

Mormon Authoritarianism and American Pluralism

Note: This conversation between David Campbell, Russell Arben Fox, Matthew B. Bowman, and Kristine L. Haglund took place February 3, 2012, at the Lucerne Hotel in New York City.

Russell: I wanted to start off this conversation by asking David about the subtitle of his book, “How Religion Unites and Divides Us.” That concern over unity and division has been a serious one for the Mitt Romney campaign. He’s made efforts to bridge divides in order to make his candidacy appealing to a particular segment of conservative Republican primary voters who, generally speaking, have not looked well upon Mormons. He’s also made efforts to downplay the significance of his religious identity entirely in this election cycle, to keep the focus on the economy and on beating President Obama in November. What, if anything, do you think someone working for the Romney campaign could learn from your book that they could make use of in helping their candidate along?

David: Well, one thing they would learn—and perhaps they’ve already learned it the hard way—is just how it is that Mormons are perceived by other Americans. Even though I’m LDS myself, my co-author, Robert Putnam and I did not set out to write a book that emphasized Mormons or any other religious tradition in particular. Still, it does turn out that Mormons are very distinctive in many ways, and so we just couldn’t help but point out what makes Mormons unusual. One of those things is the way other Americans perceive them. The degree of negativity in that view is quite striking, actually. Now, those working for Mitt Romney probably wouldn’t find that fact surprising. What they would also learn

from our book is the reason why we think Mormons are perceived so negatively. And the reason is that, compared to other religious groups in America, Mormons are much less likely to form bridges or social connections with people outside their faith.

Why are Catholics and Jews viewed more positively today than in the past? They're also groups that have experienced discrimination throughout American history. The reason is simply that those two groups "bridge" far more than Mormons do. So the challenge for the Romney campaign is something that they probably can't do anything about. It's hard to imagine a presidential campaign somehow encouraging Mormons to go out and make close friends with people of another faith. So what they would learn from the book is that they'll have to deal with the reality that Romney's Mormonism is going to be foreign and alien to most voters because they simply do not know any Mormons.

Kristine: Bob Goldberg, a history professor at the University of Utah and director of its Eccles Center, recently gave a talk in which he compared Mormons and Catholics—and Jews, to some extent. It seems to me that intermarriage was a really key factor in those groups' assimilation, and somehow we have to account for the doctrinal difficulty that makes it less likely for Mormons to marry outside the faith if that's the most important bridge.

David: That observation relates to a message I've been delivering to various LDS audiences. I emphasized the challenge that the insularity—the social cocooning that goes on among Mormons—presents for how they're perceived in the rest of the population. I take pains to point out one aspect of that bonding is not going to change—that is, that Mormons have a much higher tendency than other faiths to marry "their own kind." And we all know the reasons for that—strong doctrinal reasons that go far beyond what you find in most other faiths. That's not going to change. But it extends beyond that. Mormons are also more likely to have close friends who are of the Mormon faith and less likely, therefore, to have close friends who are of another faith. So the message I deliver is that *because* of the challenge of same-faith marriage (in this context of intra-religious bonding), there's an extra imperative to reach out and make friends and form connections with people of other faiths, all of which is 100 percent consistent with what Gen-

eral Authorities have taught recently. It should not come as a surprise for Mormons to hear. Mormons just don't do it.

Russell: I was thinking of the recent article by Fred Gedicks, a law professor at BYU, where he, after taking a look at Romney's candidacy in 2008 and then at the battle over Proposition 8 in California, concludes that it's really very silly for someone in Romney's position to try to assuage doctrinal differences and find a way to get on the turf of the civil religion establishment within the United States.¹ He felt that a much wiser approach would be to embrace a more aggressive ecumenism, a liberal pluralism—to stop trying to build doctrinal bridges, and try to build more social bridges. Do you feel that the argument you're laying out here feeds into that sort of a conclusion? Would you agree with the assessment that Mormons trying to get along with Christian conservative voters are doing it wrong?

Matt: Can I complicate that a little bit? Mormons are insular, but isn't it that insularity that gives them all the social capital to build the kind of community strength you were speaking about earlier? If we were to reach out to other Christians, play games with them, and have nice social events with them, would that dilute some of the social capital Mormons have?

