Mormon Europeans or European Mormons? An "Afro-European" View on Religious Colonization

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Introduction

Mormon history is part of the colonization history of the American West; and the LDS Church, as a major player in that process, still bears a colonization imprint in many ways. The colonizing days are over now, and the Church is part of a major political presence in the world, no longer the colonized, but rather the colonizer. In this article, I argue that the Utah-based modern Church has replicated the same colonization process on its membership abroad to which it was once subjected.[1] To elucidate this argument, I will sketch colonization processes experienced in nineteenth-century Deseret and compare them with the colonization processes now apparent in the modern Church. I will use the perspective of an an-

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1. Mark P. Leone, *The Roots of Modern Mormonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 6–10, 225–26, also uses the colonizer/colonized concept, though somewhat differently. I am indebted to Ethan Yorgason and Armand Mauss for their constructive remarks and bibliographic assistance.

thropologist who has dealt most of his life with African local cultures-*cum*-religions that have been subjected to clear and well-described colonization pressures to show similarities between the situation of African groups and that of Mormon settlement in Deseret. Then, to discuss the Church's internal colonization, I will also write from the perspective of a European Mormon who, for almost the same length of time, has been an active member of the LDS Church in the Netherlands.

First, I give a short description of the history of the LDS Church, slightly tongue-in-cheek and in the ethnographical present, the way the LDS "tribe" around the 1860s in the territory of Deseret would have been described by anthropologists used to an African situation.[2] (Only a somewhat outdated anthropologist would use the term "tribe" these days, but for our narrative it is indispensable.[3]) Then I proceed with a European LDS view of the relationship with the "domestic Church," and finally try to assess some basic identity features of Mormons in Europe under the question: Mormon Europeans or European Mormons?

The "Tribe" of Deseret

The Deseret tribe inhabits a remote hinterland of the continent, occupying a large territory with fuzzy boundaries, united by its one important ritual center. The people are bound to the land by a mythical charter using ancient images such as "the everlasting mountains," a new Jordan river with another Dead Sea, and the "people of Israel." Effectively they see themselves as a chosen people who fled from an oppressing government to an unpolluted land. The promised land is considered to have been prepared by deity. They view themselves as a replica of a mythical tribe that once, on another continent but in similar surroundings, possessed such a land. The area was considered to have been empty, despite the presence of a small remnant of an old population. These remnant people (in African situations often considered half-mythical creatures) enjoy a special status in the founding myths of Deseret. They represent a positive

2. My narrative device has, of course, been inspired by the classic example of Horace Miner's, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema," *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 3 (1956): 503–7.

3. Historically, the notion of "tribe" originated in large measure from this colonization project. Most of the local groups habitually called "tribes" are a product of the interaction of local groups of uncertain status with the foreign colonizer who had its own ideas about how African groups should be and behave.

presence, not as such, but only as remnants of history. As remnants they were watched with some fear and apprehension, tolerated and marginalized.[4] The Deseret tribe tends to accentuate its distinctiveness from its own earlier cultural origins in a large neighboring territory; but it still retains more of the earlier culture and religion than the people of the tribe suppose.[5]

The tribe of Deseret is kin-based, as is any tribe. As people flee from their recruitment area to the relative safety of the new mountain homeland (a very common situation in Africa too), they cannot at first participate in a structure of consanguine relations. A myth (the "blood of Ephraim") offering fictive kinship is called upon to explain how all those who heeded the call and gathered from the recesses of the world in fact belong to one of the tribes of the Israelite diaspora.[6] This mythical kinship is linked with a quest for the tribal homeland, making immigration a permanent feature of tribal self-definition. Of course in due time, fictive kinship evolves into real kinship, for the tribe has a very strong tendency towards marriage within the group (endogamy). As in any tribe, marriage is an important concern for the elders: women form a very important asset, and procuring progeny (the more the better) is a focal point of the religion. Apparently, much of the appeal of polygyny is due to this desire.

Polygyny forms one of the most obvious parallels with Africa, as throughout that continent polygyny is the rule. However, Deseret polygyny is based upon an explicit myth ("revelation") and is one of the most contested—and therefore cherished—issues of the tribe. Polygyny in the Deseret tribe is as deeply engrained in religious life as African polygyny is in social

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4. Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 58–70, 114–21.

5. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999).

6. Armand L. Mauss, "In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 131–73; Arnold H. Green, "Gathering and Election: Israelite Descent and Universalism in Mormon Discourse," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 195–228.

life.[7] In Deseret the ecclesiastical elders dominate the marriage market. They happen to have an extra inducement to marry more wives and usually the means at their disposal to do so. In consequence, "plural wives" tend to be considerably younger than their husbands, in Deseret as in Africa.[8] The tribe follows peculiar drinking taboos,[9] and they manifest other unique customs, too. The tribe routinely excludes nonmembers (and even nonconforming members) from the rituals in their temples, stating that outsider presence would spoil the ritual and pollute the shrine (a quite common view in African religions, too).

A standard amount of ethnocentric bias can be recognized in the tribe. They call themselves "the elect," "Saints" or "God's people," thus drawing a clear boundary between themselves and others, for whom counter-names are employed, such as "the world," or "gentiles," sometimes "the sectarians." Still, these out-groups are not considered evil per se, as they contain actual kinsmen and potential tribe members. So out-group relations are, on the whole, on a double footing: The difference between the tribal society and the outer world is stressed, yet the larger society is defined as a recruitment area. As far as routine life experiences are concerned, people beyond the tribal border cannot be trusted.

People tend to restrict their social encounters to tribesmen. With them they share the same language, values, and social (including authority) structure. Consequently, they rely on them for help and support, the extended kin group being important in this respect. As is usual among tribes, they have a more complex folk sociological model in which they differentiate between kindred tribes containing potential kinsmen and tribes to which no kinship can be traced; in short, they are neither color-blind nor innocent of ethnic labeling.[10]

Authority is strongly centralized in the tribe, as usual without a *de facto* separation between religious authority and political power. The paramount

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7. Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987).

8. Ibid., 34–35; Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 111–12.

9. These taboos, characteristically, would be more rigidly enforced at a later stage, when differences with the surrounding population would diminish.

10. John L. Sorenson, *Mormon Culture: Four Decades of Essays on Mormon Society and Personality* (Salt Lake City: New Sage Books, 1997), 244–46.

chief, who has more wives than most tribesmen (like one of the great classical case studies in anthropology, he is like a Trobriand chief), enjoys tremendous popular respect, though on a basis of affective kinship rather than in a specifically "political" sense. He may be affectionately called "Brother," though usually the formal title of the chieftainship, "President," applies. In daily life he distinguishes himself as little as many African chiefs do, wearing about the same outfit as any of his people. People listen with respect; and when he sends people off to distant places to enlarge the tribal territory, normally they go unquestioningly. Few material symbols of kingship are used. In ceremonial gatherings, the overt symbols of power are practically absent, though the placement of the elders in ritual settings is highly significant: Chiefs are seated higher than the commoners and always face them. The authority structure is reinforced in a semi-annual rite with all those attending raising their right arm in support of the chief leaders. Authority is, in fact, unchallenged. It is based upon an unquestioning acceptance of the legitimacy of the chief, who has a personal history of close association with the much mythologized founding hero and with whom he is even said to have had a fleeting moment of supernatural identification.[11]

The chief's appointed community and lineage elders try to follow his example. They lead their communities as undisputed authorities; in theory their authority is grounded just as directly in the supernatural world as that of the great chief. In practice, however, they have to follow his general counsel and policies. They, like the chief, have their own businesses to tend, their fields to plow, and their harvests to reap. In their tribal section leadership as well as in their utilitarian work, they tend to rely on kinsmen and in-laws. Leadership is not considered a full-time occupation, although on the level of the chief and his counselors, in effect it is.

