Assimilation and Ambivalence: The Mormon Reaction to Americanization

Armand L. Mauss

IN THE CENTER OF SALT LAKE CITY, two important traditional Mormon symbols confront each other across Main Street: the angel on the temple spire and the beehive atop the now-closed Hotel Utah.[1] While the beehive may have originated as an allusion to the Jaredite word *deseret* (honeybee) in the Book of Mormon, it has since come to be considered primarily as a symbol of worldly enterprise throughout the Mormon heartland (H. Cannon 1980). For the purposes of this discussion, the beehive represents all aspects of Mormon involvement with the world, cultural as well as economic.

The angel, in contrast, represents Mormonism's other-worldly heritage, the spiritual and prophetic elements, eternal ideals, and remarkable doctrines revealed through Joseph Smith and passed down as part of a unique and authentic Mormon heritage. Ideally there is no conflict between the angel and the beehive, for Joseph Smith taught that there was no ultimate distinction between the spiritual and the material and that our duty was to subordinate worldly things to spiritual imperatives (D&C 29:31–35; McMurrin 1969, 1–8; O'Dea 1957).

Historically, however, the angel and the beehive have been locked in an unending struggle. Indeed, both the Bible and the Book of Mormon describe the triumph of the worldly beehive over the spiritual values of the angel. Perhaps we may ponder the diminishing visibility of the Angel Moroni as Temple

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[1] The Hotel Utah is currently undergoing renovation to house Church offices.

Square is increasingly obscured by high-rise office buildings. To set the stage for the analysis to follow, however, let me move from symbol and metaphor to a theoretical framework with which to interpret developments in recent Mormon culture and history.

Sociology and anthropology have accumulated a rich literature on the causes and consequences of new social movements (Gurney and Tierney 1983; Jenkins 1983; Kriesberg 1978–88; Marx and Wood 1975; Turner and Killian 1987). While the classical work of Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and their intellectual descendants may be the most applicable to the study of religious movements (Johnson 1963, 1971; D. Martin 1978; Troeltsch 1931; Wilson 1985), it seems clear that the general processes in the development of social movements are very similar, whether the movements be religious, political, or cultural. To be sure, important particulars in the histories of social movements will differ across time and cultures, and we must recognize the bias of sociologists who work with examples from North America, where we have probably the most powerfully assimilative cultures ever known.

The appearance of a new religious or social movement, like nineteenth-century Mormonism, challenges the normative order of the host society. This challenge will be the more serious, of course, the more militant and deviant the movement is; and survival itself may preoccupy the new movement initially. The overwhelming majority of new movements fail to survive even one generation. Sociologists are thus intensely interested in factors that differentiate the few movements that prosper from the great bulk that disappear early (Moore 1986; Stark 1987).

The natural and inevitable response of the host society — through not only its government but all its major institutions — is either to domesticate the new movement or to destroy it. Domestication involves various kinds of social control pressures used selectively against the movement's most unique and threatening features. To the extent that the society succeeds, the movement is assimilated. Failing sufficient domestication, the host society will eventually resort to persecution and repression.

The logical extreme of either assimilation or repression is, of course, oblivion for the movement. In the natural history of the interaction between new movements and their host societies (Hiller 1975; Mauss 1971), there are few historical exceptions to the proposition that new movements must either be assimilated in important respects or be destroyed.[2] Of course, the process is bilateral, and the assimilating society often experiences profound changes in the process, but my focus here is the internal impact of the assimilation process upon the movement itself.

Religious movements which, like Mormonism, survive and prosper, succeed, among other things, in maintaining indefinitely an optimum tension (Berger 1980; Stark and Bainbridge 1985) between the strain toward greater assimilation and respectability, on the one hand, and toward greater separate-

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[2] The rare third alternative is revolution, in which the movement overthrows the society and becomes the new establishment (Brinton 1957).

ness, peculiarity, and militance on the other. Along the continuum between total assimilation and total repression is a narrow segment on either side of the center; within this narrow range of socially acceptable variation, movements must maintain themselves, pendulum-like, to survive. If, in its quest for acceptance and respectability, a movement allows itself to be pulled too far toward assimilation, it will lose its unique identity. If in its quest for uniqueness, it allows itself to be pushed toward total rejection of the host society, it will lose its very life. Its viability and its separate identity both depend upon a successful and perpetual oscillation within a fairly narrow range along a continuum between two alternative modes of oblivion.

At any given time, then, a movement is grappling with either of two predicaments. First, if it has survived for some time as a "peculiar people," conspicuously rejecting the surrounding society and flexing the muscles of militancy, then it will begin to face what I call the *predicament of disrepute*, in which the host society responds with repression and threats to the movement's very existence. In such cases, the movement typically begins to modify its posture and to adopt selected traits from the surrounding culture that will make it more acceptable. Just which traits are selected will depend on the movement's ideology and internal political struggles and resources, as well as on sheer expediency.

After a movement has achieved some success through this strategy of purposeful accommodation, however, it may soon find itself in the *predicament of respectability*. At this point, the movement has adopted so many traits from the surrounding culture that it is not readily distinguishable from the establishment, and its identity as a separate or "peculiar" people is in jeopardy. The movement must then begin to invent, or to select from the surrounding social environment, a set of traits that will allow it to lay credible claim to uniqueness in identity, values, folkways, or mission.

As the movement successfully reasserts its peculiarity, it moves back toward the earlier predicament of disrepute, and the cycle begins again. To complicate matters, every time the movement switches direction, it must contend with internal tendencies toward schism and defection (Baer 1988). This general heuristic model of a cyclical or dialectical process in the "careers" of successful movements is widely applicable, I think, in interpreting the histories of many social movements in Europe and America, at least; but from here on I would like to apply it specifically to the Mormon case in America.[3]

The geographical limitation is a serious one. Changes in Mormon culture can be expected from pressures elsewhere in the world as well, and the assimila-

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[3] For related studies on other religions with "identity" problems, see Assimeng (1986), Bass and Smith (1987), Furman (1987), Hamm (1987), and Liebmann (1983). In addition to the sociological level, I recognize the importance of the psychological level as individuals grapple with the predicaments faced collectively by their movements. However, these individuals do not necessarily understand this cyclical process, either at the micro- or the macrocosmic levels, though they may react to certain feelings deriving from the two predicaments. Sociological theories are based on the naturalistic assumption that social processes do not require teleological intention or understanding by individuals for the processes to take place, any more than biological or physical processes do.

tion struggle itself will become important and perhaps take different forms in other societies, once the Mormon presence and numbers there reach significant levels. But those are subjects for other essays.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY MORMONISM: A CASE STUDY
IN ASSIMILATION

While this pendulum model could, I think, be successfully applied to the entire history of the Mormon movement, it is especially useful for understanding the transformations of Mormonism in the twentieth century.[4] As this century began, Mormons were deeply enmeshed in the predicament of disrepute. Utah's relative isolation had made possible the unrestrained development of the angel motif: The Latter-day Saints, under prophetic inspiration, had self-consciously cultivated unique religious and secular institutions. From the outside, Mormonism and its way of life projected a national image — not altogether unjustified — of an un-American, even anti-American, insurgent counter-culture.

The Quest for Respectability

The *Reynolds* decision of 1879 seemed to sum up the mood of the country in judicial language: The First Amendment guaranteed freedom of belief, but not unlimited freedom of practice. A society can tolerate only a limited amount of "peculiarity," even in the name of religion. By the 1890s, the increasing repression from American society had produced the desired result. The Mormons gave up polygamy, theocracy, and collectivist economic experiments, thus abandoning charismatic peculiarity except at the relatively abstract level of theology. In return, Utah achieved statehood, less harassment, and more toleration. Symbolically, the new state's seal featured a prominent beehive (Lyman 1986).

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[4] As a sketch of how the same model might apply to the nineteenth century, I suggest that the New York, Kirtland, and Missouri years were innovative and charismatic ones symbolized mainly by the angel. This period (1827–39) saw major political and economic innovations and increasing militancy in Mormon behavior (as opposed to rhetoric). The repressive response of the establishment, especially in Missouri, was quite predictable. By comparison, Nauvoo represented a more successful accommodation in line with the beehive motif, until the secret of polygamy became public; up to 1844, at least, there was quite an extensive Mormon participation in the normal political and economic life of Illinois and of the nation, as well as a number of other worldly compromises.

In Utah up to the 1890s, the pendulum swung again, toward a studied rejection of American society; deviant arrangements in political, economic, and family institutions flourished. The increasingly repressive response from the rest of the country was inevitable. Historian R. Laurence Moore observes that this mutual rejection and hostility served certain political, psychological, and other interests of both the Latter-day Saints and the scandalized nation. Mormons, he says, frequently advanced their claims "in the most obnoxious way possible," while both sides seemed to go to some lengths "to stress not what Mormons had in common with other Americans, which was a great deal, but what they did not have in common" (1986, 31–32).

I am, of course, oversimplifying this social movement theory by emphasizing the more fluid and uncontrolled collective aspects of the Mormon movement and not giving equal attention to the Church's more stable organizational aspects.

From that time on, Church policy has been conspicuously assimilationist in most respects, though Mormons still struggled with the predicament of disrepute for decades. Their achievement of respectability against a background of almost universal national contempt is an astonishing success story (Alexander 1986; Shipps 1985). With the consistent encouragement of Church leaders, Mormons have become super-patriotic, law-abiding citizens. Their participation in the full spectrum of national social, political, economic, and cultural life has been thorough and sincere, not only at the grassroots level, but also as prominent leaders in many national institutions.

Since World War II, Mormons have risen in socio-economic status to a virtual tie near the top with Episcopalians and Presbyterians (Roof and McKinney 1987, 110). Not all the Saints have been able to keep up, however, and some of the less affluent have found themselves more comfortable in other religions or schismatic groups (Baer 1988). It's not that twentieth-century Latter-day Saints have necessarily been more preoccupied than their forebears with material things; but they have been more successful materially than the rest of the nation and thus have acquired a greater stake in the American socio-economic system than did their turn-of-the-century grandparents.

