

# Heavenly Father or Chairman of the Board?: How Organizational Metaphors Can Define and Confine Religious Experience

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MANY LATTER-DAY SAINTS WORRY that as the Mormon Church has become more corporate in nature, it has not retained its strictly religious focus. Some have argued that its extensive financial holdings have made the Church a major political power, and numerous essays, studies, and even books have analyzed the Church's bureaucratic, corporate, and financial aspects. However, while the corporate aspects of the Church have created problems for leaders and members alike, some form of bureaucracy is essential if the Church is to accomplish its goals. Organizational tools such as authority, rules, chains of command, professional training, and positions awarded by merit are clearly useful and necessary for large organizations such as the Church. When I began my doctoral studies in organizational behavior, I expected not only that I would understand my Church experience more fully but that my studies would be of great value in my future service to the Church. I continue to believe that organizational studies have much to offer the Church and its members.

In this essay, I will first introduce the concept of organizational culture as a device for understanding organizations such as the Church, then explore three dominant cultural metaphors that have shaped the Church and its members' identity through the years, and finally, propose that the current dominant metaphor be replaced.

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## STUDYING AN ORGANIZATION: CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

One lens through which to view the Church is organization theory—specifically, the concept of organizational culture, which has been popularized in such books as *In Search of Excellence* (Peters and Waterman 1982) and *Corporate Culture* (Deal and Kennedy 1982). Organizational culture is a way to view an organization by examining how beliefs, values, meanings, and assumptions are transmitted to individuals. To do so, we may apply the methods of anthropology and investigate how rituals, stories, symbols, heroes, and specialized language communicate and reinforce values at both a societal and organizational level. These observable evidences of culture, which can be referred to as artifacts, are relatively easy to identify. More difficult to identify are the shared values, beliefs, meanings, and basic assumptions about the world which define the core of an organization. While some shared values and assumptions may be obvious, others are difficult for even organization members to detect or articulate (Robey 1986).

Five types of artifacts help shape our identity as a Mormon community of believers: rituals, stories, symbols, heroes, and language.

### *Rituals*

Rituals, including rites and ceremonies, are instrumental in reinforcing and preserving beliefs. For example, the ritual of the sacrament reminds us of the centrality of Christ and the atonement to our worship. Less sacred practices, such as missionary farewells or family home evenings also fall in the category of ritual. Mormon anthropologist John L. Sorenson has enumerated more than seventy of these religious and quasi-religious rituals within Mormonism (1981). Secular scholars (Trice and Beyer 1984) identify six distinct types of ritual—rites of passage, rites of degradation, rites of enhancement, rites of renewal, rites of conflict reduction, and rites of integration—by which we may also classify the rituals of Mormonism.

*Rites of passage* help individuals form their identity, identify points of transition, celebrate progress, and bring closure to life changes. Such rites appear in all cultures. Perhaps the most noticeable rite of passage in the Church is the missionary farewell, which marks the passage to manhood for many male members. Missionaries become full-fledged members and are treated as equals for the first time. One reason many capable young women may have problems with the Church in their late teens is that fewer women go on missions, and then at a later age; the only comparable alternative rite of passage for females is marriage. Other examples of rites of passage in the Church

are Primary graduation and Aaronic Priesthood ordination, marking the entrance to puberty for Mormon children.

*Rites of degradation* communicate to a person and the group that a person is no longer a member of the community or has performed inadequately. The processes of excommunication and disfellowshipment serve this function for Latter-day Saints, even though some features of the rites, such as public confession, are now less common and the rite is becoming less public. Although I welcome the change, I believe that these rituals are becoming less meaningful as a result.

*Rites of enhancement* recognize a person's standing or accomplishments. Achieving a Duty to God award or Eagle Scout rank has always been a significant event in the wards I have attended. As a father of two daughters, I worry what message is being conveyed when we don't have equivalent rites for girls in the Church, the new Young Women's programs notwithstanding.

*Rites of renewal* help organizational members assess the organization's progress and identify ways in which the organization can be improved. Stake and ward leaders' yearly goal-setting may fall into this category, as do the general conference reports on Church growth and activity. On a personal level, Family Home Evenings offer the opportunity to take stock of progress and problems on a weekly basis within our own families. For some families a monthly father's interview may also serve this function.

