

BIRTH CONTROL AMONG THE MORMONS: INTRODUCTION TO AN INSISTENT QUESTION

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*"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful
and multiply, and replenish the earth . . ."*

Genesis 1:28

"Birth control" is a relatively new expression, coined only sixty years ago. The desire to control births is several thousand years older. Early Egyptian, Chinese, Greek, Roman and Moslem medical lore all included potions and practices to limit fertility. Semi-reliable contraceptive measures were known in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, and at least some early American colonists were familiar with them as well. The extent and use of this knowledge is difficult to measure. Most students of the Western experience believe that except in France, contraception was uncommon before the nineteenth century. Within the Christian world, public morality almost unanimously condemned such practices as interference with Divine will.¹

In early nineteenth century America, published discussions of contraception were both rare and risky. The first publications dealing with specific techniques did not appear until the early 1830's. Neither (there were two) were well received, and the more explicit earned its physician-author an obscenity conviction with several months at hard labor.²

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A topic of theoretical relevance, which was more socially acceptable, did receive considerable national attention—the Malthusian thesis that the rate of population growth would eventually exceed the earth's "sustaining capacity." Even the Mormon *Evening & Morning Star* joined in by reprinting a "table of population" correlating births and deaths with the price of corn.³ Several years later the *Latter-Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* went considerably further. The March, 1837 issue carried a short article entitled "Preventive Check" that extolled the custom in Germany and Moravia of delaying one to four years "between betrothal and final rite" as "the best Malthusian plan . . . being founded on prudence." The author, presumably editor Warren Cowdery, noted that this interposed "a seasonable pause before young parties enter into the expense of a family and house"; that it also provided an opportunity to discover "any cause, such as drunken or idle habits or poverty which might make marriage unsuitable"; and that it served as a limited deterrent to population growth.⁴

Such comments were unusual. For most Mormons, as with Americans in general, population pressures were at best only theoretical considerations. Their home, the archetypal land of plenty, was accommodating the highest national birth rate in the Western world.⁵ In considering demographic problems, the Mormons, among others, were as willing to turn to scripture as to official figures and projections. Gloomy predictions of overpopulation were incompatible with the first great commandment to multiply and replenish the earth. Since the Lord had not rescinded this directive, it was unreasonable to assume that he would send more spirits to the earth than could be accommodated.⁶

Notwithstanding the lack of credence given Malthusian projections, Apostle Orson Pratt made one curious concession to the compelling mathematics of Malthus' argument. Combining the latest in science and scripture with characteristic enthusiasm, he reached the unique conclusion that the timing of the creation of the earth was related to population pressures in the pre-existence. Our previous estate, he surmised, had become "overstocked with inhabitants" and the "superficial contents too limited to yield sufficient sustenance for the innumerable millions of [the] father's family."⁷

With the Mormon move west, Malthusian rhetoric lost whatever marginal credence it previously had been accorded. The Kingdom needed more men, not fewer. Isolated in an empty Great Basin, the Saints apparently sustained a very high birth rate for most of the remainder of the nineteenth century—and in so doing distinguished themselves in yet another way from their countrymen to the east. While the Mormons probably maintained a rate near 50 births per thousand population, the national birth rate fell from about 50 in 1830 to less than 40 in 1875; by 1900 a new low was reached nationally, 28 per thousand.⁸

Most demographers cite voluntary family limitation as a major factor in the declining national fertility. Although the specific methods by which this limitation was achieved have not been fully delineated, contemporaries (most often appalled by the decline) frequently identified three principal causes: the use of preventive (contraceptive) techniques, abortion, and infanticide. The last of these, although not strictly a form of fertility control, usually was not distinguished from the preceding two (particularly abortion) in the heated national polemics of the mid- to late nineteenth century. Moreover, while legal distinctions were made among the three, ethically and statistically there frequently

was no distinction.⁹ Vestiges of this association are evident in anti-birth control discussions well into the twentieth century. It is important, therefore, to review briefly the early national and Mormon commentary on these alternative methods of "fertility control."

Despite its prominence in the polemics, infanticide was apparently never a common practice in America. In Europe, however, where several Mormon Church leaders served missions, it was reportedly one of the major factors limiting population growth.¹⁰ Initially, abortions were also apparently rare in America. Few states had legislation on the subject; those that did generally considered it a misdemeanor, and then only when performed after "quicken-ing" (usually about the 18th to 20th week of pregnancy).¹¹ By mid-nineteenth century, however, abortions had become much more common. Around 1860 a national anti-abortion crusade developed, spearheaded by the medical profession, the Catholic and some of the Protestant clergy, and the Eastern press, aimed primarily at strengthening and standardizing state anti-abortion statutes. The ensuing sensational public discussion peaked in the 1870's, with allegations that the number of annual "foeticides" or infanticides was in the tens of thousands (or millions!).¹²

The extensive national attention had a demonstrable impact in Utah. In 1876 the territory's first anti-abortion law was enacted, carrying a penalty of two to ten years for performing an abortion; a woman convicted of having an abortion received one to five years "unless the same is necessary to preserve her life." It was also during this period that one finds the first real discussion of fertility control by leading Mormons.

The abortion issue had provided Church leaders a timely, ready-made vehicle with which to wage a moral counterattack against the critics of polygamy. They argued that while Mormons were openly and honorably living with several women, their "monogamous" critics were living dishonorably with mistresses and prostitutes, and compounding their sin by destroying the offspring of their illegitimate alliances.¹³ Capitalizing on the widely circulated reports of an increasing national incidence of abortion and infanticide, Church leaders repeatedly castigated the "whited walls and painted sepulchers" of the East for practicing "their hellish arts" at the very time the Easterners were self-righteously inveighing against Mormon "innocence, virtue, and integrity."¹⁴ The argument was not entirely fair, for it had been the highly publicized campaign *against* abortion that provided the data on which the Mormon accusations were based. Regardless of the private practice in America, public advocacy of abortion was always uncommon. At the least, the Mormons argued, the Easterners should "sweep out their own Augean stables" before looking to the West for a cause.

There had been sporadic references to abortion in Mormon publications and discourses from the 1840's on, but it was not until 1878 that the subject became a common theme. Then, following the decade of John Taylor's administration (1877-1887), abortion again received little additional attention for nearly a century.¹⁵ The motivation for the extensive Church attention apparently was not concern over a local problem. The infrequent concessions that such practices were present in Utah usually linked them with non-Mormon elements,¹⁶ though there was also acknowledgment that a few of the less faithful were involved.¹⁷ Overwhelmingly, the leadership viewed the prodigious child-bearing among

the membership as evidence of a resounding rejection of such practices, and frequently help up Mormon fertility as a standard of righteousness to the world¹⁸

Despite the extensive Mormon commentary on abortion during this period, there was no single comprehensive treatise on the ethical issues involved. An underlying "doctrinal" position, however, can readily be identified in these early discourses. First and foremost, abortion was termed "murder" by the Church leadership. Especially during the period of the most vigorous polemics (1878–1885), virtually every leader who dealt with the subject was unequivocal on this point.¹⁹ Essentially no attempt was made to distinguish between abortion ("foeticide," "destruction of embryos") and child murder ("infanticide," "infant murder"). The eternal implications of each was described in the same terms. Understandably, then, any involvement in abortion was considered to have grave personal consequences. In the words of George Q. Cannon,

... they will be damned with the deepest damnation; because it is the damnation of shedding innocent blood, for which there is no forgiveness. . . . They are outside the pale of salvation. They are in a position that nothing can be done for them. They cut themselves off by such acts from all hopes of salvation . . .²⁰

Those assisting the principals were equally guilty. Even "a man that would sanction such a thing in his family, or that would live with a woman guilty of such acts, shares in the crime of murder."²¹ More immediately, President John Taylor instructed bishops and stake presidents to insure that those involved in abortions not be allowed in the temples, and "to sever them from the Church; they shall not have a place in the Church and Kingdom of God. . . ."²²

Unlike some religious groups concerned with the abortion/murder issue, the Mormon position did not derive from a doctrine fixing the time when a spirit entered an embryo or fetus, nor to an assumed irreversibility of this union. Even today there remains no official Church doctrine on this relationship. Brigham Young believed that the spirit entered the fetus at the time of quickening,²³ but his understanding of the relationship presupposed a surprising degree of flexibility,

... when some people have little children born at 6 & 7 months pregnancy & they live but a few hours then die they bless them &c. but I dont do it for I think that such a spirit has not a fair chance for I think that such a spirit will have a chance of occupying another Tabernacle and developing itself . . .²⁴

Early Mormon references to contraception were almost non-existent except for the few associated with condemnations of abortion and infanticide. John Taylor, for example, lamented, in 1882, that "already are licentiousness and debauchery corrupting, undermining and destroying society; already are we interfering with the laws of nature and stopping the functions of life, and have become the slayers of our own offspring. . . ."²⁵ Speaking, as he was, of American society in general, Taylor's observations were well-founded—both in the case of abortion and contraception. In spite of the seemingly hostile reception afforded the early public advocates of contraception, their writings gained increasingly wide circulation in the United States in the mid- and late nineteenth century.²⁶ The techniques advocated, rudimentary by modern standards, were often capable of significantly reducing average fertility. Withdrawal (coitus interruptus), vaginal sponges or tampons, spermicidal douching solutions, and

primitive condoms were all described in the works published in the 1830's. A decade later the vulcanization of rubber led to a more effective and economical rubber condom. By 1866 these contraceptives were allegedly for sale "by every druggist and in all pharmacies. . . ."27 Within another decade public manifestations of the fertility control industry had reached such proportions that distribution of contraceptive literature was banned nationally under the "Comstock" obscenity statutes. Later, still other effective contraceptives were introduced—the diaphragm and stem pessary (predecessor to the IUD). Regardless of the public antipathy to contraception, knowledge and availability of these techniques probably played an increasing, if not dominant, role in the declining national fertility in the last half of the century.

Mormon references to the specifics of contraceptive technique were euphemistically vague. Brigham Young spoke of "attempts to destroy and dry up the fountains of life"; Erastus Snow of "taking villainous compounds to induce barrenness and unfruitfulness" and of "devices of wicked men and women" that resulted in "apparent sterility"; and Parley Pratt found scripture proscription of "untimely union, excess, or voluntary act, [which] prevented propagation. . . ."28

The Saints apparently withstood such worldly incursions. As Erastus Snow succinctly recapitulated:

They do not patronize the vendor of noxious, poisonous, destructive medicines to procure abortion, infanticide, child murder, and other wicked devices, whereby to check the multiplication of their species, in order to facilitate the gratification of fleshly lusts. . . .²⁹

Mormon opposition to contraception was not based solely on association with abortion; nor was abortion condemned solely in the context of the sixth commandment. Again, in the words of Erastus Snow, ". . . that abominable and soul-destroying doctrine of devils, infanticide and foeticide, which is practiced to no little extent in the Christian world . . . is in open violation to the laws of nature and the law of God to our first parents, to 'multiply and replenish the earth. . . .'"³⁰

Although secondary in the abortion polemics, the "first great commandment" was easily the major focus of nineteenth century Mormon commentary on the broader subject of fertility (and its control). Joseph Smith spoke of "the blessings . . . to multiply and replenish, with the addition of long life and posterity."³¹ This theme was continued in Utah, and when the practice of polygamy became public, "replenishment" was cited as one of its major justifications. According to semi-official apologist Orson Pratt:

The object of marriage is to multiply the species, according to the command of God. A woman with one husband can fulfill this command, with greater facilities, than if she had a plurality . . . But a plurality of wives would be the means of greatly increasing a family, and of thus fulfilling the command, not only to a far greater extent on the part of the husband, but also on the part of the females who otherwise might have been under the necessity of remaining single forever. . . .³²

Brigham Young was more direct: "This is the reason why the doctrine of plurality was revealed, that noble spirits which are waiting for tabernacles might be brought forth."³³ There was never any equivocation; the command had been to multiply, and the prime reason for the institution of marriage—plural or otherwise—was to carry out this instruction.³⁴

It did not follow that everyone ought to (or should even be permitted to) marry and have children. Beginning with the early *Messenger and Advocate* suggestion that "drunken or idle habits or poverty . . . might make . . . marriage unsuitable,"³⁵ certain groups were consistently identified as unfit for marriage. Parley Pratt was certain that "a wise legislation, or the law of God . . . would not suffer the idiot, the confirmed, irreclaimable drunkard, the man of hereditary disease, or of vicious habits, to possess or retain a wife. . . ."³⁶ Orson Pratt took a somewhat broader view:

. . . have the wicked the same right to the blessings of a numerous posterity, under this divine institution [of marriage], as the righteous? We answer, they have not.