The Church itself, as a corporate entity, is awesomely involved in the American capitalist marketplace and in the rough-and-tumble of American politics (Gottlieb and Wiley 1984; Mauss and Bradford 1988). Church publications have regularly and approvingly featured Church members who have achieved prominence in government, business, athletics, music, arts, and entertainment, especially if they credit the Church for part of their success.

Church leaders at the general, stake, and ward levels have been drawn disproportionately from those successful in business, law, education, and one or two other prestigious professions. My tabulation from the *1985 Church Almanac* shows that about a third of the General Authorities were business administrators, another third attorneys, and a fifth educational administrators (rather than teachers/scholars), with the remainder representing medicine, dentistry, engineering, and miscellaneous fields (Deseret News 1984, 18–37).

The system of governance in the Church is now based far less upon the individual prophetic initiative of a Joseph Smith or a Brigham Young and far more upon the collective, collegial, and bureaucratic model usually associated with large corporations. While much of this bureaucratic development is the inevitable companion of growth, its effect is still to produce another kind of convergence with the corporate world. This is especially true since the advent of "correlation" in the 1960s (Gottlieb and Wiley 1984; Woodworth 1987). The Church's public relations enterprise has mushroomed in size, scope, and importance. The approval of the world has been courted not only through a growing corps of clean-cut young missionaries, but also with the Tabernacle Choir, mass-market magazine ads, and television spots and specials.

Such involvements with the world carry the constant risk of compromising the angel with the beehive. Most conflicts between the two never come to public attention. We know, however, that if the Church is going to own hotels and other businesses, then it must keep many of them open on Sundays and

serve beverages that Church members are enjoined to avoid. If Church-owned radio and television stations are major network affiliates, as many of them are, then they must sometimes carry ads for products that Saints may not use or broadcast music and programs that some Church leaders urge LDS youth to avoid.

The point is not that all involvements with the world are subversive; the Saints have always been counseled to embrace good wherever they find it. Much in the world is fully harmonious with traditional Mormon values. Nor, indeed, have all worldly borrowings been of a material nature; some have come from other religions — for example, many of our hymns (Hicks 1987). My point is only that the Saints should be clear about the source of the borrowings. Did they come from the angel or from the beehive, from within the Mormon heritage or from outside? However we might answer those questions, it does appear that the Latter-day Saint movement has resolved its early predicament of disrepute and has gone far toward achieving respectability.

Corporate Signs of Assimilation

While assimilation is aided by increasing tolerance from the host society, it has usually required the deviant movement to do most of the changing, by giving up especially controversial claims or characteristics. Recent scholarship on the Mormons has shed a great deal of light, not only upon the forms of such renunciation, but also upon the ideological and organizational evolution accompanying it (Alexander 1986; Gottlieb and Wiley 1984; Lyman 1986; Shepherd and Shepherd 1984; Shipps 1985).

Gordon and Gary Shepherd, for example, have traced the assimilation process through the changing rhetoric in general conference sermons. They found, among other things, a steady decline between 1890 and 1950 in such uniquely Mormon themes as Zion- and kingdom-building, eschatology, missionary work, apostasy, restoration, doctrinal differences with other churches, the corruption of outside governments, and obedience to Church leaders, while such assimilationist themes as the greatness of American institutions, patriotism, good citizenship, and fellowship with other faiths increased (1984, 174–77; 190–99).

In Mormon hymnody during the same period, successive official hymnals not only borrowed an increasing proportion of hymns from mainstream Protestantism, but the texts of some classic LDS hymns were "toned down" to reduce peculiar Mormon referents or militancy. For example, in "Praise to the Man," "long shall his blood . . . stain Illinois" became "long shall his blood . . . plead unto Heaven" in the editions after 1940 (Hicks 1987).

Important doctrinal and ritual developments during the first half of the twentieth century also reflected assimilationism. Alexander (1980) has documented how doctrines of deity were codified early in the century to eliminate both contradictions and such drastic departures from traditional Christianity as the "Adam-God" theory (Buerger 1982). The official sponsorship and widespread dissemination of James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* can best be understood, I think, as part of the same process of standardizing LDS concepts of

deity. While some uniquely Mormon ideas are obviously important in that book, its portrayal of Christ was heavily influenced by prevailing Victorian theories in contemporary mainstream Protestant scholarship (Thorp 1987). During the same general period, changes in the temple endowment and garment and the gradual deemphasis of the second anointing rendered the temple experience somewhat less foreign to the novice (Alexander 1986, 291–303; Buerger 1983, 1987; Mauss 1987).

The effort to bring the Church into mainstream American life during the early twentieth century can also be seen in the auxiliary organizations, beginning with the almost immediate adoption of the new national Boy Scout program in 1913 (Alexander 1986, 144–45). Social welfare professionalism was introduced into the Relief Society, some of whose general officers were encouraged by Church leaders to maintain contacts and collaboration with outside professionals (Alexander 1986, 128–36; May 1976). The Mutual Improvement Associations, at least up to the 1950s, became almost a Church extension education program, offering training in the arts, drama, and forensics and lessons on important social and ethical issues authored by noted Church professionals and intellectuals (Alexander 1986, 140–46; Kenney 1978, 1987). Indeed, individual scholars or experts often wrote lesson manuals for the Relief Society and the Sunday School, as well (Alexander 1986, 138–40; Christensen 1987). To all appearances, the social gospel movement of general Protestantism was making inroads in Utah, as elsewhere (Alexander 1983).

Dr. Franklin S. Harris, appointed president of Brigham Young University in 1921, had General Authority support for upgrading and enhancing the school's respectability as a legitimate institution of learning in the eyes of the nation (Christensen 1987; Bergera and Priddis 1985). A new religious education program of seminaries began in 1911, and institutes followed in 1926 to help young Church members articulate their religious faith and integrate it with the worldly learning they were now starting in large numbers to seek (Alexander 1986). For a few summers, prominent non-Mormon biblical scholars and theologians came to Utah to instruct the seminary and institute faculty in contemporary theological scholarship (Nelson 1985). In a few cases, the Church even provided stipends for some of its promising young scholars to obtain advanced degrees at centers of learning like the University of Chicago, expecting them to bring to the Church educational system some of the worldly professional credibility it was then lacking (Arrington 1967; Sherlock 1979; Swensen 1972). To be sure, there was much ambivalence and some controversy among Church leaders about the wisdom of these and similar developments (Sherlock 1979), but they seem clearly enough to manifest the quest for respectability in the beehive mode.

Signs of Assimilation in the Church Population

Such signs of accommodation and assimilation in the corporate or institutional church are fairly easy to document, since they can be traced in the historical record. More difficult is tracing changes across time in the minds of people. Such a record would require longitudinal or successive surveys of popu-

lar traits and opinions like those accumulated by Gallup. To my knowledge, there have been no such systematic surveys on Latter-day Saints earlier than those I conducted in Utah and California twenty years ago (Mauss 1972a, 1972b, 1976). By then, of course, assimilation was basically complete.

We must thus resort to inferences and assumptions about changing values, ideas, or behavior across time in the Mormon population. We might be able to assume, for example, that the changes traced by the Shepherds (1984) in pulpit rhetoric eventually influenced the thinking of the Saints in the same directions. Or, if we find major differences between the beliefs and values of older and younger respondents, we might be able to assume that those of the younger group represent a trend. Or, given that increasing proportions of Church members live outside Utah and the mountain west, we might be able to assume that the trend is away from the Utah position and toward the positions of those living elsewhere. Such assumptions might have some value, but they are weak compared to successive surveys.

However, my Mormon surveys from the late 1960s showed that the San Francisco sample was closer than the Utah sample to the moderate Protestant mainline group in various measures of religious commitment (Mauss 1972b). The San Francisco sample was also much less politically conservative than the Utah sample, both in domestic and in foreign policy preferences (Mauss 1972a). In sexual norms, marriage outside the Church, compliance with the Word of Wisdom, keeping the Sabbath, and using profanity, the two Mormon samples showed more similarities than differences, although noteworthy gaps remained among those under forty in the two locations (Mauss 1976). Though it is arguable, one may infer that at least the coming generation of Mormons and/or those outside Utah were growing somewhat "less Mormon" and thus more "assimilated" than the older Utah generation.[5]

By now, that "coming generation" has arrived at middle age, and it would be helpful to have more recent survey data for comparison. The only recent surveys of systematic LDS samples of which I am aware have been conducted under Church auspices and so are not available for analysis by scholars generally. On a tentative basis, however, we might get some indications about the characteristics of today's Latter-day Saints by looking at data available through the annual social surveys conducted by the Roper and NORC polling organizations. These surveys include relatively few Mormon respondents but still make possible some comparisons of Mormons with non-Mormons nationwide.[6]

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[5] For these and subsequent inferences I draw on (1) my surveys of careful probability samples of more than 1,200 Salt Lake City and San Francisco Mormons conducted with the permission but not the surveillance of Church leaders between 1967 and 1969 (Mauss 1972a); (2) my analyses of data from the annual spring social surveys of the National Opinion Research Corporation (NORC), 1972–85 (see, for example, Davis and Smith 1987); and (3) analyses of similar NORC data sets conducted by Roof and McKinney (1987). The latter deals only peripherally with the Mormons in the sample, usually by including them in a number of interesting cross-denominational comparisons.

[6] The Mormons constitute a very small number in any one NORC survey; but by aggregating these Mormon subsamples across all thirteen years, it is possible to accumulate as many as 189. Like Roof and McKinney, I carefully studied the data to ascertain whether serious variations in survey results occurred by period or region. There were none in basic

TABLE 1

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTIONS FOR LIFE-LONG MORMONS
("LIFERS"), FOR MORMON CONVERTS, AND FOR NON-MORMONS

Demographic Traits	Lifers (N=113)	Converts (N=76)	Non-Mormons (N=1247)	Prob.*
Occupation				
prof., tech., mgr.	35%	36%	29%	.192
clerical	15	17	22	
Occup. Prestige				
(above middle)	47%	54%	48%	.581
Father's Occup.				
Prestige (>mid)	64	61	57	.305
Education more than high sch.	41	26	26	.009
Income >$25K/an.	34	23	19	.118
Class self-ident.				
working class	39	59	47	.127
middle class	55	38	44	
Region				
Mountain	63	42	6	.000
Pacific	21	29	16	
Mid & So. Atl.	8	17	32	
East So. Central	3	5	7	
Age <40	68	52	44	.000
Family >4 kids	31	24	20	.003
Conservative polit. self-ident.	55	31	27	· .000
Party preference				
Republican	66	30	30	.000
Democrat	26	55	56	

* Probability of chance distribution by chi-square test. Ns here are the maximums for each
column. They change somewhat from one item to another but rarely fall below 50 for
either Lifers or Converts.

