

# DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

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# Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability

*Armand L. Mauss*

Almost two decades have elapsed since I published *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). My book began by acknowledging and illustrating the “Americanization” thesis advanced by others—namely that the LDS Church and religion had spent the first half of the twentieth century in a deliberate policy of assimilation with American society and was thus following the time-honored trajectory traced by such early scholars as Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber—from a peculiar and disreputable sect toward a respectable church, increasingly comfortable with the surrounding American culture.<sup>1</sup> My main argument, however, was that, since the mid-twentieth century the Church had begun to reverse course and was trying to recover some of the distinctiveness that seemingly had been lost during assimilation. I called this reversal a process of “retrenchment,” and I emphasized that it was a historic anomaly, for conventional wisdom predicted that all new religions would either be stamped out, be socially and politically quarantined, or eventually be assimilated by the dominant surrounding culture. Once on the path toward assimilation, how and why did the LDS Church resist and then reverse course?

I answered that question by drawing on recent sociological theories about new religious movements, arguing that new religions thrive not by full assimilation but by maintaining a degree

of peculiarity and thus tension with the surrounding culture.<sup>2</sup> If this tension becomes excessive, the new religion will face a “predicament of disrepute,” as Mormonism did in the nineteenth century, and its survival will be jeopardized. However, if assimilation proceeds too far, the religion faces a “predicament of respectability,” where its identity or “brand” does not stand for anything distinctive enough to be attractive—a condition which Mormonism approached by the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Growth and prosperity depend upon finding and maintaining an optimum level of tension on a continuum between disrepute and respectability.<sup>4</sup> This *external* tension typically arises in part from a certain *internal* strictness and sacrifice entailed by Church membership, lest members grow complacent in assuming that the promised rewards can be had without any “cost.” The costs and sacrifices imposed on members define the boundaries of the LDS way of life and therefore their very identity as “Mormons”—even as these boundaries help also to define the external image of the organization. The leaders of the LDS Church by midcentury seem intuitively to have understood all this and to have deliberately begun moving the religious and political culture of the Church back in a sectlike direction, as though to recover some of its lost distinctiveness and societal tension. I went on to identify various institutional expressions through which the resulting LDS retrenchment process had become evident, especially in the realms of formal organization, focus on modern prophets and scriptures, gender and family, missionizing, genealogy and temple worship, and religious scholarship.

While *The Angel and the Beehive* was well received and fairly reviewed in general, it has been criticized, and properly so, for certain inconsistencies or ambiguities. Any theoretical framework is likely to fit the data only imperfectly. One issue seems to be the nature and scope of the *assimilation* process that I described. To some of my readers, it has not been clear just what about Mormonism was being assimilated to what else? I had originally been thinking in terms of Mormon assimilation broadly with American culture, especially American popular culture. Yet some critics seemed to see continuing assimilation, rather than retrenchment, in the Mormon turn toward political conservatism and in the constant Church efforts to convince other Christians—especially

Evangelicals—that Mormons are legitimately part of the Christian family.<sup>5</sup> Isn't the Church, in effect, pursuing a policy of assimilation with the more conservative denominations? My answer is no. To the extent that Mormonism identifies itself with other relatively *high-cost* religions, it is still resisting and rejecting assimilation with the secular culture of the society in general.

A derivative ambiguity in my assimilation-versus-retrenchment argument was my failure to emphasize enough that, while the retrenchment in question, has external implications, it is primarily an *internal* process. Externally, the Church continues to seek respectability and acceptance as one Christian religion among others. Members will recognize, however, that what we tell ourselves internally is that there is only *one* true church, and ours is it! We continue to cherish our peculiarities as ways of emphasizing that exclusive claim, even as we cringe over what outsiders make of those peculiarities and try to gloss over them whenever we are confronted with them.

Another critic has focused on my interpretation of the part played by the “correlation movement” in the retrenchment process. Whereas I saw correlation as the vehicle by which retrenchment was implemented, Roger Terry sees correlation as a major feature of assimilation. He argues that, even though the retrenchment process was focused on resisting the worldly cultural encroachments of the 1960s and 1970s, the Church actually was quietly coming to resemble the rest of the “global economy dominated by multinational corporations, organizational values, and professional managers. In light of this development, the Church wasn't moving *away* from American society but *with* it, and by the turn of the millennium, Mormons had actually come to define mainstream corporate respectability.” Seen in that light, says Terry, despite my claim that correlation and a renewed emphasis on peculiarity were all part of a retrenchment, that is, going “against American societal trends, [yet] . . . on a more fundamental level, this retrenchment effort was simply a well-executed program of going with the flow.”<sup>6</sup>

While I share Terry's perceptions about the extent to which the organizational culture of the Church has absorbed the bureaucratic ethos of the corporate world, I would not go so far as to say, as he does later, that the reverse is also true—i.e., that the

Church has run the risk of being simply “absorbed into a global economy dominated by multinational corporations.” The peculiarly Mormon *values* emphasized by the Church in the retrenchment process should not be confused with the *means* used in that process (i.e., Correlation), even though such means do implicate other values as well. As an analogy, we would not, I trust, claim that the advanced computerization of our genealogical research program implies that technological values have displaced the religious values underlying our family history program.

All such questions and criticisms about my theoretical framework are valid and useful, but in general I think my 1994 book has held up fairly well as an interpretation of LDS Church history since midcentury. Indeed, until recently, it has been about the only scholarly treatment of recent LDS history, though it is now joined by Claudia Bushman’s valuable overview of contemporary issues in Mormonism;<sup>7</sup> and Jan Shipps, I understand, has a truly comprehensive history of the modern Church well underway.

Meanwhile, I offer in this article something of an update to *The Angel and the Beehive*. The book was published in 1994, just as Howard W. Hunter succeeded Ezra Taft Benson as president of the Church, to be succeeded himself in 1995 by Gordon B. Hinckley. The Hinckley era, to which the Hunter presidency was a compatible prelude, slowly but surely introduced a series of changes in Church policy that have had the cumulative effect of pulling the pendulum of ecclesiastical culture back somewhat from the retrenchment mode and toward assimilation. This reversal has not occurred uniformly along all the dimensions which I discussed in my book, but it has occurred extensively enough to give the Church a different “feel” now from the retrenchment environment that reached its zenith in the administration of President Benson. I will first identify some examples of this seeming retreat from retrenchment, and then I will suggest the tensions to which the Church seems to have been responding in the policy changes it has made. My presentation here can be only suggestive, for I haven’t yet gathered the kind of systematic data needed for reliable conclusions. Nor am I claiming that there has been a wholesale rollback of the retrenchment policies, but only some relatively modest “course corrections.”