. . . Who can . . . believe that the wicked ought to multiply upon the earth and raise up candidates for the devil's kingdom? No person can believe this, who believes in the Bible. . . .³⁷

Yet the wicked *were* multiplying and thereby creating bodies unworthy of the many righteous spirits awaiting their earthly experience.³⁸ To Brigham Young the implications were clear:

Do you understand this? I have told you many times that there are multitudes of pure and holy spirits waiting to take tabernacles, now what is our duty?—to prepare tabernacles for them; to take a course that will not tend to drive those spirits into the families of the wicked, where they will be trained in wickedness, debauchery and every species of crime. It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can. . . .³⁹

This particular tenet was integral to the justification of polygamy. Church leaders rarely argued that there were insufficient numbers of men to marry the available women; rather, that there were not enough *worthy* men.⁴⁰

Twentieth century advocates of contraception generally assume the validity of a non-procreative role for sex in marriage. Although this was not a major point of discussion in the nineteenth century, at least some early Mormon leaders would have agreed. Orson Pratt believed that God had "ordained that pure and virtuous love should be incorporated with sexual love; that by combination of the two, permanent unions in the marriage may be formed, and the species be multiplied in righteousness." "Pure and virtuous love," he added, "should always exist between a husband and each of his wives, as well as sexual love."⁴¹ Parley Pratt in similar language, declared:

The object of union of the sexes is the propagation of their species, or procreation; also for mutual affection, and cultivation of those eternal principles of never-ending charity and benevolence which are inspired by the Eternal Spirit. . . .⁴²

It did not follow that one could legitimately separate the roles of sex in marriage. Those who intentionally did so deprived themselves of the ennobling aspects of each. Husbands and wives who succumbed to their "fleshly lusts" and secured for themselves "the pleasure of self-gratification without bearing the responsibilities of maternity" were one and the same with those who engaged in abortion and infanticide, or otherwise drying up the "wellsprings of life."

Nonetheless, in some special circumstances coitus was permissible when it could not have resulted in pregnancy. Responding to a question by Parley Pratt who had asked what was "strictly right" in the "connection of a man with his

wife," Brigham Young advised, "As to sexual connection during pregnancy, just as they pleased about that, they could suit themselves."⁴³ Additionally, although nursing mothers are frequently infertile, coitus was also permissible 40 (or 70) days after the time of delivery.⁴⁴

Thus, by the close of the nineteenth century, the Church had developed a comprehensive, if not systematic or exhaustive, set of beliefs and teachings relevant to the subject of fertility control. Although public expressions had been motivated primarily by indirectly related theoretical considerations, there was clearly no place within the Kingdom for such "hellish" practices. Marriage (and sex) was instituted by God for the propagation of the species, and on the Saints themselves rested the greatest obligation to have large families. Their performance in fulfilling this obligation was an obvious source of pride to Church leaders.

It should not be inferred, however, that there was no form of fertility control among the nineteenth century Mormons. Although there is no direct evidence to date that the spread of effective contraception (or abortion) had any impact on Mormon fertility for most of the century, in a very real sense child spacing was almost universally evident from the earliest days. Notwithstanding an early assumption by the *Messenger and Advocate* that most women had 22 potentially fertile years, and Orson Pratt's sanguine supposition that women could bear a child a year, the average (monogamous) Mormon mother reportedly bore "only" about eight children.⁴⁵ Frequently there were 20 to 30 month intervals between births.⁴⁶ This can probably be attributed primarily to the lengthy periods mothers breastfed their infants.⁴⁷

Another practice which would have contributed to child spacing was conjugal abstinence or (for the married Mormon missionary and polygamist Church leader) marital absence.⁴⁸ Such "techniques" were not necessarily voluntary. There was no safe alternative to breast feeding,⁴⁹ nor could the marital abstinence of missions nor logistical limitations of polygamy necessarily be avoided.⁵⁰ These were fertility controlling factors nonetheless. The most significant limitations on Mormon family size may well have been infant mortality and maternal morbidity, which remained high for most of the century. Finally, there is some evidence of intentional "spacing" as well—such as the rotational pattern of childbirth suggested in some polygamous families, and the reproductive delay often apparent after the birth of twins.

All these influences were continually present, and so had little impact on fertility trends. A decline in overall fertility would have required a new development. If Mormon birth rates were falling late in the century, the decline was apparently not evident to the Church leadership. Perhaps their view was obscured by a lower infant and child mortality—for things were not all that they seemed.⁵¹

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. . . there is a certain class of Latter-day Saints that have come to think as the gentile world does—that it is not stylish, not nice to have large families; and therefore we find, much to our sorrow, that in some instances steps are being taken to prevent these spirits being tabernacled by them. . . .

Apostle Abraham O. Woodruff, 1900

With the arrival of the twentieth century, two significant changes emerged in Mormon discourses on fertility control. First, although abortion and infanticide

were still occasionally spoken of, by far the greatest attention was devoted to "preventive" practices. Second, the remarks no longer were directed at the non-Mormon world, but toward Zion itself.

Apostle Abraham Woodruff was among the first to note that there was "a spirit creeping in among certain classes of Latter-day Saints which is not of God, but of the world." "Reliable sources," he announced during General Conference in April, 1900 had informed him that steps were being taken by some individuals "to prevent spirits being tabernacled." He hoped that "some of the older members of this quorum, or . . . the Presidency" might address the subject.⁵² President Joseph F. Smith responded to Woodruff's call with an expression of his own concern, adding,

Those who have taken upon themselves the responsibility of wedded life should see to it that they do not abuse the course of nature; that they do not destroy the principle of life within them, nor violate any of the commandments of God. The command which he gave in the beginning to multiply and replenish the earth is still in force upon the children of men. Possibly no greater sin could be committed by the people who have embraced this Gospel than to prevent or to destroy life in the manner indicated. . . .⁵³

Two years later Woodruff's information was largely corroborated by the Church statistical report for 1901 (possibly the earliest reporting a Church birth rate). "There is something wrong," reported the *Juvenile Instructor*, "either with ourselves or with our statistics—possibly with both; but we trust it is with the statistics, as that is the lesser evil." Not only had the marriage rate declined, but "our average birth rate, if we can believe our statistical reports, is far too low. It is below that of the nations of modern Christendom to whose birth rate we have been able to obtain access. Ours, as reported, is a little over thirty-five per annum in each thousand souls."⁵⁴

The reaction to this discovery was predictable. A charge was given to review the statistics and to keep more accurate records, and markedly increased attention was given in Church discourses and publications to the obligation to have large families. Throughout the remainder of the decade, the Saints were enjoined to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth," and to abandon the "tendency to postpone the responsibilities [of marriage] until middle life." Bachelorhood and "wilfully motherless wives" came under particular attack, while the mothers of large families were singled out for special recognition.⁵⁵

The mothers of Zion (or the statisticians) responded to the call. Within a decade, the Church could announce a birthrate of 38 per thousand, up ten percent. Although not as high as desired, there was still room for considerable pride that this was "the highest birth-rate in the world, as far as available statistics show."⁵⁶ (By comparison, the national rate was nearly ten per thousand lower. At these rates, a representative Mormon mother would average nearly five children, while her non-Mormon counterpart would be closer to 3½.)

Nonetheless, ground had been lost, and it became an accepted if lamented fact that fertility control had had an impact on the Mormon community. Paraphrasing a letter from a physician, President Joseph F. Smith wrote in 1908,

The doctor is authority for the statement that a great many people, even among the Latter-day Saints, hold to the view that parents should control the size of their families; that they should not be the means of bringing children into the world unless they are able in every way to

provide for their children's wants in keeping with modern requirements'; that prevention is justifiable, even where parents are in strong physical health, provided criminal measures are not resorted to. He admits that, without doubt, there are ways by which it is possible. . . .⁵⁷

The doctor had written to ask, "Is it proper and right in the sight of God for parents intentionally to prevent, by any means whatever, the spirits . . . from obtaining earthly tabernacles? I have, of course, only reference to parents lawfully married, and specifically to Latter-day Saints."⁵⁸ Similar questions were raised by a sister in Chicago, "Is it wrong for married people to refuse to have children when they can have them? Is it right for a poor couple to have a large family when the mother is sickly and the children receive very little care?"⁵⁹

The sister's questions were handled by B. F. Cummings, editor of *Liahona The Elders' Journal*, who turned for his answer to the rhetoric (and undifferentiated perspective) of the not too distant past. Refusal to have children was "a great sin":

. . . Neither poverty nor impaired health on the part of either or both parents can be pleaded in justification of pre-natal destruction of offspring. The soundness of this view will become apparent if the form of the question is slightly changed, thus: 'Is it right for a poor couple to kill some of their children when the wife is sickly and they receive very little care.' . . .⁶⁰

President Smith's response to the physician, published several months later in *The Improvement Era*, was in significant contrast:

In a general way, and as a rule, the answer to this question is an emphatic negative. I do not hesitate to say that prevention is wrong. It brings in its train a host of social evils. It destroys the morals of a community and nation. It creates hatred and selfishness in the hearts of men and women, and perverts their natural qualities of love and service, changing them to hate and aversion. It causes death, decay, and degeneration instead of life and growth, and advancement. And finally, it disregards or annuls the great commandment of God to man, 'Multiply and replenish the earth.'

I am now speaking of the normally healthy man and woman. But that there are weak and sickly people who in wisdom, discretion and common sense should be counted as exceptions, only strengthens the general rule. It is not necessary to go into detail concerning the wisdom of prevention in such cases, only to say that in my estimation no prevention, even in such cases, is legitimate except through absolute abstinence.⁶¹

This statement probably represents the first published acknowledgment that under selected circumstances, a form of intentional fertility control was acceptable to the Church. The overall thrust of the Church position remained unchanged.

Despite the growing and acknowledged change in national fertility patterns during this period, President Smith's perspective was typical of most commentary of the day. On this subject the Mormons remained in the social main-streams. The marked decline in American fertility, particularly among the "old American stock" and the more highly educated, had for some time been the cause of considerable national concern. It was in this context that Theodore Roosevelt popularized the expression "race suicide," which quickly became the rallying cry for critics of voluntary family limitation.⁶² Publicly, contraception remained an unacceptable, legally proscribed, threat to the national well-being, openly advocated primarily by the radical fringe.

The following decade, 1910-1920, brought several new and significant de-

velopments. The most notable, perhaps, was the organization of a widely reported national movement to legalize "birth control" and free American wives from "compulsory" childbearing. Identified most frequently with activist Margaret Sanger, the movement initially remained associated with radicalism, and had only a limited national following. But not all who openly advocated birth control were radicals. The *Relief Society Magazine* noted in 1916 that there were also "fashionable women, and . . . fashionable doctors and ministers who advocate this movement." In view of these developments, editor Susa Young Gates requested that some of the "leading brethren" express themselves once again on the subject.⁶³ In response she received and published commentaries from six of the Apostles, and the Presiding Bishop.⁶⁴

These articles, collectively the most extensive discussion of birth control to date, precipitated "animated and sometimes heated discussion" in the Relief Society.⁶⁵ Because of the "widely distributed interest and . . . inquiries" which followed, the First Presidency was asked "if they approved in full" the statements that had been published. In response, the Presidency wrote:

We give our unqualified endorsement to these articles, including that of Elder Joseph F. Smith, Jr., and commend the sentiments to members and non-members . . . everywhere.⁶⁶

Retroactively, then, these discussions represent to some extent the first explicitly sanctioned "official" statement of a Church position on birth control.

The essays were all in essential agreement; none departed substantially from the established position of the Church. The commandment was clear, and those who failed to comply did so at grave eternal risk.⁶⁷ Moreover, those women who took preventive measures risked serious health problems,⁶⁸ as well as the emotional trauma of old age without children.⁶⁹ In the rare circumstances in which some fertility control was appropriate, the only acceptable means would be by conjugal abstinence.⁷⁰ While few concrete guidelines were given as to what constituted an acceptably large family, several articles expressly rejected the "fashionable" notion that families should be restricted to only two to four children. Apostle Rudger Clawson thought most women capable of having a family of eight to ten, and encouraged reproduction to the "utmost limit."⁷¹

The particular attention attracted to Joseph Fielding Smith's remarks were probably due to two assertions. First,

. . . those who attempt to pervert the ways of the Lord, and to prevent their offspring from coming into the world . . . are guilty of one of the most heinous crimes in the category. There is no promise of eternal salvation and exaltation for such as they. . . .⁷²

If Church "modernists" disapproved of the tone of this statement, they either ignored or were unaware of the ample nineteenth century precedents.⁷³ A second probable source of discussion was Smith's condemnation of those who were concerned with the relatively high fertility of the "so-called 'lower classes' . . ." So far as he was concerned, "the old stock is surely being replaced by the lower classes' of a sturdier and more worthy race. . . ." These remarks touched not only on a major tenet of birth control proponents, but were also directly relevant to the intensely discussed eugenics movement, then at its height nationally. This movement commanded a great deal of attention among the Mormons—perhaps in part because the Mormon defense of polygamy had anticipated popular eugenics theory. It was not long, however, before this

enthusiasm lost much of its attraction for both Mormons and non-Mormons alike. Though initially many Church leaders praised the "new science," their endorsement never extended to the use of birth control as part of its program. The eugenicists themselves were split on this point.⁷⁴

The Relief Society dutifully responded to the exhortations of the leading brethren. At their next conference (April, 1917), an extensive resolution was "unanimously passed" on the subject of "birth control or race suicide." After listing birth control organizations in fifteen foreign locales, and twenty U.S. cities which advocated "the use of contraceptive devices to prevent child bearing," it was resolved:

... That we call upon our Latter-day Saint women everywhere to repel this pernicious doctrine both in private conversation, in public talks, in our own homes and families; to pass similar resolutions in all our stakes and ward organizations and live up to them.