They also allow us to compare Mormon converts with lifelong members, or
"lifers." To the extent that Mormons resemble non-Mormons, we might infer
that assimilation has occurred. We cannot know how different Mormons were
from non-Mormons in the past. Still, we can infer how assimilated Mormons
are with non-Mormons now. At this point in the essay, we will be comparing

demographic distributions like age, sex, occupation, education, etc. Variations do occur by
time and region in certain social and political attitudes, not only for Mormons but for the
general samples. Accordingly, whenever comparisons are made in this paper between Mor-
mons and others, they are based on data aggregated across time in the same way; thus, they
are affected in the same way by both time and region and thereby remain comparable. Both
in the NORC data and in my surveys, it is possible to distinguish converts from lifers; thus,
that kind of comparison is also introduced where salient.

mainly the first and third columns of the tables, reserving for later a closer look at the middle column (converts).

The demographic data in Table 1 shows that the "typical" Mormon is not extremely different from his or her non-Mormon counterpart in the United States. For obvious historical reasons, Mormons are geographically distributed disproportionately in the West. They differ little, if at all, however, from non-Mormons in occupational preferences or prestige. Lifers (but not converts) do differ noticeably in educational attainment, income, politics, age distribution, and family size, all in ways that underlie the social conservatism for which Mormons have become well known.

The NORC surveys from which these data come do not ask many questions about religious beliefs; but Mormon religious differences are pronounced, though again less for converts than for lifers. Mormons are much more likely than others to believe in life after death, to hold strong feelings for their own religion, to attend church regularly, and to abstain from alcohol and tobacco, though one in six smokes and one in three drinks.

On contemporary social issues in the nation (Tables 3 and 4), the comparisons between Mormons and non-Mormons do not correspond very closely with popular stereotypes. Mormons express much more support for civil liberties than do others, reinforcing my own finding of twenty years ago (1972a). Roof and McKinney (1987, 195) found that Mormons exceed nearly all other Christian bodies in upholding civil liberties for unpopular groups. Similarly, in attitudes toward blacks and toward women's roles, Mormons rarely differ from non-Mormons in statistically significant ways; and when they do, they tend to be more liberal than the non-Mormons, though this is somewhat less true for converts. Again, these findings replicate mine as far as the races are concerned (1972a); and again Roof and McKinney find Mormons ranking

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTIONS BY RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND OBSERVANCES FOR LIFE-LONG MORMONS ("LIFERS"), CONVERTS, AND NON-MORMONS

Beliefs	Lifers (N=113)	Converts (N=76)	Non-Mormons (N=1247)	Prob.*
Life after death	96%	88%	76%	.000
"Strong" feelings for religious affiliation	63%	48%	42%	.001
Observances				
Church attendance				
weekly or more	56%	49%	31%	.000
<annually	21	29	38	
Smoker at present	16	18	38	.002
Ever drink at all now	31	38	78	.000
Ever too much? (drinkers only)	38	38	38	.941

* See note on Table 1.

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTIONS BY INDICATORS OF SOCIAL CONSERVATISM FOR LIFE-LONG MORMONS ("LIFERS"), CONVERTS, AND NON-MORMONS

Beliefs/Attitudes	Lifers (N=113)	Converts (N=76)	Non-Mormons (N=1247)	Prob.*
Civil Libertarianism: Agree that atheists should be allowed to —				
Speak in public	78%	82%	63%	.001
Teach in schools	61%	43%	43%	.008
Have anti-religious books in library	68%	74%	61%	.075
Church/State Separation: Prayer in the public schools				
Approve	51%	50%	37%	.059
Sex-Related Issues				
Approval of abortion —				
For any reason	22%	16%	36%	.000
If single woman	22%	28%	43%	.000
If married, not wanting more	19%	24%	41%	.000
Favor sex education in public schools	62%	75%	79%	.104
Favor general laws vs. pornography	62%	61%	41%	.015
Has seen X-rated movie during past year	15%	5%	19%	.293
Believe homosexual relations are always wrong	86%	93%	69%	.034
Would allow book by homosexual in public library	44%	46%	43%	.979
Cynicism or "Anomia": Agreement that —				
The lot of the average man is getting worse	53%	61%	61%	.364
It's not fair to bring a child into this kind of world	19%	34%	43%	.000
Government officials, etc., are not interested				
in the average man	53%	63%	68%	.017

* See note on Table 1.

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTIONS BY ATTITUDES ON RACE AND GENDER ISSUES FOR LIFE-LONG MORMONS ("LIFERS"), CONVERTS, AND NON-MORMONS

Beliefs/Attitudes	Lifers (N=113)	Converts (N=76)	Non-Mormons (N=1247)	Prob.*
Race Attitudes: Agree strongly that —				
Whites and blacks should attend separate schools	7%	4%	11%	.447
Whites have a right to segregate neighborhoods	10%	13%	15%	.568
Blacks should not push so hard	23%	41%	38%	.205
Favor laws against intermarriage	18%	29%	29%	.072
Favor school busing for integration	23%	10%	20%	.123
Would vote for a black for president	87%	84%	78%	.357
Gender Attitudes: Agree that —				
All right for women to work outside home	75%	58%	71%	.439
Women should take care of the home, not the country	28%	43%	30%	.233
Women are not suited for politics	32%	61%	42%	.024
Would vote for a woman for president	79%	73%	81%	.204

* See note on Table 1.

ahead of most other Christians on "racial justice" and "women's rights" (1987, 200, 209).[7]

In general, the most consistent attitudinal differences between Mormons and non-Mormons are those which also distinguish the nation's more conservative Protestants on such issues as prayer in public schools, abortion, sex education in the schools, pornography, and tolerance of homosexuality. As Table 3 indicates, Mormons tend to be much more conservative than non-Mormons on these issues. Similarly, Roof and McKinney (1987, 214) found Mormons strongly resembling Southern Baptists and other fundamentalists on these issues. A separate survey of some 900 college students at four campuses in the United States and Canada also found "general substantive agreement" on such issues between Mormons and conservative Christians, as well as very similar scores on a "Moral Majority Scale" (Brinkerhoff, Jacob, and Mackie 1987).

Mormons often cite family values and behavior as important distinguishing traits. Indeed, because of a theology and cosmology that have always been both familial and patriarchal, Mormons have been strongly oriented toward marriage and family from the beginning (Campbell and Campbell 1981; Thomas 1983). Accordingly, most studies have shown Mormons more likely than other Americans to abstain from premarital and extramarital sexual relations, to marry, to remarry after divorce or widowhood, and to have relatively large families (Bahr, Condie, and Goodman 1982; Christensen 1976, 1982; Heaton 1986, 1987a; Heaton and Goodman 1985; and Smith 1976).

At the same time, however, Mormons do not differ appreciably from other Americans in using contraceptives, in divorce rates, in the incidence of female depression, or in certain other common family problems (Bahr 1981; Bluhm, Spendlove, and West 1986; Heaton and Calkins 1983; Martin, Heaton, and Bahr 1986). Nor, despite the patriarchal rhetoric, do Mormons differ from most other Americans in the rate at which married women are gainfully employed or in how married couples share power (Albrecht, Bahr, Chadwick 1979; Bahr 1979, 1982; Bahr and Rollins 1971; Brinkerhoff and Mackie 1984; Martin, Heaton, and Bahr 1986).

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[7] It is important to emphasize that the Mormon sample in these tables is not large enough, even as aggregated across the years, to carry the burden of the case for Mormon assimilation, nor am I using the tables for that purpose. The case for a social and cultural convergence of Mormons with other Americans rests mainly upon (1) the preceding paragraphs on assimilation at the corporate level; (2) the systematic evidence from the Shepherds (1984) on the changing content of general conference sermons; (3) the evidence from my own older and larger surveys; and (4) the highly corroborative findings on Mormon social attitudes and behavior from the empirical studies of other scholars cited often in these pages.

Yet, although the NORC data in these tables can be considered only as suggestive, they should not be disregarded. The tables have been presented in three columns to obviate the need for two sets of tables (one each for the Mormon/non-Mormon comparison and for the lifer/convert comparison). This form of presentation, however, actually underestimates the Mormon/non-Mormon similarities, since the converts are usually closer statistically to the non-Mormons. Thus, if the convert and lifer data were merged into one Mormon column (as in Roof and McKinney 1987), then the Mormon/non-Mormon differences would be even smaller. Furthermore, the total (merged) sample size for Mormons would be much larger than in either of the two existing Mormon columns, thereby enhancing also the statistical significance of the comparisons.

From these data, I would generalize that Mormons resemble other middle-class Americans in their basic beliefs and values far more than they differ from them (Davies 1963) and that such distinguishing traits as they do have in politics, family or sexual values, and alcohol use make them look much more like other conservative Christians than like an unassimilated minority. Recent changes in the surrounding culture have also helped erode Mormon distinctiveness. National campaigns decry tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, poor nutrition, and lack of exercise; others promote wholesome family life. National politics are more conservative than perhaps at any time in the past half century. (For a generally congruent assessment of the few differences between Mormons and other Americans, see Clayton 1986).

Thus, American Mormons have achieved a high degree of assimilation, a mixed blessing, which has brought the Church and its individual members to a new predicament.

THE PREDICAMENT OF RESPECTABILITY

In the predicament of respectability, the corporate institution and individual members feel an increasing need to reassert their claims to a separate identity and uniqueness, to reach ever deeper into their bag of cultural peculiarities to find either symbolic or actual traits that will help them mark their subcultural boundaries. Even the traditional Mormon theological heresies have a less distinguishing effect in a society which has generally grown indifferent to theology as opposed to the search for personal fulfillment.