Religion, as in any well-organized tribe, is of prime importance for the unity of the tribe. The hierarchical structure is heavily imbued with ritual power, the political system depending on the religious one. Tribal character-

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11. Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 84; Richard S. Van Wagoner, "The Making of a Mormon Myth: The 1844 Transfiguration of Brigham Young," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 1–24. In African myths, founding heroes often are blacksmiths. The founding hero of Deseret bears the same name, a curious coincidence. The explicit mythology that sprang up after his violent death is very tribal.

istics in the religion are found in, among other things, the territorial myth, the absence of full-time religious specialists, ritual clothing, patriarchal blessings as divination, a sacred initiation at the start of adulthood for boys, and girls' initiation into the tribal secrets at the age of marriage.[12] African tribal religion usually is rooted in its geography: sacred places, holy mountains, shrines along the footpaths of the ancestors. These religions often do not travel well, though individual cults may.[13]

Deseret religion has its holy grounds as well. The main messianic message is couched in territorial terms: the tribe has a gathering place for eschatological times. Its relations with the neighboring tribes are often stated in terms of this messianic territoriality. Characteristically, for any tribe, the future holiness of a territory links to pre-historic elements: gathering places of ancestors, high points of the tribe's specific history, and spots significant to the founding hero. As with any tribe, the landscape of Deseret is part of sacred history and future eschatology. As with any African tribe, magic is a basic element of the religion, both in its grounding myths and in everyday life, as tales of miracles and healing testify.[14]

This only partially tongue-in-cheek description of a few aspects of early Deseret Mormonism—perhaps an exercise in what Nibley called "the art of telling tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young"[15] —shows how apt is our depiction of the Mormons of the mid-nineteenth century as a tribal group: that is, as a group of people bound together by fictive and real kinship ties and a mythical charter, occupying a definite territory to which they are ideologically bound, their

12. For an overview of the commonalties between Mormon and African religions, see Dennis L. Thomson, "African Religion and Mormon Doctrine," in *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression*, edited by Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E. A. van Beek, and Dennis L. Thomson (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heineman, 1994), 89–99.

13. John M. Janzen, "Drums of Affliction: Real Phenomenon or Scholarly Chimaera?" in *Religion in Africa*, 160–81.

14. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987); John L. Sorenson, "Ritual as Theology and as Communication," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 117–28.

15. Hugh Nibley, *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991).

group life facilitated by sharing a culture and speaking a common language, and unified by a comprehensive power structure.

Of course, there are differences. A crucial one is the claim to universality and exclusiveness by Deseret religion. Traditional religions, be they African or other, have no claims on unique truth, nor on universal application or exclusive authority. Such a pretension is far removed from the everyday practicality of local religions.[16] Claims of universality and exclusivity belong in the Christian/Moslem sphere,[17] not in the tolerant and easy-going traditional religions of Africa and elsewhere. It is this feature, however, that will transform the colonized Deseret people into the religious colonizer of the rest of the world.

From "Tribe" to American Colony: Deseret's Domestication

The usual historical way that African groups entered into the wider world was through the colonization process of being conquered and defined as part of an empire, often British and French, but sometimes Portuguese or Dutch. In any case, inclusion in a colonial state transformed the African groups, in fact "domesticating" them into citizens of a larger empire. This domestication entailed the installation of markets (for imperial products), the extraction of minerals and primary products (for imperial use), the establishment of education, health services, and a new religion, plus occasional conscription for imperial wars. Deseret Mormons followed quite a similar process.

For the tribe of Deseret, domestication came quickly. This first transformation, usually dubbed the "Americanization" of the LDS Church, started at the end of the nineteenth century, though many processes had been set in motion much earlier.[18] The abolition of plural marriage, for example, was, in a sense, welcome in many Church cir-

16. Walter E. A. van Beek and Thomas D. Blakely, "Introduction," in *Religion in Africa*, 1–20.

17. H.U.E. "Bonno" Thoden van Velzen and Walter E. A. van Beek, "Purity, a Greedy Ideology," in *The Quest for Purity: Dynamics of Puritan Movements*, edited by Walter E. A. van Beek (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton, 1987), 3–35.

18. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Ethan R.

cles.[19] This transformation was not completed until well after World War I, so it cannot truly be called revolutionary. Still, it occurred rather swiftly and smoothly, the adaptation by Mormon society progressing along natural lines, even with its peculiar contradictions.[20] Of course, this transformation was in large part an aspect of the industrialization of Utah, yet the integration of the changes was remarkable.

Now let us see what changes this transformation has wrought in the "tribal" characteristics of the people of Deseret, now transformed into the "Domestic Church."

Domestic Mormons no longer occupied a distinct territory, though there still was a recognized Mormon core area or corridor in the American West.[21] A latent ideology of gathering still prevailed, and people still tended to settle in the core area, although lack of economic opportunity there resulted in a near-balance between immigration and emigration as early as the 1920s.[22] In the face of economic realities (lack of arable land, obstacles to dramatic industrialization, etc.), in the last three-quarters of a century, leaders of the Domestic Church have had to move away from the nineteenth-century ideology of the territory and of gathering in Zion.[23] The external holy place outside the tribal boundary (Missouri-as-Zion) decreased in ritual importance, and statements of the

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Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

19. John L. Sorenson, "Mormon Folk and Mormon Elite," *Horizons* 1, no. 1 (1983): 4–18; Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region*, 40, 212–23.

20. Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

21. Donald W. Meinig, "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847–1964," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 55 (June 1965): 191–220; Donald W. Meinig, "The Mormon Nation and the American Empire," *Journal of Mormon History* 22 (Spring 1996): 33–51.

22. James P. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 499.

23. Ronald D. Dennis, "Gathering," and A. D. Sorensen, "Zion," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1992): 2:536–37, 624–26.

founder about the larger definition of Zion (America-as-Zion, read United States of America-as-Zion) were stressed.[24]

Kinship was less frequently mentioned as a basis for either association or gathering, and the functional interrelationships of roles became more important than common descent. The former marriage system changed beyond recognition. Polygyny as the cultural ideal became contrary to group norms after a prolonged and bitter fight with the colonizing society, although it lingered on in a vague theological sense. The colonized Domestic Church no longer differentiated itself from mainstream America in many respects, save by a general conservative stance, trailing slightly behind the changes in the society at large; although it should be noted that, from a European viewpoint, American denominations are very conservative indeed. Genealogy continues as a serious, though rather esoteric, interest.[25]

Characteristic of domestication was the changing position of women. Traditional societies, even if they relegate women to a seemingly lower social status, in fact leave women considerable leeway in fulfilling their own goals and objectives. Inclusion in a larger society often puts this freedom at risk. The same process happened in the Domestic Church. Women's influence in official matters has always been marginal. But, as elsewhere, their influence was maximal in times when the structure of society was weakest:[26] the laying on of hands by women, the vigils for dying sisters, and women poets who wrote the hymns of Zion came to an end when the hierarchical structure of Domestic Mormon society reasserted itself.[27] This organizational marginalization of women has been clear in the "Correlation" movement inside LDS Church gov-

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24. Douglas J. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 29–33; Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region*, 165–68.

25. For a fascinating analysis of the Mormon distinctiveness of "family history," see Fenella Cannelli, "The Christianity of Anthropology," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 11 (2005): 335–56.