### Prophets, Scriptures, and Doctrine

Although the retrenchment themes of “follow the prophet” and “he will never lead the Church astray” have continued unabated, some Church leaders have recently softened these intimations of infallibility. In the 1989 October general conference, Elder James E. Faust, while calling for the sustaining of the current prophet (Benson), also denied in passing any claim of infallibility for the prophets and pointed to the collective and consultative nature of the revelatory process as protection against being led astray.<sup>8</sup> In 1992, Elder Dallin H. Oaks acknowledged that the Church can claim to speak for “higher authority” on moral questions but not on “the application of those moral questions to specific legislation.”<sup>9</sup> More broadly, a 2007 LDS Newsroom article began with the declaration that “not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine,” and goes on to emphasize the collective deliberation and consultation required among the Presidency and the Twelve in the process we sometimes call “canonization.” There is no hint of any infallibility claim but only an explanation that the revelations and doctrines of the Church are always relative to time, place, audience, and circumstances.<sup>10</sup> In 2009, the *Mormon Times*, a section of the Church-owned *Deseret News* which also maintains a blog with the same name, carried a series of articles by Michael Ash, a prominent LDS apologist, on LDS prophets and their fallibility, on scriptural relativity, individual dissent, etc., starting with an article attacking the notion of a prophet’s infallibility and redefining the meaning of “lead[ing] astray.” While *Mormon Times* routinely includes a disclaimer of official endorsement, it seems highly unlikely that such an article (or extensive series) could have appeared under *Deseret News* auspices in the 1980s.<sup>11</sup>

Obviously none of these instructions contradicts the injunction to follow the prophet, but the emphasis and tone are both very different from what we received in the 1980s, for example, from Elder Ezra Taft Benson’s “fourteen fundamentals,” which insisted not only that a prophet could never lead us astray but also asserted that the prophet was authorized to pronounce on any topic whatsoever, temporal or spiritual; or from Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s unequivocal designation of certain ideas as “deadly

heresies,” even though some of them had conspicuously been taught by earlier presidents of the Church.<sup>12</sup> Despite McConkie’s authoritative tone and his following among the folk as the final arbiter of true doctrine, his stature has recently been undermined somewhat at the official level. The introduction that he had written for the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon was modified to eliminate the claim that the Lamanites were the “principal” ancestors of today’s Native American Indians and replaced by the more modest assertion that the Lamanites were “among” the ancestors of the Indians. Here we can see the orthodoxy of FARMS taking precedence over McConkie’s orthodoxy.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, many of the italicized chapter headings that he had written for the Book of Mormon were rewritten to eliminate their obvious and unnecessary racist connotations.<sup>14</sup> Finally, to the great relief of many of us, his *Mormon Doctrine*, for half a century the chief resort of strict, doctrinaire Mormons, was finally allowed to go out of print in 2010.<sup>15</sup> It had officially been replaced in 2004 by *True to the Faith*, an anonymously written and more basic description of gospel topics arranged in alphabetical order. It bears the First Presidency’s imprimatur but without their names, communicating that changes among personnel in the First Presidency do not affect this book’s official status.

An even more conspicuous indication of assimilationist thinking at the doctrinal level can be found in the recent official tendency to soft-pedal, if not to abandon totally, some of the most distinctive teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, such as those in the King Follett Discourse. In its ongoing efforts to enhance its image as a mainstream Christian denomination, rather than a weird “cult,” the Church seems to be backing away as much as is feasible from such distinctive teachings as heavenly parents, the eternal progression of God from a mortal state, and the potential human destiny of godhood.

The earliest indications I saw of this tendency was the seeming equivocation of President Hinckley’s answers to questions about these doctrines in some of his public interviews during the 1990s. For example, in an August 1997 interview with Don Lattin, religion writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, President Hinckley was asked directly whether Mormons believe that God was once a man, and he answered, “I wouldn’t say that. There was a little cou-

plet coined, ‘As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.’ Now that’s more of a couplet than anything else. That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.”<sup>16</sup> Then the nimble president switched the subject to “eternal progression.”

Similar deflections away from such topics can be seen in his interview the same month with David Van Biema of *Time* magazine, which the reporter readily recognized as “downplaying the faith’s distinctiveness.”<sup>17</sup> Interestingly enough, President Hinckley seemed to be reacting to concerns about equivocation on matters of traditional doctrine when he included the following comment during one of his addresses in the October 1997 general conference: “I personally have been much quoted, and in a few instances misquoted and misunderstood. I think that’s to be expected. None of you need worry because you read something that was incompletely reported. You need not worry that I do not understand some matters of doctrine. I think I understand them thoroughly, and it is unfortunate that the reporting may not make this clear. I hope you will never look to the public press as the authority on the doctrines of the Church.”<sup>18</sup>

Lest we assume that such retreats from LDS doctrinal distinctiveness are for public consumption only, we need look no farther than the 2010–11 official lesson manual for the priesthood and the Relief Society to see a rather remarkable erosion of distinctive doctrines. One might have thought that *Principles of the Gospel*, used for years as the manual for new converts and investigators, had already been properly vetted, cleansed, and simplified for the “lowest common denominator” of LDS doctrine, but no: It had to be relieved of yet more material that might detract from a mainstream Christian image for Mormonism. Among the traditional LDS teachings that have been eliminated or seriously watered down in the new version, *Gospel Principles*, are that faithful members can become gods; God was not always a god but became God in the same way that LDS members can become gods; both Jesus and Satan are our brothers; and we are children of heavenly parents (including a mother), and that what is required for salvation is true faithfulness, not primarily obedience to a checklist of works-oriented commandments.<sup>19</sup> Yet another kind of important change in this manual has been a reworking of the citations to

sources, such that the main sources of dubious doctrines, especially Elder McConkie, have been removed or replaced, as for example, in the discussion of the gathering of Israel and of signs of the Second Coming.<sup>20</sup>

### Gender and Family Policies

Church teachings and policies on gender and family have always evolved in response primarily to cultural and political developments in the surrounding American society. Although these teachings were expressing a preference for neo-Victorian domesticity by the middle of the twentieth century, one systematic sociological study found that, by 1990, the instructions to women and families in the *Ensign* “had evolved in such a way that the traditional ideal [was still being] reaffirmed even as new roles and behaviors [were being] accommodated.”<sup>21</sup> Such normative discrepancies between the ideal and the actual always introduce strains and anxieties, especially between generations. Recall that, in 1987, President Benson had delivered some rather stern instructions to LDS mothers employed outside the home. These directives drew on earlier counsel from President Spencer W. Kimball, who had called on wives to “come home from the typewriter, the laundry, the nursing; come home from the factory, the cafe. No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother—cooking meals, washing dishes, making beds for one’s precious husband and children.” Benson himself then added: “The Lord clearly defined the roles of mothers and fathers in providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam—not Eve—was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow. Contrary to conventional wisdom, a mother’s calling is in the home, not in the market place.”<sup>22</sup>