David: Both excellent points. Let me first address the idea of making social links, rather than trying to find theological common ground. I haven't read that article, but I would agree with the point Russell drew from it. As I've said, Americans feel very positive about Catholics and Jews and other religions as well, but there's no evidence that they really know much about what those religions believe. The Pew Research Center has done some excellent research, in which they've come up with factual questions to ask about religion, and it turns out that Americans know very little their neighbors' religion—or for that matter, their own. But they know they *like* their neighbors. They know they feel warmly toward their neighbors of other faiths. So, why is that? It's not because of beliefs those people have. It's because of the relationships they've built.

Now, Matt's question about whether building bridges beyond Mormonism might lead to a dilution or weakening of the vitality of Mormonism is the \$64,000 question for any religion that wants

to be in the mainstream of American life. One could argue that the arc of Catholic history over the last fifty years has been gaining acceptance in the mainstream of America at the price of what made Catholics distinctive. (One can argue about what's cause and what's effect there, because lots of changes were happening in Catholicism at the same time it was moving into the mainstream.)

In the case of Mormonism, I actually think that Mormons today have such a tendency to bond that, even if they were to bridge to other religions more, they're in no danger of losing distinctiveness in either this generation or the next—maybe three generations from now we could talk about that. But as long as Mormonism maintains its distinctive practices—temple worship and all the other practices that set Mormons apart—I'm not terribly concerned about the dilution of the faith's vitality.

Russell: This discussion about how Americans may be confident in their knowledge of their own beliefs but generally have very little accurate knowledge about what their neighbors believe or what any other churches believe feeds into a model of American public life that a lot of people would describe as "liberal." They'd say that this is a liberal, individualistic society, where belief is decided by a person's individual conscience and it's not much dictated by the churches they might happen to associate with. A lot of liberals would argue that that's a good thing, that it's going to create a public square that's very amenable to the sorts of things that allow democracy and the principles we value about a free society to flourish. Are organized religions with a strong authoritarian structure, like Catholicism or Mormonism, a threat to that kind of society? And in order to build the kinds of social bridges we're talking about here, are we going to have to anticipate a liberalization that will move us away from that authoritarian structure? Is that a price that will simply have to be paid because there is no way to function or flourish politically in a liberal society without it?

David: Well, I understand what you're saying, but I think it's easy to overstate the authoritarian nature of Catholicism (and I say that as someone who teaches at Notre Dame) and of Mormonism. And I say that because we know that, within Mormon culture, there's a lot more "play in the joints" as to how people live out

their Mormonism than you might be led to believe by just reading the material produced by the Church or just visualizing those organizational charts on paper that say they're describing how things are supposed to work. My experience is that, in a typical ward, the chain of command that is supposed to be followed is often loosely interpreted. And I think that's just the nature of people, or at least the way that Americans live their religion, because, after all, we live in a world of religious choice. That's a fact of social life that even local LDS leaders have to be thinking of. If you're not allowing your religion to meet people's expectations, they'll stop showing up. They'll go elsewhere. So, even though we don't normally think of local LDS leaders as having to be innovative and entrepreneurial and creative the way Protestant pastors do, they still do have to be somewhat responsive. There's a little bit of latitude given.

I'd say further that it's important to keep in mind that not only can people choose to leave the Church, but people also choose to come into the Church. So despite the "authoritarian" nature of the Church you're describing, it's still something people choose to be a part of, and that's a very different world than one in which people can't leave or enter at will. This is not a matter of ascription, it's a matter of choice, and that's what helps Mormonism or Catholicism or any other top-down hierarchical organization function in society—that there's a little more democracy than it might seem at first.

Kristine: There's a lot of talk lately about threats to religious freedom from this pluralistic society, a sense that the United States is somehow newly or more intensely threatening to the ability of Mormonism and other religions' ability to practice their faith on the ground. Do you see that? Or is it issue-driven? Will it go away when our anxiety about gay marriage lessens?

David: Well, these are real concerns, not just within the LDS community but with other faith groups, especially this week with the decision by the Obama administration to require all health insurance plans to cover birth control. The particular issue of birth control per se is not of huge concern to Mormons, but I can assure you that it's a big concern at Notre Dame, and it should matter to Mormons, on principle. So this is a live issue; it's a real thing. I'm

not as convinced that religious freedom is truly under attack, however, in the United States, because this is still a highly religious country. It's a country that has provisions written into its Constitution protecting free exercise and avoiding establishment of religion, and I see lots of counter-evidence suggesting that religions are flourishing.

What's different—what we're undergoing right now—is a recognition of increased diversity of religions, the question of how to accommodate religions that don't fall within the Judeo-Christian framework. But we should remind ourselves that the very fact that we use the term “Judeo-Christian” means we've done this before. There was no such thing as “Judeo-Christian” at the time of the founders; it was introduced later on. And one day we may have another term that accommodates Jews and Christians and Mormons and Buddhists and Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims.