26. Van Velzen and van Beek, "Purity, a Greedy Ideology," 8–9.

27. In anthropological terminology, women rose to the forefront in *liminal* times, when the values of *communitas* for a short time gained the upper hand over *structure*, *communitas* referring to the experience of relating to others as fellow-humans in contrast to relations through structural differences. Linda King Newell,

ernment.[28] In this internal colonizing project the women's organization lost its periodical, its margin of autonomy, its funds, and—in part—even its building. With "correlation," domestication was completed: the Domestic Church was an American colony, and prophetic aspects gave way to managerial skills.[29]

African groups often used to decry their own backwardness, yearning for modernization as a way to respectability.[30] Americanization, as the domestication of Deseret is usually called, resulted in a similar search for respectability by the Domestic Church. The link between Mormons and American culture always was strong and grew even stronger.[31] In fields that have no direct bearing on its fundamental message, such as sports and athletics, the Church proudly advertised the achievements of its members, following the American appreciation of competitive sports and national media exposure; a sports hero who competes on Saturdays but not on Sundays is considered a good role model and, except for the last quarter century, might be called to speak in general conference. Though not uncritical of present-day American life,[32] Mormon society enthusiastically embraced those elements that led to acceptance of Mormons as respectable Americans, if not *the* respectable Americans.

"Tribal" self-sufficiency had to go in this transformation. The territory of Deseret had become the much smaller state of Utah (and environs), and the colony was increasingly drawn into a larger world. At first

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"A Gift Given, a Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick among Mormon Women," *Sunstone* 6 (September/October 1981): 16–25.

28. Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992); Marie Cornwall, "The Institutional Role of Mormon Women," in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, edited by Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 239–64.

29. Hugh Nibley, "Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1983): 12–21; Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive*, 156–76.

30. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 239–57; Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive*, 21–59.

31. John L. Sorenson, "Mormon World View and American Culture," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1973): 17–29.

32. John L. Sorenson, "Mormon Folk and Mormon Elite," *Horizons* 1, no. 1 (1983): 4–18.

the old Deseret furnished the American metropolis raw materials (e.g., through mining companies) and uninhabited expanse (for military exercise grounds and nuclear testing grounds); in this the new Utah showed itself a colony of the United States, with a definite dependency on the metropolises on either coast of the United States.[33] As development continued, the Domestic Church (albeit reluctantly) settled into its function as a part of a larger machine.[34] Though the general implications of this growing dependency were hardly seen as a problem, a marginal tendency to fight dependency remained. Self-help and self-reliance were highly valued, community orientation applauded, and welfare programs developed to heighten individual and local Church self-sufficiency. The ideal of a self-reliant, autonomous community or society continued to live on in modified fashion as family independence.[35]

From Colony to Colonizer

In the 1960s most African countries became independent, and the situation of the local groups changed to some extent. The "tribal" labels imposed by the colonizer were not removed, and relations with the former empire became very ambivalent.[36] On the one hand, the newly independent states tried to put as much political distance between themselves and the colonizer as possible; but on the other, they remained highly dependent on their former overlords. In economy, education, technology, health, and in almost every other sector, they had to rely on expertise, help, and financial aid from the North. As a result, what emerged from the colonial states were not independent entities, but neo-colonial states—in name independent, but *de facto* satellites of the old imperial center.

In anthropology this situation has been expressed in the *dependencia* model, developed primarily to characterize the relationship between the

33. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition.*

34. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive.*

35. Garth L. Mangum and Bruce D. Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty: A History of LDS Welfare, 1830–1990* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993).

36. Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (London: James Currey, 1992).

United States and Latin America.[37] In this model the "metropolis" creates "satellites" through inequalities in political power and economic exchange. The metropolis is not only enriched by this relation, but also keeps satellites subdued; the process has been called the "development of under-development." This relation holds for Africa vis à vis Europe: African countries, with the exception of South Africa, can be considered neo-colonies or satellites of the European metropolis, and the political unification of Europe has even stipulated this relationship. For example, most French-speaking African countries use a currency that is directly dependent upon the Euro.

For their part, the Mormons, who had been a more or less "tribal" society during the nineteenth century, became an American colony beginning in the early twentieth century, and then gradually gained their own power. The Domestic Church had become part of the metropolis, and—by virtue of its own ideology—even became colonizer. It now colonized the rest of the world, the mission field, in a curious reversal of history. So here our narrative switches from the relationship between the Church and the United States toward the relationship within the Church between metropolis and periphery, or between what Quinn calls the Headquarters Culture and International Church.[38] The reason to link the two relationships is obvious: the same processes that shaped Deseret and the Domestic Church are now impinging upon the Church Abroad. With international expansion, the notion of the "Domestic Church" changes from a "domesticated American Church" into "homeland headquarters" versus the international periphery.

The mission field had always been the feeding ground for the growth of Deseret, the Utah-based Church growing from both its own dynamics and input from various mission fields. After domestication, the outer world was no longer a recruiting ground for new homeland inhabitants, as immigration gradually slowed. Colonial units away from the Mormon core area were established in most regions where formerly the new tribesmen had been recruited. The main characteristic of these units has

37. Andre G. Frank, *Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment* (London: MacMillan, 1978).

38. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS 'Headquarters Culture' and the Rest of Mormonism: Past and Present," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24, nos. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2001): 135–64.

been their dependence on the Domestic Church, in ideology, leadership, mission personnel, and finances. The relation is characterized by a clear hierarchy between colonizer and colonized, uncritical adoption of the colonizer's culture, view of the colony as an area to be developed, inequality in financial and personnel exchange, unequal distribution of relevant knowledge, etc. These colonial wards and branches were explicitly seen to represent a stage in a process of growth, a transition toward greater autonomy, but not independence—following the model of the erstwhile African colonies.

This colonial relationship came under tension in the period of rapid expansion between World War II and 1980. Spectacular growth erupted, presenting new challenges to domestic Mormonism, both in terms of control and theology.[39] Any African colonial system has a dual society—in fact, a two-tiered system. The colonizer and colonized are different, but the colonized have to be as equal as possible among themselves. A colony is a foreign territory ruled by law, which should apply to all subjects equally, at least to all subjects within the colony. Thus, the colonizing Domestic Church, now a metropolis creating satellites, had to undo all internal differences among the people it ruled over. But here was a problem. Basing itself upon a fully tribal myth of dispersed Israelite tribes, the old Deseret theology had compared missionizing to the calling home of dispersed kinsmen, especially from the tribe of Ephraim. However the Church grew rapidly in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, areas where descent and kinship through ancient Israel were not particularly obvious or explicable. The notion of Latter-day Saints as descendants of Ephraim had to be deemphasized, which, in fact, happened.[40] Even more important was the change toward color-blindness, a development which needed a full-blown revelation to undo an informal myth that had hardened into popular doctrine.[41]

Growth into a large Church also raised other doctrinal problems. A focus on the elect, hunted out among the masses of the unrepentant, has

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39. Lowell C. Bennion and Lawrence A. Young, "The Uncertain Dynamics of LDS Expansion, 1950–2020," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 119–29.

40. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children.*

41. Armand L. Mauss, "The Fading of the Pharoahs' Curse: The Decline and Fall of the Priesthood Ban against Blacks in the Mormon Church," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 10–45. For an account of one

been part of the Mormon heritage. The paths to Zion are repeatedly defined as narrow and steep, trodden by few. The notion that all people might, but will not, be saved because of their love for worldly things is a central doctrine.[42] Mormonism has always tried to avoid the choice between "a Church of the elect" and "a Church for all people" by claiming to gather the kindred elect from the Diaspora.[43] With growth in membership and recruitment area, the notion of "elect" has been redefined in a similar way as the notion of "gathering."

Any colonizing project also changes the colonizer profoundly. The Netherlands has in the past colonized what is now Indonesia, just as England and France have colonized most of Africa. These European countries cannot be understood apart from the influence their colonies exerted upon them. The colonization project changes everyone involved. The same happened within Mormon history, as exemplified in some theological concepts. The idea of gathering in Zion formerly, implicitly as well as explicitly, meant immigration to the core region of Deseret; now Zion was stressed as a ubiquitous presence, a tree to be planted deeply in foreign soils. The stakes of Zion (Deseret at first had been but a single stake) were the new gathering nodes. Thus, territory had been rendered abstract. Formerly Zion was a particular place in America; now it can be anywhere.