... That we sever all connections with any club, society, or associates who advocate and practice birth-control or race suicide. That we refuse to sustain papers, magazines, publishers and physicians who teach this doctrine.

... That we sustain by our voice and vote all laws and law makers who advocate and maintain laws prohibiting every unnatural and immoral birth-control propaganda. . . .⁷⁵

Shortly thereafter President Joseph F. Smith again addressed the Relief Society on birth control. These comments are among the most frequently cited on the subject. While somewhat stronger than his earlier remarks, they also included another exception to the general rule—reflecting no doubt the recent attention given eugenics:

... I regret, I think it is a crying evil, that there should exist a sentiment or a feeling among any members of the Church to curtail the birth of their children. I think that is a crime whenever it occurs, where husband and wife are in possession of health and vigor and are free from impurities that would be entailed upon their posterity. I believe that where people undertake to curtail or prevent the birth of their children that they are going to reap disappointment by and by. I have no hesitancy in saying that I believe this is one of the greatest crimes in the world today, this evil practice. . . .⁷⁶

Although admonitions against birth control continued to be common for the next few years, by 1920 their frequency had diminished. The influence of Joseph F. Smith during the formative years of Mormon teachings on birth control is unmistakable. Much as John Taylor's administration reflected the greatest concern over abortion, the years that Joseph F. Smith led the Church (1901–1918) show the greatest concentration of discourses on birth control (matched only in the post-Pill era).

Mormon fertility probably held its own during this period of intense exhortation; the birth rate among members was frequently announced as higher than the national average, or even as "unequaled by anything in the world. . . ."⁷⁷ Indeed, the fertility reported in several communities was spectacular. Birth rates, per thousand, of 45, 50 or higher were achieved in some Utah counties, rates twice the national average.⁷⁸ Demographer Warren Thompson, writing a decade later after an extensive study of the 1920 census, concluded that the Mormons were "the one clear case of the influence of religion on the size of the family. . . ."⁷⁹

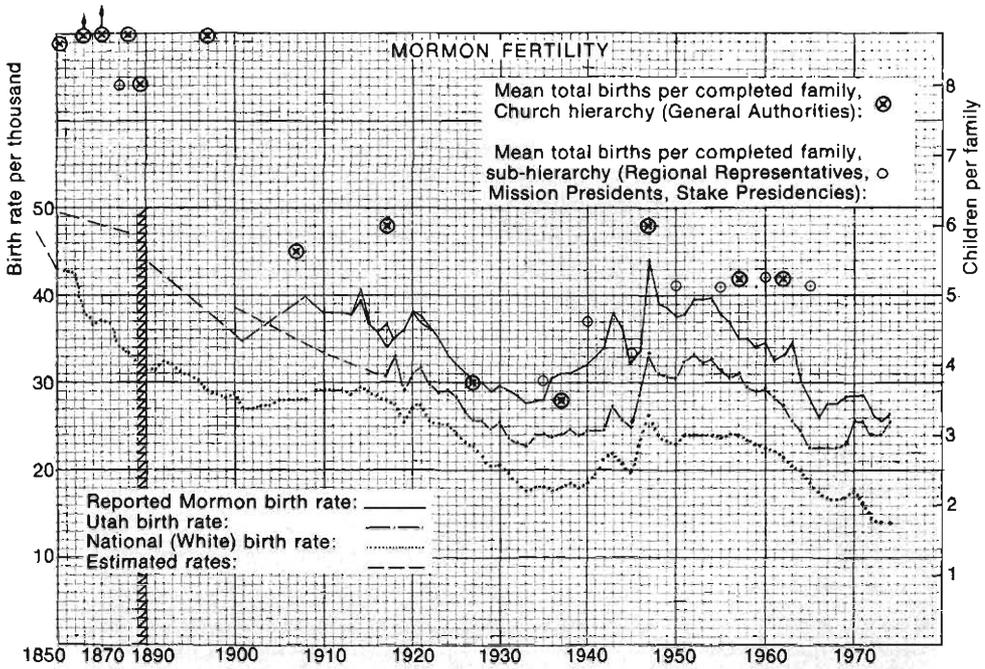


Figure 1 The striking similarity in the trends of Mormon, Utah, and national birth rates, and family sizes of general authorities and "subhierarchical" Church leaders is subject to several qualifications.¹²⁰ First, "fertility rates" (births per 1000 women ages 15-44) is a better measure than birth rates, but fertility rates are not available for the Mormons. Second, completed family size is arbitrarily imposed on birth rate data at a ratio of 1 to 8 (i.e., four children being equated with a birth rate of 32 per thousand). This assumes certain population characteristics present in the U.S. from 1850 to the mid-1940's, but *not known* for the Mormon groups. Third, the reported Church birth rate probably has been erroneous until relatively recently, and is no longer directly comparable to U.S. national figures because of the growth of the international Church.

Church statistical data is replete with inconsistencies. The natural growth rate (births minus deaths) added to annual converts yields a total growth rate well in excess of that reportedly experienced for every decade for which figures are available (1920-1970). Natural growth alone accounts for over 100% of total growth for most years between 1920 and 1950. In particular, the birth rates for the Forties are almost surely too high. In addition to accounting for 150% of reported Church growth, the rates were uncharacteristically independent of the Utah rate (which is paralleled rather closely every other decade from 1920 to 1970). Additionally, the annual number of children blessed, which normally was about 100% of theoretical births, dropped to 80% of claimed births during most of the decade. Several other years (e.g., 1963) are characterized by similar inconsistencies.

Twentieth century fertility trends have proven to be remarkably volatile manifestations of the American psyche, sensitive to a number of pragmatic as well as ethical considerations. Notwithstanding the established and unequivocal position of the Church on voluntary family limitation, twentieth century Mormons have been influenced by some of these pragmatic considerations as well. The early Twenties brought hard times to Utah, a decade ahead of the nation. Possibly the discussion of economic justifications for family

limitation was no longer an abstract doctrinal exercise. Whatever the cause, the effect was unmistakable. Beginning with 1920, Mormon birth rates declined steadily for over a decade, falling from a reported 38 per thousand in 1920 to less than 28 for the years 1933–1935 (a low surpassed only within the past decade). Nor was this decline limited to the “rank-and-file” of Mormondom. Those individuals later selected to serve as general authorities of the Church who were in their child-bearing years during this period averaged about half as many children as their immediate predecessors. In comparison to the fertility of the senior authorities who had led the anti-birth control campaign of the preceding decade, the drop was even more pronounced.⁸⁰

Paradoxically, as the Mormon birth rate declined, so also did the frequency of public references by Church leaders to birth control and the obligations to have large families. Doctrinally, however, there were no major changes. Much of B. H. Roberts’ lengthy discussion of marriage in 1928, for example, could as well have been dated a decade before. All of the major elements remained—emphasis on having large families, condemnation of “indulgence in the sensual delight of sex without incurring the risks, the pains and the responsibilities of parenthood,” and allusions to the “physical and moral and spiritual” evils of birth control. There was one interesting adjustment:

Of the over-prolific poor and ignorant, multiplying beyond all reason of hope to provide for bare necessities, to say nothing of opportunities for good prospects in life, wholesome nourishment, decent clothing and education—for these, enlightenment and patient instruction, education. . . .⁸¹

Education, Roberts explained, should include “proper sex information,” not in “mechanical and chemical” contraception, but in “prudential self-restraint,” “periods of continence self-imposed” that would “keep a family within hailing distance of rugged well being.”

The decline in birth rate ended for both Mormons and non-Mormons in the mid-to-late Thirties, and by the early Forties rates had returned to pre-depression levels. On the issue of fertility control, however, there was no turning back. The gap between increasing personal practices and longstanding public repudiation had almost been closed. Judicial decisions (with major cases in 1933, 1936, 1940) had ended most legal restrictions on contraceptives. In 1937 the conservative but representative American Medical Association endorsed contraception in “voluntary family limitation.” Popularly published polls indicated that by the mid-Thirties a majority of American women believed in the practice of birth control.⁸² And a large majority of the Mormon students at Brigham Young University also shared this view. When asked in a survey in 1935, “Do you believe in the practice of birth control in any form?” over 80% of the nearly 1300 respondents answered *yes*.⁸³

Although Church leaders returned occasionally to the subject of fertility control, the overall Mormon commentary during the period from 1929 to 1940 was significantly less than in any other decade in the twentieth century. This was nonetheless a period of continued, if subtle, doctrinal adjustment. President Heber J. Grant’s reply to an inquiry on birth control in 1939 had a slightly different emphasis. He quoted the frequently cited statement of Joseph F. Smith, and also wrote.

. . . Married couples who, by inheritance and proper living, have themselves been blessed with mental and physical vigor are recreant in their duty if they refuse to meet the natural and rightful responsibility of parenthood. Of course, in every ideal home the health of the mother, as well as the intelligence and health of the children should receive careful consideration.⁸⁴

Another development shortly became evident. Responding privately to a personal inquiry, Apostle John A. Widtsoe in 1942 wrote that "as far as I know the Church has not expressed itself as to birth control. It is generally understood by Church members that marriage should be accomplished by the begetting and rearing of children. . . ." ⁸⁵ Later the same year Widtsoe published a much expanded discussion on this "insistent question." In a remarkably even-handed treatment he considered various arguments, pro and con, on the use of birth control and having large families, and for the most part reached the traditional conclusions. Widtsoe did not reject all non-health related justifications for birth control as erroneous, but rather observed that "the economic excuse for birth control is seldom convincing." Then, covering new ground, he wrote,

Birth control when necessary should be accomplished in nature's way, which does not injure the man or the woman. A careful recognition of the fertile and sterile periods of woman would prove effective in the great majority of cases. Recent knowledge of woman's physiology reveals 'the natural method for controlling birth.' This method 'violates no principle of nature.' . . .⁸⁶

Widtsoe was not alone among Church leaders in believing that abstinence was not the only legitimate means of fertility regulation. Shortly thereafter, David O. McKay of the First Presidency also advised an inquirer, ". . . when the health of the mother demands it, the proper spacing of children may be determined by seeking medical counsel, by compliance with the processes of nature, or by continence. . . ." ⁸⁷ "The viewpoint of the Church," he wrote on another occasion, ". . . is that the use of artificial preventatives is strictly out of line, as long as the health of the wife is not seriously impaired by childbearing."⁸⁸

The accommodations evident during these years were by no means equally evident in the public remarks of all the Mormon leadership, nor should these changes be viewed as a complete capitulation to the birth control movement on the part of anyone. No Church leader at any time had advocated "small" or "limited" families, nor did anyone give much credence to economic or educational justifications for deferring or controlling family size. Nor was there any explicit suggestion that there was a legitimate role for sex in marriage without the associated responsibilities of parenthood. Moreover, several of the brethren apparently remained unwilling to sanction the use of actively employed birth control (be it "natural" or otherwise), regardless of the indications.

Most noticeable, perhaps, was the difference in tone between the statements of leaders such as Widtsoe and McKay, and those who appeared more traditionally oriented. Notable among this latter group were Joseph Fielding Smith and J. Reuben Clark. Apostle Smith never departed from the position set forth between 1910 and 1920 by himself and others under President Joseph F. Smith. Those "who wilfully and maliciously design to break this important commandment shall be damned. They cannot have the spirit of the Lord. . . ." ⁸⁹ Clark, a counselor in the First Presidency, was equally direct: "Remember the prime

purpose of sex desire is to beget children. Sex gratification must be had at that hazard. . . .⁹⁰

During the 1950's and early 1960's there were no new developments in the Church position on fertility regulation. Although birth control appears to have been widely accepted by the general membership, Mormon families during this period tended to be large (by twentieth century standards), swelled by the post-war baby boom to an average of four or more children per family. The birth rate again began a gradual decline in the mid-Fifties, but was still at pre-depression levels as late as 1963. There continued to be no open advocate of birth control among the Church hierarchy, but differences in their public emphasis became somewhat more pronounced. Apostle Hugh B. Brown, who had recently succeeded J. Reuben Clark as counselor to President McKay, espoused probably the broadest guidelines ever published by a Church leader:

The Latter-day Saints believe in large families wherever it is possible to provide for the necessities of life, for the health and education of their children, and when the physical and mental health of the mother permits.⁹¹

Although Brown was a strong advocate of large families, and supported the Church opposition to "birth control," his explicit flexibility clearly separated him from the traditional treatment of the subject. Responding to a personal inquiry he also wrote in October 1961 that the Church opposed birth control but added,

However, we advise mothers, and fathers, to be wise in their intimate relations and, if the health of the mother is involved and the welfare of the rest of the family is at stake, parents are justified in following the advice of good physicians, preferably members of the Church, who are of high moral standards and will advise such measures only for the protection of the health and life of the mother and other children. . . .⁹²

Joseph Fielding Smith remained most widely identified with the traditional view, but was not alone. In 1958, for example, Bruce McConkie published *Mormon Doctrine* (almost immediately a standard reference on Church doctrine for many Mormons in spite of its "unofficial" status), in which he briefly reviewed the situation and concluded, "Those who practice birth control—the regulation of births in a family by the employment of artificial means or contraceptives to prevent conception—are running counter to the foreordained plan of the Almighty. They are in rebellion against God and are guilty of gross wickedness."⁹³ A number of others spoke with a similar emphasis, though perhaps not quite so pointedly.

