but a cultural core often remains constant over a substantial period.

Leone's seminal studies have revealed the high degree of adaptability of contemporary Mormonism.[30] He finds that the faith's ability to produce "modern men" in the face of "rapid flux" in the economic and social setting is keyed to intense participation plus low role definition. To permit this the Church has "evolved a do-it-yourself ideology which permits maximum behavioral flexibility." *No longer is doctrine spelled out in detail from headquarters.* Instead "now the church prepares an individual for economic adaptability and ideological independence within American culture." If Leone is correct, the upper-level, conceptual features of Mormon life are being left to float free, so to speak, allowing individuals to make their own adaptations to the lower-level demands of American (or Korean, Italian, Samoan, etc.) culture. Certainly the concern with doctrinal specification in the Church is at an all-time low. Required beliefs are reduced to the essential minimum, in part in recognition on the part of the authorities in Salt Lake City of the need for cross-cultural adaptation of the gospel message. Compared with an earlier day, it is remarkable that doctrinal expositions are few and broad. For this reason in the long run the Church faces the possibility of serious doctrinal divergences within its ranks, particularly in some of the newer lands where a local tradition for Church members has not yet crystallized.

In the special circumstance of settlement in the Great Basin, life among the Mormons took the form of a set of unique institutional forms: the village, cooperative economic ventures, irrigation practices, frontier norms for interpersonal and esthetic life, etc. Substantial uniformity prevailed, or at least so it appeared from the perspective of Church headquarters. Whether alternative forms arose among Latter-day Saints in such places as the Society Islands and Sweden is not really reported. Probably the stream of missionaries to those far places from the Great Basin resulted in molding the mission-field institutions quite closely to the models of the heartland. In a place like New Zealand, Mormons function within their own mini-tradition, featuring their own folklore, special lexicon (including Maori terms), heroes, sacred sites, and so on. These mini-traditions are, however, fully coordinate with main Mormon tradition, again because of central administration and the constant flow of missionaries from the western United States into those locales bearing their own folk version of Mormon cultural practices and beliefs.

Is there a Mormon culture, then? There is indeed a world-wide culture if we mean by that a world view characterized by a reasonably standardized explanation of the meaning of life and the universe, shared values, and a set of "facts." More variation exists in communicative symbols, although even here, as Gordon Thomasson has urged, a substantial degree of uniformity prevails.[31]

Is Mormon culture American? In America the ideology, values, and knowledge

central to the Utah-centered LDS way of life take on the cultural flavor of the time and place. We could not expect the emphasis on individual conversion, mobility, and "testimony" to be quite so strong anywhere else than in the USA, I suppose. Yet these are matters of emphasis, largely. Leone's work has shown how the basic repertoire of Mormon "values [are] combined and recombined in the face of the range of day-to-day problems" without resulting in essential shifts.[32] At least at this time there is no significant evidence that the values and doctrine of Tongan Saints, for example, differ markedly from those of American Mormons in their roles as Latter-day Saints. Research on this topic would, of course, be welcome.

How can it be, then, that observers can hold that Mormon life has changed fundamentally over the years? Are Hansen and O'Dea without foundation for their assertions that major changes have occurred? I hold that it is precisely those observers who pay least attention to ideology and other conceptual materials who reach this conclusion. I believe that these are the same types of observers who would hold that various American Indian peoples have been acculturated beyond recognition. Increasingly, however, there is evidence that it is in their conceptual worlds—in their world views—that ethnic and other minority groups retain their basic distinctiveness.

Clyde Kluckhohn's characterization of the values of five Southwestern cultures has already been mentioned. Despite some problems with his methodology, this scheme demonstrates how much world views differ among apparently similar-behaving people, and also how alike may be the conceptual maps of peoples overtly dissimilar. The following table demonstrates the point, using data from Kluckhohn.[33]

Value Emphases in Three Cultures

Issue	Mormons	White Americans (Texans)	Zuñi
The universe is:	determinate (orderly) unitary good	indeterminate (capricious) pluralistic evil	determinate unitary good
Man-to-man relations emphasize:	group other dependence active stance discipline physical tense	individual self autonomy active stance fulfillment physical relaxed	group self dependence active stance discipline mental relaxed
Time relations emphasize:	then	then	now