A new Mormon resistance to assimilation, and an effort to recover peculiarity, seem visible on at least three levels: (1) Official, where presiding authorities make renewed efforts to reassert the charismatic and prophetic element of the angel through new programs and through reemphasizing, renewing, or retrenching existing programs and principles. (2) Folk, where individuals and groups of Church members in wards and stakes identify and promote certain values and norms of behavior as uniquely or especially Mormon, in reaction to the pressures of assimilation. (3) Scholarly, where Mormon academics and intellectuals seek out, illuminate, and celebrate our unique historical and cultural identity. Such enterprises as the Mormon History Association, DIALOGUE, *Sunstone* (both symposia and magazine), and the "Camelot" days in the Church Historical Department can, I think, all be understood as part of this level (Bitton 1983).[8] However, the remainder of this essay will concentrate on the official and folk levels.

Official Efforts: Historical Background

Those useful abstractions, "stages of history," are not marked by distinct boundaries. Rather, there is much overlapping at the margins, as the forces set in motion during an earlier stage play themselves out simultaneously with

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[8] One of the excesses of this scholarly thrust, in my opinion, has been the effort in Canada and in the U.S. to define Mormons as a separate "ethnic group" (May 1980; Card et al., in press), an effort to which I have taken exception elsewhere (Mauss, in press).

the emergence of new forces headed in different directions. It is thus very difficult to set a date for the end of the "assimilationist stage" and the beginning of resistance to assimilation. The concern with respectability is certainly still obvious in the massive public-relations campaign of the 1970s and 1980s. Yet at some point after World War II, it seems clear that at least some segment of the Church leadership became more concerned with the costs of assimilation than with the benefits; more concerned with the consequences of a muted Mormon identity, an ambiguous peculiarity, than with maintaining or enhancing a position of comfortable respectability.

The seeds of that change may have been planted as early as the mid-1930s when the Great Depression brought a sense of crisis in the Mormon community and perhaps a renewed sense of dependence on "first principles" and on the Church as a source of security. The newly organized (or reorganized) Church Welfare Program of that time, with its stress on communitarianism, might be understood as such an expression. American political changes, exemplified by Prohibition repeal and the New Deal, were also threatening. President Heber J. Grant, for example, regarded the emerging political values as so subversive to the moral fiber of the nation that he became a Republican.

A thorough history remains to be written of the Church since the 1930s, but it seems clear, given the political and economic conditions just mentioned, that the thirties provided a fertile environment for change. The calling of J. Reuben Clark to the First Presidency during this time seems in retrospect to have been as significant as it was fortuitous. I do not mean to subscribe to such simplistic notions as a "great man" theory of history, but my reading of Clark's biography (Quinn 1983) convinces me that his appointment in 1933 had a more profound impact on the Church than any other First Presidency appointment since Jedediah M. Grant's during the "Reformation" in 1854 (Sessions 1982).

Coinciding with President Clark's appointment came the deaths of B. H. Roberts, James E. Talmage, and Anthony W. Ivins, influential proponents of a different leadership style. Equally significant and coincidental was the fact that for nearly two decades the presidents of the Church to whom Clark was first counselor were not in vigorous health, President Grant because of advanced age and President George Albert Smith because of a chronic condition. These coincidental conditions in top leadership, in effect, left the vigorous, conservative, and eloquent President Clark as the Church's most influential spokesman with few dissenters of comparable personal or ecclesiastical power.

To some extent, Clark's colleague in the First Presidency, David O. McKay, provided a degree of balance; but President McKay disliked confrontations and tended to avoid engaging Clark directly. These differences in style and philosophy signaled the emergence of "camps" among the General Authorities, evident from the tendency even in the 1930s to speak of each other as "Clark men" or "McKay men" (Quinn 1983, 117–28). In the early 1940s, with President Grant growing feebler, four young apostles were called — Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, and Mark E. Petersen. Elders Lee, Benson, and Petersen, at least, were clearly identifiable as "Clark men."

Elder Lee had a powerful impact upon Church organization as the architect of the Welfare Program even in the 1930s, and then of the Correlation Movement in the 1960s (Gottlieb and Wiley 1984, 59–64; 194–99; Wiley 1984–85). Elder Petersen, during much of his tenure among the Twelve, had the special assignment of dealing with apostates and trying to protect the Church from their influence. He undertook a number of forays against the fancied faithless, including an attempted "purge" of certain DIALOGUE scholars (myself included) as recently as 1983. Elders Lee, Petersen, and Benson have all been known for their theological and political conservatism, their preference for centralized and standardized control, their stress upon obedience to current authority, and their suspicion of scholars and intellectuals.

Because we lack access to the records of the crucial deliberations, we cannot document President Clark's exact involvement in these appointments. However, his influence during 1943–44 must have been great. President Grant was already incapacitated from the lengthy illness that would end his life in early 1945. It is apparent also that these three shared President Clark's preference for a more formal, bureaucratic, and centralized leadership style (Quinn 1983, 300).

I do not mean to suggest a conservative conspiracy. After all, such important leaders as David O. McKay, Stephen L Richards, John A. Widtsoe, and Matthew Cowley were clearly not "Clark men." I suggest only that as these Clark-sponsored men gained seniority and power, along with certain others like Bruce R. McConkie, appointed to the First Council of Seventy about the same time, they would naturally have been disposed to support the renewal and retrenchment ethos increasingly apparent in Church leadership since World War II. Their support may or may not have been decisive, but it must have been important.

Harold B. Lee's "correlation movement" expressed the organizational commitment to renewal and retrenchment. As Richard D. Poll explains from personal experience, Elder Lee, the "quintessential Iron Rod," was the prime mover behind Correlation, a program "originally intended to eliminate duplicate and inefficient programs and practices," but which by the 1970s had produced "a standardized and sanitized instructional curriculum [in which the] intellectual threat was being contained by eliminating intellectual inquiry from Church education" (1985, 17).

Even earlier, in the early 1950s, Elders Lee, Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R. McConkie, and others were trying to close down the "swearing elders" seminars at the University of Utah (Bergera and Priddis 1985, 155–56; Blakely 1985; Poll 1985), removing or transferring such "liberals" as George Boyd and Heber Snell from the Utah LDS Institutes (Sherlock 1979) and urging the adoption of Elder Smith's anti-evolutionist *Man: His Origin and Destiny* as an Institute text.

It is against this historical background of organizational developments from the 1930s to the 1950s that we can better understand the significance of more recent retrenchment efforts. Five such efforts seem especially noteworthy.

Five Contemporary Features

1. *Reassertion of the principle of continuous revelation through modern prophets.* Though a classic doctrine of Mormonism, this principle has received renewed emphasis in recent years, as manifest by the increased frequency of the charge, "Follow the Brethren!" The Shepherds confirm empirically that since 1950, if not earlier, general conference sermons have shown a greatly increased emphasis upon keeping the commandments, the dangers of disobedience, and the importance of obeying priesthood leaders (1984, Appendix C).

Second, three new revelatory sections have been added to the canon in the Doctrine and Covenants after a hiatus of nearly a century. The renewed emphasis upon the Book of Mormon, a particular preoccupation of the Benson presidency, can also be seen in this light. Admittedly the assimilationist motif of the Church can be seen in the 1981 addition of a Book of Mormon subtitle, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," thus stressing a common Christian heritage with the rest of America. Yet, at the same time, there has been an increased stress on the book as concrete evidence of the prophetic claims of Joseph Smith.

Clearly related, especially during the period of Spencer W. Kimball's influence, has been the increased focus on Lamanites and, indeed, the expansion of that term officially in recent years to cover Polynesians (England 1985). The establishment a few years ago of the private Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), housed at BYU, might be seen as a scholarly, or even a semi-official, expression of the same renewed emphasis on the Book of Mormon. All of these developments, in one way or another, stress that the traditional prophetic claims of Mormonism continue to provide a basis for Mormon distinctiveness.

Even some of the politically unpopular positions of Church leadership in recent years can be understood as efforts to maintain the integrity of the prophetic office (Mauss and Bradford 1988). The official response to criticism of the Church's pre-1978 racial policies reasserted the divine legitimacy of the prophets' leadership; and that issue early displaced the racial issue itself for leaders and probably for most members as well (Mauss 1981). Similarly, I find that official resistance to many feminist claims is not so much an expression of patriarchal politics as another assertion of the integrity and charisma of the prophetic office in the face of pressures for political expediency.

2. *Renewed emphasis on genealogy and temple work.* Few characteristics are as uniquely and authentically Mormon as these two related programs. Both have received enormously increased emphasis in the past two decades. Genealogical research has been increasingly computerized and turned over to a cadre of professionals and to specially trained volunteers at stake genealogical libraries. The name extraction program greatly facilitates ordinance work for deceased individuals, separating ordinances from demonstrated kinship.

At the same time, however, lay Saints are kept involved in the genealogy program (at least in principle) through the continued requirement for each individual to complete four generations of pedigree/family group sheets and

through expanding the meaning of "genealogy" to emphasize personal and family histories. Indeed, the genealogy program and library were, in 1987, renamed "Family History." An important effect is to foster the continued sense of connection to a unique identity and heritage among members, including converts.

Since 1950, there has been a tremendous increase in the emphasis given to temples and temple work in general conference sermons (Shepherd and Shepherd 1984, Appendix C). Up to the end of World War II, there had never been more than eight temples in operation. Five more were added in the next twenty years. The 1985 *Church Almanac* lists almost fifty, either in operation or under construction (Deseret News 1984, 12). This post-1965 increase in temples has been accompanied by a streamlining of the ceremony, both substantively and technologically, and by a modernization of the garment (Buerger 1987, 55–56).

These changes have made temple work more accessible geographically, logistically, and even psychologically to a vastly larger proportion of members than ever before (Deseret News 1984, 12). Though there is some question about how much proportionate increase has occurred in actual temple participation (Buerger 1987, 63–67), the very presence of temples in new locations and the potential for increased participation enhances the sense of distinct identity, especially among Mormons who live near the growing number of temples and wear the garment as a symbol of resistance to assimilation (Mauss 1987).