The year 1960 witnessed a development so significant in the history of contraception that many are now unaware that a "birth control movement" even existed prior to that date. The development, of course, was the introduction of the "pill" into American life, and with it the first seemingly safe and completely reliable means of conception control. This development was followed not long after by the rehabilitation and popularization of a second highly reliable fertility control device, the IUD. By mid-decade these two contraceptives were widely accepted, and were being used by millions of Americans. The impact on group fertility was not long in coming: by 1965 the national and Mormon birth rates had dropped to new lows, eclipsing even the records established in the depths of the depression three decades before.

These developments did not elicit a formal response from the Church. President McKay and the First Presidency continued to respond privately to personal inquiries. Copies of many of their letters (or extracts from them) were reproduced and circulated among interested Mormons. Viewed collectively, they reflect a consistent, moderately well-defined position very close to the philosophy espoused by President McKay while an Apostle and counselor in the Presidency.⁹⁴ In 1969, after the Mormon (and national) birth rates had once again begun to stabilize or rise, the First Presidency issued the first formal statement on birth control since 1918, the only formal discussion of the subject ever published over their name.⁹⁵ In effect it summarized, with few exceptions, the views set forth by the First Presidency and President McKay in private correspondence over the previous decade:

The First Presidency is being asked from time to time as to what the attitude of the Church is regarding birth control. . . .

We seriously regret that there should exist a sentiment or feeling among any members of the Church to curtail the birth of their children. We have been commanded to multiply and replenish the earth that we may have joy and rejoicing in our posterity.

Where husband and wife enjoy health and vigor and are free from impurities that would be entailed upon their posterity, it is contrary to the teachings of the Church artificially to curtail or prevent the birth of children. We believe those who practice birth control will reap disappointment by and by.

However, we feel that men must be considerate of their wives who bear the greater responsibility not only of bearing children, but of caring for them through childhood. To this end the mother's health and strength should be conserved and the husband's consideration for his wife is his first duty, and self-control a dominant factor in all their relationships.

It is our further feeling that married couples should seek inspiration and wisdom from the Lord that they may exercise discretion in solving their marital problems, and that they may be permitted to rear their children in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel.⁹⁶

Beyond a public restatement of the Presidency's views, these few paragraphs also effectively recapitulated fifty years of Church attitudes toward birth control. Beginning with an extract taken directly from Joseph F. Smith's remarks in 1917 (with some notable modifications), the statement adds (paragraph four) sentiments quite similar to the advice given by Heber J. Grant in 1939, and concludes with advice clearly anticipated in the previous words of David O. McKay, particularly those in the early Forties.⁹⁷ Although a doctrinal "oneness" may thereby have been conveyed, the incorporation of advice delivered in such radically different social contexts as these led to a certain ambiguity. Mormons of all shades of opinion found support in the statement for their personal views.

The undefined use of terms such as "birth control," "artificially," and "self-control" further complicated the picture. "Artificial" was (and continues to be) particularly confusing. Since it was first used shortly after the popularization of "natural" means of controlling fertility, and was frequently used as an adjective to describe birth control ("artificial birth control"), an obvious assumption is that it referred to the use of contraceptives. However, McKay (who most often used the expression) accepted the use of contraceptives for health reasons, but never condoned the use of any form of birth control for non-health reasons—in which case "artificial" might have been more akin to "arbitrary." At different times the context of McKay's remarks (and those of others) supported each of these alternatives.

Possibly the ambiguity in the 1969 statement was intentionally retained—to reinforce McKay’s judgment that the final decisions rested solely within the family. In a particularly well-known letter, he had written, “It is the policy of the Church to discourage the prevention of conception by any means unless the health of the mother demands it. It is also the policy of the Church to regard marital relations of husband and wife as *their personal problem and responsibility to be solved and to be established between themselves as a sacred relationship.*”⁹⁸ (emphasis added) Notwithstanding an occasional zealot, questions about birth control practices were not to be (and are not now) a part of the periodic moral evaluations Mormons undergo—for temple recommends, advancement in the priesthood, or when assuming positions of leadership.

The absence of a formal statement of Church position throughout most of the Sixties had not inhibited spokesmen from confidently setting forth “the Church position” any more than it had in previous decades. The Sixties, in fact, probably mark the high water point in total Mormon commentary on fertility control. Historical precedents, though by then providing a broad spectrum of interpretations, continued to provide substantial support for a conservative view, and the position most vigorously asserted was significantly harsher than the statement eventually released by the First Presidency. Still prominent in the conservative camp was Joseph Fielding Smith, whose discourses in 1965 and 1968⁹⁹ could easily have been interchanged with others he delivered on the subject over the preceding five decades. Apostle Mark E. Petersen, as author of the *Church News* editorials for much of this time, also waged a highly visible “Church” campaign against birth control and related issues.

In addition to the traditional arguments, two long standing minor themes reemerged during this period, and came to dominate the “unofficial” (i.e., other than public or private statements by the First Presidency) Church commentary. First, evidence of the physical risks associated with the use of contraceptives was repeatedly introduced into the discussions. The accompanying quasi-medical assertions frequently conveyed an ominous and distorted picture of the nature and incidence of the known risks (culminating in 1973 with a quotation from an “obstetrician” that “the pill is killing more women than automobile accidents”).¹⁰⁰

The second major focus was the issue of overpopulation. As previously noted, allusions to this subject occasionally appeared in nineteenth century Church discussions. These references continued to appear sporadically until 1960. In the Sixties, however, great national concern developed over population problems, and the “population explosion” became an increasingly frequent theme in Church discourses.

As had been the case a century before, those who addressed the subject overwhelmingly denied that there was either a present or potential population problem. God had “commanded his children to multiply and fill the earth, and the earth is far from full”: that commandment had never been “altered, modified, or cancelled.” For some even the suggestion that there might be a problem verged on blasphemy.

Are we so naive as to believe God would fail to provide for his own offspring as they come into the world? That would be to regard the Infinite as being less considerate than finite mortals. . . .¹⁰¹

No one denied that parts of the globe suffered from a disproportion of people and food supply, but the solution was seen in agriculture rather than population control. Had not the Lord declared, "For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare. . . ." Long range predictions were also considered ill-conceived, for they neglected to take into consideration "God's plans for this planet." Rather than fear "the danger of starving because of lack of food," we should be fearing the "burnings" of the wicked, which "in the not-too-distant future" would accompany Christ's return, leaving the earth "empty," "with few men left."¹⁰²

Understandably, from this perspective there was no justification for the use of fertility control in dealing with population problems. Efforts to subsidize birth control in heavily populated areas of the world were "in direct opposition to the plans and laws of God."¹⁰³

In the years since the First Presidency statement was issued in 1969, there have been no official changes in the Church position on birth control. The Mormon birth rate, after an increase between 1967 and 1971, has returned for the past few years to the lows of the mid-Thirties. Although the presidents of the Church since David O. McKay were outspokenly against birth control as Apostles, their administrations have been characterized only by a shift in tone, and not by an official return to earlier interpretations.

There are probably several reasons for the continuity. A moderate doctrinal position had been officially established, making an immediate, major change in emphasis awkward if not impossible. Moreover, this official position was interpreted as placing the responsibility for the ultimate decisions with the family itself. While the Church continued to encourage having a large family, and to condemn family limitation for "selfish" reasons, the actual decisions regarding family size and spacing and the means by which these were achieved had in effect been placed above ecclesiastical review. In the popular phraseology, these matters were strictly "between the husband, wife, and the Lord." Finally, the reemergence of the ethically overshadowing abortion question has drawn most of the attention away from the subject of birth control.¹⁰⁴

The infrequent references to birth control by Presidents Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Spencer W. Kimball nonetheless retained much of the tone of their earlier remarks. For Presidents Smith and Lee, conjugal abstinence apparently remained the only approved method of limiting births in those rare instances when it was justified.¹⁰⁵ President Lee emphasized the Church's continued antipathy to the use of birth control in a broader geographical context. It is "a grievous sin before God," he declared, "to adopt restrictive measures in disobedience to God's divine command . . . [and take] measures to prevent life or destroy life before or after birth" even where there is "abject poverty in some heavily populated countries."¹⁰⁶

Most of President Kimball's remarks on fertility control have encouraged parenthood or condemned abortion. He has spoken against voluntary sterilization, a subject largely neglected heretofore.¹⁰⁷ President Kimball also has commended J. Reuben Clark's dictum: "Remember the prime purpose of sex desire is to beget children. Sex gratification must be had at that hazard." To this he added that he knew "of no scriptures or authorities which authorize young wives to delay their families or to go to work to put their husbands through

college."¹⁰⁸ More recently he has enlarged on one aspect of the subject not usually discussed:

The union of the sexes, husband and wife, . . . was for the principle purpose of bringing children into the world . . . We know of no directive from the Lord that proper sexual experience between husbands and wives need be limited totally to the procreation of children, but we find much evidence from Adam until now that no provision was ever made by the Lord for indiscriminate sex.¹⁰⁹

As noted, recent changes in tone have not been reflected in the general Mormon birth rate, which continues to be about as low as it has ever been (despite the growth of the Latin American church to nearly 10% of total membership!). The rate for 1975, 27.8 births per thousand, is about the average for the Seventies. If this average continues, it will be lower than for any preceding decade.

Thus, Mormon attitudes toward birth control have followed a general evolutionary path. Initially treated as indistinguishable from abortion, contraception achieved its own identity in Mormon thought at the turn of the century. Although abortion remained allowable only when a mother's life was threatened, fertility limitation through abstinence soon became permissible if the health of the mother was in jeopardy. Shortly thereafter this was extended to cases in which either parent had transmissible diseases or defects. By the end of the depression, the intelligence and health of the children, and extreme poverty also had been identified as acceptable reasons to some Church leaders for limiting fertility.

A major development came in the Forties when "natural" birth control (i.e., the rhythm method) became an acceptable alternative to abstinence. Shortly thereafter there was another significant modification, as birth control with contraceptives was no longer condemned when there were medical reasons for limiting fertility. This position has remained essentially unchanged to the present day. Throughout these developments the importance of having large families has been a consistent theme, but only rarely has a standard been suggested. The use of birth control for solely economic or educational purposes never has been publicly sanctioned, nor have most Church leaders condoned arbitrary spacing between pregnancies. Ultimately, however, the decisions in this area have been left almost entirely to the family involved, and no sanctions have been applied to those practicing birth control, artificial or natural, regardless of the apparent motive.

A measure of the degree to which birth control has become defused as an issue within the Church was the recent publication by noted Mormon obstetrician, Lindsay Curtis, of *A Sensible Sex Guide for the L.D.S. Bride and Groom*.¹¹⁰ This popular handbook provides both general counsel to newlyweds, and explicit guidance on the merits of various contraceptive practices. It has been a long time since Dr. Charles Knowlton's equally well-intended *Private Companion of Young Married People* landed him in a Cambridge, Massachusetts jail.

III

For those Mormons who have viewed the Church as engaged in an ongoing moral struggle against the various manifestations of fertility control, the record of the past century must not be very encouraging. The movement to control

fertility, having made its public debut in America almost simultaneously with the advent of Mormonism, now finds support among tens of millions of Americans. Moreover, for the past four decades surveys have suggested that a majority of the Mormons themselves have become "family planners." As society at large has reconsidered and modified the acceptable indications for the use of fertility controlling measures, so also has the Mormon leadership revised (albeit to a lesser degree) their ethical guidelines.

A significant hiatus nonetheless remains between the judgment of the Church and the judgment of society as to the legitimate means and indications for birth control. Contrary to the broader societal norms, the Mormon leadership has not condoned economic limitations, educational obligations, or "arbitrary" restriction of family size as acceptable reasons for the use of any form of birth control. On the other hand, medical or mental health factors, narrowly defined, are considered by most Church leaders to be legitimate indications for using even the "artificial" forms of birth control (i.e., contraceptives). In the ill-defined area between these two categories, many sanction only "non-artificial" birth control (i.e., abstinence, rhythm, extended breast feeding).

For many, if not most, married Mormons in their childbearing years, such distinctions quickly become blurred. Relatively few consider it logical to distinguish between artificial and natural birth control (short of abstinence).¹¹¹ Viewing coitus as a positive and inherent part of a healthy marital relationship, they also reject conjugal abstinence as unrealistic, unjustified, even abnormal—in many ways as "artificial" a method of controlling fertility as any other.¹¹² If fertility control is to be employed, Mormons, like others, tend to prefer a method "that is sure" and aesthetically satisfactory, and which will allow them to maintain what they view as a normal married life.