The spiritualization of goals, well-known in expanding African churches, has occurred for Mormonism, too. From a specific place, Zion has been spiritualized into the "pure of heart," a fairly easy transformation thanks to scripture allowing this definition received even before the Deseret period.[44] Of course, there still is a notion of a center stake, although it is now seen in the popular mind as Salt Lake City. Even so, Missouri ideology, though latent, also lingers vaguely on.

A correspondingly gradual decrease in the immediacy of eschatolog-

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scholar's negotiations with LDS leaders and scholars as he was preparing to publish on the doctrine, see Lester E. Bush, "Writing 'Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview' (1973): Context and Reflections, 1998," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (1999): 229–71.

42. Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Burlington, England: Ashgate, 2000), 162–63.

43. Dennis, "Gathering," and Sorensen, "Zion."

44. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism*, 29–33.

ical expectations has set in. This is less clear than the territorial change but can be gleaned from various sources. One indication is that, in patriarchal blessings bestowed around World War II, one frequently heard the phrase "marching up to Zion," while in present blessings, this phrase rarely appears, at least in the Dutch stakes. The eschatological climax has been postponed a bit, and even the arrival of the third millennium A.D. could not fire popular Mormon imagination in this direction.[45]

The Mormon Periphery: Satellite and Metropolis

Relations between the Domestic Church and the Church Abroad changed during the years of expansion, from 1980 onwards. The colonial churches have increased in numbers and leadership potential, though by varying rates in different areas. Where strong enough, they have developed into units equivalent to those in the core area in the abilities of their local leaders and in their financial self-support. Still, policy is made by the Domestic Church, and the top leadership generally comes from the core region. Decisions on leadership beyond the local level, on building and missionary policies, and on stake formation are also made there. So the former colony has developed into a satellite, and the former colonizer has changed into a metropolis. The metropolis has not only retained financial and political control over the satellites, but the lines of command have been strengthened at regular intervals. Administrative centralization has countered the centrifugal forces of expansion. One example is the metropolis's ambivalent relationship toward the internet. At first, the central Church strongly discouraged private or regional websites, as everything had to be centralized (and controlled) from Utah. When this no longer proved possible, strong directives enabled a limited number of strictly supervised local and regional websites to flourish. In fact, this change came rather late, in 2003; by then the Dutch stakes had already had their unofficial website for five years.

Expansion means internal growth, too. The administrative apparatus has mushroomed; what used to be a tribal council now is a multina-

45. Walter E. A. van Beek, "Chiliasme als Identiteit: De Heiligen en hun Aller Laatste Dagen," in *Maar Nog is het einde Niet: Chiliastische Stromingen en Bewegingen bij het Aanbreken van een Millennium,* edited by Lammert G. Jansma and Durk Hak (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), 117–38.

tional board of directors.[46] Still, this professionalization of the apparatus is strictly administrative and, in line with fundamental policy, has not resulted in the emergence of a class of theologians.[47] Specialists of many extractions populate the administrative offices of the Church. Whole careers have sprung up, wholly within the Church but apart from any ecclesiastical work, though some of the top leaders are recruited from these ranks. Consonant with this accent on administration, the personal charisma of the leaders, though occasionally still considerable, has followed the route Weber outlined with his concept of the "routinization of charisma."[48] Charisma devolves from persons to positions, into a positional charisma that proves quite stable and adaptive.[49]

Satellite status implies that the status of the LDS Church inside these countries is different from that in the core region. Whereas the Domestic Church is now the fifth largest American denomination, a major player in a major country, the situation of satellites is different. Abroad they are anomalies on the religious scene, often dubbed "sects." Sociologically—and discounting the derogatory association that goes with the term—"sect" they are.[50] One can expect satellites to identify with those colonial models they know, usually older ones than those currently *de rigueur* in the metropolis.

There seems to be a perceptible time lag in institutional and doc-

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46. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), and *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997).

47. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism*. It seems that the Church Educational System (CES) now sets the theological tone in the Church.

48. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (1947; reprinted, New York: Free Press, 1964), 363–70.

49. I concur with Stark's recent critique on "ancestor worship," which should fade away; Rodney Stark, "Putting an End to Ancestor Worship," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 4 (2004): 465–75. Though Mormonism closely fits the Weberian type (work, frugality, and capitalism) the "Weber thesis," as it is usually referred to, is historically debatable. Nevertheless, Weber's insights on the development of bureaucracies are still important, including the notion of charisma and its subsequent routinization. Here again, the LDS Church provides a very good example.

50. They are sects in the sociological sense because they are small, religiously isolated groups with a definite tension between their own and the surrounding cultures. Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, *The Future of*

trinal developments between metropolis and satellite. For instance, in these satellite churches the expectation of a literal gathering seems to have lost less of its appeal than in the domestic stakes. In Europe, for example, members still expect a literal, massive gathering to the central United States—still "marching up to Zion." Church programs aimed at self-reliance and self-help, like food storage, often are interpreted as preparations for the great exodus over the ocean. During the late 1980s the first item in food storage for Dutch members was the backpack, filled with food for the long march to Zion.[51] Likewise, I have the impression that, in the overseas areas, the ideals of self-sufficiency and autonomy are voiced much louder than in the United States. In Europe, for instance, some regions try to emulate mid-century conditions in Utah by shying away from government relief for their needy numbers. This, despite the fact that the social welfare network is much stronger in Europe than in the United States, and storage in Europe has no function as a private insurance against joblessness, periods of illness, or other postmodern calamities.

Inside the European Periphery

Most colonial regimes in Africa had their anthropologists, sometimes in official "government anthropologist" positions. Their recording of the tribal ways was appreciated, and the records generated were occasionally used in the *mission civilizatrice* of the empire. Despite knowledge of the other cultures, however, what was passed on to the colonies was the exact replica of the political system of the metropolis, with all of its implicit cultural values. Historian Basil Davidson even calls this replication the "curse of the nation state."[52] Africa's postcolonial development, with its plethora of political disasters, has taught a bitter lesson. Despite all of Europe's insights on foreign culture, it systematically overlooked the simple fact that a postcolonial African state was not going to replicate a European one.

Now the view from the Mormon satellites will replace the view from Africa, a second twist in our tale. The quest is to specify the relationship between satellite and metropolis. The dilemma in the title is clear: Are the

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Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 21–24, 245–47.

51. I was president of Rotterdam Stake in the 1980s and had several meetings with my Dutch and Belgian colleagues on this issue.

52. Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden*, 121.

LDS Church members in the satellites "European Mormons"? Are they first and foremost in their own self-definitions "Mormon," and secondly "European," be it Dutch, English, French or Portuguese? Or are they "Mormon Europeans," for whom their national (and by extension European) identity comes first, sharing the values and norms of their society before those of the LDS Church? This question implies that the message of the LDS Church, both in its voiced texts and in its organizational routines, has American overtones and is part of American culture, an aspect that has been amply demonstrated and commented upon in the literature.[53] Here I give just some examples of this hegemony by pointing out a few Americanisms in Mormon Church culture. I later go into detail on the question of where European culture is different from American to show why Mormonism's appeal is waning in Europe.

First, the hegemony of the metropolis. The literature points out hegemonic elements in some detail.[54] The fact that lesson materials are made in the Domestic Church, to be translated afterwards, indicates that information flows only one way: from the center to the satellite Church, and not vice versa. This direction holds not only for the tiny Dutch-speaking part, but also for the huge Spanish-speaking portion of the Church. This fact is more than a matter of convenience; those who write (and publish) define! The hegemony even extends to the translation itself. According to all known international standards of translation, translation should originate within the goal-language, not in the source-language.