The apparently similar Mormons and immigrants from Texas studied by the Harvard project actually proved to be notably different in their conceptual or perceptual worlds. A parallel situation has been described by William Caudill and George De Vos. They studied Japanese Americans who came to Chicago dur-

ing World War II where they fitted into the occupational scene and middle class society with remarkable speed and facility. Employers praised the values they exhibited on the job, such as efficiency and speed, hard work, honesty, punctuality, good grooming, and so on. Landlords and neighbors made equally positive evaluations. The researchers' analysis showed, however, that the apparent overlap between the minority's values and general middle-class American values was deceptive. "Peers, teachers, employers, and fellow workers of the Nisei [Japanese-Americans] have projected their own values onto the neat, well-dressed, and efficient Nisei in whom they saw mirrored many of their own ideals." Further, "certain compatibilities in the value systems of the immigrant and host cultures operated strongly enough to override the more obvious difficulties."[34]

Mormon values have often been evaluated by middle-class Americans as positively as those of the Japanese Americans. In the Mormon case too, however, this approbation rests on incomplete knowledge of the real structure of Mormon values, for certain elements in that structure do not fit at all comfortably with general American values. At a slightly different level Mormon religious language is simply not the same as non-Mormon religious language even though many words (e.g., "eternal" and "salvation") appear to overlap with those used outside the Mormon group.[35]

I have argued thus far that the distinctiveness of the Mormons is ultimately based upon their unique world view. Secondarily their social and physical circumstances distinguish them. Specific local settings in various parts of the world provide variations for the expression of that world view—primarily variations in emphases in beliefs, values and knowledge. The best known cultural expression of Mormon world view was formed in the Great Basin in western North America in the last half of the nineteenth century. Normal processes of sociocultural change have affected that particular cultural configuration in noticeable ways. Superficially there may appear to be major cultural differences between the early Mormon form and that prevailing in western America today, yet the world view itself is basically unchanged. The same world view has been, and is now being spread into diverse cultural settings around the world without major change. In those exotic places localized cultural forms have arisen as vehicles for the world view. While these variants undoubtedly constrain the expression of Mormon fundamentals in certain ways, they appear to be of secondary significance to the remarkable uniformity in ideology, values, knowledge systems, and communicative symbols which the administrative apparatus of the Church is able to maintain.

How the Reorganized Latter-day Saint people are to be accommodated in this view of culture is not clear. They and other groups which share the Mormon tradition, on a historical basis at least, belong to the same cultural family, yet I am impressed that the differences in world view which now characterize the smaller groups are substantial enough that it would be misleading to count them as part of a single cultural whole today.

It may well be that cultural splintering will continue, just as it has to some extent since Joseph Smith's day. Not only might we anticipate that some Latter-day Saints in the United States may break off (compare schisms occurring, nominally at least, over the issue of plural wives and leadership powers within the last generation), but nationalism abroad most likely will lead to break-offs there too.

Studies of the Nigerian "Latter-day Saints" as well as the Mexican schism of the 1930's (subsequently mended) would be enlightening about this process and prospects for its further occurrance. While the administrative structure of the Church succeeds in constraining most extreme change in mission areas, there remains sufficient variety in Mormon thought and behavior to suggest the possibility of further splits. (There are evidences that the Church authorities in Salt Lake City are sensitive to this possibility, particularly with regard to American Indian or "Lamanite" members.)

Regardless of the observations above about the degree to which Mormons are different from non-Mormon Americans, nothing said should be taken to imply that the Latter-day Saints today are not heavily influenced by U.S. patterns of thought and behavior. Elder McConkie's talk quoted earlier implies his recognition of this important fact. Furthermore the Mormons in general seem unaware of the distinctions which do prevail between Mormon and American ways. Missionaries and mission presidents, as scores of anecdotes illustrate, are frequently Americanizers abroad as much as preachers of the gospel. On the popular Mormon level awareness of the place of cultural difference in the Church is little advanced over what Robert N. Rapoport reported twenty years ago for "Rimrock" in New Mexico.[36] There the LDS members appeared to have failed quite completely to appreciate the point of view of the Navahos whom they were trying to convert. Conversion was seen by the members as largely a theological or spiritual phenomenon not directly connected to the structural factors or cultural concepts which were of great importance to the Indians.