Such sentiments, though alien to the nineteenth century, now reflect both the views of contemporary society and modern medical thought. Early enthusiasm for the rhythm method of birth control has been replaced by a more realistic appraisal of its value. While highly (if not completely) effective for many women, it is totally unreliable for others. Similarly, breast feeding is not an effective contraceptive for all women; even when it is effective, it is rare today for women to nurse long enough for it to be a significant spacing factor. Perhaps more importantly, medical science has demonstrated the relative safety of most contraceptives, dispelling in theory, at least, one of the longest standing objections expressed by Church leaders.¹¹³

Another point on which most young married Mormons apparently differ with the established position of the Church is over the legitimate indications for the use of birth control. A limited survey in the mid-Forties found that nearly two-thirds of the married Mormon students surveyed at Brigham Young University approved the use of birth control, and that 60 per cent considered economic problems as a legitimate reason for limiting family size.¹¹⁴ More recently 70 per cent of another group of Mormon students (married an average of 2½ years) reported that they were practicing birth control (overwhelmingly "artificial")—though most stated that they disapproved of the use of birth control for economic reasons or to complete schooling!¹¹⁵ A comparable incidence of contraceptive use was found among married Mormons recently graduated from BYU.¹¹⁶ The average ages of these groups clearly belie a justifi-

FIGURE 2
SOME SURVEYS REFLECTING MORMON ATTITUDES
TOWARD BIRTH CONTROL

YEAR	GROUP	QUESTION	Yes	No	Unsure
1935	1297 BYU students ¹²¹	"Do you believe in the practice of birth control in any form?"	82%	8	10
1941-2	356 BYU students ¹²² (most were single women)	"Do you believe that married couples are justified in having smaller families than nature intended, that is, in practicing birth control?"	56	26	18
1942-3	438 BYU students ¹²³ (most were single women)	same	54	26	20
1943-4	404 BYU students ¹²³ (most were single women)	same	55	25	20
1946-7	125 married BYU men ¹²³ 1385 single students "()"	same	66 (55)	24 (24)	10 (22)
1963-4	383 LDS women ¹²⁴ students (U of U)	"Will you try to plan the spacing [or number] of children in your family?"	94	6	
1968-9	LDS students (U of U) ¹²⁵ n = 7, <300	(approve the use of contraceptives?)	~90		
1970	354 married women, ages 24-48, recently graduated from BYU ¹²⁶	"Do you use contraceptives?"	66	34	
1971	184 married BYU students; 543 single students "()" ¹²⁷	"Have you and your spouse ever practiced birth control?"	70	30	
		(Acceptable indications:			
		wife's physical health	90(84)	5(7)	5(9)
		wife's mental health	82(75)	6(10)	12(15)
		child spacing	60(40)	26(47)	14(13)
		husband going to college	38(32)	50(53)	12(15)
		prevent additional children	26(21)	52(61)	22(18)
		get ahead economically	9(7)	84(85)	7(8)
1972	132 LDS families Salt Lake City suburb ¹²⁸	(using/have used birth control?)	83	17	

cation based on narrowly defined medical grounds. To one observer the evidence was unmistakable: "The Lord's commandment to multiply has been broken by the use of contraceptives."¹¹⁷

More fundamentally, most Mormons probably would deny the assumption of Church leaders that birth control is a violation of the "first great commandment"—rather they see their planned, but still large families as an indisputable sign that they are replenishing the earth. Over the years Mormons have, in fact, clearly demonstrated their desire to have "large" families. Although un-

mistakably responsive to the pressures that have influenced national fertility, they have maintained a birth rate approximately 11 per thousand higher than the national rate—for as long as Church statistics have been reported (see Figure 1).¹¹⁸ On observing the remarkable consistency of this pattern, one wonders how much impact Mormon polemics against birth control have had on the membership. The data suggests that the real impact rather has come from the high value Mormonism places on having large families—this in turn having led to the observed pattern of increased fertility and larger families *despite* the general acceptance by Mormons of birth control as a legitimate part of their married life.

For a significant number of Mormons, the greatest personal impact of the Church stand on birth control has been the emotional discomfort caused by the strained rationalizations used to reconcile personal practices with their view of the Church position. "Conserving the strength" and "guarding the mental health" of the mother have become the elastic clauses of Mormon birth control doctrine, even though there is little justification for a liberal interpretation of these expressions in the published views of Church leaders. Medically, however, such a rationale finds genuine support among most physicians on the basis of preventive medicine, if nothing else. Unfortunately, the individual's peace of mind in this latter instance becomes dependent on the philosophy of the physician. For many faithful traditionalist members the end point remains a Mormon variant of the Peter Principle in which babies continue to arrive until the mother's health is obviously affected, or her capability exceeded. At this point contraception becomes justified, rather than at an earlier time "before" there were medical indications. However, as physicians (Mormons included) have become more socially oriented in their definition of legitimate "medical" grounds for using contraception, even the conservatively oriented Mormons are finding early, yet doctrinally acceptable grounds for controlling the growth of their families.¹¹⁹

In an informal conversation, a "subhierarchical" Mormon leader once asked what percentage of normally fertile Mormons use birth control during their married lives. There are as yet no studies capable of answering this question. The guess at the time was about ninety per cent. "It's interesting," he then observed, "that while the body of the Church rarely has a chance to vote on Church doctrine any more, they effectively have voted on this subject." A case can be made that such a "vote" influenced the Church leadership during the late Thirties and Forties. Whether a more recent "referendum" will eventually bring about additional changes remains to be seen. Practically speaking, the potential impact of such a change would probably be small. The "insistent question" long since has had an insistent answer.

NOTES

¹The best general history of contraception remains Norman C. Himes, *Medical History of Contraception* (New York, 1936). The American experience is treated more specifically in David M. Kennedy, *Birth Control in America: the Career of Margaret Sanger* (New Haven, 1970); Peter Fryer, *The Birth Controllers* (London, 1965); John B. Haller, *The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America* (Urbana, 1974); and Milton Rugoff, *Prudery & Passion: Sexuality in Victorian America* (New York, 1971). Also see, Robert V. Schnucker, "Elizabethan Birth Control and Puritan Attitudes," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 5(4):655-667 (Spring 1975), and Wilson Yates, "Birth Control Literature and the Medical Profession in Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 31(1):42-54 (January 1976).

Serious attempts to survey the Mormon experience in this field are virtually nonexistent. Two uneven articles touching on the subject are Donald W. Hastings, Charles H. Reynolds and Ray R. Canning, "Mormonism and Birth Planning: The Discrepancy between Church Authorities' Teachings and Lay Attitudes," *Population Studies* 26:19-28 (May 1972), and Judith C. Spicer and Susan O. Gustavus, "Mormon Fertility Through Half a Century: Another Test of the Americanization Hypothesis," *Social Biology*, 21(1):70-76 (1974).

²Rugoff, *op. cit.*, p. 164. The books in question were, Robert Dale Owen, *Moral physiology; or a brief and plain treatise on the population question* (New York, 1831), and Charles Knowlton, *The Fruits of Philosophy, or the private companion of young married people* (Boston, 1833).

³*Evening and Morning Star*, 1(1):7 (August, 1832). The figures, from a Paris correspondent of the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, showed an inverse correlation between the annual excess births over deaths and the mean price of corn in both France and Prussia for the years from 1821 to 1830.

⁴*Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (hereafter *M&A*), 3:480 (March, 1837). Malthus would have agreed; initially at least he considered deferred marriage and abstinence ("moral restraint") the only acceptable methods for limiting population growth.

⁵For the American view see E.P. Hutchinson, *The Population Debate: the Development of Conflicting Theories up to 1900* (New York, 1967); for comparative fertility, see Ansley J. Coale and Melvin Zelnik, *New Estimates of Fertility and Population in the United States* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 34-35.

⁶A revelation dated April 23, 1834, provided circumstantial evidence, reading in part, "For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare . . ." (*D&C* 104:17). See also Heber C. Kimball, *JD*, 4:224 (1857); Brigham Young, *JD*, 12:120-121 (1867); and Erastus Snow, *JD*, 20:374 (1879), 24:74-75 (1883), 25:111-112 (1884), and 26:219-220 (1855).

In 1834 the estimated world population was about one billion. For one contemporary Mormon observer, the 1976 figure of four billion would not have been impressive. In 1835 he computed an actual world population (versus the reported 700 million) at about 3½ billion. The accepted figures had neglected to take into account the "thousands of millions of Israelites" who probably lived "at the north pole." (*M&A*, 2:194 (October 1835).

⁷Pratt first raised the possibility in a series of "Questions on the Present State of Man" in the *Latter Day Saints Millennial Star* (hereafter *MS*), 6:174 (November 15, 1845), and provided an indirect answer two months later when he computed the number of spirits in the pre-existence at 1,020,000,000,000,000 (*MS* 7:30-31). In reviewing the situation in March, 1853, his conclusion was unequivocal: God "organizes a new world, after a similar order to the one which we now inhabit" when "his Heavenly inheritance becomes too small, to comfortably accommodate his great family . . ." (*The Seer*, 1:37).

The calculation which led to the population estimate was initially directed at determining how much older the firstborn of the spirits was than the last born. Acknowledging that the calculations were based "upon suppositions which are of very imperfect data," Pratt assumed that the earth would have an 8000 year life, with an average of 500 million inhabitants every 50 years; he added 50% to the total spirits thus required to allow for the "one-third part of the hosts of heaven who fell;" assumed that there were thirty other worlds in our solar system populated in proportion to the earth also drawing from the same pre-existent family (adds a factor of 12,750); and thus reached his grand total. To determine the age difference, he assumed that spiritual gestation was comparable to that on earth, and concluded that one spirit was born per year. Thus the process took one quadrillion, twenty trillion years, and the age difference was established.

Hesitating briefly at the magnitude of the figures, Pratt considered the possibility that the gestation period might be shorter. If the spirits were born at the rate of one per minute, he computed, the time required could be shortened to 1,900,000,000 years; and "at a rate of one per second, . . . thirty million of years." (*MS* 7:30-31). Accepting Pratt's assumption that the physical processes involved were analogous to the earth experience, this rate might pose logistical problems for the

father as well as the mother of these spirits; for whatever reason, Pratt later dismissed a shortened gestation period as "very improbable."

Several years later Pratt recomputed the number of spirits "born in Heaven before this earth was formed" and found some relief for Heavenly mother. This time he limited the earth's functional life to seven thousand years, ignored any other potentially inhabited spheres, and concluded that the figure was somewhat over 100 billion spirits. Since polygamy by now had been made public, he was able to make a final reduction by assuming that these spirits were the products of 100 polygamous wives, thus requiring only a billion years of annual child bearing per wife. (*The Seer*, 1:38-39)

The foregoing is only a portion of Pratt's mathematical incursion into celestial demography; the references should be consulted for the ramifications of such fecundity through several generations of heavenly hosts. Interestingly, Pratt's considerations were not entirely without precedent. Feldman reports an early Jewish tradition which postulated that during the millenium the gestation period would be shortened to one day (David M. Feldman, *Birth Control in Jewish Law*, New York, 1968, p. 181).

⁸For national figures see Coale and Zelnik, *op. cit.*, 21-23, 34. There are no reliable data on nineteenth century Mormon fertility. The present assumption derives from several fragmentary bits of evidence. Occasional reports appeared in early Mormon publications allowing a crude birth rate calculation (e.g., figures for total population and births in October, 1853, yield a rate of about 50 per thousand). Stanley Ivins, in "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," *Western Humanities Review* (10:229-239), reports that polygamous Mormon wives during this period averaged just under six children, while those who were monogamous (the majority) averaged eight. These figures are commensurate with a general birth rate of at least 50 per thousand. The U.S. Census for 1880 reported admittedly inaccurate birth rates for the states and territories. Utah was reported at 41.9, with the caveat that U.S. figures were probably 15% low (i.e., yielding a "corrected" figure of about 48 per thousand). My own limited review of a number of genealogies suggests that there was not a significant decline in the number of births at least through the 1880's.

⁹For early illustrative examples from the national press, reprinted in Mormon publications, see the *Deseret News* editorial, "A Damning Crime," (November 13, 1878) and *JD*, 25:352-354 (October 19, 1884).

¹⁰William L. Langer, "Checks on Population Growth: 1750-1850," *Scientific American*, February, 1972, pp. 92-99; see also his "Infanticide: A Historical Survey," *History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory*, 1:353-365 (Winter, 1974).

¹¹Eugene Quay, "Justifiable Abortion," *Georgetown Law Journal*, 49 (Spring, 1969), provides a detailed historical survey of the legal status of abortion in each of the states.

¹²R. Sauer, "Attitudes to Abortion in America, 1880-1973," *Population Studies*, 28(1):56-67 (March, 1974), especially pages 54-60. Mormon estimates of the magnitude of the problem were probably accurate reflections of the inflated national rhetoric. These varied from tens or hundreds of thousands of annual abortions (and infanticides) (*JD*, 23:19; 21:116) to "millions" (*JD*, 21:167).