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53. Shipps, *Mormonism*; her "Difference and Otherness: Mormonism and the American Religious Mainstream," in *Minority Faiths in the American Protestant Mainstream*, edited by Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 81–109; and her "Surveying the Mormon Image since 1960," *Sunstone* 118 (April 2001): 58–72; David C. Knowlton, "Mormonism in Latin-America: Toward the Twenty-First Century," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 159–76; Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 1991); Walter E. A. van Beek, "Ethnization and Accommodation: Dutch Mormons in Twenty-First-Century Europe," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 119–38; Rodney Stark, "The Basis of Mormon Success: A Theoretical Application," in *Latter-day Saint Social Life: Social Research on the LDS Church and Its Members*, edited by James T. Duke (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 29–70; Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive*.

54. Quinn, "LDS 'Headquarters Culture.'"

While the LDS Church does have translation departments in the various language areas, it retains a central translation office in the Domestic Church. From there, it exercises considerable control on the translation, even specifying which Bible translation is officially approved for Church use in various areas.

The recent Book of Mormon retranslation project into several European languages (Danish, German, Swedish, Dutch) provides an example. The effort was heavily supervised from Utah with full authorization from the highest levels. Ironically, the Dutch project was almost killed at one point because of criticism from a Dutch General Authority living in Utah[55] and was rescued only by compromise. The directives of the revision were explicit.[56] Since the project was about scripture, and thus highly sensitive, the Church authorities wanted as literal a translation as possible within the confines of both languages. This of course is a possible and, in the case of scripture, comprehensible choice. But the corollary, the trans-

55. He judged the new translation too colloquial; he also thought the new text deviated too much from the biblical text (especially in the Isaiah chapters). But he checked against the wrong Bible translation (the obsolete *Statenvertaling*, which long has held the same position as the King James translation does for the English language area) instead of the currently used NBG translation (*Nederlands Bijbel Genootschap*). Still, as a General Authority, his voice prevailed, and the text had to be changed.

56. This revision had a long history. I participated as a member of the committee reviewing the translations and discussed the situation with the translators in question, who happen to be close friends. In 1986 many new translations (from the English original) were planned for other languages, Dutch among them. For six years a carefully selected and officially called group of members, led by the Dutch Translation Branch, worked on a new text. The result initially was met with great enthusiasm, especially by the Dutch members who were called upon to comment. Later, the text ran into hot water in evaluations at the central level (see previous note), and the whole project had to be redone because of remarks from on high. The new translation had to position itself between the recently produced text and the older version, published together with the new translations of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, plus a study guide in a triple combination in 2005. The new translation enjoyed an enthusiastic reception from the Dutch members, some of whom wondered why the newest official Dutch Bible translation (NBV) had not been used; but the two translation projects had proceeded in parallel by coincidence, so it had not been possible to integrate this most recent Dutch Bible translation.

lation guideline, did not follow so obviously. For a large number of English words, in principle and if humanly possible, the same Dutch word was to have been used throughout the scripture. In this way the literal quality of the translation would be guaranteed, it was thought. Of course, any 1:1 translation is a linguistic impossibility. Not only does it fly in the face of acquired wisdom from centuries of translation, but it also negates fundamental differences in languages. Such an effort in translation is, in fact, linguistic nonsense for natural language texts, but it does illustrate the need the metropolis felt for control. Headquarters could check the translation in this manner, without knowing the language. Characteristically, the revision was made under close and continuous supervision by personnel from the translation office in the core area. A supervised session of the final proofreading of the Dutch text provided a rather curious illustration of the need for control. In one day, under watchful American eyes, a variety of native speakers who knew some English, performed the proofreading. It was not a professional job (the Dutch translation department later performed its own proper proofreading at its own initiative), but it was definitely under metropolitan control. The same holds for simultaneous translations of General Conference. Until recently, the central office had Dutch immigrants do the interpreting. After years of listening to these "Dunglish" performances, the professional Dutch translation department was allowed to do it, but only with equipment that allowed Salt Lake to operate the controls.

The presence of a corporate culture throughout the Church is another aspect of Domestic cultural hegemony. Job rotation, the insistence on efficient meetings and some interpersonal formalities vis à vis office holders, the style of reporting on stewardship, and the deference to authority throughout are examples. Crucial is the separation of position and personality, a separation which does not match well many satellite cultures. The missionary organization is replete with corporate Americanisms: numerical goal setting, the almost strangling focus on baptisms, and of course the small power games between missionaries who vie for enviable positions of leadership inside the mission.

Another example is the separation between the sexes. In Europe such a clear separation between male and female worlds is unthinkable and rejected. Couple orientation in Dutch culture is, for example, much more dominant over peer orientation than it is in the United States, so the Mormon separation of the sexes in Church services is regarded as a

strange American phenomenon. As one consequence, Dutch Church leaders decided early on that youth camps would have to be mixed, a fact they carefully concealed from their American superiors. At a deeper level, the thin line between chastity (considered a Christian principle) and prudishness (observed in American public life, especially in the LDS Church) is, in the eyes of the Europeans, definitely and irrevocably crossed by the American core area in the direction of the prudish. An example is the recent directive that youngsters with actual sexual experiences in their past may not be called upon a mission. Here, prudishness seems to have conquered the notions of repentance and forgiveness. Also, rules for lady missionaries are a case in point. Female missionaries are allowed to meet with a local Church official only in a larger meeting or when another woman is present. Even inside the chapel or other public place this holds. Here prudishness defeats efficiency.

The importance of dress codes—even inside a university!—is a sign of institutional prudishness on the one hand and of corporate culture on the other. Recently an apostle argued for white shirts in Church on the basis of a color symbolism (white = pure) that not only is definitely Atlantic (white is the color for mourning in East Asia, and for fertility in Africa) and not universal at all, but also freezes an outdated clothing fashion that once was in vogue in corporate America.

The 1997 pioneer celebration provides an incidental example of Domestic cultural focus. The sesquicentennial's official guidelines, after broadly defining pioneers,[57] suggested a number of activities, each of them focusing mainly on the Utah pioneers, as did the logo (featuring a handcart) and the theme ("Faith in Every Footstep"). The guidelines offered only one cultural translation, relating the example of an LDS branch of Cambodians who celebrated their first "pioneer" converts—not in Cambodia, however, but in Utah and Massachusetts!

Of course, pioneers are extremely important in the formation of the Church and the United States; but not in other cultures. For one thing, the term "pioneer" does not have the same positive ring in many cultures, and

57. The official letter signed by the First Presidency (January 20, 1995) stressed the pioneer heritage and the positive effect of homage to the pioneer spirit and legacy. The guidelines identified anyone who stands for what is right, lives the commandments, follows the commandments, preaches the gospel, and is an example of a Christian way of life, as a pioneer.

"pioneer spirit" or "pioneer values" has no meaning in communally oriented cultures, let alone "pioneer recipes and meals." More important, each country abroad has its own significant history, often much older than the recorded Deseret one. Each has its own role models, its cultural heroes, its liberators, its founding fathers and mothers. To call them "pioneers" is a misnomer. To try to mold these histories into a "pioneer" framework is not only slightly insulting but also is a missed opportunity. Each of the colonies abroad could have been asked to select significant moments or events in its national history and invited to celebrate them as examples of piety, perseverance, and faith. Synchronization (though, in fact, why synchronize at all?) with the Utah celebration could have resulted in a cross-cultural palette of Christian role models.[58]

Mormon European or European Mormon?

At stake is a crucial difference between metropolis and satellite. Inside the metropolis the Domestic Church is part of a larger, encompassing Mormon culture. Through its self-definition and by its manifold programs and policies, the Church aims at having a large place in the lives of its members. It is what in sociology is sometimes called a "greedy institution," one claiming the whole life of the individual. General Authorities readily concede this point, citing it as evidence of the Church's trueness.