Then in 1995, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” was promulgated in large part as a product of the strains in the Church for the previous two decades over gender roles and also over policies toward homosexuals. While the ideal doctrines and policies set forth in the proclamation have continued to be promoted since then, and some of them even reemphasized, a certain amount of softening at the operational level can now be seen in Church counsel on women’s careers versus their domestic priorities. Note the remarkable contrast between the earlier Kimball-

Benson injunctions and the apostolic counsel of Elder Quentin L. Cook in 2011, when he urged the Saints to keep in mind two important principles. One was that no woman devoting herself primarily to raising and nurturing children needs to “apologize” for her career decision; and the second was that “we should all be careful not to be judgmental or assume that sisters are less valiant if the decision is made to work outside the home. We rarely understand or fully appreciate people’s circumstances.”<sup>23</sup> His tone here seems to me almost defensive, as though both kinds of careers, and not just the second, had come under criticism among the Saints in recent years.

Even in 2007, General Relief Society President Julie B. Beck offered a rather relaxed reiteration of motherhood as the ideal for Mormon women in her address, “Mothers Who Know.”<sup>24</sup> Her remarks generated considerable controversy on the many new feminist blogs that had been created since Benson’s time. Eventually a kind of counter-construction to Beck’s conceptualization was offered by the bloggers with the title, “What Women Know.” In analyzing this controversy and counter-document, Andrea Radke-Moss, a historian at BYU-Idaho, found a great variety in women’s reactions to Beck’s talk, ranging from strong support to strong disagreement with the perception of some women that she was trying “to pigeonhole all women into one set of expectations.”<sup>25</sup> To me the most remarkable thing about the controversy over the Beck speech was the freedom which the bloggers felt in publicly offering their opinions, including some strong dissents, to a message that was, after all, delivered in general conference.

I concur with the Radke-Moss observation that this episode represents a new posture by Church leaders that encourages “a more honest discussion of controversial . . . issues in church publications.” Even if the blogosphere had been available twenty years ago, it’s hard to imagine this kind of episode without a few disciplinary councils in its wake.

Instead, the Beck controversy was followed, in the worldwide training conference the next year, by comments from Church leaders that seemed responsive particularly to that controversy. Elder Oaks, for example, pointed out that, in emphasizing the primary responsibility that mothers have for the nurture of their children, the Proclamation on the Family doesn’t say exclusive re-

sponsibility. Then when Julie Beck herself, in a 2008 meeting with a group of BYU women, was asked if they should have careers, she is quoted as having said, “Whatever your dreams are, go for it. . . . Sometimes you don’t have control over the Lord’s time and plan. . . . Go for broke, but don’t lose sight of the gospel. When the time comes to marry and have children, re-evaluate.”<sup>26</sup>

Clearly the Church’s instructions to Mormon women have left considerable space for individual adaptations but at the cost of a certain accompanying ambiguity. Indeed, the Church itself is now a major employer of mothers; for example, a fifth of all BYU faculty members are women, and some of them certainly have small children at home.<sup>27</sup> Counselors and researchers who have studied the consequences of this ambiguity find that it can be quite alienating for women. In 2008, two psychologists from BYU’s counseling and career center presented a paper at the annual conference of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP). They spoke of the “anxiety and guilt” experienced by many women, whether or not they choose a career outside the home. In a culture that tends to look upon such choices as a dichotomy of good versus evil, women who choose careers feel the judgment of women on one side of the dichotomy, and those who stay home full time feel the judgment of those on the other side. The women who came to their counseling center, the two therapists reported, found it very helpful just to be able to talk about their predicament.<sup>28</sup>

Certainly the examples of modern Mormon women in the “I’m a Mormon” series on mormon.org provide models that are remarkable in their variety—which, I take it, is the whole idea of those vignettes; but they don’t do anything to clear up the ambiguity that many women seem to perceive in Church doctrines and policies about the roles advocated for women.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, however, official policies directed toward the most intimate aspects of husband-wife relationships, which had earlier been quite intrusive, have increasingly (and appropriately) been left to the ultimate discretion of the couples themselves—for example, in matters of birth control, artificial insemination, and in-vitro fertilization.<sup>30</sup>

Other important changes in the LDS ecclesiastical culture are also apparent since the 1970s. In those days, even as feminist poli-

tics were gaining ground in the outside world, Church policies toward women had increasingly reflected the retrenchment motif occurring in the Church more generally. “Correlation” placed under priesthood control all auxiliary programs that had once been quasi-independent under female leadership. Restrictions on the participation of women in sacrament meeting programs were added so that (for example) opening and closing prayers had to be offered by men, and the major “sermon” at the meeting was always given by “the priesthood” (i.e., a man). Women were still expected to take crying children out of the sacrament meetings and to look after them during the subsequent auxiliary meetings. With the turnover of another generation, however, women started to give prayers and otherwise participate more equally in sacrament meetings. Women began to participate not only in monthly ward council meetings but even in some weekly priesthood executive committee meetings.<sup>31</sup> Fathers began to share more fully in caring for children during meetings.

Even at BYU, a Women’s Research Institute (WRI) was established in the early 1970s and in 1975 began to sponsor an annual women’s conference. On the other hand, with the passage of time, the presentations at these conferences became increasingly “correlated,” which is to say that their content became less academic or intellectual and more devotional and spiritual in nature.<sup>32</sup> The WRI also sponsored a variety of research projects and grants on issues of importance to women, but it apparently had outlived its mandate by 2010, when it was closed down, much to the disappointment of its large constituency.<sup>33</sup> Yet at about the same time, a new multivolume series on LDS women’s history, *WOMEN OF FAITH IN THE LATTER DAYS*, was initiated in the Church Historical Department with Richard E. Turley Jr. and Brittany A. Chapman as co-editors.<sup>34</sup> With the blessing of many priesthood leaders, at least in California, Claudia Bushman’s oral history project through the School of Religion at the Claremont Graduate University has produced more than a hundred rich and candid interviews with LDS women of varying ages in California, and at least one book is projected that will analyze the experiences reported in these interviews.