¹³Polygamy was not "an infringement upon the rights of others, neither men nor women, but gives all women an opportunity to become wives and mothers, and thus to shut out what is politely called the social evil, with all its horrid concomitants of seduction, foeticide, infanticide and all the train of sexual monogamic evils which haunt and infest Christendom . . ." (Franklin D. Richards, *JD*, 26:540, 1885; see also Joseph F. Smith, *JD*, 24:11, 1884.)

¹⁴"A Damning Crime," *Deseret News* editorial, November 13, 1879. See also John Taylor, *JD*, 23:238-239, August, 1882. The Mormons were able to capitalize as well on the concurrent national "purity crusade" which conveniently resulted in extensive press coverage of prostitution in America. See David J. Pivar, *The Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868-1900* (Westport, Connecticut, 1973).

¹⁵Taylor's remarks also suggested greater knowledge of the specifics of the problem. He accurately described the practice of "baby farming," which was the vehicle for most infanticides in Europe, and also alluded to the notorious Madame Restell, probably the most widely known abortionist in America. She had been actively in practice in New York during Taylor's sojourn there as editor of *The Mormon*. (E.g., *JD*, 23:238)

¹⁶E.g., John Taylor, *JD*, 25:352 (1884)

¹⁷E.g., John Taylor, 25:315-317; George Q. Cannon, *JD*, 28:14-15, both 1884. John C. Bennett had been labelled an abortionist by Hyrum Smith at the time of his banishment from Nauvoo in 1842. See *The Times and Seasons* (hereafter *T&S*) 3:870 (August 1, 1842).

¹⁸"The Latter-day Saints are proverbial for NOT murdering their children. They have hosts of them, and they do not try to destroy them neither before nor after birth . . ." (Joseph F. Smith, *JD*, 24:11, October 22, 1882). Similar remarks were common. Joseph Smith was even alleged (in 1890) to have stated that "the time would come when none but the women of the Latter-day Saints would be willing to bear children." (*The Young Woman's Journal*, 2(no. 2):18)

John Taylor effectively reversed this point: "It has become unfashionable in the east for women to have large families. I have heard remarks like this: one lady was asked, How many children have you? One or two. Is that all? What do you take me for, do you think I am a cow? Why no, you are not a cow, for cows do not murder their offspring." (*JD*, 23:667). Erastus Snow carried the analogy a step further, and characterized those who "employ hellish means to prevent the increase of their species" as "not only beneath the brute, but beneath the vegetable creation, by refusing to bear fruit . . ." (*JD*, 24:74).

¹⁹". . . pre-natal murders . . ." ". . . many of their murders are committed while the children are pre-natal; they kill them either before or after they are born, just as it happens . . ." (both John Taylor, 1879) ". . . they have a fashionable way of murdering them—either before or after they come into the world . . ." (Taylor, 1882); ". . . children murdered among them . . . either before or after their birth . . ." (Joseph F. Smith, 1882); ". . . where women murder their offspring before they are born, are guilty of this pre-natal murder . . ." (George Q. Cannon, 1884). See *JD*, 20:355, 21:167, 23:238–239, 24:11, and 26:14–15. Similarly, see Orson Hyde, *JD*, 2:77 (1854), Heber C. Kimball, *JD*, 5:91–92 (1857) and others. Brigham Young was not quite so explicit, but the association was still clear (*JD*, 12:120–121, 1867).

²⁰*JD*, 26:14–15 (1884). John Taylor was equally explicit, ". . . They are murderers and murderesses of their infants . . . and you that want them, take them, and you that do will go along with them, and go to perdition with them; and I tell you that in the name of the Lord . . ." (*JD*, 22:320, 1881; see also *JD*, 20:355, 1879).

²¹George Q. Cannon, *JD*, 26:14–15 (1884); also, Erastus Snow, *JD*, 24:74 (1883).

²²*JD*, 25:317 (1884). George Q. Cannon "would no more perform the ordinance of laying on of hands on a woman guilty of that crime, if I knew it, than I would put my hands on the head of a rattlesnake. . . ." Nor would he "administer to such women, baptize them, or perform any ordinance of the Gospel for them . . ." (*JD*, 26:14–15).

²³*JD*, 17:143 (1874). By contrast, the Catholic view assumed a fixed time for the arrival of the spirit (ensoulment). See John T. Noonan, Jr., *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge, 1966), or his more recent, "An Almost Absolute Value in History," in *The Morality of Abortion: Legal and Historical Perspectives*, John T. Noonan, Jr., ed. (Cambridge, 1970).

²⁴Journal of Wilford Woodruff, October 16, 1857 (original in the Historical Department of the Church). Woodruff adds, "this is new doctrine yet it looks Consistent[;] what period of Debarkation or age the spirit would take another Body we are not informed."

²⁵*JD*, 23:62 (April 9, 1882).

²⁶This increased circulation was acknowledged and bemoaned as early as 1856. See Wm. A. Alcott, *The Physiology of Marriage* (Boston, 1852), pp. 180–186. Alcott, with many others, treated preventive and abortifacient techniques as comparable practices. He noted, as the Mormons also accurately observed, that the impact of this new information was earliest and most extensively evident in New England.

²⁷Edwin M. Hale, *A Systematic Treatise on Abortion* (Chicago, 1866), pp. 297–298. The first Utah legislation relating to the regulation of condoms was not passed until 1937, and then dealt with their use in prophylaxis of disease. Hale considered the regulation of the timing of coitus to be an effective contraceptive 94% of the time if "not performed until ten days after cessation of the menses, nor within four days previous to, or during their occurrence" (p. 293) (cf. note 36 below). Hale termed all such preventive techniques "ovular abortion" and also characterized embryonic or fetal abortion as "morally and legally . . . a crime, equal to, if not identical with, murder . . ." (p. 290).

²⁸*JD*, 12:120–121, 20:375, 26:219; Parley P. Pratt, *op. cit.*

²⁹*JD*, 25:111–112 (1884).

³⁰*JD*, 20:374 (1879). Similar expressions are found in *JD*, 20:355 (John Taylor) and in *JD*, 24:116 (Moses Thatcher). Snow was particularly fond of this point (*JD*, 23:230–231; 24:74–75; 26:216–221).

³¹Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Period 1*, B.H. Roberts, ed. (Salt Lake City, 1902–1912), 2:320, November 24, 1835. A similar expression is found in the revelation on polygamy, July 12, 1843 (D&C, 132:63): “. . . for (the virgins) are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment. . . .”

³²Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, 1:60 (April, 1853). Pratt returned frequently to this theme throughout a series on “Celestial Marriage” (especially installments between February and October, 1853), as well as in a companion series, “The Pre-Existence of Man.”

³³JD, 4:56 (1856). He added, “If my wife had borne me all the children that she ever would bear, the celestial law would teach me to take young women that would have children. . . .”

³⁴In addition to Orson Pratt’s thorough coverage (note 32 above), see also Parley P. Pratt’s *Key to Theology* (Liverpool, 1855), Chapter 17. The obligation to marry and propagate is implicit in most of the references cited throughout the nineteenth century. E.g., Brigham Young, JD, 12:262 (1868), 15:132 (1872); Wilford Woodruff, JD, 18:129–130 (1875); George Q. Cannon, JD, 13:206–207 (1869).

³⁵M&A, 3:480 (March, 1837). Poverty or economic considerations, it should be noted, were not again included as a contraindication to marriage. One of the most frequent accusations against those who limited their families in the nineteenth century was that they had done so to avoid the expense involved.

³⁶Parley P. Pratt, *op. cit.* At this more purely “medical” level, others had specific eugenic suggestions as well. Brigham Young once advised not to “unite with a woman, in view of impregnation till seven days after the cessation of the menstrual discharge, in order for the most healthy procreation of our species.” (*Journal History*, April 29, 1849). The basis for his recommendation is presumably Leviticus 15:19–28. While the advice would not have maximized the chances for conception, it would have been more useful than the advice of contemporary physicians, who believed women to be maximally fertile immediately before, during, or shortly after menstruation. See Charles M. McLane and Midy McLane, “A Half Century of Sterility, 1840–1890,” *Fertility & Sterility*, 20:853–870 (1969), and Noonan, *op. cit.*, pp. 438–439.

³⁷*The Seer*, 1:93, 95 (June, 1853)

³⁸Pratt had explained, “Multiplication . . . was originally designed only for the righteous; but the wicked have presumed to take this blessing to themselves, and have thus been the instruments in bringing hundreds of millions into the world which God is obliged from time to time to cut off and send to hell in order that the world may not be brought wholly under their dominion. . . .” (*Ibid.*, p. 94). Orson Hyde had a slightly different explanation (see JD, 2:116–117, also 1853).

³⁹JD, 4:56 (1856) and JD, 12:262 (1868); see also Wilford Woodruff, JD, 18:129–130 (1875), Joseph F. Smith, JD, 24:11 (1882), and Moses Thatcher, JD, 24:116 (1883). More direct action against the wicked was not advocated, except perhaps by Heber C. Kimball who once announced, “If I am not a good man, I have no just right in this Church to a wife or wives, or to the power to propagate my species. What then should be done with me? Make a eunuch of me and stop my propagation” (JD, 5:29, 1857). Some zealots may have accepted this view literally; see the isolated accounts of punitive castrations in *On the Mormon Frontier: the Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1861*, Juanita Brooks, ed. (Salt Lake City, 1969), p. 653 (“dragged him out of bed with a whore and castrated him by a square & close amputation”), and p. 663 (“castrated . . . lately for adultery”)—both the year after Kimball’s remarks.

⁴⁰“If the men of the world were right, or if they were near right, there might not be the necessity (for polygamy) that there now is. But they are wholly given up to idolatry. . . .” (Brigham Young, JD, 4:56 [1856]).

⁴¹Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, 1:155 (October, 1853)

⁴²Parley P. Pratt, *op. cit.*; see also George Q. Cannon, JD, 13:206.

⁴³*Journal History*, April 25, 1849. Coitus during pregnancy was apparently an ongoing topic of discussion. A number of years later Erastus Snow advised that intercourse should be continued during pregnancy “where it was right and consistent that they might not entail on their offspring unholy desires and appetites. . . .” (Charles Walker Journal, November 3, 1883, Excerpts Typed, Salt Lake City?, 1969, p. 40). It was several decades before geneticists discredited the notion that attitudes and “appetites” in pregnant women were transmitted to their offspring. A warning similar to Snow’s was voiced by Brigham Young who warned expectant mothers not to hanker after such things as tobacco, tea, coffee, and liquor (JD, 13:3). Orson Pratt cautioned specifically about “the state of the parent’s mind at the time of conception” (*The Seer*, 1:155).

⁴⁴*Journal History*, April 24, 1849. Forty if a boy; seventy if a girl (cf. Leviticus, 12:1-5).

⁴⁵The data limitations cited in note 8 still apply. This estimate nonetheless is probably generous.

⁴⁶The wives of Parley Pratt, for example, averaged 30 months between consecutive births. See the genealogy appendix to *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City, 1970), pp. 462-464.

⁴⁷In comparable situations prolonged breast feeding may be associated with a transient infertility lasting a year or longer. Jeroen K. Van Ginneken, "Prolonged Breastfeeding as a Birth Spacing Method," *Studies in Family Planning*, 5(6):201-206 (June, 1974). Expectedly, then, Mormon genealogies frequently show a shorter interval between births when the first infant dies within the first two months.

⁴⁸As previously noted, polygamists averaged two children less per wife than the monogamists (although when expressed as children per adult their collective reproduction is nearly comparable). The fertility limiting impact was greatest among those with many wives, and thus was most evident among the Mormon leadership. Brigham Young, for instance, averaged less than two children per wife, as did Heber C. Kimball. Even when one considers only those wives who had at least one child in a polygamous marriage, the net fertility is significantly reduced (e.g., Young's productive wives averaged 3½ children). Yet this was not the way they chose to view the situation, for the Mormon leadership preferred to speak in terms of the *male* fertility. Brigham Young fathered 57 children, Heber C. Kimball 64 or 65, Joseph F. Smith, 44, etc., etc.

⁴⁹Safe artificial feedings are largely a twentieth century development. In the nineteenth century artificial substitutes were, nonetheless, not uncommon. Some of the associated risks were publicized from time to time in national publications. One, entitled "Death in the Nursing Bottle," was reprinted in the *Woman's Exponent*, September 1, 1876 (p. 56), with the comment appended that "many infants" had died in Salt Lake City and the Utah Territory through the use of a patented nursing bottle condemned in the article.

⁵⁰Not necessarily to be weighted too heavily, for Parley Pratt managed to father a collective child every seven months throughout two decades of polygamous life, and missed only 1852 and 1856 over a fourteen year stretch during which he served several missions away from home. Others had similar records, and occasionally averaged over eight children per wife for three wives or more.

⁵¹Infant and child mortality in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century claimed the lives of an estimated 30% of the children before age 15. By 1900 this figure was much closer to 20% (and was probably even lower among the Mormons). Coale and Zelnik, *op. cit.*, p. 170. There were areas in which the declining birth rate so matched the declining death rate that essentially the same number of children reached age 15. By 1900 birth rates were dropping faster than death rates, and any masking effect would have begun to dissolve.