Russell: You already hear people trying out “monotheistic religions” to include Muslims. So there's diversity but also the introduction of choice. Maybe in matters of law, that choice was always there, but I think that technological and economic changes in American life have resulted in a significant pluralization of society and the breaking apart of a lot of customary norms, with the result that choice has become a greater reality in even these authoritarian religions.

Matt, you've just published a book about the Mormon people. Do you feel as though there came a particular time when choice and other sorts of liberal concerns, as they might be defined American society, became issues for the Mormon Church? I can see several points in history where you could argue that it was beginning, but where do you see it?

Matt: Well, I think to some extent, it's there from the beginning. Mormonism is one of these new religions that's playing around in a disestablishment America. Mormons are losing people to Methodists, Methodists are losing people to Mormons, and there's some clash there, some going back and forth. We talk about Mormonism *becoming* a denomination, but there's a sense in which it really was just a denomination for the first ten years or so. It was not seen as that different from, say, the Disciples of Christ or other innovative Protestant sects. Mormonism's exclusivity and

its claims of being the “New Israel”—the sense that this was a culture as much a religion—doesn’t really emerge until Missouri in the late 1830s.

Russell: So in earliest Mormonism, let’s say, you’ve got Oliver Cowdery penning Section 134 of the Doctrine and Covenants . . .

Matt: And you’ve got Cowdery and Whitmer getting excommunicated for saying things like “we will not allow religion to trammel our freedoms.”

Russell: Very liberal language. So, let’s say that goes away and is followed by a theocratic period. When does it come back?

Matt: I don’t know that it ever really goes away. We have this idea of a Golden Age in the early Utah period, but the reality looks different. Inactivity has always been as much of a problem as it is now for the Church; meeting attendance is just not that high in the Utah period. Brigham Young is always complaining about people like Almon Babbitt being “lukewarm Mormons.” Members will go off to the East and not come back, and he’s constantly preaching that members who don’t live their religion should go to California and hell in that order. This is going on—this is why they have the “Reformation” in 1856–57, because there’s this sense that this idealized Zion, this New Israel, is not what it was cracked up to be.

David: And this same dichotomy between the ideal and the real continued even into the early part of the twentieth century. We actually have empirical data—surveys done of BYU students—who are asked questions basically about the Mormon catechism: Do you believe that the First Vision really happened? Do you believe in the historical nature of the Book of Mormon? And the percentage of students who answer affirmatively is very low, shockingly low. Something changed between then and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Matt: Part of that is that there were a fair number of non-Mormons at BYU until the Wilkinson period—a lot of children of miners from Price and other non-Mormon Utahns sending their children there. But, yeah, there’s a hardening of notions of orthodoxy and exclusivity in the 1950s and 1960s.

Kristine: But pre-correlation?

Matt: Where I've seen these surveys is in *The Angel and the Beehive*, and Mauss contrasts the answers in the '30s with those done in the '70s. By the '70s, the percentages who answer these questions affirmatively is way, way up. By the '70s, 99 percent say that Joseph Smith is a prophet, 95 percent say that the Book of Mormon is historical, that sort of thing.²

Russell: Well, then, to tie in some of the concerns we were raising before, does this trend suggest that the political problem of Mormon insularity—the lack of bridge-building between Mormons and their neighbors—is a recent one, a problem two generations old, and that, perhaps, if Mitt Romney had run for president in, say, 1948, Mormonism *wouldn't* have seemed weird?

Matt: You know who *didn't* have a “Mormon problem”? George Romney. George Romney is giving interviews in 1968, going on about how wonderful it is to be a Mormon, and how Mormonism has made him the man he has become, and *Time* magazine is fawning all over him. So there *is* a shift. I think much of it has to do with the rise of the Evangelical Right.

Russell: So it's not that we became insular, but that they raised the bar for inclusion?

Matt: I think it's much like what David was saying about Catholicism earlier. There's a sense that Mormon authoritarianism, this grim specter of the hierarchy, is something that has always been more image than fact, something that other people fear more than Mormons actually experience it.

David: It's actually hard to make this comparison between Mormonism today and its insularity—that's maybe too strong a word; let's call it social cocooning—and what we might have observed in the 1800s or the first half of the twentieth century. Today, while Mormons are still concentrated in the Mountain West, they're much, much more widely dispersed throughout the country than they were then. So, while there was a lot of insularity then, it was dictated by geography.