*Rites of conflict reduction* may be disappearing from Church. These rites offer ways to resolve conflict in legitimate and sanctioned ways. In the early days of Church colonization when both ecclesiastic and civil authority resided in the bishop, the bishop's court afforded a way for members to resolve issues. And the Brethren in those days engaged in organized debates as part of the process of resolving questions of doctrine or policy. Today, however, there appears to be a desire within the Church to deny that conflict exists or has an appropriate place within a church community. Conflict and differences of opinion among leaders and lay members are more often glossed over or suppressed than allowed free expression. I believe this lack of a rite of conflict resolution is more damaging to the health of the Church and its members than any underlying conflict could ever be.

*Rites of integration* occur when an organization's members assemble to increase their solidarity and shared identification with the organization. Latter-day Saints are known for mass meetings and conferences. We hold conferences at the general church, area, regional, stake, and ward level. We even broadcast firesides throughout the world. These meetings serve to pool spiritual strength and increase unity and dedication to the gospel.

## Stories

A second important cultural artifact is stories, known also as myths or folklore, depending upon their supposed origin or degree of factuality. When assessing its influence on organizational culture, however, a story's factuality is largely irrelevant. Rather, the content of those stories which tend to be told and retold are what convey the values of the community. Such stories communicate meanings above and beyond the actual events in question. Folklorist William A. Wilson, for instance, has shown how missionary stories can convey a sense of community, communicate the importance of mission rules, reassure missionaries of ultimate success, and emphasize the need for proper conduct (1982). Wayland D. Hand has explored how many Utah tales of magic and the supernatural communicate important Church values (1983).

Scholars have identified as many as seven types of recurring stories in corporate organizations, including those which deal with basic issues of equitable treatment of members, job security, and the degree of control that the organization has over its future (Martin *et al* 1983). I find these categories less relevant to the LDS community, and have classified the stories I have heard (and sometimes retold) within Latter-day Saint circles into three groups: Kingdom-of-God, Persevere-to-the-End, and This-People stories.

*Kingdom-of-God stories* strengthen and renew our basic faith in the restored Church. These stories are of three basic types. The first communicates to us that our leaders are inspiring and inspired. One of my favorites tells how President Kimball never missed a Primary meeting. A second type attests to temporal presence of the kingdom of God by demonstrating God's intervention in our daily lives. As a boy, I remember listening in fast and testimony meeting to inspiring stories about how the Lord's hand guided one sister in her genealogical research around the globe. Three Nephite stories are perhaps the most dramatic of this genre, but the humbler accounts of God's intervention in saving a child's life or making a college education possible serve the same faith-confirming function. The third type of Kingdom-of-God story centers around archaeological finds and their support for Joseph Smith's work. I have heard the same story several times, with certain details changed, of Church archaeologists in the Middle East who were busily translating an ancient version of the temple ceremonies and were called on the telephone by one of the Brethren and requested to stop just prior to revealing sacred truths. Many stories circulate about archaeological finds in South and Central America which confound the experts and support the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

*Persevere-to-the-End* stories also come in three basic varieties. All three would motivate receptive listeners to be diligent and avoid temptation. The first variety teaches us that punishment always awaits the sinner. My favorite, found in various forms in many missions, is about the two missionaries, stationed far from the mission home, who go to some forbidden, exotic location for a short vacation. In Chile, the location was Easter Island. Though they are absent for two weeks, the missionaries have planned carefully, leaving two bogus weekly reports for the landlady to mail. But no one can sin so blatantly and get away with it: the landlady gets mixed up and sends in the second weekly report first. The punishment is usually an early return home for the senior companion and severe censure for the junior companion.

Another variety of *Persevere-to-the-End* stories depicts hard-working, obedient Saints whose effort and diligence are rewarded with spiritual or temporal blessings. The oft-told stories of Heber J. Grant's success in singing, baseball, and business are familiar examples.

The last of the *Persevering* variety centers around the faithfulness of members worldwide—stories about the diligent tithe-payer in Tahiti, the faithful Primary child in Tokyo, the member missionary in Quebec. Beyond encouragements to similar diligence and sacrifice is a broader, underlying message: We are part of a winning team composed of faithful individuals engaged in a worthwhile cause.