II

⁵²*Conference Reports of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (hereafter CR), 70A(Annual):39-40, April 5, 1900.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵⁴*Juvenile Instructor* (hereafter *Jl*), 37:241-242, an editorial, April 15, 1902. Particularly galling was the discovery that the French marriage rate was higher than that of the Mormons. The French had long been identified with the use of contraception and were frequently cited as an indication of what would happen to a nation who adopted such practices. One wonders about the source of the Church's comparative statistics, for the birth rates in Europe were nearly all below 35 per thousand at this time. On the other hand, the rates in Africa, Asia, and Latin America remain collectively above that level even to the present day.

⁵⁵Joseph F. Smith, July 1, 1902, in *Jl*, 37:400-402, "This command [to be fruitful and multiply] He has never changed, abrogated, or annulled. . . ." See also CR, 73A:54 (Reed Smoot, 1903); *Jl*, 40:240-241 (Joseph F. Smith, 1905); CR, 78S(Semiannual):35-38 (George Albert Smith, 1907); *Improvement Era*, 11:959-961 (Joseph F. Smith, 1902), among others.

Regarding mothers of large families: "I met one sister who was the mother of eighteen children. I looked upon her as a veritable queen among women; her crown was studded with eighteen precious jewels. I have met other sisters in the Church who were the mothers of fourteen, fifteen or sixteen children, which we will all concede are very large families. There are hundreds of mothers in Israel who have eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen children, which reflects great credit and honor upon them." (Rudger Clawson, CR, October 5, 1907)

⁵⁶CR, 81S:4 (April 6, 1911). Chagrin that the figures were not higher still was explicit the following year (CR, 82A:33). As before, the international comparisons must have been limited to European nations.

⁵⁷*Improvement Era* (hereafter *IE*), 11:959-961 (October, 1908).

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Liahona The Elders' Journal*, 8 (no. 2):36-38 (1908).

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*IE*, 11:959-961 (October, 1908).

⁶²The expression became as common within the Church as it did nationally; e.g., *CR*, 74A:54 (1903), *Liahona The Elders' Journal*, 8(2):38 (1908), *CR*, 79A:116 (1909). Kennedy, *op.cit.*, provides a thorough review of the relevant national developments early in the twentieth century.

⁶³*Relief Society Magazine* (hereafter *RSM*), 3:363 (July, 1916). The subject had not really been dropped from Church discourses during this time. See, for example, *CR*, 82A:33 (Hyrum M. Smith, 1912), *CR*, 84S:89 (Heber J. Grant, 1913), and the *Juvenile Instructor*, 50:250-251 (Joseph F. Smith, 1915).

⁶⁴Rudger Clawson, George F. Richards, David O. McKay, Orson F. Whitney, Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., Hyrum M. Smith and Bishop David A. Smith. The views of the first five were published in the June issue (3:363-368); the last two appeared in August (3:433-435). A final essay from George Albert Smith was published early the next year (*RSM*, 4:71-73).

⁶⁵*RSM*, 3:433.

⁶⁶*RSM*, 4:68 (1917). The Presidency had been asked specifically about the views of Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., who had "treated the matter authoritatively," and with considerably more finality than some of his colleagues.

⁶⁷Thus wrote Clawson, Richards, and Hyrum M., George Albert, and Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr.

⁶⁸Richards and David A. Smith. Richards wrote (with the support of most contemporary physicians): "As to the danger and hardship of child-bearing to the mothers, I have to say that from my observations, I conclude that the answering of nature's laws which are God's laws is far less injurious and dangerous than the efforts made to defeat these laws."

⁶⁹Clawson, Richards, George Albert Smith.

⁷⁰Clawson and Whitney. McKay warned against putting "the marriage relationship on a level with the panderer and the courtesan. . . ." or befouling "the pure fountains of life with the slime of indulgence and sensuality."

⁷¹Richards spoke with pride of his wife's 15 children, any fewer than which would have been "less than her duty." He was twitted for this remark by *The Birth Control Review* (1[2]:9), which also took note of Clawson's remarks. Lengthy excerpts from the first group of essays published in the *Relief Society Magazine* were also carried in the *Journal of Heredity* (7:450-451). Their interest was primarily from the eugenics standpoint, and they included a brief rebuttal to some of the Mormon comments. In turn, the *Relief Society Magazine* carried excerpts of the *Journal of Heredity's* excerpts (minus the rebuttal) shortly thereafter (*RSM*, 4:68-73).

⁷²*RSM*, 3:367-368.

⁷³Compare, for example, note 23 and accompanying text. Smith continued, "It is just as much murder to destroy life before as it is after birth, although man made laws may not so consider it; but there is One who does take notice and his judgment is sure."

By contrast a much more conciliatory tone was evident in David O. McKay's remarks, which made allowances for those who "honestly ['even if misguided'] limit the number of children . . . to two or three because of insufficient means to clothe and educate a large family as the parents would desire to do. . . ." He also included what was to become a familiar theme for him, "In all this, however, the mother's health should be guarded. . ." (*RSM*, 3:366-367).

⁷⁴For the national developments, see Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Genetics & American Society: A Historical Appraisal* (Baltimore, 1972); Donald K. Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville, 1968); Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, 1963).

There is no study of the Mormon response to this movement, though there are numerous contemporary discussions in Church publications between 1913 and 1930. In general the Mormons accepted many of the tenets that underlaid eugenics theory. Following the national trend, their enthusiasm had lapsed noticeably by the late Teens. The only long lasting impact of the general interest in eugenics were state sterilization laws. Utah's law, passed in 1925, remains in effect today; it reflects some of the earlier medical thinking associated with the eugenics debate by authorizing sterilization under certain circumstances of a person who "is habitually sexually criminal, or is insane, mentally deficient, epileptic, or is afflicted with degenerate sexual tendencies, and . . . unlikely to perform properly the functions of parenthood. . . ."

⁷⁵"Birth Control and Fashions are Denounced," *Deseret News*, April 4, 1917.

⁷⁶RSM, 4:317-318 (June, 1917).

⁷⁷*Liahona The Elders' Journal*, April 18, 1916, p. 683.

⁷⁸As noted by W.A. Evans, MD, in his "Public Health Column," *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1920, cited in Joseph R. Morrell, *Utah's Health and You* (Salt Lake City, 1956), p. 200. Evans gave birth rates for Duchesne (52.8), Garfield (51.5), Piute (51.5) and Washington counties (45). Equally startling was the low death rate. It had been virtually axiomatic that high birth rates were associated with high death rates.

⁷⁹Warren S. Thompson, *The Ratio of Children to Women, 1920* (Bureau of Census, Washington, D.C., 1931), p. 184; see also pages 135-136.

⁸⁰A review was made of the families of the general authorities, including those listed in the *Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, 1974), pp. 120-156. Genealogy records and a variety of Church publications identified the number of children fathered by 179 (about 90%) of these men, including all but five Authorities born since 1810. Below are the averages, by decade of birth (for polygamists only the children of the most productive wife are counted):

Decade of birth	(n =)	number of births		Decade of birth	(n =)	number of births	
		mean	median			mean	median
1770-1800	(12)	8.3	8½	1870-1880	(22)	5.6	5
1800-1810	(17)	8.1	9	1880-1890	(11)	5.9	6
1810-1820	(15)	8.6	8	1890-1900	(15)	3.7	3
1820-1830	(6)	9.0	10½	1900-1910	(15)	3.5	3
1830-1840	(7)	10.9	11	1910-1920	(10)	6.0	5½
1840-1850	(8)	8.8	9	1920-1930	(13)	5.3	5
1850-1860	(14)	8.1	8	1930-1935	(7)	5.3	5
1860-1870	(7)	8.9	8				

Those born prior to 1890 averaged about 8 children; those after 1890, about 4½. Involuntarily reduced fertility (or sterility) affected at least two of the authorities born after 1890, and may artificially reduce the averages to some degree. The raised families of those born prior to 1860 were not as large as these numbers suggest, for infant mortality recorded in their family genealogies not uncommonly exceeded thirty per cent.

⁸¹IE, 31:181-192 (January, 1928)

⁸²Kennedy, *op cit.*, pp. 269-270, 216, 140-141; see also Peter Smith, "The History and future of the legal battle over birth control," *Cornell Law Quarterly*, 49:274-303 (1963).

⁸³Unpublished survey of 1297 Brigham Young University students (1935), conducted by Harold T. Christensen. Responses to birth control questions in the survey were as follows:

	Yes	No	Doubtful
Do you believe in the practice of birth control in any form?	82%	10	8
Do you believe in the practice of birth control by artificial devices (contraceptives)?	35	47	18

Six years later Christensen conducted another survey of Mormon students at BYU. In each of the years (1941-1945) covered in this study approximately 55% reported approval of the use of birth control, 25% opposed, and 20% were uncertain. Harold T. Christensen, "Factors in the Size and Sex Composition of Families: A Survey of Student Opinion," *Proceedings of the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters*, 23:107-113 (1945-1946).

⁸⁴Letter from Heber J. Grant to Arnold Haymore, May 1, 1939, copy in my possession. The quotation from Joseph F. Smith was taken from his remarks to the Relief Society in 1917 (see note 76 and text).

⁸⁵Letter from John A. Widtsoe to Cardon Klingler, April 15, 1942, copy in my possession.

⁸⁶*IE*, 45:801, 803 (December, 1942), "Should Birth Control Be Practiced?" Though physicians thought they had identified a "sterile period" within the menstrual cycle nearly a century earlier, the correct timing of ovulation (and infertility) was not discovered until the mid-1920's. The book which introduced the "rhythm method" into American life was published the following decade—Leo Latz, *The Rhythm of Sterility and Fertility in Women* (Chicago, 1932).

⁸⁷Letter of May 27, 1946, from the "files of LaMar Berrett, Professor of Religion, Brigham Young University" as reported in an unpublished compilation of "Statements of the General Authorities on Birth Control" obtained from the Department of Religion at Brigham Young University.

⁸⁸Letter of June 16, 1947, extract in *ibid.*; elsewhere this letter is dated October 28, 1952 (see Phillip C. Smith and Phillip R. Kunz, "Population control and Church Policy," unpublished paper, 1973). McKay spoke similarly in 1943; see *CR*, October 2, 1943, pp. 30–31, or *IE*, 46:657.

⁸⁹*IE*, 34:643–644 (September, 1931). Or, sixteen years later, "When a man and a woman are married and they agree to covenant, to limit their offspring to two or three, and practice devices to accomplish this purpose, they are guilty of iniquity which eventually must be punished . . ." (*Church News*, July 12, 1947, p. 5). McKay, though speaking of the "scourge of artificial birth control," consistently added that "intelligence and mutual consideration . . . be ever-present factors in determining the coming of children to the household" (*IE*, 46:657 [1943]).

⁹⁰*CR*, October 1, 1949, pp. 194–195.

⁹¹Hugh B. Brown, *You and Your Marriage* (Salt Lake City, 1960), pp. 135–136.

⁹²Letter of October 6, 1961; he wrote similarly January 23, 1962. Extracts in Smith and Kunz, *op.cit.*

⁹³Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City, 1st edition, 1958), p. 81. From Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City, 1955), 2:86–89.

⁹⁴For some expressions of President McKay's view, see *Church News*, February 27, 1952, p. 3; *CR*, April 5, 1952, p. 86–7; *Church News*, June 11, 1952, p. 3; *CR*, April 4, 1953; *IE*, 56:401–402, June, 1953; *The Instructor*, January, 1958, p. 1.

⁹⁵A First Presidency statement was issued on "Parenthood" in 1942, which emphasized the commandment to "multiply and replenish the earth;" it included no reference to birth control. *CR*, October 3, 1942, p. 12–13. On August 30, 1965, the Presidency also signed a letter in response to a private inquiry on birth control (Smith and Kunz, *op.cit.*), but this was actually a copy of an earlier letter from Heber J. Grant (as quoted in note 84 and accompanying text).

⁹⁶First Presidency Statement of April 14, 1969, available at the Historical Department of the Church.

⁹⁷Compare the text (above) accompanying Notes 76, 84, and Note 73. Previous responses to personal inquiries to the First Presidency also had contained almost identical wording to much of the April statement (e.g., letters of January 7, 1969 and February 19, 1969; copies of both in my possession).

⁹⁸See "Statements . . ." Note 87; Smith and Kunz, *op.cit.*; or similar compilations available at the LDS Institute at the University of Utah. The secretaries to the First Presidency wrote similarly on several occasions during the Sixties.

⁹⁹*CR*, October 1, 1965, pp. 28–29 (or *IE*, 68:1107–1108); "The Blessings of Eternal Glory," speech delivered at Brigham Young University, April 23, 1968.

¹⁰⁰"The Population Bomb," *Church News* editorial, June 2, 1973. See also "Birth Control and Virtue," *Church News* editorial, February 26, 1966; "God's Wisdom—and Man's," *Church News* editorial, October 28, 1967; "The Pill is No Panacea," *Church News* editorial, April 19, 1969; "The Controversial Pill," *Church News* editorial, May 24, 1969. Widtsoe had been similarly concerned in 1942, as had his predecessors in 1916.