Yet probably nothing has done as much to increase the voices and visibility of Mormon women in this generation as the cre-

ation of all the electronic social media, especially the blogosphere; and these, as far as I can tell, have encountered more appreciation than disapproval from Church leaders. It is primarily because of such blogs as *Exponent II* (an e-continuation of the venerable feminist quarterly newspaper by the same name) and Mormon Feminist Housewives that Peggy Fletcher Stack could declare, "Feminism is back!"<sup>35</sup> In their feminist content, these sites range from somewhat conservative to rather adventurous, but almost all of them have been founded by women who are participating members of the LDS Church and anxious to explore the intersection between their feminist yearnings and the roles expected of them in the teachings and policies of the Church.<sup>36</sup> The discussions cover a huge range of interests from the personal and mundane to the deeply philosophical and theological. Expressions of anguish and anger are not uncommon, as the bloggers reach out to each other for insights and understanding about their personal efforts to cope with family problems or their struggles to come to terms with their experiences at church. Tresa Edmunds, one of the most active and outspoken of the bloggers, speaks of the lingering "environment of fear" (of Church discipline or family disapproval) into which today's Mormon women "come out" as feminists, and I do not doubt that such fears would have been justified a generation ago; but Church discipline for public expressions in these blogs seems very unlikely in today's LDS Church.<sup>37</sup> Apparently it is even safe now to discuss the history and development of the concept of a Heavenly Mother, which astonished me when I saw the extensive article on that subject in 2011 in *BYU Studies*, of all places!<sup>38</sup>

### **Dealing with the Issue of Homosexuality**

Since my book was finished in the early 1990s, the retrenchment policy had not yet confronted certain newer issues of gender and family, particularly homosexuality. As this issue became increasingly prominent, the reaction of Church leaders was predictably quite conservative. I think all Latter-day Saints were taken by surprise to learn how many Mormon families were affected by this issue and particularly by how rapidly homosexual relationships and lifestyles gained acceptance in the surrounding society. In the later 1990s and early 2000s, as same-sex marriage increas-



ingly became a divisive political issue, Church leaders tried to walk the narrow line between (on the one hand) condemning all aspects of homosexuality and politically resisting attempts to normalize it, while (on the other hand) urging civility, kindness, and love toward homosexuals.<sup>39</sup> As late as 2006, the *Church Handbook of Instructions* still required that members with even homosexual *feelings* should repent and be referred to professional counseling. During the same period, however, both the emerging professional literature and the personal accounts of LDS families and individuals were raising doubts about the traditional assumption that the homosexual preference was either entirely learned or entirely a matter of choice.<sup>40</sup> The clash between the traditional and the emerging understandings about the issue came to a head politically in the 2008 Proposition 8 campaign in California and similar campaigns in other states, which quickly translated such scientific questions into contentious public policy issues, especially the legitimacy of same-sex marriage.

The public relations blowback for the Church from its political campaigns made clear the need to take new public positions on gay rights that would emphasize the need to distinguish its firm position on *marriage* from other questions about the rights of homosexuals, both in society generally and in the Church particularly. One result was the rather remarkable and unexpected entry in November 2009 of Michael Otterson, the managing director of LDS Public Affairs, into the debate over various civil rights for homosexuals in Salt Lake City—and this time on the more liberal side of the debate. As Church spokesperson, he supported a Salt Lake City ordinance outlawing discrimination in housing or employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland publicly added his personal view that the new Salt Lake City ordinance in question should also be adopted by the state legislature.<sup>41</sup> In September 2010, the press reported on a dramatic meeting of invited adults in the Oakland California Stake, called by the stake president, in which Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy listened quietly but emotionally to numerous personal accounts about the anguish of gay members and their families who had been dealing with the policies and politics of the Church relating to homosexual relationships. The meeting culminated in a dramatic apology from Elder

Jensen for the pain these people had experienced throughout the Proposition 8 campaign, although he did not, of course, apologize for the campaign itself.<sup>42</sup>

In view of such developments, it was perhaps not surprising to see a softening of the Church's guidance on relationships with homosexual members in the latest *Church Handbook of Instructions*, released in November 2010. This version of the *Handbook* made a clear distinction between homosexual behavior, which would require repentance, and homosexual feelings, which would not. The same instruction reiterated the 2006 guidance that celibate homosexual members were to be eligible for all blessings of membership, including callings and temple recommends.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps the most explicit indication of the official change in tone on this subject was the development that occurred in the wake of President Boyd K. Packer's address at the 2010 October general conference, which (among other things) referred to homosexuality as an "impure and unnatural" condition that could be overcome. This talk was widely criticized, and not only outside the Church. The damage control was immediate: Before Elder Packer's remarks could be published in the Church magazine, or even on the LDS website, they were modified to remove his characterization of homosexuality—a post hoc revision that must have had few, if any precedents, in the experience of a president of the Quorum of the Twelve.<sup>44</sup>

A few days later, the Utah Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and its allies delivered to Church headquarters a petition with 150,000 signatures denouncing Packer's characterizations of homosexual feelings and relationships. Otterson then responded with a long statement emphasizing common ground with the HRC, acknowledging the legitimacy of the HRC's concerns about civil rights and understanding for homosexuals, and condemning persecution and bullying, even while maintaining the Church's right to reject same-sex marriage.<sup>45</sup> Another form of outreach from headquarters occurred when several prominent members of the Utah gay community were given special invitations to the Christmas concert in the huge Conference Center.<sup>46</sup> Liberal Mormon blogger Joanna Brooks charted these steps as very reassuring, but her *Religion Dispatch* colleague John-Charles Duffy had a more pessimistic interpretation.<sup>47</sup> All things considered, though,

the Church has come some distance during the past decade (and especially since the Prop 8 campaign) in an effort to reduce the tension between its policies and the emerging consensus for accommodating homosexuals in modern societies.<sup>48</sup>

### **Rapprochement with Independent Scholarship**

Perhaps the most conspicuous indication of a retreat from retrenchment—and the one most gratifying to scholars like me—has been the outreach and rapprochement of the current generation of Church leaders to scholars, especially those not employed by the Church. Whether Mormon or not, and whether devout or not, these scholars have lately enjoyed a tacit acceptance by leaders—sometimes even appreciation—as well as access to the Church library and archives that is unprecedented in the history of the Church, with the possible exception of the brief “Arrington Spring” in the early 1970s. This more conciliatory and encouraging posture toward scholars seems to have started during the presidency of Howard W. Hunter (1994–95) and was continued and expanded under President Gordon B. Hinckley (1995–2008).<sup>49</sup> The excommunications and other forms of discipline exercised against intellectuals during the 1980s and early 1990s seem to have dwindled or even stopped altogether, and a new official openness has become apparent toward unsponsored scholarship in general and toward controversial issues in particular.<sup>50</sup> Of course, there was no official announcement of such a change from any Church leaders, but many events and developments during the Hinckley years testify to a greater appreciation among Church leaders for the benefits and usefulness of the work done by Mormon scholars, whether or not they are employed or sponsored by the Church.