*This-People* stories, of which there are at least two types, help us feel good about being Latter-day Saints. The first type deals with world leaders or other famous people who have shown an interest in the gospel. Some revolve around the travels of General Authorities or influential Mormons such as Church ambassador David M. Kennedy. Any time a high level politician visits Salt Lake City or the Polynesian Cultural Center, these stories invariably appear in the *Church News*. When I was at BYU, a favorite story was about the Pope's nephew joining the Church and choosing to attend BYU. The second type of *This-People* story addresses the value society places upon Church members collectively. I heard many times about how Howard Hughes surrounded himself with Latter-day Saint employees because he found them to be so trustworthy. Other stories abound about how corporate recruiters flock to hire BYU graduates or how Church members are over-represented in the CIA, the FBI, and the executive ranks of business.

Let me reemphasize that the factuality of these stories is not an issue in the study of Mormonism's organizational culture. Some stories are factual; some are not. What is important is the message these repeated stories convey to Church members.

### *Symbols*

Symbols are the most tangible artifacts of all. Allen D. Roberts has chronicled the widespread use of symbolism in the early Church as well as its purposes and meanings (1985). Perhaps the most ubiquitous symbol in Utah is the beehive, which signifies the value Latter-day Saints place upon thrift and industry. Temples symbolize of the beauty, peace, and glory of God's presence and help us to feel that his presence is attainable.

### *Heroes*

Our history is replete with revered heroes. Many have argued that official Church history has been written with less concern for full historical detail than for making the participants appear larger than life. We have only to peruse an issue of the *New Era* or the *Ensign* to realize that hero-making is a continuing process — and rightly so. Heroes serve a valuable communal purpose by signaling to us what in life is worth striving for. For example, stories told about President Kimball, one of our latter-day heroes, stress the importance of humble, diligent service and the possibility of overcoming almost any physical impairment. The desire to be a heroic model that young people want to emulate has been demonstrated in Paul Dunn's now notorious storytelling. When he argues that the end results at least in part justify his fictionalizings, I believe that he makes a strong point.

### *Language*

As a community, I think we Latter-day Saints are keenly aware that our language sets us apart. No verb form of the word "fellowship" appears in my university edition dictionary, yet "fellowshipping" has a unique and forceful meaning within the LDS community. "Morality," "correlation," and "priesthood" are a few more among many terms with meanings unique to our culture.

## ORGANIZATIONAL METAPHORS IN MORMONISM

When artifacts associated with an organization's culture are highly cohesive and work together to communicate values and beliefs, a cultural organizational metaphor may be said to exist. What is the benefit to organizations and their members of studying these metaphors? My concern is that organizational metaphors not only reflect, but also powerfully influence group and individual values, beliefs, and actions, and

that an organization's culture does not necessarily arise deliberately or consciously. Although some strong, perceptive leaders have consciously created cultures which support the goals they have for their organizations, this is not always the case. In fact, many of the beliefs, values, and meanings that a dominant metaphor communicates may be undesired and unintended by the organization's leaders and members. For example, organizational scholar J. Bonner Ritchie has enumerated the sometimes undesirable consequences of using a court as a metaphor for the process of control and discipline within the Church. He argues that terms like accused, trial, judge, sentence, and summons are incongruous with notions of love and concern (1983).

At least three strong metaphors have existed in the Latter-day Saint community at different periods in its history. While all three metaphors have proved durable and coexist to some extent today, each has in turn been the dominant metaphor.

### *Family of Believers*

The family metaphor came into use during the earliest days of the Church when members viewed themselves as a closely knit community or family of believers. This collective family identity was nurtured daily as the Saints addressed each other as "Brother" and "Sister." The early Saints' attempts to practice the law of consecration also contributed to their sense of family connectedness. During this period, Church members were in close, frequent contact with Church leaders and other lay members. The lack of chapels for separate ward meetings may also have reinforced a family feeling as the Saints often met as a collective family unit to receive the word of the Lord from their leaders.