Russell: And by the communication technologies of the time.

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Matt: But actually, the percentages of Church members living in Utah in the first few decades of the twentieth century are fairly

low. At statehood, it's 56 percent.³ So, there's this myth of Zion that maybe has never actually been true.

Kristine: Can we talk about generational attrition? Is that new? Or has the retention of the next generation always been this much of a problem for the Church?

Matt: It is true, I think, that the Reformation in the 1850s, the establishment of the Retrenchment Association in 1869 (that turned into the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association), the Aaronic Priesthood reforms of the 1870s and the corresponding Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, were aimed at young people, but I don't know if that reflects an actual drifting away, if Perry Miller's "declension of the young generation" is really happening, or if people are just responding to anxieties about what *might* happen.

David: I don't have any data on trends in Mormon retention rates over time. I can speak however, about the retention rates in Mormonism compared to other religious traditions now. For all the concern that is raised about defection/disaffiliation/going inactive, Mormons actually set the bar pretty high for themselves. If we used a relative standard, Mormons are doing better than most other denominations. But "better" is nowhere near 100 percent; "better" is 60–65 percent.

Kristine: That's still higher than you'd think from some of the alarmist rhetoric.

David: That's captured at one point in time. That's Mormons-across-the-age-spectrum. If we had better data and could focus more specifically on young people, maybe it would be higher or maybe we'd locate some large-scale defection. That's certainly happening in other faiths; and if it were happening in Mormonism, it's likely to be just Mormons following the national trend, rather than there being any distinctive problem among Mormon youth.

Matt: Are these people switching faiths or simply becoming non-affiliated?

David: A little bit of both, although the dominant trend is to become unaffiliated.

Kristine: "Spiritual, but not religious?"

David: Yes. The term Robert Putnam and I and others have used is the “Nones.”

Russell: So, going back to my original question about Romney’s dilemma, let’s say that there’s some recognition among the Mormon cohort around Romney that this “insularity” is the result of a mutually reinforcing perception that has become real, or at least reportable, in terms of data. Do you think this means that a hypothetical President Romney could, safely, simply set aside the historical forms that journalists or others might cast their concerns or suspicions in? I’m thinking in particular of my friend Damon Linker’s book,⁴ where he describes what he thinks a liberal society should be and, with an admirable lack of irony, takes a look at Mormon history and some rather apocalyptic statements that have been made in the past—and some more recently—and concludes that Mormonism is an authoritarian religion. Now, maybe it has never really been all that authoritarian, and maybe that mutually reinforcing perception we were talking about has been going on for a while. But now we have a situation where there’s this historic distrust, Mormons are a little more insular than they perhaps ought to be, and that makes it easy for people to throw around words like “cult,” and worry about the prophet calling up President Romney. So do you think Romney can sail above all these concerns and simply not engage those perceptions (distortions)? Or will he be forced to dig into them, explain Mormonism, and insist that he’s not getting calls from Salt Lake in order to establish his liberal bona fides?

Matt: It’s true, I think, that in practice Mormonism is much less authoritarian than detractors have accused it of being. There is, nonetheless, rhetorically and theologically in the Church, this idea that the prophet is someone who speaks for God. The Primary children sing “Follow the Prophet.” And the case that Richard Bushman and others have made against this rhetorical strain is that *in practice* this has never actually happened. In practice, Reed Smoot was a boring, middle-of-the-road Republican senator who did not try to do anything bad to the republic; in practice, the First Presidency does not send telegrams to members of Congress telling them how to vote. But this authoritarianism exists on an ideational level.

Russell: So is the fact that it is mostly ideational going to enable Romney to escape it? Or will any Mormon president be dogged by the constant suspicion that he's an illiberal theocrat just biding his time?

David: I'm often asked by reporters whether Romney will have to give a speech about his religion, and my answer is that we just don't know and that *he* doesn't know. Barack Obama did not know that circumstances were going to conspire to compel him to give a significant speech about race (and religion) in the heat of the 2008 primaries. Mitt Romney does not know whether circumstances are going to conspire to compel him to give a speech about Mormonism. Should he become president, we don't know whether some issue would arise or whether some pressure will be brought to bear that would require him to address these questions directly.

I suspect that, as a candidate, he'll do everything he can to avoid speaking about his religion, but should he win the presidency, all bets are off. We don't know what will happen. We can be confident that the Church leaders in Salt Lake City will do everything they can to avoid any suggestion that they're trying to influence the White House. So I don't think Romney would ever have to worry about responding to something his church does. But who knows?