See note 113 for a brief review of the relative safety of modern contraceptives. Regarding the comparative mortality of automobile accidents and the pill—The annual "pill mortality" was about 3 per 100,000 users. By contrast, women in 1968 were killed in motor vehicle accidents at

rates from 19 per 100,000 for ages 20–24 to about 13 per 100,000 at ages 35–44 (men ranged from 95 to 37 per 100,000). When speaking of absolute number of deaths (as the editorial appeared to do), this disparity is increased severalfold because relatively few women use oral contraceptives in comparison to the number who use automobiles. (Accident data from Metropolitan Life *Statistical Bulletin*, May 1971, p. 7.) A more accurate, though equally irrelevant comparative statement would have been that a white woman on the pill had about the same chance of suffering a fatal complication as she did of being murdered. (*Statistical Bulletin*, November 1974, p. 2; figures from 1970–1971.)

¹⁰¹“God’s Wisdom—And Man’s,” *Church News* editorial, October 28, 1967. Or, “. . . are we to believe also that He is so blind and thoughtless that He will over-populate this earth? Where is our faith?” *Church News* editorial, May 2, 1970.

¹⁰²“Population Explosions,” *Church News* editorial, April 18, 1970. There are many similar editorials; e.g., “The Population Bomb” (June 2, 1973) and others listed above. The oft quoted verse from the *D&C* (104:17) dates from 1834, and should be consulted directly for the original context.

¹⁰³Petersen was joined in this view by a number of others. See Ezra Taft Benson’s remarks, April 4, 1969 (*CR*, p. 12); also Harold B. Lee, *CR*, October 7, 1972, p. 63; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, 1966), p. 86.

Though not professing official Church sanction, a recent BYU Press publication, *Population, Resources and the Future: Non-Malthusian Perspectives*, edited by Howard M. Bahr, Bruce A. Chadwick and Darwin L. Thomas (Provo, 1972), is viewed by many as an indirect effort by the Church to provide an academically respectable alternative to some neo-Malthusian predictions. In preparation it was actively supported by Church Commissioner of Education, Neal A. Maxwell, and on publication was placed in Church seminaries and institutes. Without entering into a discussion of world population problems, it should be noted that it is those *opposed* to the neo-Malthusian predictions whose arguments presuppose widespread acceptance and use of effective birth control. See, for example, the essays of Wattenburg, Barnett and Dyke in Bahr et al, *ibid.*, pp. 23, 28–29, 48–49, 314–315, 319–320.

¹⁰⁴The national movement to liberalize state anti-abortion statutes reached Utah in January, 1969. A proposed law (Utah S.B. 121) would have authorized termination of pregnancy in cases likely to result in serious impairment of the physical or mental health of the mother, in cases of incest or rape, or if the likely result was a child “with grave and permanent physical deformity or mental retardation.” Just over a week after the introduction of the bill, a short note was released by the First Presidency indicating that they were “opposed to any modification, expansion, or liberalization of laws on these vital subjects.” The law did not pass. (See “Church Opposes Abortion Bill,” *Deseret News*, January 23, 1969.)

In February, 1971, the Church issued another brief statement on abortion, reaffirming its opposition to a change in current laws, but adding, “Nevertheless there may be conditions where abortion might be justified, but such conditions must be determined in each instance upon the advice of a competent, reliable physician, preferably a member of the Church, and in accordance with the civil laws pertaining thereto.” (Utah law did not authorize exceptions other than cases threatening the life of the mother.) The following year the potential exceptions were specified as cases where “the life or good health of the mother is seriously endangered or where the pregnancy was caused by rape and produces serious emotional trauma in the mother. . . .” “Even then,” the statement added, “it should be done only after counseling with the local presiding authority and after receiving divine confirmation through prayer.” Subsequently, this statement has been reissued or reprinted on a number of occasions, notably in early 1973 following the Supreme Court decision striking down nearly all state (including Utah) anti-abortion laws.

Notwithstanding the “liberalization” of Church guidelines during these years, the major emphasis—as was the case with birth control early in the twentieth century—has remained on the “revolting and sinful” nature of abortion. Unlike the record with birth control, recent months have brought a *more* restrictive attitude toward abortion—with increased sanctions for offenders, and vacillation on the exception for those pregnant after rape. (See *Priesthood Bulletin*, February 1971, June 1972, and February 1973; more recently, see *Church News*, March 27, 1976, p. 6, and *Ensign*, July 1976, p. 83.)

Paradoxically, these developments have taken place in a theological framework which has rejected the nineteenth century assumption that abortion was murder. As early as 1934, Apostle McKay wrote that the Church had not made an “authoritative answer” to the question, was abortion “termed murder or not?” Two decades later, President McKay and the First Presidency reaffirmed this position, “As the matter stands, no definitive statement has been made by the Lord one way or another regarding the crime of abortion. So far as is known, he has not listed it alongside the crime of the unpardonable sin and shedding innocent blood. That he has not done so

would suggest that it is not in that class of crime. . . ." Not surprisingly, McKay believed that the spirit took possession of the body at birth, and that "life manifest in the body before that time would seem to be dependent upon the mother." The Presidency under Joseph Fielding Smith concluded that "there is no direct revelation upon the subject . . . it has always been a moot question. That there is life in the child before birth is an undoubted fact, but whether that life is the result of the affinity of the child in embryo with the life of its mother, or because the spirit has entered it remains an unsolved mystery. . . ." (See letter from McKay to Tiena Nate, October 31, 1934; First Presidency statement, *The Ensign*, March, 1973, p. 64; and letter from the First Presidency, February 12, 1970; copies in my possession.)

¹⁰⁵I have interviewed individuals who were so advised by Apostles Smith and Lee.

¹⁰⁶CR, October 7, 1972, p. 86.

¹⁰⁷Although there is no formal Church statement on sterilization, the following was prepared by the Church Commissioner of Health, with the knowledge of the First Presidency, as a statement of Mormon belief:

"The Lord's commandment imposed upon all Latter-day Saints is to 'multiply and replenish the earth.' Nevertheless there may be medical conditions related to the health of the mother where sterilization could be justified. But such conditions, rare as they may be, must be determined by competent medical judgment and in accordance with laws pertaining thereto." ("Attitudes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Toward Certain Medical Problems," June 3, 1974, obtained from the office of the Church Commissioner of Health.)

¹⁰⁸"Marriage—The Proper Way," *The New Era*, February 1976, pp. 4–7, from an address given at Stockholm, Sweden, August 1974.

¹⁰⁹"The Lord's Plan for Men and Women," *Ensign*, October 1975, pp. 2–5, from an address given at June Conference, June 27, 1975.

¹¹⁰Lindsay R. Curtis, "And They Shall Be One Flesh": A Sensible Sex Guide for the L.D.S. Bride and Groom (Salt Lake City, 1968). Curtis, whose syndicated column, "For Women Only," is carried throughout both Canada and the United States, is currently serving on the Sunday School General Board. The foreword to one of his recent books was written by Apostle LeGrande Richards. (*The Making of a Prophet*, Salt Lake City, 1974)

III

¹¹¹As indicated, these are largely my own observations from talking with Mormon patients and physicians. There are no good published studies dealing with Mormon attitudes and practices in this field. Figure 2 summarizes some of the available data.

¹¹²Even Mormons opposed to family planning are inclined to agree on this point—but with an explanation. Rodney Turner, for example, writes, "The sexual relationship is justified even though a wife is past the childbearing years or the couple are incapable of having children. We are judged not only by what we do, but also by what we would do if circumstances permitted. . . . The Lord intended that women should rest from the labors of childbirth. In doing so, they are not expected to damn their emotional needs." (*Women and the Priesthood*, Salt Lake City, 1972, p. 230, fn. 42)

Whatever the merits of Turner's rationalization, one must credit him with acknowledging the problem. Traditionally those who have condoned coitus only when conception was possible have ignored the philosophical problem posed by "natural" infertility in marriage. Numerically, the oversight is considerable—when one adds sterile marriages to those that are either in a pregnant, post-partum, or post-menopause phase, the total probably approaches 50% of everyone currently married.

¹¹³No serious medical risks have been associated directly with the use of such traditional contraceptives as the diaphragm, condom, or spermicidal foams. There are significant risks associated with the pregnancies which result when these methods fail (i.e., the risks of pregnancy *per se*—from about 10 deaths per 100,000 live births at age 20, to 40 deaths at age 40; over 40, the death rate is from 70 to 80). Both the pill and IUD are associated with a very small incidence of serious side effects, some of which have only recently come to light. For women over age 40, the risks from the pill are substantially greater (as they also are with pregnancy). Although recent studies of long term usage may lead to a revision of the figures, the mortality associated with use of the IUD is usually cited as one per hundred thousand users per year; for the pill the mortality ranges from 1.3 per 100,000 users per year among those less than age 30, to 5–7 for those ages 30 to 40, and 25 deaths per 100,000 users per year among those ages 40–44 (cf. the pregnancy figures above).

When one adds the risks associated with the pregnancies resulting from contraceptive failures, the absolute mortality among "average" users of mechanical or traditional means of birth control is significantly higher than that believed attributable to the IUD or pill. Among highly motivated individuals (with less than half as many contraceptive failures), the risks are about comparable

among the different techniques (for women less than age 40). A very useful comparative study is Christopher Tietze, John Bongaarts and Bruce Schearer, "Mortality Associated with the Control of Fertility," *Family Planning Perspectives*, 8 (1):6-14 (January/February 1976).

¹¹⁴Harold T. Christensen, "Mormon Fertility: A Survey of Student Opinion," *American Journal of Sociology*, 53(4):270-275, January, 1946.

¹¹⁵Erland D. Peterson, "Attitudes Concerning Birth Control and Abortion as Related to LDS Religiosity of Brigham Young University Students," Master's Thesis (BYU, 1971). See his Tables 12, 23, and 41. (Some of his data is included in Figure 2 of this article) Only 9% reported that they were using rhythm or abstinence. A similarly paradoxical finding between expressed attitude and actual practice is reported by Robert Kane, Wayne Spencer, and Barry Rigby, in "Birth Control Attitudes and Practices in Mormonville," University of Utah College of Medicine, Salt Lake City, 1972?.

¹¹⁶Phyllis Ann Roundy, "An Analysis of BYU Women Graduates' Present Status as Mothers in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," Master's Thesis (BYU, 1970). Sixty-six per cent of the women ages 24-48 reported that they used contraceptives; about half of these were using the pill.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹¹⁸As early as 1880 admittedly doubtful census data yielded a Utah birth rate 10½ above the U.S. figure. See Mortality and Vital Statistics of the United States, Tenth Census (Washington, D.C., 1886), cxi, cxlii. For apparent exceptions to the general pattern, see the note accompanying Figure 1.

¹¹⁹Such, for example, was the case at the formerly Church-run Latter-day Saints Hospital in Salt Lake City, where Church funds paid for the contraceptives supplied to Church welfare patients.

¹²⁰Figures for the national birth rates are from *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960*, covering the years 1909-1960. Figures subsequent to 1960 were obtained from the National Center for Health Statistics; prior to 1909 the figures are as estimated by Coale and Zelnik, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-22. Utah rates are from *Utah 1970 Vital Statistics* (Salt Lake City, 1973), supplemented with census data prior to 1930, and after 1970. The Mormon birth rate is as provided by the Historical Department from the records of the annual conferences. Prior to 1920, the rates are directly from the conference reports.

Data on the "fertility" of the General Authorities is based on the figures in note 80 above. A similar survey was undertaken of the family sizes of the subhierarchy (Regional Representatives, Mission and Temple Presidents, and Stake Presidencies), based on information given in the *Church News* on approximately 2000 men called to these positions between 1969 and 1974. Average number of children for those who were at least 40 at the time of their call is as follows, by year of birth:

	(n =)	number of children
1900-1904	(24)	3.79
1905-1909	(52)	4.67
1910-1914	(93)	4.14
1915-1919	(221)	5.11
1920-1924	(357)	5.12
1925-1929	(447)	5.27
1930-1934	(250)	5.13

¹²¹See note 93.

¹²²Harold T. Christensen, "Factors in the size and sex composition of families: A survey of student opinion," *Proceedings of the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters*, 23:107-113 (1945-1946).

¹²³Harold T. Christensen, "Mormon Fertility: A survey of student opinion," *American Journal of Sociology*, 53:270-275 (1948).

¹²⁴Charles F. Westoff and Raymond H. Potvin, *College Women and Fertility Values* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1967); a composite of data presented on page 53.

¹²⁵Hastings et al, *op.cit.*, pp. 27-28.

¹²⁶Roundy, *op.cit.*, based on figures given in her Table XVIII, p. 55.

¹²⁷Peterson, *op.cit.*, Table 13, p. 55. Six per cent were using "rhythm" method of birth control, and 3% "abstinence."

¹²⁸Kane et al, *op.cit.*, p. 19.