Several factors contributed to the waning of the family metaphor. The death of the Prophet Joseph and the forced exodus from Nauvoo marked a period of transition in many ways. During the trek westward and the colonization period, many members were dispersed geographically and separated from the main body of the Church. The explosive growth in membership also affected the family metaphor. New converts streamed in by the hundreds and then thousands beginning in the Nauvoo era. Dispersal and the sheer numbers of converts made it impossible for fellow Church members to know one another as intimately as before.

The third and likely most significant factor in changing the family metaphor was an increased level of dissent within the Church family. The inevitable power struggles that accompanied Church growth and repeated relocation diminished the feelings of unity and cohesion needed to sustain a Churchwide family atmosphere. While David Whitmer,

Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Thomas B. Marsh, and other early leaders could accept a family structure with Joseph the first among many equal brothers, they resisted a hierarchy of power within that brotherhood. While some dissention was evident in Kirtland and Far West, it seems to have erupted most forcefully in Nauvoo. It existed within the highest councils of the Church and rocked the infant organization to its foundations.

The family metaphor did not disappear completely, of course. In fact, the Church went through a period when many of its top leaders, particularly Brigham Young, ceremonially adopted other adults into their families through temple sealings. And we still speak of reuniting all of the family of Adam through genealogical and temple work. The family metaphor lingers on at the ward level also where the bishop is sometimes referred to as "father" of the ward and the Relief Society president or bishop's wife as "mother."

### *Camp of Israel*

The Camp of Israel metaphor, reinforcing the necessity of uniting to fight against Israel's enemies and to build Zion first, surfaced in the Zion's Camp trek to Missouri in 1834, flourished during the trek westward, and continued throughout much of the colonization period. Just as ancient Israel fought Pharaoh and the Canaanites, the new Camp of Israel fought against Illinois mobs and Johnston's army. Ancient Israel united to battle its way through the Sinai, and modern Israel battled its way across the plains. Ancient Israel followed Joshua into the Promised Land; the Saints followed Brigham to a new Promised Land.

Polygamy played a compelling role in the acceptance and propagation of the Camp of Israel metaphor. Restored by Joseph Smith in the 1830s and first openly practiced during the colonization era, polygamy has been described as an Abrahamic trial of faith for the Saints (England 1978). By practicing plural marriage, faithful Church members felt their lives reflected the patriarchs of old. They faced opposition with a fortress mentality which provided a fertile ground for Camp of Israel imagery.

This metaphor was promulgated in many ways. Church leaders compared the Church to ancient Israel countless times from the pulpit. In fact, Doctrine and Covenants 135 refers to the body of Saints explicitly as the Camp of Israel and proposes an organizational structure similar to the one Moses received in ancient times. Unmistakable parallels were drawn between the Great Salt Lake and Utah Lake, and the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee, even to the naming of the



Jordan River which joins them. The naming of other Great Basin locations also recalls ancient Israel—in Utah you can hike Mount Nebo and travel to Moab or Goshen. Perhaps the strongest symbol of all was Brigham himself. This forceful latter-day Moses combined spiritual, military, financial, and governmental authority to create a limited theocracy reminiscent of Old Testament times.

The completion of the transcontinental railroad, the issuance of the Manifesto which paved the way to statehood and the end of Utah isolationism, and the Church's decision to build stakes of Zion outside the intermountain West all contributed to the decline of the Camp of Israel metaphor. As the Church was thrust into contact with the outside world and into the twentieth century, the viability, and indeed the necessity, of the Camp of Israel metaphor diminished greatly.

Nevertheless, vestiges of the Camp of Israel mentality remain today. Language in our Sunday lessons still casts us as God's chosen people who must constantly be on guard against the "world," meaning non-Mormons. The defensive reaction to even mildly critical stories in the press can still be characterized as "circling the wagons."