3. *The missionary program.* While Mormons have always proselyted, the creation of the 1960s slogan "Every Member a Missionary" epitomizes a renewed commitment to missionary work. Earlier in the century, mission calls to young men were by no means routine, and a relatively small proportion of them received calls. It was not unusual for farewells before 1960 to feature visiting speakers and musicians and ornate printed programs, all now generally abandoned as part of the attempt in recent years to routinize and universalize the expectation of a mission call for young men and, increasingly, for young women. Though only about a third of the eligible young men are actually serving missions in the 1980s, that is almost certainly a large increase over the proportions called earlier in the century. With nearly 40,000 maintained in the field during the late eighties, Mormon missionaries very nearly equal the combined total of all the missionaries sent from the Protestant denominations of the United States, according to a colleague of mine on the research staff of the National Council of Churches.

Other manifestations of intensified commitment to missionary work can be seen in the efficient language and other training for missionaries; the continuous resort to and experimentation with standardized proselyting plans; the ongoing sociological research on the conversion process and determinants of missionary success; perhaps an increased willingness to recruit women and retired couples (according to a knowledgeable informant on the MTC staff, women now constitute 15 percent of each new missionary group); and even the constant "remodeling" of the missionary program at the local or stake level.

4. *Family renewal and retrenchment.* The sanctity and solidarity of Mormon family life have always been recognized, by Mormons and by others, as the foundation of both church and nation (Heaton 1987a). Yet a new emphasis on strengthening the family is clearly visible in the recent history of the Church, beginning at least with the introduction of the Family Home Evening program about twenty-five years ago and epitomized in the well-known McKay dictum, "No success in life can compensate for failure in the home."

This emphasis can be seen in a variety of official initiatives: Church-published family home evening manuals placed in every home annually (until recent years); the official expectation (not always achieved) of a Sunday School family relations course annually; the regular features, "Family Handbook" and "Family Home Evening," in the *Ensign* during the present decade; articles in nearly every *Ensign* on such practical problems as marriage enrichment, inactive or nonmember spouses, divorce, and infidelity; and a general pronatal and prochild ethos that expresses itself (among other ways) in tolerance for a remarkable level of child-generated noise in worship services.

The Shepherds' data corroborate this general picture of renewed official emphasis on family life. Between 1950 and 1980, by comparison with 1920–50, general conference talks saw a five-fold increase in references to children, four-fold in references to family life, eight-fold in references to marriage, and five-fold in references to motherhood, though none in reference to fatherhood (1984, Appendix C).

This renewed family focus has, of course, coincided in recent years with the return of feminism as a major American issue; and that juxtaposition creates the best context, I think, for understanding the apparently conservative official stance toward careers or gainful employment for mothers and toward other feminist aspirations.

President Benson's widely circulated addresses of February and October 1987, criticizing mothers' employment or their postponement of childbearing, represent perhaps the conservative extreme among today's Church leaders (1987a, 1987b). Yet rarely are official statements so uncompromising. Six months after President Benson's address to fathers, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, his first counselor, in an address to Regional Representatives (1988a) later summarized for the general Church membership (1988b), extolled the career accomplishments of prominent women who had made important contributions to the world in political and other realms (Hinckley 1988). Certainly no efforts have been made to apply President Benson's instructions to the thousands of mothers who contribute their services to auxiliary boards on the general, stake, and ward levels (Huefner 1971), to say nothing of the mothers on the Church payroll itself, both in professional and clerical positions, from the Church Office Building to the BYU campus. All things considered, it is difficult to infer any specific official Church policy in this regard.

It is perhaps more helpful to interpret the admonitions of Church leaders about the primacy of the domestic role for women as asserting the priority of the family, rather than as asserting patriarchal privilege against feminist aspirations. What presumably distresses Church leaders, and ought to distress

everyone, is the deterioration of the family institution during the past genera-
tion, both in the United States and in the Church, as indicated by increasing
rates of divorce, extra-marital pregnancy, abortion, and child abuse (Martin,
Heaton, and Bahr 1986).

Church leaders over fifty — a large percent of those now serving — grew
up in an era that assumed mothers were the chief caretakers of the family. It
is not difficult to understand why so many might assume that the increasing
entry of women into the labor force is correlated more than coincidentally with
family deterioration. These leaders seem to be calling us back to an earlier and
"safer" model of the authentic Mormon family, as another way of reasserting
our uniqueness against a secularizing and assimilating world (Heaton 1987a,
1987b).

5. *Religious education.* The past twenty-five years have also seen greater
emphasis upon religious education at both the high school and college levels.
Even junior colleges, at least in the West, are likely to have Institutes of Reli-
gion nearby. "Early-morning" seminaries have spread to nearly every corner
of the United States and overseas as well. The seminary program, in particular,
must be extraordinarily expensive, both in the demands it places upon par-
ticipants and in the money it costs the Church; but no systematic cost-benefit
analysis has been made to see whether this program achieves its goal of enhanc-
ing the gospel knowledge and testimonies of its students. Yet perhaps more
important is its symbolic significance as a means of asserting Mormon identity
to one's peers. The choice of BYU for college probably has a similar function,
in addition to educational goals.

LDS religious education has not only become more extensive but also more
intensively Mormon. When the Church Education System (CES) was founded
in the 1920s, the Church was still largely in the assimilationist mode, and its
curriculum was more inclined to make use of non-Mormon scriptural and
theological scholarship and to stress the articulation or the reconciliation of
Mormon doctrine with the best in the "wisdom of the world" (Arrington
1967). As mentioned, promising young faculty members, with Church finan-
cial support, studied at the University of Chicago and other centers of scholar-
ship, while visiting theologians taught summer sessions in Provo for seminary
teachers (Nelson 1985; Sherlock 1979; Swensen 1972).

J. Reuben Clark opposed this trend as early as 1938 (Bergera and Priddis
1985, 60–62; Clark 1938). Another example of the changing intellectual
climate in CES was the case of Heber C. Snell, a prominent CES scholar, who
published an interpretation of the Old Testament in his 1949 *Ancient Israel,*
a work highly acclaimed by professional scholars, Mormon and non-Mormon,
and widely circulated among LDS institutes but which generated considerable
internal controversy. At least as early as 1937, Snell's lectures had stirred up
more general controversy and attracted the wrath of Joseph Fielding Smith.
Though the First Presidency remained publicly aloof, Mark E. Petersen sup-
ported Elder Smith's position, while John A. Widtsoe, Joseph F. Merrill, and
Levi Edgar Young, scholarly minded apostles from the earlier generation, took
the other side. With such protection, Snell retained his institute position until

a face-saving but involuntary retirement in 1950, at the age of sixty-seven (Sherlock 1979).

Four years later, Elders Smith and Harold B. Lee personally taught seminary and institute faculty in the annual CES summer school at BYU, using Smith's *Man: His Origin and Destiny* as a text. They required all in attendance to pass an examination on it and urged that it be "taught" in the seminaries and institutes (Bergera and Priddis 1985, 152–55; Poll 1985). To the relief of many CES faculty members, President Clark (1954) a few days later effectively countermanded such an intrusion of unofficial doctrine, pointing out that only the president of the Church may define official doctrine and then only when he is speaking as a prophet. Nevertheless, the teachers who had most outspokenly opposed the Smith and Lee enterprise, including George Boyd and Lowell Bennion, both at the institute at the University of Utah, almost immediately experienced efforts to transfer them to institutes where they would be less influential.[9]

Since that time, the pedagogical posture of the CES has become increasingly anti-scientific and anti-intellectual, more inward looking, more intent on the uniqueness and exclusiveness of the Mormon version of the gospel as opposed to other interpretations, whether religious or scientific. Lesson manuals still occasionally take gratuitous swipes at scientists, intellectuals, and modernist ideas, which are blamed for jeopardizing students' testimonies. Non-Mormon sources and resources are rarely used and highly suspect. Even *Mormon* scholarly journals like DIALOGUE cannot be purchased for seminaries or institutes with Church funds, instructors' private copies are not supposed to be visible in their offices, and CES personnel are strongly discouraged from participating in Sunstone or MHA conferences.[10]

Thus, the Church, in educating the younger generation, seems to draw emphatic lines once more between Mormon and non-Mormon identities. Whether through deliberate pedagogy or selective recruitment or both, the Brigham Young University student body also has grown increasingly conservative in its outlook on religion and science during the past fifty years (Christensen and Cannon 1978).

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[9] The effort to move Boyd to USC was successful, while Bennion barely escaped transfer to Logan. My information about this episode comes from interviews with Lowell Bennion, George Boyd, and Eugene Campbell, August 1985, transcripts of notes in my possession.

[10] My generalizations about CES policy on "outside" materials and faculty participation come from recent conversations with close friends and relatives who are highly placed in the Church Education System. Examples of "gratuitous swipes" can be seen in the 1981 student manual for the LDS Institute course on the Book of Mormon, Religion 121–22 (CES 1981). The anti-Christ Korihor (Lesson 29) is personified as an academic intellectual ("Professor Cochran"). The manual quotes Ezra Taft Benson, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Bruce R. McConkie to criticize humanism, evolutionism, and birth control (pp. 8, 114, 379), to promote a highly literal interpretation of the Fall (pp. 72–73), and to perpetuate a racist characterization of American Indians (p. 112). With the exception of the reference to Indians, the Book of Mormon itself does not speak to any of those issues; thus, their use is entirely gratuitous.

The Quest for Peculiarity at the Folk Level

How has this program of renewal and retrenchment worked in practice? How well have "the folk" responded to the official admonitions from Church headquarters?

To assess the impact of official efforts in the five areas discussed above would require systematic data from longitudinal studies of grassroots compliance. Such data are not available. However, let me share some impressions.

I have the general impression that "follow the brethren" is a slogan taken seriously at the grassroots level, even if its operational implications are not well understood. For some, it seems to mean that "when our leaders speak, the thinking has been done." Even though a 1945 "ward teaching" message to that effect was repudiated by President George Albert Smith ("A 1945 Perspective" 1986), Elaine Cannon, speaking as Young Women's general president, repeated the slogan before a television audience of thousands in the 1970s. Church members of a more independent mind, find such a stance repugnant to the principles of free agency and personal responsibility (Cummings 1986; Newell 1986). Yet even the readers of DIALOGUE, presumably an independent-minded lot, in a 1984 survey, expressed a willingness by a margin of two to one to go along with Church policies that displeased them — perhaps with some question but with no "dissent," even privately (Mauss, Tarjan, and Esplin 1987).