Times are changing in this regard. Occasionally, Church leaders emphasize the need for awareness of the role of cultural difference in transmitting the gospel and implementing Church programs. "Transculturizing" is both formally and informally emphasized at Church headquarters today with the intent to avoid some of the disastrous cultural *faux pas* of the past while taking advantage of cultural emphases to facilitate the work among different peoples. There is as yet little evidence, however, that the membership of the Church has been much affected by these impulses.

The whole concept of the gospel world view being embedded in local, largely arbitrary, cultural forms bears implications which could have profound impact. Broadly speaking, Mormons in the United States consider culture as something that foreigners have, while what they have here in "Zion" are simply gospel truths. When the time comes that Mormons in the central homeland come to the realization that they too are constrained by cultural ways which have nothing directly to do with the gospel they espouse, the result could be a kind of Copernican revolution with attendant new insights into the Church and the Scriptures and the meaning of life.

The budding self-consciousness about Mormon culture, of which this article is symptomatic, leads not only to the question of the influence of the gospel on culture but also of the reverse. Even more fundamentally it arouses curiosity about the meaning of culture in terms of the gospel. One statement in the Doctrine and Covenants (93:38-40) suggests an interpretation of culture:

> Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God. And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of

men, and because of the tradition of their fathers. But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

If "the tradition of their fathers" is read as "culture," the phenomenon is seen as a negative force on men, reminiscent of Freud's characterization of culture ("civilization") as a burden imposed on the proper condition of man.[37] Joseph Smith and Brigham Young saw "tradition" in a similar light.

> We frequently see some of them [the Saints], after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their tradition.[38]

> There is nothing, no law of God nor of men, that makes men conform to certain actions and beliefs, at certain times, as tradition.[39]

In the light of the above quotation from the Doctrine and Covenants, the concept of a "celestial culture" articulated by Arturo and Genevieve De Hoyos, may be called into question.[40] If to live by truth ("things as they are") is the ultimate gospel goal, the only "culture" ultimately ought to be "light and truth" rather than any "tradition" at all. In any case we might well operate on the assumption that even "Mormon culture" is but a temporary expedient, inescapable given our present limitations, but in no sense approaching an ultimate.

NOTES

[1]Thomas F. O'Dea, "Foreword," in Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints. The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (First Phoenix edition) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. xiv.

[2]Evon Z. Vogt and Ethel M. Albert, "The 'Comparative Study of Values in Five Cultures' Project," in Evon Z. Vogt and Ethel M. Albert, *People of Rimrock. A Study of Values in Five Cultures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 1-33.

[3]O'Dea, *op. cit.*

[4]"American Subcultural Continua as Exemplified by the Mormons and Texans," *American Anthropologist*, 57 (1955), 1163-1172.

[5]See footnote 2.

[6]Clyde Kluckhohn, "Toward a Comparison of the Value-Emphases in Different Cultures," in L. D. White, ed., *The State of the Social Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 116-132.

[7]"The Evolution of Mormon Culture in Eastern Arizona," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 40 (Spring 1972), 136.

[8]John L. Sorenson, "Mirror for Mormons," in *Anthropology and the Latter-day Saints* (Leadership Week Lectures, duplicated) (Provo: Brigham Young University Adult Education and Extension Services, 1959), pp. 27-36. Compare Marion J. Levy, Jr., *The Structure of Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

[9]John L. Sorenson, "Industrialization and Social Change: A Controlled Comparison of Two Utah Communities." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1961.

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[15]*Mormon Arts*, Volume 1. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1972).

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[17]Leeman L. Perkins, letter to the editor, *Dialogue*, 1 (Summer 1966), 9; Douglas Hill, "Art and Belief; A Critique," *Dialogue*, 2 (Spring 1967), 52-54; James L. Haseltine, "Mormons and the Visual Arts," *Dialogue*, 1 (Summer 1966), 17-29; James L. Haseltine, *100 Years of Utah Painting* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, 1965). (Haseltine's criticism of the idea of Mormon art is mainly implicit in his treatment of Utah art as a unit.)

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[33]Kluckhohn, *op. cit.*

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[35]See especially Gordon Thomasson's "Thoughts on Mormon Neoorthodoxy," *Dialogue*, 5 (Winter 1970), 124; also his "A Study of Mormon Language, Religious Language, and Rhetoric," duplicated and distributed by him under the auspices of Mormon Heritage, Santa Barbara, California.

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