Russell: I know some people at BYU and elsewhere who think that the Church leadership doesn't want him to win.

David: I wouldn't be surprised if, behind closed doors, some General Authorities might express ambivalence.

Russell: Well, that's saying something, since they're all Utah Republicans. Admitting ambivalence is pretty impressive.

Kristine: They're not *all* Utah Republicans! There are at least two Democrats!

Matt: Would the Church have mounted something like Prop 8 if Romney were president?

David: That's a really great question. I am willing to go on record as saying I don't think the Church would have. The Church is very careful about how and where it chooses to mobilize its members. We don't really know what the criteria are for making those deci-

sions; but even with gay marriage, the Church doesn't get involved in every ballot initiative.

Russell: Well, then, maybe liberal Mormons should *want* Mitt Romney to be elected, because it would force the Church to retreat even further from political life, to avoid the perception of behaving theocratically.

David: And of course, it also raises the question of whether the Tabernacle Choir could perform at Romney's inauguration without an apparent conflict of interest!

Russell: Or Donny and Marie!

Kristine: Well, the question of what liberal Mormons should want tempts me to get on my soapbox about why the Church should be *more* involved in politics, rather than less.

David: Because politics is a moderating force on the Church?

Kristine: No, just because there's a broad range of issues with moral valences about which I think the Church should not be silent—poverty, child welfare . . .

Russell: I've thought for years that it would be a good thing if the Church, institutionally, got involved in partisan politics. And the reason why I thought that—and I still kind of think so (although I recognize that there are huge holes in my reasoning)—is because then there would be no getting around the fact that there would be active, temple-recommend-holding members who disagree with their Church leaders about politics. That situation would force the Church to recognize political pluralism within its own ranks.

David: There's another wrinkle here—a thread I was trying to tease out. Let's look at the case of Evangelical Christians. At the time of the emergence of the Religious Right, the activists in those ranks were far, far from the mainstream of American politics. They held opinions that were way out in right field. But if you look at members of that group who became involved in politics on a regular basis—the kinds of people who became party delegates, attended national conventions, that sort of thing—there's good evidence that, over time, their attitudes have shifted. They've become more accepting of democratic norms, and their opinions have moved toward the moderate middle. There's a lot of evi-

dence that simply being involved in the process of politics, the give and take and compromise that even intra-party politics entails, has a liberalizing (small “l”) effect.

Russell: Is there any kind of historical analogue here, Matt? Say, when statehood came and all of a sudden we had apostles serving as senators—it was a very different world then . . .

Matt: . . . and much more contentious. There were all sorts of problems—you had folks like Apostle Moses Thatcher and Seventy B. H. Roberts, who mounted campaigns to hold political office against the wishes of higher-level Church leaders. Moses Thatcher was removed from the Quorum of the Twelve because he accused the First Presidency of meddling in politics. And he was right. They were. It has definitely become less turbulent.

Russell: But a lack of turbulence is not necessarily a good thing.

Matt: Maybe. But the Church has become more hands-off and has gotten much more subtle, perhaps, and smarter, in the ways that it exercises influence and persuasion.

David: Yeah, I think all the evidence suggests that, in Utah itself, the Church really doesn’t do much actively in politics, because it can make its wishes known by subtle signaling. And in many cases, the Church can reasonably guess which way the votes will go, just because it’s relatively easy to predict how orthodox Church members will behave politically, at least on some issues.

Matt: There are surprises, of course, like the immigration issue, where the Church blew the Republican Party out of the water . . .

David: And in those cases, it’s remarkable how quickly Mormon politicians respond when the Church speaks. For example, a few years ago when the Utah State Legislature was considering legislation to allow concealed weapons to be carried in churches, the LDS Church made it clear they didn’t think that was such a good idea. You can see why, from the perspective of Church leaders . . .

Kristine: Yeah, I’ve been in some Sunday School classes . . .

David: Right. So the legislature backtracked quickly.

Matt: Or, longer ago, the MX missile was a similar case. There’s a fair amount of evidence that the Church is a couple notches to the left of the Republican Party in Utah.

Russell: There are always so many variables, so many factions in the construction of any kind of political movement. Mitt Romney has taken positions that appeal to a certain segment of the Republican electorate that he hopes will put him over the top and give him the nomination; he has communicated to them opinions on immigration, for instance, that seem to conflict with the Church's position. There may not be a lot of substance to that conflict, but that won't be the only time it happens. So how might a hypothetical President Romney manage situations in which his positions are at odds with Church positions?