Compliance with official injunctions to do genealogical and temple work is likewise difficult to assess. The name-extraction program and branch libraries in virtually every stake give the impression of more grassroots research than ever. Yet, in my stake at least, most of the users are nonmember genealogy buffs, not Saints doing their duty. With so many temples, one is also tempted to assume that more members than before are doing more temple work. Buerger (1987) has called such an assumption into question, although his data, as he acknowledges, are incomplete.

The third area of emphasis, missionary work, has yielded a record number of missionaries, as noted. Yet according to a knowledgeable informant from the Church's office of research and evaluation, only about a third of the Church's young men and a tenth of the young women accept mission calls. The survey data I collected twenty years ago from probability samples of Salt Lake City and San Francisco Mormons (Mauss 1972a) demonstrated that missionary service was a most important predictor of adult activity and commitment, second only to youthful home experiences. The missionary program thus functions as a powerful means of religious socialization for post-adolescent youth, quite apart from the new converts it generates. At the individual level, missionary service also represents a powerful assertion and cultivation of a special Mormon identity, just as William Shaffir (1978) found that "witnessing" functions similarly for Hassidic Jews. In an age when Mormons, like Jews, have been subjected to decades of American assimilation, proselyting's identity-maintaining function is extremely important.

When it comes to family programs, twenty years ago about half of the Utah and California Mormons in my survey held family home evening with any regularity. I know of no subsequent data indicating any higher levels of compliance. Given the increasing proportions in the Church of both single people and older couples beyond the child-rearing years (Heaton 1987b), it is probably not realistic to expect anything near total compliance, despite the "pseudo-family" groups into which singles are sometimes organized.

Mormon divorce rates are at least as high as those of the nation in general, though much lower for temple-married couples. Rates of child delinquency and abuse are also not far from the national average, if we can make inferences from Utah data (Bahr 1981; Heaton 1987a; Martin, Heaton, and Bahr 1986). Only 20 percent of Mormon households fit the official image of a temple-married couple with children at home (Heaton 1987b). At the same time, however, compliance with Church norms can be seen in the relatively high rates of premarital chastity, family formation, and fertility (Christensen 1982; Heaton 1987a; Heaton and Calkins 1983; Heaton and Goodman 1985).

In the division of labor and authority between spouses — patriarchal by Mormon tradition — the reality again conforms rather imperfectly with the official ideology. Mormon mothers are employed outside the home at about the same rates as other American mothers, despite a higher rate of expressed preference for at-home mothers (Bahr 1979; Heaton 1987a, 1987b; Martin, Heaton, and Bahr 1986). The rhetoric may be patriarchal, but actual decision-making is quite egalitarian (Bahr 1982; Heaton 1987a, 1987b), an interesting paradox also found in other conservative religious communities (Rose 1987). Nor do Mormon women suffer depression at higher rates than non-Mormon women in similar circumstances (Bluhm, Spendlove, and West 1986). Except for family size, it may be difficult to find many differences, either favorable or unfavorable, between Mormon families and most others.

The impact of the extensive Church religious education programs is also doubtful. Although a larger proportion of LDS teenagers attend seminary than ever before, my survey twenty years ago revealed that seminary attendance had no independent impact on later religious commitment once we controlled for home backgrounds. The *home*, not seminary, made the difference, in higher rates of missions, temple marriages, and adult activity. A much more recent and extensive study yielded similar conclusions, though it found evidence of indirect seminary impact through influencing the youngsters' choice of peers (Cornwall 1987).

Mormon Folk Religion and the Quest for Peculiarity

Although grassroots compliance with official teachings and directives seems to be incomplete and imperfect, there is another dimension of this renewed quest for peculiarity: the apparent rise and spread of Mormon "folk fundamentalism." While that movement has been aided and abetted by occasional speeches or comments from individual General Authorities or, more often, local Church leaders, it is essentially a folk phenomenon that has become increasingly apparent since World War II. The distinction between the folk

and official levels, though clear enough in principle, frequently blurs in reality for these reasons: in a lay-ministry the clergy are also part of the "folk" (Sorenson 1983); and these lay leaders, whether at the general, stake, or ward levels, often fail to specify whether they are speaking in their official or their personal capacities (Capener 1984; Clark 1954; Davis 1985; Mauss 1981, 32–34; Dunn 1982).[11]

I also find that the official/lay distinction is more likely to be blurred at lower levels of the priesthood hierarchy. The General Authorities, as a body, seem to be the most parsimonious and modest about claiming prophetic sanction for their personal preferences, though a few conspicuous exceptions must be acknowledged (Buerger 1985). More often, it is local lay leaders or salaried Church bureaucrats who attribute to General Authorities an infallibility that few of the latter seem willing to claim for themselves.

Within this context, I suggest that folk Mormonism has borrowed increasingly from Protestant fundamentalism for at least fifty years. I further suggest, as an explanation, an ambiguous and undefined grassroots awareness of the "predicament of respectability." This awareness is manifest as uneasiness in the face of almost daily ambiguity about where to draw the line between the Mormon way and the world's ways. Mormon families and individuals, as a result of assimilation, have had to shoulder an increasing burden of responsibility for defining that boundary themselves. Mormons have thus had to find symbolic and psychological ways of maintaining a unique Mormon identity that used to be maintained largely in geographic and political ways. When an assimilating and comfortable world offers a great many alternative choices, and even alternative interpretations of Mormon ideals, then identity-maintaining decisions are much harder to make.

For example, how many children are necessary to comprise a truly "Mormon" family? As many as possible? Can we use artificial contraceptives to "space" or even to prevent children? What is sex "for," anyway, just procreation? Even within a marriage, is it all right to enjoy sex for its own sake, or is that too much like X-rated worldly, carnal indulgence? How much can we talk about sex, or read about it, without undermining our spirituality? How much sex (and portrayed how) is acceptable in our literature, arts, and films? How much, and what kinds, of sex education should we give our children, and how soon? What is the "Church policy" on such matters? Or what is the Lord's will? Or what is the Mormon way? Lacking definitive answers to such questions, many Saints retreat to the "safety" of sexual prudery, parsimony, or silence, for which Utah in early February 1988 was publicly criticized by U.S. Surgeon General Everett Koop.

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[11] I here characterize as "official" only those teachings, directives, or policies found either in LDS scriptures or over the signatures of the First Presidency. Thus, a given address, article, or statement by an individual apostle, high-ranking Church leader, or ward/stake leader is "folk religion," for the purposes of this essay. Such public expressions may not be the product of the careful, collective deliberations of the General Authorities and often represent the speaker's personal biases and preferences, including those derived from Mormon folk religion (Mauss 1981, 32–34; Dunn 1982).

Similarly, a rational or even traditional observance of the Word of Wisdom is not enough to ensure a unique Mormon identity for some Saints. If a "true Mormon" says that tobacco and alcohol are bad, so now do a great many gentiles, even the federal government. Many gentiles too have given up coffee and tea, or at least have turned to decaffeinated varieties. How can the Saints truly distinguish themselves today in their health practices? One way would be to eschew meat-eating, obesity, and household drugs, as the Word of Wisdom itself would suggest; but instead, many have chosen the safety of an exclusionary checklist — abstinence not only from tobacco, alcohol, coffee, and tea, but also from cola drinks, decaffeinated coffees, white flour, white sugar, and "processed" foods.

The same existential anxiety about a Mormon identity shows itself in such questions as: What can a true Mormon do on Sunday? or, more often, What must one absolutely *not* do? As a teacher, must one "stick to the manual," or may one bring in relevant "outside" material? If so, how much, and from where? Can a faithful bearer of the priesthood "let" his wife work outside the home? If so, how much, under what circumstances, and with what career plans? If gambling is officially discouraged, can a "true Mormon" play cards for fun or is there something intrinsically "un-Mormon" about holding face cards? What kind of music is acceptable for Church dances or even for a "true Mormon" home? Leaving aside the question of "suggestive" lyrics, is there a certain "beat" or decibel-level that is "spiritually dangerous"?

For all of these questions, there has been remarkably little official Church guidance offered, presumably in the expectation that the Saints should make some of these decisions for themselves. Yet for many, the decisions have taken the form of fleeing from uncertainty and insecurity to the safety of the most conservative extreme. Ironically, such differences are also conspicuous features of Protestant fundamentalism (Ammerman 1987; Brinkerhoff and Mackie 1984; Marsden 1980).

Fundamentalism in American Religion

Early in the twentieth century, two movements became apparent in Protestant Christianity in America: the social gospel movement and fundamentalism, whose proponents preferred the "old time religion" more common in nineteenth-century Protestantism. While the schism cut across denominational lines, denominations more heavily influenced by the theological perspective of the "social gospel" included Unitarians, Episcopalians, Methodists, American (northern) Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. These churches have come to be called "mainline" American denominations and comprise a clear majority of Protestants in the United States (Roof and McKinney 1987). In contrast, the Southern Baptists and many smaller sects have clung to the fundamentalist style and content.

This oversimplified review does not acknowledge the emergent strife between "moderate" and "fundamentalist" factions in nearly all denominations even today, or the intermediate category sometimes called "evangelical," or the "neo-orthodox" reaction in seminaries and denominations after World War II,

which has further complicated the Protestant religious scene (White 1987). Nevertheless, I think it is fair to say that American Protestant fundamentalism is characterized by such features as scriptural literalism, authoritarianism and strict obedience to pastoral injunctions, salvation by grace (sometimes through "born-again" experiences), a certain austerity in religious style, prudery in matters of sex and gender, and a hostility toward "modernist" influences like "secular humanism," biblical criticism, and scientific theories like evolution (Ammerman 1987; Marsden 1980).