However, such claims give the institution the task of filling the void

58. On this issue, my letter to the editor ("Oh, pioneers. . . .," *Sunstone* 20, no. 1:2) generated some flak from Dietrich Kemski of Germany ("Pioneers again," *Sunstone* 20, no. 2:2). He argued that German members had enthusiastically embraced the pioneer celebrations. Indeed, so had some Dutch members, but the results of both were quite pathetic. Television coverage showed some members, both in the Netherlands and Germany, towing handcarts through a forest; the commentaries were scathing in their friendly condescension: the "Mormons" were portrayed as people not from this world, imitating American customs totally unrelated to European reality. If those celebrations did anything, it was to reinforce the image of Mormons as a sect. Eric A. Eliason, "The Cultural Dynamics of Historical Self-Fashioning: LDS Pioneer Nostalgia, American Culture, and the International Church," *Journal of Mormon History* 28, no. 2 (2002): 160, is correct in assuming that German culture asserts more links to the Wild West than Dutch culture. But I seriously doubt his assumption that pioneer nostalgia could be a productive symbol worldwide.

it has created by separating converts from their old environment.[59] Mormonism never was simply a faith; it always was a "way of life." In the nineteenth century, this way of life was realized by the "gathering," in which the Mormons could be a people and where being Mormon implied participation in that group's culture. The old Deseret Church could become a greedy institution by virtue of its social inclusiveness. A saving grace has been the value placed on pragmatism. Mormons always have considered themselves a practical people and their religion a practical one. The practical bent of Mormon society prevented the greediness of the institution from being all-consuming. That pragmatism is highly visible in the history of that extreme form of institutional command over individual lives called the United Order, which was either a failed short-lived ideal or merely an opening phase of territorial colonization.[60] The people retreated from it as soon as its impracticalities became evident.

With Americanization, the Church's inclusiveness dwindled. The life of Mormons became more secularized, consonant with the general American movement toward a more secular society.[61] But the Deseret period plus the subsequent period of Americanization involved a culture region with Mormon dominance where a Mormon (sub)culture could evolve, supporting both the implementation of the belief system and people's accommodation to it and to the mainstream American culture.[62]

For Church members in the satellite areas, however, the picture is different. In official ideology, the Church is defined as an institution that should direct the lives of its members. Satellite members support this claim and realize that their way of life should be markedly different from that of their non-Mormon countrymen. The Church Abroad, evidently, cannot fill the cultural functions demanded by this ideology, as the minority situa-

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59. For an incisive description of converts' isolation from a strongly Catholic culture, see Wilfried Decoo, "Feeding the Fleeing Flock: Reflections on the Struggle to Retain Church Members in Europe," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 97–118.

60. Leonard J. Arrington, Dean L. May, and Feramorz Y. Fox, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976). The United Order was an experiment in communitarian economy that is now considered by the Church as an ideal, but presently unfeasible, way of life.

61. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive.*

62. Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region.*

tion precludes formation of a supporting Mormon culture, with guidelines for both living and bending the rules. The absence of a mediating Mormon culture creates the dilemma of a Church that should be important in most aspects of its members' lives but which does not have the means to serve as a "total way of life." Members in minority situations always face the question of how one can, as a Mormon, be different from the "gentiles" without a fully organized, supportive Mormon culture. The result, in sociological terms, is called—however much one might deplore the negative connotations—a sect: a group with built-in tensions with the surrounding culture.[63]

So, for satellite members, the Mormon Americanisms are clear, but the differences of their own culture from that part of American culture that shines through in Mormonism are even more relevant. Let us now look at what this predicament means to Mormons in Europe, the oldest colony and the oldest satellite—but not the most successful satellite. European LDS membership is characterized by stagnating growth (little or no growth, even some receding numbers), with the majority of new converts not from the autochthonous population, but from immigrant minorities.[64] Despite the insistence on conversion of families—still the official mission policy—whole families that convert are extremely rare. The European Church is dominated by the second and third generations who descend from the autochthonous population, while a small margin of immigrant people keeps coming in and filtering out. The result is a small, inward-looking denomination, largely invisible to the outside, in which leadership simply passes to successive generations of insiders.[65]

What is the relation of this stagnant growth to the satellite situation? It is my thesis that the changing relation between metropolis and satellites (i.e., the United States and European countries) is at the heart of this predicament. As an example of a European country, I take the Netherlands, which not only is best known to me, but also has within Europe a certain vanguard role in new developments, especially where general tolerance and certain personal freedoms are concerned.

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63. Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 21.

64. Gary C. Lobb, "Mormon Membership Trends in Europe among People of Color: Present and Future Assessment," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 55–68.

65. A small survey taken in a selected number of wards and branches in the Netherlands has produced this observation, to be used in a later paper.

Like all European countries, the Netherlands ("Holland" for short) is a very secular country, much more so than American visitors realize in their visits to the "old country." The issue is that Holland has turned secular in the last half century. Up until World War II, the Dutch social landscape was dominated by denominational competition. Each major sector of the population had its own denomination, whether Roman Catholic or one of the manifold versions of the ever-splitting Protestant Churches, divided roughly by a north-south division. Each of these denominations had its own social world, a so-called "pillar," consisting of an educational system, health services, social services, and even a broadcasting system. The Socialist (not Communist!) part of the population, dispersed throughout the country, had its own "pillar" as well. Someone who grew up within a—say Protestant—Church joined a "school with the Bible," played on a Protestant soccer club, went to a Protestant university, married a Protestant woman, had children delivered in a Protestant hospital and monitored by a Protestant health service organization, listened to Protestant radio, voted the Protestant political party, and eventually, in a Protestant old age home, died a pious death, and was buried by an undertaker from his or her own faith. The rest of Holland did the same in their respective pillars.

This "pillarization" started at the turn of the twentieth century with a struggle for the control of schools. Its heyday lasted half a century. After World War II, the pillar system crumbled with increasing speed in a process called "depillarization" that not only divided social and welfare services from denominations but eroded the whole confessional basis of Dutch society.[66] Holland went from a fully religious society, not to a civil society with strong churches, but to a civil society in which churches had lost their *raison d'être*. Of course, industrialization and continuing urbanization contributed to this trend as well, but the main religious trend was a massive leave-taking by members, a progressive drop in attendance.

The role of the churches changed from a major structural element in society into a peripheral institution, taking as their main function the preservation of some elements of Calvinist culture as well as providing a general conscience for the nation as a whole, albeit often through individual voices of warning. Throughout, the churches compete not with one another, but

66. Karel Dobbelaere and Lillian Voyé, "From Pillar to Postmodernity: The Changing Situation in Belgium," *Sociological Analysis* (recently renamed *Sociology of Religion*) 51 (Suppl. 1990): S1–S13.

with non-church organizations, voluntary organizations, welfare organizations, pressure groups, etc. It has been argued that organizations such as Green Peace, Foster Parents (now "Plan International"), Amnesty International, and the Red Cross better represent the general Christian culture in the Netherlands than the remaining churches do. The fact that Holland routinely gives the highest percentage of GNP in the world (together with the Scandinavian countries, to which Holland is culturally very close) in development aid is indicative. So, not only are the churches empty, but they have lost to secular organizations their main power to provide meaning. After decades of attendance losses, averaging 2 percent per year, the trend seems to have slowed somewhat, however. Sociologists of religion now dare to speak of a rock bottom of Dutch religiosity, embodied in small, isolated, but stable religious communities, small islands in a secular sea.