Perhaps the most concrete evidence can be found in several important books published by Mormon scholars on controversial subjects during the Hinckley years. The first of these was actually a trilogy, *Standing on the Promises*, dealing with the African American experience in the LDS Church.<sup>51</sup> Published by Shadow Mountain, an imprint of the Church-owned Deseret Book of Salt Lake City, this trilogy is semi-fictionalized history. It draws on historical data from many archives, including those of the Church itself, and stays close to the documented facts, even though it is ostensibly

“fiction.” It is remarkably candid about the tragic treatment of black Latter-day Saints in Mormon history, especially considering its publisher. The appearance of these titles from the official Church press could not have happened without approval at the highest ecclesiastical level (and, indeed, did not happen without some tense negotiations between authors and nervous editors, as reported to me by one of the authors).

On another delicate subject in Mormon history, namely the Mountain Meadows Massacre, historian Will Bagley published *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), which argued, among other things, that Brigham Young was not merely an accessory after the fact but had approved the massacre before the fact. Yet there was no official reproof or condemnation for his attack on the traditional Church account of that massacre. Instead, the Church commissioned three of its own senior, distinguished historians to reopen the whole history of that tragedy and to write a new and fuller account from scratch. In doing so, the Church opened its archives without restriction to these authors, who put their own integrity on the line as professional historians, committing themselves to produce a full and candid account based on a complete search not only of Church archives but of several other archives as well. The result by Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard was *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*, which was evaluated favorably enough by professional peers to be published by the Oxford University Press in 2008 as the first of a two-volume work on the topic.<sup>52</sup> With fuller evidence than that available to Bagley, this book acknowledged the markedly hostile rhetoric and histrionics of Brigham Young before the massacre but did not find evidence to support Bagley’s conclusion that Young approved the actual massacre, either before or after the fact.

In 2003, I published *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage*, which demonstrated that the racialist heritage of Mormonism was originally far more extensive and doctrinal than just its application to black people, though that heritage has by now been greatly attenuated and even reversed. In 2004, Kathleen Flake published *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), which revealed how the seating of the first Mormon U.S. senator was almost prevented by the failure of the LDS leadership to abandon polygamy in good faith for nearly two decades after that practice had been ostensibly ended in 1890. Then, in 2005, three biographies of LDS presidents were published, including one of the founding prophet: *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling*, by Richard Lyman Bushman, and two of the most important presidents of the late twentieth century: Gregory A. Prince and William R. Wright's *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, and Edward L. Kimball's *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (including a supplemental DVD).<sup>53</sup> All of these presidential biographies were remarkably candid, partly because they were based not only on archival materials under Church control but also on many materials that were not.<sup>54</sup>

These biographical and other works cited above were not the only important books on Mormon history to come out during the Hinckley years, but they were especially noteworthy because (1) so many of the authors were independent of Church control or employment but were given generous access to the Church archives; and (2) all of these books engaged sensitive and controversial issues in Mormon history that would, in my judgment, have brought official censure or discipline upon these authors a quarter century earlier. Think, for example, of D. Michael Quinn's *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* article on post-Manifesto polygamy, which today would probably not raise an official eyebrow but which began the unraveling of Quinn's relationship to the Church in the 1980s.<sup>55</sup> Or consider the candid but sympathetic *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), by Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippets Avery, which was met by official censure and silencing of the authors in Church-sponsored venues in 1984, but which was honored at a special twenty-five-year retrospective session of the Mormon History Association's annual conference in 2009 with the current Church Historian in attendance.<sup>56</sup> As if these contrasts between the 1980s and the current era do not speak for themselves, consider the following eloquent statement in an LDS Newsroom release in June 2009. I submit that this statement could not have been issued by the LDS Church of 1985:

The new Church History Library is the substance behind the growing emphasis of transparency in the Church's interaction with the public. This facility opens the door for researchers and historians of all kinds to flesh out the stories of Mormon heritage that pass through the imagination of Latter-day Saints from generation to generation. The Church cannot undertake this project on its own. It requires a groundswell of countless individuals—from within and without the Church—operating on their own personal inspiration. The story of the Church will inevitably be told as historians of good faith are given access to the library's records and archives. . . . It is in the interests of the Church to play a constructive role in advancing the cathartic powers of honest and accurate history. In doing so, the Church strives to be relevant to contemporary audiences that operate under changing cultural assumptions and expectations. A careful, yet bold presentation of Church history, which delves into the contextual subtleties and nuances characteristic of serious historical writing, has become increasingly important. If a religion cannot explain its history, it cannot explain itself.<sup>57</sup>

As the Church leadership has thus reached out in friendship to all sorts of individual scholars “of good faith,” it has also seemingly embraced the Mormon History Association itself, with which it had earlier maintained a meticulous and wary arms-length relationship. Since 2002, the Church Historian has attended nearly every conference of the MHA by assignment—and not just with perfunctory greetings, but as a participant throughout the conference. Furthermore, at the 2007 MHA conference, the Church Historian presented a check for \$10,000 from the LDS Foundation to the MHA leadership to inaugurate a new endowment campaign. He also made a “generous personal donation and challenged those in attendance to ‘go thou and do likewise!’”<sup>58</sup> Probably a similar gesture from the Church leadership toward *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* at this stage would suggest either the arrival of the Millennium or a drop in temperature to absolute zero in hell, depending on your view of *Dialogue*; but even the new posture of Church leaders toward the MHA is a strong indication that the work of sincere and competent scholars of various kinds is now welcome.

Two other indications of the same new posture can be found in the responses of Church leaders (1) toward the establishment of new courses and endowed chairs in Mormon studies at some of the nation's universities, and (2) toward various important aca-

ademic conferences on Mormonism held under auspices not controlled by the Church. The public statements in Church-sponsored media, such as the LDS Newsroom, about the new academic Mormon studies programs are clearly favorable and supportive, despite the strictly secular contexts in which these programs are being created.<sup>59</sup> With a similar collegial attitude, the Church is now sending some of its General Authorities, with academic backgrounds and credentials of their own, to participate in important conferences under outside, secular auspices—not merely as official observers but as regular and equal program participants.