This major religious development coincided with Mormonism's transition from its nineteenth-century disrepute to its twentieth-century acceptance and assimilation. As the assimilation process went on, Mormonism was understandably influenced by these same national trends (Alexander 1982, 1986). Some LDS leaders, notably Joseph F. Smith and his son, Joseph Fielding Smith, were clearly influenced by fundamentalism, which expressed itself, among other ways, in a long struggle over official policy on the theory of evolution (Bergera and Priddis 1985; Keller 1982; Sherlock 1980).

Although Mormonism has always had a certain tendency toward literal-mindedness (Cummings 1982), much in earlier Mormon history and doctrine was more compatible with humanism and modernism (Ericksen 1922; Kenney 1987; McMurrin 1969; O'Dea 1957). Moreover, fundamentalism had always provided the chief theological and ecclesiastical animus for nineteenth-century persecutions. Finally, as the American religious mainstream became increasingly tolerant toward Mormons and increasingly oriented toward the social gospel, Mormon leadership simultaneously began to include younger General Authorities like James E. Talmage and John A. Widtsoe with "modernist" scholarly credentials and a scientific bent (Alexander 1982, 46, 47, 53).

Despite the 1911 "purge" of pro-evolutionist faculty at BYU (Bergera and Priddis 1985), Church leadership in general declined to take an official position on evolution, and the topic was ruled out for discussion until revived by Joseph Fielding Smith in the 1950s (Alexander 1980, 1982; Sherlock 1980; Keller 1982). Even the enforcement of the Word of Wisdom, reflecting a fundamentalist preference especially of President Grant, did not gain Church-wide acceptance until the 1930s (Alexander 1981). Furthermore, the Church began including such conspicuously "social gospel" elements as professional social work and a children's hospital into its program during the 1920s and 1930s as part of its increasingly assimilationist posture toward the nation as a whole (Alexander 1983, 1986; Christensen 1987; Kenney 1978, 1987; Nelson 1985).

After the 1930s, however, as the Church leadership began to deal with its new predicament of respectability, it turned gradually but increasingly toward retrenchment and resistance to assimilation in order to maintain a claim to a distinct Mormon identity. The folk, for their part (including a few in high places), have found ways of their own to deal with this predicament, attempting somehow to become a little more "Mormon" by becoming a little less "respectable." One form of that effort has been a certain amount of borrowing from the less popular American tradition of fundamentalism (Crapo 1987).

Forms of Mormon Folk Fundamentalism

The doctrinal content of folk fundamentalism has been explored at some length and with convincing documentation by O. Kendall White (1987) in his work on Mormon neo-orthodoxy.[12] He pays particular attention to three tendencies: (1) a redefinition of God in the infinite, incomprehensible terms associated with traditional Christianity, rather than in the more contingent and finite terms used by Joseph Smith; (2) a redefinition of human nature in the pessimistic terms associated with the traditional dogmas of original sin and human depravity, rather than in the more optimistic and perfectable terms found in early Mormonism; and (3) a redefinition of salvation more in terms of grace than of works. As exponents of this neo-orthodoxy, White identifies such scholars as Hyrum Andrus, Daniel H. Ludlow, Glenn Pearson, Paul and Margaret Toscano, Rodney Turner, and David Yarn.

These writers are certainly not General Authorities, so in a strictly ecclesiastical sense they might be considered part of the "folk." They are, or have been, all associated with BYU; except for the Toscanos, they have also been Religious Instruction faculty able to articulate in their writings, class lectures, and "Know Your Religion" series, doctrinal ideas that lend legitimacy to the folk fundamentalism among their audiences. Occasional speeches in a similar vein by General Authorities naturally have had the same effect, even if not strictly official in nature — for example, "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets" (Benson 1980)[13] and "The Seven Deadly Heresies" (McConkie 1982).

The influence of neo-orthodox theologians upon grassroots Mormons, or even the extent of folk fundamentalism itself, has not been empirically determined. However, there are some indications.

Doctrinally, the Mormon folk have always selectively adapted Church teachings to their personal needs and circumstances (Crapo 1987; Leone 1979; Sorenson 1983). I have heard sermons and lessons characterizing an awesome God and a depraved humanity that sound more like fundamentalist Protestantism than the King Follett discourse. On the other hand, an emphasis on

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[12] Mormon "fundamentalism" usually refers to a subgroup practicing polygyny, but I use the term to refer to the generic Christian version described here. White too notes (p. xxi) that he considered using "neo-fundamentalism" instead of "neo-orthodoxy" but wished to avoid possible confusion with pro-polygynist fundamentalists. Despite our general congruence of ideas, he focuses mainly on formal theological developments among a fairly small coterie of (mostly) BYU-based scholars, while I attempt to appraise a grassroots phenomenon. Also, his theory of "cultural crisis" differs somewhat from my model in terms of "the predicament of respectability." (See my review of White's book in the March 1988 issue of *Sunstone*.)

[13] This address, given when President Benson was president of the Quorum of the Twelve, caught considerable media attention, not only for its authoritarian tone and content but also for its assertion that the teachings of the current Church president took precedence over the accumulated revelations of his predecessors. Whether justifiably or not, this contention was widely interpreted as President Benson's attempt to set the stage for his own presidency. A close relative of President Kimball has since told me that Elder Benson was obliged by President Kimball to offer a formal apology to his colleagues in the First Presidency and the Twelve for such imprudent public remarks.

grace rather than works is probably pretty rare apart from the neo-orthodox
writers themselves.

Yet, at the grassroots level, I find the doctrinal features of folk funda-
mentalism less telling than expressions of intellectual style. Foremost among
these traits is a constant grasping for doctrinal certainty based upon the state-
ments of this or that Church leader, whether or not he is purporting to speak
for the Church. Who has not heard efforts to bring closure and certainty to
an issue by citing "the manual" or "Elder So-and-So" ? It is as though a line
must be drawn clearly between truth and heresy for a peculiar but uncertain
people, as well as for an atheological America. Even the term "heresy" is
unusual in Mormon parlance, despite Elder McConkie's 1982 attempt to
clarify which ideas must be avoided as "heresies." Few would advocate the
opposite extreme of complete relativism (Dangerfield 1986), but the desire
for absolutism is a classical feature of Protestant fundamentalism (Ammer-
man 1987). As a Mormon development, it contrasts sharply with an earlier
tradition when even General Authorities occasionally disagreed with each other
in public (Alexander 1982, 1986).

A related symptom of Protestant fundamentalism that seems to be spread-
ing among the Mormons is a resort to scriptural literalism and certainty
(Ammerman 1987). The literalist strain in the Mormon tradition was largely
offset in the nineteenth century by the reluctance of such early Mormon leaders
as Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and the Pratts to be restrained in their
theological innovations by strict readings of any biblical text (Barlow 1988).

In the early twentieth century we saw Church sponsorship of some of the
scholarly efforts of Roberts, Talmage, and Widtsoe to write serious theological
treatises, as well as an effort to learn from the biblical scholarship of the outside
world. In short, the Church seemed bent on using "higher criticism" to beat
the world's theologians at their own game, confident that LDS doctrine and
scriptural interpretation would stand up to scholarly and scientific scrutiny.
Just where the Church stands today on scriptural literalism versus "higher
criticism" is less clear. On the one hand, a certain literalist tendency can be
inferred from the footnoting and topical guide in the 1981 edition of the scrip-
tures, perhaps due to the influence of Elders McConkie and Packer, two very
conservative apostles who supervised that project (Buerger 1985). Further-
more, some of the more popular works on the scriptures by LDS apostles and
others have relied upon the secondary works of conservative Protestant evangel-
ical scholars for their interpretations (Hutchinson 1982).

On the other hand, the temple endowment identifies at least the scriptural
account of the Creation and Fall as not literal, and the Church has never
taken an official stand on evolution (Alexander 1980; Sherlock 1980). The
early twentieth century confidence in the vindicating potential of science and
scholarship seems to survive also in the work of the Foundation for Ancient
Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) at BYU, though its official stand-
ing is not clear.

Still, literalism certainly flourishes among the Mormon folk (Crapo 1987;
Cummings 1982; Keown 1986; Leone 1979; Sorenson 1983), and the trend

toward literalism and other forms of fundamentalism in the BYU student body
has also been amply demonstrated (Christensen and Cannon 1978).

A third fundamentalist feature of emerging folk Mormonism is a striving
for "pure obedience," obedience for the sake of obedience apart from rational
individual thought, study, meditation, or prayer to achieve one's own spiritual
witness and understanding. "Follow the Brethren!" for many of the Saints
has come to mean blind obedience. Sometimes labeled "authoritarianism"
(White 1987), this mentality is a regular feature of Protestant fundamentalism,
where strict obedience to pastors, even in nonreligious matters, is considered
obligatory for a "true Christian" (Ammerman 1987).

A clue to its extent can be found in the 1984 DIALOGUE readers' survey,
where 10 percent of the respondents said that they would obey a Church direc-
tive "without question" even if they disagreed with it (Mauss, Tarjan, and
Esplin 1987). Given that DIALOGUE readers are among the more intellectually
independent of the Mormon folk, I assume that such a proclivity is far more
widespread in the Church at large. An especially pernicious consequence of
this blind obedience, according to one General Authority, in a "church where
many leadership positions are held in awe," has been the susceptibility of many
Church members to business scams, in the mistaken assumption that "just
because someone is in a leadership position . . . he can talk about a stock pro-
posal" ("Church Leader" 1982, 10).

Finally, I would identify certain extreme forms of social conservatism
among Mormons also as borrowings from Protestant fundamentalism. One
example is the addition to the Word of Wisdom of a whole check-list of other
forbidden items. Another example is the tendency to push to prudish extremes
the Church's traditional and legitimate insistence on the law of chastity and
on pronatal family life. Manifestations of this prudery can be seen in the
opposition to sex education programs in either school or church; a prepon-
derantly negative treatment of even marital sex in Church manuals (Day
1988); a misguided and quickly withdrawn effort by the First Presidency
(1982) to define and regulate acceptable sexual practices for married couples;
efforts to ban erotic materials from public cable television (Associated Press
1983); austere dress and grooming codes imposed on BYU students and faculty
and widely promoted in the Church generally (Bergera and Priddis 1985);
and a generalized hostility to "rock music" (De Azevedo 1982).[14] In part,
such attitudes may derive from an exaggerated effort to "live down" the
nineteenth-century image of "Mormon licentiousness" (Cannon 1974); but
here again, these extremes are also characteristic of Protestant fundamentalism
(Ammerman 1987).