### *Corporation*

The current cultural metaphor, that of a corporation, germinated during the presidency of David O. McKay, when the Church completed its transition to an international church. The rise in the number of members, the accompanying building boom across the continent and around the world, the burgeoning Church educational system, and the rise of the Church as a financial power all necessitated a change in Church organization and procedure. New layers of bureaucracy were created to meet the increased administrative burden. More general and regional authorities were called and the number of career, nonecclesiastical Church employees mushroomed. The Church began recruiting employees for permanent administrative careers directly from college campuses. Committees whose members remain anonymous to the vast majority of Church members now make and implement many of the Church's policies. This proliferation of bureaucracy, while necessary to administer the Church's many affairs, has resulted in the relative isolation of rank-and-file members from the highest levels of Church leadership and has given the Church organization the semblance of a modern multi-national corporation.

The corporate image is reinforced in many ways, including language. Increasingly we hear terms like efficiency, standardization, and correlation to describe how decisions are made within the Church. The Church has always had clerks and presidents. Now we also have

executive secretaries, area presidencies, regional representatives, and a host of committees and boards at all levels. Many of us have had the experience of writing checks payable to the Corporation of the President.

Symbols also reinforce this corporate image. While the Salt Lake Temple will always be a cherished symbol of the Church's presence in the Great Salt Lake Valley, I fear that the Church Office Building has surpassed it as the dominant physical symbol of that presence. Most of our printed material and buildings are now graced by a handsome, standardized logo reminiscent of other corporate logos. Our heroes also seem in keeping with this image. Many of our top leaders not only have business backgrounds but sit on the boards of large corporations. Church-sponsored periodicals and magazines such as *This People* and *BYU Today* have, over the years, contained glowing stories of many active Latter-day Saints with successful business careers.

#### DRAWBACKS OF THE CORPORATE METAPHOR

In many ways I find this new corporate metaphor apt and useful. However, just as Stephen L. Tanner (1982) has cautioned that Christianity must only employ war as a guiding metaphor with great care, I think we need to consider the drawbacks of using a corporate metaphor. I believe the corporate metaphor has proved to be dysfunctional in a number of cases.

##### *Mission Field*

One example of this metaphor gone astray was my missionary experience. Missionaries could not help but view that particular mission at times as a glorified sales organization. Mission leaders used motivational language that was often more appropriate for salespersons than for ministers of the gospel. Although goal-setting and performance appraisal were omnipresent topics, I rarely heard terms such as "conversion" and "saving lives" during mission, zone, and district meetings. Just as there are award ceremonies and free vacation incentives for salespersons, missionaries with the most baptisms had their pictures prominently displayed within the mission home and were invited to the capital city for dinner with the mission president. From time to time, a leader would assure us that the numbers themselves were not important. But when a mission in another South American country finally succeeded in baptizing more converts in one month than we did, mission leaders reacted much as I suppose Coca-

Cola headquarters would after hearing that Pepsi had just exceeded Coke's market share. Although missionaries are indeed engaged in a type of selling, the sales metaphor was used too often, too intensively, and perhaps inappropriately with such a naive and impressionable group.

### *Doing Versus Being*

On a day-to-day basis, the corporate metaphor may also make our religious practice overly mechanical. Many ostensibly religious books targeted at the Mormon audience read more like self-help and motivational books promising success in business careers, financial dealings, or personal goals. The problem with this approach is that it may create a "checklist religion" which emphasizes efficiency and achievements rather than caring, integrity, and inner conversion. To-do lists have now migrated from refrigerator doors to handsomely bound day planners. While goals and accomplishments are important in any religion, one's motives, feelings, and character are the true measures of spiritual health. Corporations reward accomplishments, but character should be its own reward within the context of religion.

### CALL FOR A RETURN TO THE FAMILY METAPHOR

I would like to propose a return to the family as the dominant church metaphor. I recognize that some families function quite well following some aspects of the corporate model (at least on the surface) and that some corporations succeed while following the family model. In fact, a good deal of management literature suggests that many of the traits I have assigned to the prototypical family unit actually describe the ideal corporation. And many businesses now hire consultants to help them become more like families, a fact I find ironic given that the Church appears to have moved in the opposite direction. To me, church as family has much more to offer than church as corporation. To illustrate, let me enumerate several of the important ways in which a family organization differs from a corporate organization.

As I contrast the corporate and family models in the six areas diagrammed on the next page, I freely admit to having oversimplified to make my arguments clearer. At times, I may seem to be describing Beaver Cleaver's TV family. What is important is the difference in idealized values that families and corporations represent to organizational members.