Aside from the conferences of the Mormon History Association, already mentioned, perhaps the earliest of these “outside” conferences was the May 2005 conference on “The Worlds of Joseph Smith,” held at the Library of Congress, with Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Twelve as a major speaker.<sup>60</sup> Other examples would include the 2009 annual conference of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), where Elder Robert S. Wood of the Seventy was the concluding banquet speaker;<sup>61</sup> the inaugural conference in 2010 of the Mormon chapter of the Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy, held at the University of Southern California, where the opening speaker was Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy;<sup>62</sup> and even the Third Congress of Traditional and World Religions, held in Kazakhstan in July 2009, where Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy presented a paper.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Twelve participated as one among a diverse collection of LDS commentators at the *Patheos* website on “The Future of Mormonism.”<sup>64</sup>

In light of all these developments, well might Richard Bushman have declared that a new “golden age” of historical scholarship has dawned among the Mormons. In a capstone address at the June 2011 oral “*festschrift*” in honor of his eightieth birthday, Bushman rejoiced in the new intellectual environment, citing some of the same developments I have discussed here.<sup>65</sup> This new era, he claimed, “has brought into existence a realm of independent inquiry where scholarship is no longer judged by its partisan conclusions but by its accuracy and insight.” Mentioning especially Elder Marlin K. Jensen, LDS Church Historian, and Richard E. Turley Jr., Assistant Church Historian, Bushman credited them

and their colleagues in the new LDS Church History Library with “the conviction that the Church and its history can flourish in the realm of free, open, and independent inquiry. . . . We do not need to conceal our history. We believe it will be more convincing and more engaging and more true if we tell it as it is.” Bushman also acknowledged the foundational but abortive efforts of Leonard J. Arrington, Church Historian in the 1970s, to implement essentially the same philosophy of historical research and writing but discreetly avoided placing the Arrington project and its fate within the context of the retrenchment era, as my theoretical framework does.<sup>66</sup> He suggested simply that “Leonard . . . would be immensely pleased with what is happening now . . . [when] history writing . . . is built on a much steadier foundation than his Camelot, with much better prospects for continuance.” By “steadier foundation,” I presume that Bushman was referring to the wider support for such scholarly (as contrasted with apologetic) history among today’s General Authorities.<sup>67</sup>

### **Explaining the Partial Retreat from Retrenchment**

I have offered a variety of evidence, mainly from the public record, in an effort to demonstrate that, in several important respects, the Church has modified the single-minded retrenchment thrust that characterized its policies after the mid-twentieth century. For about the last twenty years, the retrenchment motif has been displaced by a more assimilationist posture in certain aspects of doctrine and scripture, in the definition of gender and family roles, in policies toward homosexuals and homosexuality, and in a new engagement with scholars and scholarship in Mormon studies that have recently emerged in the world outside Church sponsorship or control. While I think I have made a pretty good case for this change of direction in the ecclesiastical culture of the Church, I hasten to add that the retrenchment of the past half century has not been entirely rolled back, especially at the grass-roots level. Correlation, a major vehicle of retrenchment, is alive and well. “There is only one true Church” and “follow the prophet” continue to be recurrent slogans with intimations of prophetic infallibility. Adult lesson manuals continue to be intellectually simplified and sanitized treatments of history and doctrine, with official instruction that they are not to be supple-



mented with “outside” materials. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” continues to be emphasized, with variations from traditional gender roles considered as exceptions to be justified, rather than as truly acceptable alternatives. Many of the “peculiar” doctrines and practices of Mormonism continue to be emphasized, both inside and outside the Church, including the importance and historicity of the Book of Mormon, missionary service, genealogical research, temple worship, and the Word of Wisdom.

My argument, then, is not that retrenchment has ended and we are back to the assimilationist posture of 1950. The theory in my 1994 book is a cyclical one—or rather a pendular one—in which the growth and strength of the Church depend on periodic “course corrections” to maintain an optimum level of cultural tension with the surrounding society, which itself is constantly changing.<sup>68</sup> While the function of retrenchment (intentionally or not) might be to restore an assimilating religion to “optimum” (rather than minimal) tension with the surrounding society, each new retrenchment campaign seems to start from a more advanced stage of assimilation than the last one did, so that the ecclesiastical culture is never pulled all the way back to the tension level from which it started. The actual pattern, then, seems to be two steps toward assimilation and only one back toward retrenchment. The end result is typically still a well-assimilated religious community in the long term.<sup>69</sup> In the short term, though, we might see the opposite—a strong retrenchment thrust followed by a partial retreat again toward assimilation, which is what I think has occurred during the past two decades.

But why and how? The answer to why seems to be an effort on the part of the Church to respond to the accelerated and sharpened attacks on its public image in the wake of its new political prominence. As Mormonism has grown in size and in geographic dispersion around the United States, the political initiatives of its hierarchy, as well as of its prominent individuals, have attracted increasing attention to its history, its internal and external policies, and especially its peculiarities. In the mid-1970s, during the campaigns of the International Women’s Year (IWY) and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), the Church began to exert its political muscle, both publicly and surreptitiously, in ways that

were unprecedented in the twentieth century.<sup>70</sup> During the ensuing three decades, up through the most recent political campaigns in various states over gay rights and same-sex marriage, the membership of the Church also increased fourfold. Mormons gained over-representation in Congress, and prominent individual Mormons became serious candidates for the presidency.

Unwelcome national attention to Mormonism's legacy of polygamy was once again stirred up by schismatic groups and magnified by popular television programs. Hostility and ridicule from gay rights advocates and their allies in politics and the mass media raised such issues as Church control over individual Mormon political decisions, unwholesome secrecy in the temples and governing councils of the Church, Mormon gender inequality, implausible elements in the founding narratives of Mormonism, and even the unusual Mormon underwear. Highly touted and successful Broadway productions such as *Angels in America* and *The Book of Mormon: The Musical*, while not necessarily unfriendly to Mormons or the Church, nevertheless added to the emerging national (and international) image of Mormonism as weird and laughable. In short, the Church in recent years has been losing control over its own public image, its own "brand."

To counteract these attacks on its image, the Church seems to have turned primarily to its Department of Public Affairs. The public relations enterprise has been a prominent part of Church operations at least since the 1970s; but with the appointment of Michael Otterson as its head in 1997, Public Affairs has gained a new importance and turned the Church in a new direction.<sup>71</sup> In the past, the responses of Church spokesmen to scandal or to criticism (internal or external) have had a somewhat defensive tone, a kind of "circling of the wagons," a tendency to avoid revealing more than necessary while making an effort to get on to a different subject. This approach has often left an impression that there was more to the story, perhaps something the Church was trying to hide.<sup>72</sup> Now, however, under Otterson, the strategy seems almost opposite, whether the spokesmen (and now spokeswomen, too) are Church leaders or Public Affairs representatives.