Sexual austerity and prudery are usually accompanied by rather rigid
gender definitions (Ammerman 1987). The "cult of true womanhood," com-

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[14] De Azevedo, a popular Mormon folk musician and composer, largely follows the Prot-
estant fundamentalist line that modern rock music, partly because of its sensual "beat" and
partly because of its lyrics, fosters illicit sex, drugs, violence, and satanic preoccupations.
Ironically, some Protestant ministers have sponsored public tape and record burnings that
have included music by the Osmonds because of their connection with the Mormon "cult"!

bining such sexual and gender attitudes, survives from Victorian times mainly in the fundamentalist segment of Protestant Christianity (Foster 1979, 1981; Welter 1966), but John R. Anderson (1986) has demonstrated again the convergence of these ideas between Mormons and Southern Baptists as revealed in their respective women's magazines.

For Mormons, BYU religion professor Rodney Turner (1972) has carried the Mormon position to the fundamentalist extreme of confining women to strictly domestic and child-bearing roles as a theological imperative, quite at odds with the politically and socially active images of Mormon foremothers expressed in the nineteenth-century *Woman's Exponent.*

Officially, the LDS church has taken a pronatalist stance, rather than the anti-contraceptive position of Roman Catholicism (Heaton 1987a); and Mormon couples, despite relatively high fertility rates, use artificial contraceptives at about the same rates as do others in the nation (Heaton and Calkins 1983). Yet in the downright hostility toward contraception of Turner (1972, 213–42), and of a few individual Church leaders, we can see again the expression of a fundamentalist outlook on sex and women, which has some following among the Mormon folk.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In summary, I argue that during the past few decades, and especially since the 1950s, Mormons have developed a growing uneasiness at both the official and the folk levels about the "predicament of respectability." Official efforts have been made to restore some of the tension with the surrounding American culture that had eroded during a half century of assimilationism and to redefine a separate identity for a "peculiar people." This retrenchment effort can be seen in such traditional Mormon institutions as the office and calling of modern prophets, temple work and genealogy, missionary work, the family, and religious education.

At the folk level, Mormons have apparently borrowed from or converged with the ideas and styles of Protestant fundamentalists. The largely unconscious and unarticulated motivation for such borrowing has again been the predicament of respectability. The successful assimilation of Latter-day Saints into the American mainstream has made it increasingly difficult for them to define a unique identity, either to themselves or to their non-Mormon neighbors. Among such fundamentalist borrowings are doctrinal absolutism, scriptural literalism, blind obedience, and certain extremes of social conservatism and austerity. It is as though Latter-day Saints had spent the first half of this century striving to become more like Episcopalians, only to reverse course in the second half and begin emulating the Southern Baptists! Ammerman's (1987) observations about the functions of this fundamentalist outlook among the Protestants apply equally well to the Mormons. The Protestant fundamentalists, she says, seek to find a clear line between the "saved" and the "unsaved," between their way of life and that of the world. They stake their identity on having the discipline to "say no"; and until their stance attracts a certain amount of ridicule and

opposition, they are not sure that they are "Christian" enough (or here "Mormon" enough).

Another instructive historical parallel occurred among the Jews during the Babylonian captivity. According to one scholar:

> It was in Babylon that the Jews most noticeably acquired their sense of being different, of being a peculiar and indeed superior race. . . . Here the Jews drew more and more within their own hard shell. . . . The desire to be different from their neighbors led them to discriminate meticulously between such food as was permissible [under] the Law and such as was not. Whatever the origin of these dietary tabus may have been, their observance now became an obsession . . . [with certain foods being] . . . openly shunned by all Jews in as ostentatious a manner as possible. . . . How else were they to assert their distinctive role, their sense of a unique vocation, their pledge of complete obedience, unless by making it plain for all the world to see that . . . they were determined to be no longer like "all the nations" but were a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation?" . . . Beginning with the laudable intention of expounding the distinctively Jewish observances . . . , this priestly concern to safeguard the heritage of Israel ended in later Judaism as a stranglehold on the community, killing the spirit of the law by insisting on the letter (Neil 1975, 262–64).

While it has not been possible in this essay to establish the *extent* of folk fundamentalism among the Mormons, there is enough evidence to establish its *existence.* Subsequent research to estimate empirically the actual extent and influence of Mormon folk fundamentalism (and of White's neo-orthodoxy) would be fascinating and valuable, and not just for academic reasons. The continuing appeal of Mormonism to its current and prospective members will have as much to do with the social and intellectual environment of its folk religion at the ward and stake levels as with the success of the missionary program itself. The media images of Mormonism fostered by the Church public relations program may attract the initial attention and good will of a great many people; but the actual converts, especially the enduring ones, will come from among those who like what they see, hear, and feel when they mingle with the Mormon folk.

What may those converts be like? We can get a few intimations by looking again at Tables 1–4, which allow us to compare lifers and converts for the past decade or so. When Mormons are compared to others without this distinction (Roof and McKinney 1987), they present an image of a well-educated, conservative, affluent, and largely assimilated people. However, when the converts are separated out, some interesting and important distinctions appear. For example, while Table 1 shows that Mormons taken altogether do not differ much from the national averages in occupation, occupational prestige, or occupational background, converts are more like non-Mormons in most other demographic respects, particularly in education, income, class identification, age, family size, and politics.

Table 2 indicates that in religious views, feelings, and observances, converts tend to fall between lifers and non-Mormons, except in regard to the Word of Wisdom, where they are much closer to the lifers. In social conservatism (Tables 3 and 4), Mormon converts statistically resemble lifers more than non-Mormons on civil liberties, school prayer, abortion, pornography

laws, and homosexuality. On the race and gender questions, differences are few; but in those cases, converts are the most conservative. See, for example, attitudes about blacks "pushing," intermarriage, busing, and all the gender questions.

In sum, the tentative profile that emerges from the tables of the Mormon convert, compared to the lifer, shows that the convert has lower levels of education, income, and class identification; is more likely to be living on the west coast or in the southeastern quadrant of the country; is less likely to have a large family; is much less conservative in politics, but at least *as* conservative in social issues like tobacco and alcohol use, school prayer, abortion, pornography, and homosexuality; tends to be somewhat more cynical or disillusioned about the world (Table 3); and tends to be more conservative in race and gender attitudes. The regional difference is worth emphasizing. Note that almost a fourth of the converts (22 percent) came from the southeastern quadrant of the country (bottom two categories of "region" in Table 1), known both for its Protestant fundamentalism and its populism.

Such data suggest that American converts may come disproportionately from among those already inclined toward fundamentalist thinking by virtue of their education, social class, and region.[15] If such a postulate is plausible, the logical inference is that Mormon folk fundamentalism is coming in with converts. On the other hand, it could be that such converts are attracted by the folk fundamentalism that they see already in the Church. In either case, the question of Mormon folk fundamentalism is not merely academic but has profound implications for the emerging quality of the Mormon grassroots religious experience. It will also eventually have implications for the kind of Church leadership that emerges in the next century.[16]

The irony in this apparent convergence between Mormon folk religion and Protestant fundamentalism is that the most conservative Protestants have always been Mormonism's most venomous enemies (Brinkerhoff, Jacob, and Mackie 1987; Brinkerhoff and Mackie 1986; White 1986). Even today, Protestant evangelicals and fundamentalists like the Tanners make up the core of

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[15] Such a suggestion must remain tentative, due to these sketchy NORC data. The first problem is the sheer paucity of the Mormon data, especially from the converts, as acknowledged in Note 7. Another problem is that we are not able to distinguish long-term from short-term converts; but if we assume that long-term converts become more like lifers, then the data in these tables are actually underestimating the distinctiveness of new converts. A third problem is in the legitimacy of generalizing from data aggregated over a thirteen-year period, a procedure which obliterates any trends. However, this temporal averaging does not affect comparability, since all three categories were aggregated and averaged in the same way.

[16] One of this paper's reviewers has suggested alternatively that Mormons, having achieved a degree of acceptance by mainline Protestantism, are now trying to win over the more conservative Protestants. In other words, the assimilation process is not really being resisted but only completed. While this explanation is possible, it eventually converges with my thesis, since success with conservative Protestants would bring increased rejection from mainline Protestants.

Certainly, many other explanations are also possible. At this point, the data available to me seem largely consistent with the heuristic theoretical framework I have proposed. I invite others to generate new theories, analyze new data, and continue the dialogue.

such anti-Mormon organizations as Ex-Mormons for Jesus and Saints Alive in Jesus.

More serious than this irony, though, is the vulnerability of fundamentalist Mormons to anti-Mormon propaganda. Mormons who think that "following the Brethren" means blind acceptance of anything any Church leaders have ever taught, and who take a literal, proof-texting approach to scripture study, are especially susceptible to anti-Mormon attacks. For them, each new anti-Mormon "disclosure" becomes a crisis of faith. To the extent that a fundamentalist approach prevails in the Church Education System, Mormon youth will be made more vulnerable, not less, to the arguments of Protestant anti-Mormons, who have little trouble showing that "the Brethren" have not always taught the same things and do not always interpret the scriptures literally. Thus, if those of fundamentalist mentality are increasingly the most likely converts to Mormonism, they might also be the most vulnerable to defection, unlike "intellectuals," who are by training better able to handle relativity and ambiguity, worrisome though they may sometimes be to "the Brethren."

I began this essay with the symbols of the angel and the beehive — the charismatic, other-worldly tradition of Mormonism and the more worldly tendencies also embraced by Mormon culture. Mormonism's success so far has been found in its ability to maintain an optimum degree of tension between the two strains. Lately Mormonism seems to have been reemphasizing the angel motif. Yet Saints who recoil from the secular as they look to the angel must beware lest, in their anxiety, they reach for the sectarian instead. Sectarian philosophies like fundamentalism are every bit as much a product of the world's cultures as are the more materialistic expressions of the beehive — and fully as subversive if carried too far.

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