Other European countries followed different pathways to secularization, resulting in effectively similar situations.[67] Belgium, predominantly Roman Catholic, never had strongly competing pillars, but here the Catholic Church became heavily engaged in movements for social welfare and equity. There, the Roman clergy, also with the help of some charismatic

67. For a comparison with other "satellites," see *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996), especially contributions from Ian G. Barber and David Gilgen, "Between Covenant and Treaty: The LDS Future in New Zealand," 207–22; Michael W. Homer, "LDS Prospects in Italy for the Twenty-First Century," 139–58; Thomas W. Murphy, "Reinventing Mormonism: Guatemala as Harbinger of the Future?" 177–92; Marjorie Newton, "Toward 2000: Mormonism in Australia," 193–206; Jiro Numano, "Mormonism in Modern Japan," 223–25. See also Henri Gooren, "Analyzing LDS Growth in Guatemala: A Report from a Barrio," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 97–116; Jörg Dittberner, "One Hundred Years of Attitude: The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Free and Hanseatic City of Bremen," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 51–70; Lamond F. Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1987), and "Mormon Colonies in Mexico," in *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, edited by S. Kent Brown (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 110–11; Marc A. Schindler, "The Ideology of Empire: A View from 'America's Attic,'" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 50–74. The Haiti example, with its creative syncretism, deserves special attention here: Jennifer Huss Basquiat, "Embodied Mormonism: Performance, Vodou, and the LDS Faith in Haiti," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 1–34.

personalities, became the country's major voice of conscience, displacing other-worldly goals in favor of this-worldly objectives. Germany experienced a process more like Holland's, though pillarization never was as fully expressed. Germany always had known secular civil society and nonconfessional service organizations, but here the people's retreat from religion meant simply declining church attendance, not abandoning the church altogether (the Dutch option). People stay on as members of record, still paying church taxes, which are collected through the state tax system. In fact, most of Europe's inter-church and ecumenical activities are financed by this *Kirchensteuer* (church tax) from Germany, where religion has become a default option.

These varieties of secularization are quite different from the U.S. situation. Of course, the genesis of the United States has been a thoroughly religious process, and civil society in the United States rests upon the denomination as the second of two foundations (the other is the school system). Churches operate in a denominational market, but choosing a denomination is a normal option. The default option in Germany is paying a church tax, in Holland joining a preservation project, in Belgium going to mass for the wedding and funeral; but in the United States, one joins a denomination of one's choice. The church (and school) networks form the main venues for the formation of sodalities and provide most of the educational and recreational programs. In Europe, all these functions have their own organizations, unconnected to the religious sphere.

The vast majority of Dutch and European culture lies beyond the realm of religion, and anyone joining or being active in a church has to explain why. Colleagues, fellow students, neighbors, and family routinely suppose one is not affiliated with a church. As any membership needs constant explanation, membership in a small and unusual group, such as the Mormon Church, demands double explanation. Explaining why one is religious is easier than explaining adherence to something often dubbed a "sect." This change has been obvious from the 1970s onward, when depillarization shook the foundations of Dutch society, changing the political landscape, health services, education and—yes—even broadcasting. It also coincided with a diminishing role for the Netherlands' age-old Calvinist culture, with its Bible scholarship and general scriptural proficiency. The values remained but more as general norms of a welfare-oriented society than as part of a religious legacy. In this society, large differences in wealth were intolerable, and tolerance of cultural and social

differences was the norm. The Netherlands became an anti-hegemonic society with deeply embedded values of social justice and equity.

Although this culture is changing, moving toward the political right in its confrontation with another hegemonic ideology, Islam, these are the values Dutch Mormons are not only familiar with, but also deeply share. The base culture for LDS membership is Dutch social culture, with compassion for the less fortunate, tolerance toward different opinions, and the notion that one not only has to cooperate but also to compromise to reach one's goals. Political parties never rule alone, but always in coalitions, often through long and difficult negotiations. No one stands out, and no one has the right to hegemony, since consensus can always be reached through constant consultation. No longer is the social model a multi-confessional one as in the past; rather, it is now called a "polder" model (the Dutch term for a reclaimed low flatland), suggesting a consensus reached where everybody has all relevant information and decisions are taken together, shouldered by as large a majority as can be found—perhaps a rather "flat" compromise.

Permissive Dutch society bears the stigma of drugs and other vices among some outsiders (especially for the French and Americans), but most Dutch do not experience any drug problems at all, and a permissive drug policy finds massive support in Dutch society, including among LDS members. The same attitude holds true for other social issues on which Holland is ahead of the European pack: the acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriages, the regulation of abortion, and the official regulation of careful practices for euthanasia. The Dutch sometimes are shocked to hear American evangelicals lash out against the "killer doctors" in Holland and almost never recognize their own legislative models and medical practices from the hyped-up accusations from across the ocean. The dignity of life has precedence, in Dutch eyes, over the absolute number of days of life.

The Domestic Church standpoint is much closer to the general American vision and finds little resonance in Holland, even among LDS Church members. For instance, the acceptance of homosexuality as merely a different form of sexuality is pervasive, for LDS members as for other Dutch; and tales of American institutions (BYU is mentioned sometimes) that tried to "heal" this "affliction" by deprogramming are whispered about with some horror by Dutch members. Also, the general LDS Church stance (one may be a homosexual but not practice it) is generally considered as less than satisfactory, a blatant denial of the mounting evi-

dence of sexuality's genetic basis. As many Latter-day Saints subscribe to Dutch cultural norms and government policy on these issues, they tend to avoid discussion about them in church since their collective stance would stand out against an LDS Church policy they find awkward.

One example: A few years ago, when the Domestic Church openly mobilized members in California against same-sex marriages, an apostle told European stake presidents to fight against legislation accepting same-sex marriages in European countries. All stake presidents listened dutifully and then conveniently forgot the advice. First, that debate had been completed years ago. America was running behind, a situation illustrating the satellite aspect of European stakes. No LDS voice was heard when those laws were passed in Europe. But more important, the stake presidents felt no reason at all to be against those laws; in fact, acceptance of same-sex marriages takes so much wind out of these fruitless debates that homosexuality becomes much less of an issue for Church members as for others. Finally, any political opposition by the satellite churches against legitimizing same-sex unions would be a public relations disaster for the Church in Europe; the general non-Mormon public would experience it as a "great leap backwards." Evidently, this situation is quite different in America—or for that matter in Africa—which more closely resembles the general U.S. opposition against homosexuality. In TV debates in Europe, the ironically humorous question of whether "America is really a modern country" is treated quite seriously.

The general European notion is that permissiveness diminishes the attraction of moral vices. One should not prohibit sinful behavior by law, and Europeans do have some powerful scriptural references in this regard—about forcing people to heaven. The deep European conviction is that alcohol prohibition stimulates drinking, prudishness generates teenage pregnancies, and the war on drugs produces addicts. A restrictive society is the least efficient way to combat vice. European Church members share these opinions, which run deeply against the American grain.

A similar movement in European society concerns the changing definition of marriage. Formerly, civil marriages, followed by a church celebration, were the norm, but with the erosion of religion, the civil transaction also declined. The large majority of Dutch couples start their life together by living together without a formal agreement and gradually move into a

more legal arrangement. One arrangement along the way is a cohabitation contract drawn up by a notary of state.[68] These contracts have full legal status, including in tax matters. Dutch society has learned that there is more than one way to contract a marriage, each having its own legal status and social acceptance. Here again, the American Church's definition of marriage (exclusively contracted at the civil registrar, for in Holland the temple ceremony and other religious rituals do not count as legal) is at variance with Dutch culture and, consequently, with the notions of Dutch LDS members. Most of them deplore this gap between America and Europe and see no compelling reason why people living in perfectly harmonious unions, solemnized by notaries, should be considered as living in sin.

For Dutch Mormons this difference, as well as the others mentioned, is first and foremost a question of culture, not a question of doctrine. They have the impression that the Dutch views as expounded here, could in large measure be accommodated within the restored gospel without losing any essential teachings. Some members argue that the proscriptions, like that against homosexuality, have a shallow Old Testament basis, not reinforced in either the New Testament or modern revelations, and that the LDS Church could learn from other Christian churches in this respect. But as these issues are viewed as mainly cultural problems, in fact as "Americanisms," most members have little tendency to engage in doctrinal discussions or debates on scriptural texts; they feel that the existing body of doctrine could allow for more leeway in the social practices of Latter-day Saints. But at the leadership level, some attempts to discuss, for instance, the definition of marriage in meetings with General Authorities were struck down quickly by the Domestic Church. As yet, there seems to be no room for such discussions. Thus, many members make some separation between doctrine and their evaluation of existing social practices, a cognitive compartmentalization that comes with the minority situation of being a non-European orthodox church in a secularized environment or, I might add, even a church on the road to fundamentalization.[69]

In conclusion, the members in Europe are not European Mormons,

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68. The Dutch "notary" is a more official, legal, and authoritative version of the American "notary public."