There seems to be a new, proactive expansiveness and transparency in facing the world's questions and criticisms.<sup>73</sup> Otterson himself is exceedingly smooth and quick in taking on the media;

as only one example, I would cite his July 2011 reaction to the pejorative “cult” label so thoughtlessly attached to the LDS Church by media commentators (who should know better) and by Christian evangelicals (who have a vested interest in using the label).<sup>74</sup> Especially impressive has been Otterson’s handling of the popularity of the clever Broadway *The Book of Mormon: The Musical*, starting with the low-key official Church reactions and culminating in an expensive PR blitz that, in effect, turned the tables on the musical’s producers by surfing on their wave of popularity with a conspicuous and pricey promotion of the “I’m a Mormon” series in Times Square and in placards atop hundreds of New York taxis.<sup>75</sup>

Beyond these new proactive measures toward the mass media, the Church, through Public Affairs, has also embraced the popular “social media” in a big way, sponsoring a variety of its own websites and encouraging individual Mormons to go out and engage the world with their own personal ideas and testimonies.<sup>76</sup> More importantly, for my argument about the pull-back from retrenchment, one sees no effort to discipline dissenting LDS bloggers or otherwise to control either the content or access to the content on those sites which present alternative views on official Church positions. Instead, Church spokespersons enter those sites and conversations with skill and good will. Rather than warnings about “alternate voices,” we are urged instead to engage in the discussions about the Church and its people, lest we abdicate to others the right to define us and our public image.<sup>77</sup> In the words of Elder M. Russell Ballard, “There are conversations going on about the Church constantly. Those conversations will continue whether or not we choose to participate in them. But we cannot stand on the sidelines while others, including our critics, attempt to define what the Church teaches.”<sup>78</sup>

It seems that the Church leaders have recognized a certain inevitability about their loss of control over how the Church is discussed and covered in these sites and have decided that its interests are better served by maintaining a constructive relationship with them than by opposing them. Good examples are the long conversation of Richard Bushman with Michael Cromartie, Ken Woodward, and a dozen journalists and scholars at a Florida meeting of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2007;<sup>79</sup>

Michael Otterson's regular appearance for the past five years on the *Washington Post*'s "On Faith" series;<sup>80</sup> his informative interview with Steve Evans on the blog *By Common Consent* in 2009;<sup>81</sup> and Elder Quentin L. Cook's entry into the *Patheos* discussion on the future of Mormonism in 2010.<sup>82</sup> In the same spirit was the long two-part interview that the LDS Newsroom gave in 2008 to *Times and Seasons*, another prominent site in the Mormon bloggernacle, even before Otterson's interview with *BCC*.<sup>83</sup>

Such openings to the outside and increased transparency have had some effects on internal Church policies as well. Public Affairs callings at the stake level have been greatly enhanced as the local face of the LDS Church through proactive bridge-building with local civic and religious leaders, regular communications with local mass media, and various civic and humanitarian projects such as Mormon Helping Hands.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, an important Churchwide result has been to reconceptualize the mission of the Church in *four* parts instead of three. At least since President Kimball's time, the Saints have been taught that the "three-fold mission of the Church" consists of preaching the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead. Section 2.2 in Book 2 of the new 2010 *Church Handbook of Instructions* changes somewhat the terminology and arrangement of these three and adds a fourth: "In fulfilling its purpose to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation, the Church focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities. These include helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ, gathering Israel through missionary work, caring for the poor and needy, and enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances." This revision of the Church's mission statement was not reported in any official LDS Newsroom releases, and only incidentally in *Mormon Times*.<sup>85</sup> Otherwise it does not seem to have received much attention in the regular meetings of the Saints, as far as I can tell, perhaps because the new (fourth) emphasis on humanitarian goals represents an outreach to the world, so different from the more strictly spiritual nature of the original three from the "retrenchment" era. Yet many LDS blogs have certainly picked up on the change and praised it.<sup>86</sup>

Another reflection internally of the new Public Affairs orientation was the decision to make Book 2 of the 2010 *Church Hand-*

*book of Instructions* available on the internet, which seemed to take both the Saints and the outside world by surprise, given the strenuous efforts to restrain access to earlier versions. Comments about the new internet access were very appreciative both from inside and outside the Church.<sup>87</sup> Both substantively and symbolically, this decision bespeaks the new policy of greater transparency, candor, and openness in the Church and should help to neutralize the public stereotype of an unduly “secretive” Mormon leadership. It will also help rank-and-file Church members to feel inclusion and “ownership” where programs and policies are concerned. Since the membership in general is not involved in the creation and promulgation of Church rules and policies, these sometimes come across as what “they” (remote leaders) impose upon “us” (ordinary folk). However, now that all members can directly access and review the policies that affect them the most, a more informed membership will gradually emerge with a greater awareness of Church expectations, both in personal behavior and in the requirements of all the various callings held by themselves and their fellow ward members. The rules and policies will seem more like “ours” as a Church than as “theirs.”

### Conclusion

All things considered, it seems clear that at least a partial reversal of the late twentieth-century retrenchment process is underway, both in the ecclesiastical culture of Mormonism and in the efforts of the leadership to improve and soften the Mormon public image. These internal and external processes are connected, for they are both driven by an organizational imperative to modify the degree of cultural and political tension that had developed in recent decades. Tension is *increased* both by Church demands on the membership that seem excessive or “weird” to the outside and by Church policies that seem at odds with the general normative and political consensus—or that challenge powerful interest groups. Tension is *reduced* to the extent that demands on members seem less strenuous and/or the Church seems to pose a lesser political challenge to interest groups in the “establishment.” As I have argued here, tension reduction seems to be the order of the day as the new century unfolds. Internally, certain traditional ideas about the Book of Mormon and some doctrines from the

Nauvoo era have been dropped or soft-pedaled as no longer central to Mormonism, thereby reducing somewhat the discrepancies with traditional Christianity. Although the “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” remains very much in force as a statement of doctrine and policy, modifications and exceptions are increasingly accommodated at the operational level—that is, in the ways that gender roles are expressed in actual behavior. Accommodations for the spiritual needs and human rights of homosexuals have been made in Church policies, both internally and in civil law. Scholarship on Mormon doctrine, history, and culture is now welcomed by Church leaders, even when it comes from independent scholars, LDS and otherwise. These internal changes, though not dramatic, should be apparent to any of us who were active scholars in Mormon studies through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

Externally, meanwhile, the Church has ramped up its assimilationist thrust, especially through a Public Affairs apparatus that has been enhanced both in visibility and in sophistication. The initiatives taken in recent years, whether by Public Affairs or by the Church leaders more generally, point to policies that have become less defensive, and more proactive and transparent, in the struggle to define and enhance the Church’s public image. It is no longer enough to go back and forth with the Evangelicals on whether Mormons are, in fact, Christians. That was yesterday’s preoccupation.<sup>88</sup> Today, though still in conversation with Evangelicals, Mormon outreach seems much more interested in actively cultivating new relationships with Catholics, Jews, and Muslims, both Churchwide and through initiatives of stake Public Affairs Councils at the local level. Besides the special VIP invitations extended to dignitaries from these religions to the open-house events at our new temples, interfaith outreach takes many other forms as well, which are well publicized by articles in the LDS Newsroom and *Mormon Times*, among other venues.<sup>89</sup> Like most of these other traditional faiths, the LDS Church has also recently embraced humanitarian outreach to all communities, regardless of their religion, as a fourth part of its public mission statement—certainly a move also in an assimilationist direction.