	CORPORATIONS	FAMILIES
1. DECISION-MAKING PREMISES	Rationality, Political Model	Altruism
2. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS	Competition	Cooperation
3. MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS	Efficiency, External	Internal
4. POSITIONAL FOCUS	Career	Calling
5. REWARDS	Position, Material Rewards	Relationships
6. PRIMARY ALLEGIANCE	Organization	Family Members

1. *Decision-Making Premises*

In corporations, the president or other officer with the most clout makes decisions. Underlings obey and often seek to curry favor. Decision making is centralized. Power and influence flow from the top down.

We follow the corporate church model when we base our decisions on organizational logic or positional power rather than on benevolence; when we implement programs regardless of their appropriateness for individual members; when we regard top-down decision making and flow of information to be the only legitimate means of influence and control; when overcentralization of decision-making leaves little room for local autonomy or the exercise of talents and abilities of local leaders and members.

In a model family, members sacrifice for the good of others. While decisions are made in an effort to preserve the family, the focus is on benefiting all family members.

We follow the family church model when we do what is good for ward members regardless of how difficult it is or how unfamiliar or uncomfortable it feels; when the needs of individuals are stressed over conforming to Salt Lake-initiated programs or pleasing someone in authority; when members are encouraged to innovate and grow within the structure of the Church.

2. *Relationships with Others*

In corporations, cutthroat competition for promotions means people produce or they are severed from the organization. Competition is the key to survival both within and between organizations. The organization gets ahead at the expense of other competing organizations.

We follow a corporate church model when we compete for callings, esteem, or recognition rather than helping one another to succeed; when quorum members are chided rather than encouraged or helped; when we adamantly fight for our views, preferred activities, and proposals rather than finding a common ground; when we judge others and compare our relative worth rather than helping others to become better or happier.

In families, all members work together to make the family succeed. Members are interested in each other's welfare and growth, and family survival is contingent upon cooperation.

I saw a nearly perfect example of the family church model in action in my newly divided ward in Monterey. Leaders pulled together to consider people's needs with no notions of separation of concerns or duties. There was no "territory" or concern over who was in charge. In addition, not once did I hear statistical or other comparisons with other wards in the stake.

### *3. Measures of Effectiveness*

Corporations focus on efficiency. Profits are the bottom line. Corporations also tend to concentrate on external success by using measures of effectiveness such as market share and the ability to attract financial and other resources.

We follow a corporate church model when we stress the number of converts over the retention or development of our members; when leaders discuss sacrament meeting attendance rather than edification, enjoyment, or spiritual content; when we consistently stress home teaching statistics but ignore the spiritual health of the ward. Efficiency and standardization are usually poor criteria by which to make decisions about worship or religion. In my opinion, efficiency should not be our overriding concern in designing buildings, in determining meeting schedules and the functions of the auxiliary organizations, or in producing Church educational materials. Standardization is not the answer for meeting the diverse needs of an international church.

Families stress effectiveness rather than efficiency with such measures as love, respect, closeness, and openness. Families also focus on the internal dynamics and experiences of family members rather than comparing themselves to other family units.

We follow the family church model when we discuss things such as spiritual health, enjoyment, and faithfulness; when we concentrate on our progress as a ward or other unit without the need to compare ourselves to other similar groups.

### *Positional Focus*

Getting ahead is the ultimate goal in corporations. Positions are stepping stones. Career advancement is equated with success.

We adopt a corporate church model when we view our responsibilities as rewards for merit and as stepping stones for greater influence, prestige, or future degree of glory rather than as opportunities to benefit others and to take responsibility for their well-being.

In families, membership ideally is regarded as a sacred calling to help one another. Family membership entails responsibilities to one another as parents, children, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and so on.

We are operating under the family church model when we view our worth not by positions or financial success but by the quality and depth of our compassion and service to others; when we approach our calling as prophets rather than priests (see Erickson 1979)—that is, when hierarchy, authorities, ritual, and organizational demands are subordinated to our relationships with one another.

### *Rewards*

If we work hard in corporations, we will in due course be promoted and offered other tangible rewards such as money and recognition.