69. Van Beek "Pathways of Fundamentalisation: The Peculiar Case of Mor-

but definitely Mormon Europeans. One last reason will be discussed below: the diminishing status of the United States, the colonizer.

The U.S. Connection: From Asset to Liability

In the twentieth century, the expansion of the Domestic Church coincided with the expansion of U.S. influence and power, a situation reminiscent of the growth of the first Christian Church together with the Roman Empire. In the latter case, the empire provided the political and economic context for the spread of Christianity, but this relationship is more complicated in the Mormon case. Mormonism never was dominant in the United States, but the American political and security umbrella for the non-Communist world furnished a platform of political respectability for LDS expansion, enabling the Church to present an economic role model as well as a material success story underlying the spiritual message. With the specific role of America in LDS sacred history–a unique Mormon feature–Mormonism tied in well with a positive general evaluation of the United States. After World War II, the Mormons could bask in the sunshine of the successful pacifier (likewise, most colonizations in Africa started out as a pacification as well as a conquest) and deliver their message within a framework of political success.

However, colonization processes move ever faster, and likewise decolonization dynamics. Any colonizer inevitably faces the loss of prestige and status among its colonies, satellites, and other dependent entities. The status of France in West Africa, of Great Britain in East Africa, and of the Netherlands in Indonesia, has suffered severely because of their presence-in-power there. Decolonization comes with demystification of the former colonizing power, and the colonizers fall from grace. France is quite unpopular in West Africa, the Netherlands likewise in Indonesia, and the former French colony of Vietnam turned to the United States for protection. So, being a former colonizer is not an asset, but rather a liability.

The LDS Church is facing the same dilemma in many countries, especially those in Europe. Considering the fact that European Mormons are full members of their own native culture, the reputation of the United

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monism," *The Freedom to Do God's Will: Religious Fundamentalism and Social Change*, edited by Gerrie ter Haar and James J. Busuttil (London: Routledge, 2002), 111–43.

States in Europe is highly relevant, both for the membership and in explaining the lack of proselytizing success. The LDS Church is inevitably, and in many ways correctly, seen as an American church, and outsiders fully perceive the metropolis–satellite situation.

But the status of America has changed considerably over the past decades. U.S. status, in addition to secularization and adherence to national cultures, is the third factor influencing membership in Europe. The Church is not only American in culture, but politically clearly pro-American as well, with patriotism considered a major virtue. It is this U.S. connection that, in just a few decades, has shifted from an asset to a liability. The Domestic Church has also become a major player in the American political and religious arena, while almost never being seen as criticizing American actions or issues. The sole remaining superpower after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, America views itself as the policeman of the world. Of course, the United States was instrumental in the liberation of Europe from the Nazi yoke, and of course most Europeans would rather have the United States patrolling the world than the former USSR. Yet one has to remember that gratitude is a fleeting feeling, one that cannot be cashed in on any longer.

Though few Europeans would prefer a different policeman, most would prefer none at all. Americans, though, prefer to be liked as nice people, an assessment that most of the time is correct; but then they forget that power can be envied, emulated, or admired, but never liked. A major power must flex its muscles from time to time to remain strong and be seen as such, and indeed, that is what the United States does. It has participated in, and recently even instigated, wars in other parts of the world and is now seen not as a peacekeeper but as a warlike nation.[70] In a recent survey in Holland among secondary school girls, George W. Bush came out as the major threat to world peace just ahead of Osama Bin Laden. True, the girls might have been mistaken or misinformed, but the sentiment is clear and pervasive.

In viewing the American proclivity for war—in sensing first of all the American idea that problems can be solved by war—Europeans with some historical memory reflect on the myriad wars made on their own continent, musing on how little effective change and progress all those wars brought.

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70. Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wynn Davies, *Why Do People Hate America?* (Cambridge, U.K.: Icon Books, 2002).

Three rules stand out in European history: (1) Colonial wars will always be lost, e.g., the Netherlands in Indonesia; (2) Wars of liberation will always be won by the population, e.g., Vietnam against the French and the Americans; and (3) Winning the peace is more important than winning the war—the lesson Germany taught England after World War II, as the Western allies failed to learn it after the First World War.

The European impression is that America is fighting a colonial war in Iraq, which might be turning into a liberation war and which definitely risks losing the peace. This kind of problem is seldom discussed in LDS Church circles, but the war is very unpopular with the general European public. Europe has seen enough of its own such drive to recognize it in someone else and has no drive to empire left. Europeans are comfortable not being part of a world power; in fact when traveling abroad, not being an American is much safer than being one. In United Europe, the notion of patriotism has lost much of its meaning, at least outside the soccer field. The flag of patriotism has been raised too often: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel," said Samuel Johnson, an eighteenth-century English essayist. Talleyrand, the old French statesman-philosopher, when musing about patriotism and high treason, said: "Treason? Just a matter of dates!" Furthermore, the United States is not only the sole remaining superpower in the world, but it is also, to a great extent, the defining power of the world, attempting to define for the rest of the world what is a "terrorist" or a "fundamentalist," what is "democracy" or "liberty,"[71] and of course what are "weapons of mass destruction." This effort, again, has eroded the credibility of the center of power.

Dutch Church members of long standing have come to terms with this decline in American credibility, even though, for instance, the absence of LDS Church warnings against war and in favor of peace were sorely missed with the American decision to wage war on Iraq. Only *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* featured some discussion,[72] but these are out of reach for most Dutch members. Yet for new members, the status of America and the uncritical acceptance of any American policy by the Domestic Church defi-

71. Ibid., 201–2.

72. I found the following articles in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2004) generally well reasoned and convincing: M. Diane Kranz, "Reflections on War of a Liberal Catholic in Mormon Utah," 136–45; Patrick Q. Mason, "The Possibilities of Mormon Peacebuilding," 12–45; Robert M. Hogge,

nitely is an added obstacle. Historically, through the 1980s, the status of America was quite high, as the vanguard of liberty and democracy, eventual defender against the Soviet presence, and of course the liberator of old. But things changed with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Soviet threat disappeared overnight and seemed to have been overestimated anyway. Europe was burdened with the colossal failure of a socialist Utopia, in fact the most dramatic failure of an ideological system the world has ever witnessed. Reunited Germany is still paying the huge price attached to that patriotic ideal.

The American role became unclear. With one superpower gone, the reason for the other evaporated. The liberator became the policeman, and the policeman then instigated colonial wars. It is during this period, the 1980s and the 1990s, that the numbers of Dutch converts declined, only partly replaced by immigrant conversions as European societies became immigration societies. It is with these immigrants, often from Suriname, Africa, and Asia, that the status of America is still high, and association with an American Church is still an asset. But for the native Dutch (and Germans and French), Mormonism's association with America has become a liability.

Thus, the United States in tandem with the Domestic Church makes its position as metropolis very clear by defining Europe as a satellite, both in geopolitical terms and in Church terms. The combination of factors at play—secularization, the continuing adherence to European culture, and the diminishing status of the United States—may be viewed as a silent rebellion of the satellite against the metropolis, in which the rebels simply vote with their feet.

"War Is Eternal: The Case for Military Preparedness," 165–79; Michael E. Nielsen, "Peace Psychology and Mormonism: A Broader Vision for Peace," 109–32; Robert A. Rees, "America's War on Terrorism: One Latter-day Saint's Perspective," 11–30; Richard Sherlock, "Rooted in Christian Hope: The Case for Pacifism," 95–108; and Bradley Cook, "The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict Reconsidered," 1–7. But the voices of Church officials were nowhere heard.