David: I think it's fair to say that there's really a small number of issues on which an official Church position can be discerned, and most of those are not in areas where a chief executive really has a lot of influence—casino gambling in states, liquor laws in Utah . . . immigration is really the only one that a president would have to deal with. When you get right down to it, it's really a very short list of policy issues about which the Church has spoken out officially. There are all kinds of issues about which one might try to draw inferences from Church teachings about what the Church's position might be, but that's not at all the same thing as an official policy position. There's a hierarchy of issues that matter to the Church, and on the most important ones—gay marriage, for example—the Church's position is very clear. But there will be lots of other issues on which one might reasonably infer a Church position, but it's not going to rise to the level of affecting your standing in the Church to disagree.

That's also true in Catholicism. Abortion matters a lot to the Catholic hierarchy, capital punishment matters some, and other issues really not so much at all.

Kristine: Before we wrap this up, can we turn from how a Mormon president might govern to the question of how having a Mormon candidate will affect Mormons and maybe Mormonism?

One of the parts of your work that's most interesting to me, David, is the data on how warmly Mormons report feeling toward members of other faith groups, as compared to the rather less warm feeling that members of other faith traditions report about Mormons. I think this is a reality that many Mormons could be comfortably oblivious about until recently. But now, from the re-

action to Proposition 8 in California, conservative Mormons learned something about how virulently they can be disliked on the left; from the vote in South Carolina, they're likely to learn how much they're disliked on the right, while from the sneering of the *New York Times* editorial page, for instance, it must be clear to liberal Mormons that they are similarly disliked, and I wonder how (or whether) that will affect Mormons' self-presentation. Will we keep begging for people to like us with "I'm a Mormon"-style PR, or will we resurrect the rhetoric of being persecuted for righteousness' sake? How will Mormons cope with this? I think it does shake us up. It's a big deal.

David: It is a big deal. The Mormons' sense of persecution has never really gone away. We asked a question about this on our survey: "Are your values threatened in society today?" Mormons are one of the groups that are most likely to say their values are threatened. That can be interpreted in lots of ways, but it's consistent with the idea that Mormons are being persecuted—that the world is out to get them.

Matt: In the most recent Pew survey, 46 percent of Mormons say they've been victims of discrimination based on their religion.

Kristine: And that's even more specific than just saying your "values" are threatened.

David: Right—so that's both perception on the part of some Mormons, but also some reality; they really are experiencing negative comments or other slights.

A minute ago, you raised an interesting question about what the reaction to this perceived (and real) dislike will be. Let me answer it by saying what I hope the reaction will be. I actually fear that the "I'm a Mormon" campaign may have a completely unintended effect on Church members. If individual Mormons think that the Church, with a capital "C", is taking care of Mormons' image problem, they may conclude that they don't have to individually worry about it. And if that's the result, it will not help Mormonism's image at all. A PR campaign won't hurt, but it won't help that much in terms of how Americans perceive Mormons. Now, if the ad campaign leads to conversations, opens doors, then it will have been a success. But if it just leads to people thinking, "Oh, thank goodness this is taken care of. Now I don't have to en-

gage with my neighbors, because that's hard—they'll ask questions about what I believe, they'll offer me coffee when I go over there, or invite me for a barbecue on the Saturday night before fast Sunday . . . Thank goodness Brandon Flowers is taking care of it," then it will have failed.

But I do think that those individual efforts can make an enormous difference. In 1960, if you had told JFK that, in fifty years, Catholics would be one of the most respected and accepted religions in America, that the Supreme Court would have a majority of Catholics and not a single Protestant, that there would have been multiple candidates for president in both parties who were Catholic and that the issue of their religion simply did not come up, he would have said, "You're crazy! Look what I'm having to go through, and I'm not even a serious Catholic." But something changed. Catholics have now moved completely into the mainstream; and if it can happen for Catholics, I'm convinced it could happen for Mormons, too. Maybe we don't want it to, but if we do, it will happen as individual Mormons build bridges and social connections and real friendships with their neighbors.

Notes

1. Frederick Mark Gedicks, "Truth and Consequences: Mitt Romney, Proposition 8, and Public Reason," *Alabama Law Review* 61, no. 2 (2010): 337–71.
2. Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 179.
3. Reid L. Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism: The Latter-day Saints and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 52.
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