We follow the corporate church model when we spend our time in pursuit of prestigious positions or wealth rather than improving relationships; when the need to be a successful provider or leading light or Church leader outweighs parental responsibilities; when temporal blessings or promised blessings in the life to come motivate our choices. Widespread and continuing financial fraud within the Utah Mormon culture indicates that a confusion of secular and spiritual values may well be commonplace. In fact, one study argues that "spiritual roots" are a selling point in these fraudulent schemes, a falsely religious approach to financial success to which many Mormons are particularly susceptible (Witham 1987).

In families, the chief rewards are the closeness and love of family members and the satisfaction of seeing them grow, succeed, and be happy.

We operate under the family church model when we gain our Church-related satisfaction from being a part of the ward family, a community of believers; when service and brother or sisterhood are their own reward.

### 6. *Primary Allegiance*

For corporate women or men, the corporation is all important. It determines where they live and when and how they relate to others. If the corporation beckons, family needs come second. Organizational requirements are transcendent. With the exception of the past couple of years, bishops have been pressured to add more and more administrative responsibilities to their pastoral roles. Many ward auxiliary and priesthood leaders report to and receive directions from stake leaders, which may redirect their focus toward following Salt Lake- or stake-initiated programs and away from the varying individual needs of ward members. These leaders may feel that their callings entail as much responsibility toward a larger administrative hierarchy as to the ward family.

Some Church members express special satisfaction in knowing that the same Sunday School lesson is being taught on precisely the same day throughout the Church. But does such standardization mean the educational needs of all members are being met in the best way possible? Ron Molen has argued persuasively the drawbacks of a "corporate correlated ward," explaining that the true strength of the Church has always been the ward community (1985). To be strong and thriving, however, these ward communities must be self-determined and committed to their individual members while at the same time functioning within larger communities. According to Molen, "over the years the community's commitment to the member has continually receded into something smaller, less ambitious, less communal, and therefore less dynamic" (1985, 31).

In families, family members come first. The family must be preserved at all costs.

Under the family church model, callings are accepted after consulting all immediate family members about their feelings. Ward members can indicate which callings they would or would not like to fill. As for Church programs and activities, individuals choose to participate according to their desires and needs. Stake presidents do not use a heavy hand to impose organizational conformity, to discipline bishops or others, or to pursue numerical goals. Members and local leaders are allowed to modify or reject programs based upon local needs.

### SUMMARY

In conclusion, I feel that a corporate metaphor is inappropriate and confusing for members of a religious community. Business organizations and religious organizations are and should be very different

types of entities. While churches can learn many helpful lessons and principles from corporations, their goals are, or at least should be, very different from those of a corporation.

In the early Church, our cultural metaphors were congruent with our religious heritage—the family of believers was not foreign to readers of the New Testament, and the Camp of Israel metaphor was borrowed from the Old Testament. But in drawing upon the corporate organization of the twentieth century, the Church has adopted a nonreligious concept in forming its dominant cultural metaphor. Just as the Camp of Israel and war metaphors can be exaggerated and evoke excessively militaristic images which lead away from fundamental Christian values, the corporate metaphor can lead to a substitution of a temporal focus for religious experience. It is sobering to think that if this metaphor is not appropriate even in the United States, how bizarre and dysfunctional it must be in other cultures.

It will not be easy to change. The corporate model pervades our modern industrial society. Church members, by virtue of their involvement in the business world, will import aspects of that culture into their religious life (Woodworth 1987).

#### HOW CAN THE METAPHOR BE CHANGED?

Then what are we, as a church, to do if we wish to get back to our roots? And can we successfully, willfully change metaphors? The answer to the second question is yes. A whole new industry has arisen in the management consulting field which has as its goal changing organizations' cultures. Changing cultures means changing the beliefs, values, and actions of the individuals in the organization. This involves first deciding upon the desired predominant values, beliefs, and behaviors and then changing and/or manipulating cultural artifacts to reinforce the desired culture.

As for the first question, "What are we, as a church, to do in order to change?" I have several suggestions, assuming that we want to change and that we can agree on our common values and beliefs—two big assumptions, I grant you.

##### *1. Use More Family-Oriented Rituals*

Allow and encourage missionary farewells. This tradition not only serves as a rite of passage but also reinforces the ward-as-family metaphor. Family and friends gather to bid farewell to a departing son or daughter, sister or brother. Enhance the Primary advancement and seminary graduation ceremonies. Strengthening these rites of passage



helps signify to the young women as well as the young men that the ward family cares for them and celebrates their accomplishments. Allow women to stand in blessing circles and young women to prepare the sacrament table and pass the sacrament. As far as I can tell, there is no scriptural injunction against these changes. In fact, past practice in health blessings and current temple practice seem to indicate that females can assume at least secondary roles in ordinances (Newell 1981). Allowing this participation would strongly convey that women and girls are full-fledged, valued members of the ward family.

### *2. Revise Our Stories*

The mix of stories in formal meetings and lesson manuals should emphasize love, brother- and sisterhood, and caring rather than winning, success, and reward. Donlu Thayer's "Top Kingdom: The Mormon Race for the Celestial Gates" (1989) illustrates how metaphors from our competitive business culture have contaminated our religious practices and beliefs. We can consciously resist and attempt to reverse this trend as we have occasion to teach and speak in our own ward communities.

### *3. Change Our Symbols*

Many practices with symbolic content have evolved which might easily be changed. For instance, I often wonder why so many people sit in front of the congregation during meetings. Having leaders sit with their families instead, especially when they are not conducting, rather than on the stand peering down on the congregation would help convey the message that we as a Church are a family rather than a hierarchical organization. Male authorities might also select formal attire which differed from the traditional conservative business suits. Dressing for success and dressing for Church are so parallel in Mormon culture that it has the unfortunate effect of confusing the two concepts in the minds of some.

Changes in our meetinghouses could also emphasize the sacred rather than secular character of church services. If meetinghouses are supposed to symbolize the dwelling place of God's spirit, then they should admit sunlight in the chapels, feature religious paintings, and be designed with stained glass or other aesthetically appropriate adornments. Currently, standard chapel plans would require few modifications, especially in adornment, to be adapted to serve as office buildings. As far as the great symbol of the corporate church, the Church

Office Building, is concerned, the most we can do is pretend it wasn't really built right next to the temple.

#### 4. *Change Our Heroes*

All leadership callings which require nurturing should be filled by people who are experienced and capable of ministering to people's needs. Bishops and stake presidents should be given training in mental health and family dysfunctions. To communicate the value of a life of service, great educators, social workers, nurses, and Peace Corps volunteers should be featured more often in our publications in addition to those who have been more financially successful or famous with lucrative careers. Allowing women to fill all callings at the ward level except within bishoprics, quorums, and Young Men's organizations would not only increase the local leadership pool but would help more individuals to feel truly a part of the ward family.

#### 5. *Modify Our Language*

In order to deemphasize corporate thinking, we need to change our vocabulary. Some examples readily come to mind. The words *correlation*, *efficiency*, and *standardization* should be banned. We could refer to mission leaders as mission father and mission mother. We could replace the word "president" with "leader."

#### 6. *Decentralize Most Decision Making*

By allowing ward members to take more control over their religious experience, we would strengthen the ward family metaphor and weaken the perception of church as bureaucracy. We could do away with many largely symbolic stake leaders such as high council members and auxiliary presidencies. As with the recent change in the annual Primary children's sacrament meeting program or the Relief Society's sesquicentennial guidelines which stress local initiative, we could encourage members to be more creative and to utilize their talents in developing lessons, programs, and activities within Church-wide guidelines.

#### 7. *Separate General Authorities from Day-to-Day Business Decisions*

By hiring a professional group of managers with some sort of civil servant protection or other insulating device to avoid undue ecclesiastical influence, the distinction between economic and spiritual matters would be much easier to keep clear for both leaders and members.

## CONCLUSION

How important are these issues? I believe they are critical. They go to the core of our religious experience; they define and confine the nature of how we relate to the Church and how the Church relates to us. Am I optimistic that things can change for the better? I am. The LDS Church has thrived throughout the years precisely because it has changed and adapted to meet its members' needs. I can only hope that the changes the future holds will help us all to feel even more like brothers and sisters.

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