Is all of this working? Is the LDS Church gaining increased acceptance and respectability as a legitimate and valued institution in the American religious family? That is a much harder question

to answer, despite all the new energy and resources that Public Affairs has exerted toward that end. The residue of ill will over the campaigns against same-sex marriage remains strong, especially among gay rights sympathizers in the secular world and in the more liberal religious communities, where it is used to validate traditional claims about Mormon weirdness, retrograde theological and social teachings, and political conspiracies.<sup>90</sup>

So far the results of the latest Public Affairs offensive seem somewhat mixed, even among observers who might wish the Church well. A *Washington Post* observer early in 2011 outlined the mixed blessings for the Church of the political prominence of Mitt Romney and other Mormon politicians. Whereas Michael Otterson was quoted as saying he thought such prominence indicated that the Mormon community had “finally arrived,” many other experts quoted in the same article saw as much mistrust and ill will as ever toward Mormons.<sup>91</sup> This article was duly noted at LDS Newsroom and was followed by a great variety of prominent voices from American religions and politics weighing in on the pluses and minuses of the growing LDS political visibility.<sup>92</sup> In one of these responses, Otterson himself wrote extensively to clarify what he meant (and did not mean) in saying that Mormons had “arrived.” Comments by bloggers following the comments by Otterson and others certainly displayed the range of popular opinion about Mormons on the national scene.<sup>93</sup>

One of the most interesting—and perhaps problematic—aspects of the various Public Affairs initiatives directed externally is their unintended consequences for internal LDS consumption (and perhaps vice versa). For example, the enormous variety in the models of Mormon womanhood expressed in the “I’m a Mormon” ads certainly complicates the model that one would infer from the Proclamation on the Family, an interesting point aired by an LDS woman in Utah, who described these ads as “drastically misleading”: “The disparity between the image my Church is trying so hard to convey to the world and the image local members are being told they must adhere to . . . is a bit unnerving.”<sup>94</sup> Of course, the professionals and bureaucracies in the Church that are tasked with external image-making are different from those tasked with internal Saint-making, so such discrepancies are probably inevitable. In a similar vein, one wonders also if the efforts at

Public Affairs to take relatively liberal positions (or at least less conservative ones) on external issues such as gay rights, illegal immigrants, and “green” construction policies, provide an exaggerated impression of diversity among the Saints on these issues while attempting to separate the Church itself from its common image as arch-conservative.<sup>95</sup>

What is apparent, however, from this presentation is the growing importance of LDS Public Affairs policies and spokespersons in a “course correction” intended to reshape the popular image of Mormons and their Church in such a way as to reduce the political and cultural tension with American society. This external course correction, however, is having its implications also for certain internal changes that promise to soften, or even partially roll back, a few prominent features of the earlier retrenchment policies regarding doctrine and scripture, women’s roles, and the acceptance of homosexuals and scholars with “alternate voices.” One wonders what additional course corrections are around the corner as the Church approaches its bicentennial, and what implications these might have for LDS members in other parts of the world.

### Notes

1. My thinking here was informed also by theories about the “natural history” of new social movements, which I had used in my earlier work on the sociology of political “reform” movements. See, for example, my essay, “On Being Strangled by the Stars and Stripes: The New Left, the Old Left, and the Natural History of American Radical Movements,” *Journal of Social Issues* 27, no. 1 (1971): 183–202; I was guest editor for this issue. See also my *Social Problems as Social Movements* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975), chap. 2, esp. 57–71.

2. This idea, too, was derivative from earlier studies showing that commitment and growth in religious movements are importantly dependent on demands for strictness and sacrifice from the membership. See, e. g., Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972). During the 1980s, Rodney Stark, in collaboration with William S. Bainbridge and other younger colleagues, elaborated such ideas into an entirely new paradigm for understanding the success of new religious movements (NRMs). See,



e.g., Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Clearly my own work was influenced by this emerging paradigm, which is explained more fully by R. Stephen Warner, “Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 5 (March 1993): 1044–93.

3. I had first advanced this general framework and terminology in invited lectures under the auspices of the Charles Redd Center at Brigham Young University (1982) and the B. H. Roberts Society in Salt Lake City (1983), and then in the following published articles: “Assimilation and Ambivalence: The Mormon Reaction to Americanization,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 20–67; “Church, Sect, and Scripture: The Protestant Bible and Mormon Sectarian Retrenchment” (with Philip L. Barlow), *Sociological Analysis* (now called *Sociology of Religion*) 52, no. 4 (1991): 397–414; and “The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation and Identity: Trends and Developments since Midcentury,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 129–49.

4. A very similar argument was under development by Laurence R. Iannaccone from the discipline of economics. See, e.g., his “A Formal Model of Church and Sect,” *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (Supplement): S241–68 (1988); “Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives,” *Journal of Political Economy* 100, no. 2 (1992): 271–92; and “Why Strict Churches Are Strong,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994): 1180–1211. Eventually sociologists Stark and colleagues, and Iannaccone from economics, merged their efforts to produce the above-mentioned “new paradigm,” which has since come to be described (not entirely accurately) as “rational choice” theory applied to religion. This merger reached its zenith in Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

5. See, for example, the review of O. Kendall White Jr., “Swimming Up the Mainstream,” *Sunstone*, June 1996, 62–65.

6. Roger Terry, “Competing Values within the Restored Church: An Organizational Analysis,” unpublished paper, 2010, 25–26, emphasis mine. Terry also quotes, to the same effect, Warner P. Woodworth, “Brave New Bureaucracy,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 34.

7. Claudia L. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006).

8. James E. Faust, “Continuous Revelation,” *Ensign*, November

1989, 8–11. In the 1994 general conference, President Hunter, on succeeding to the presidency of the Church, also alluded to the consultative process in decision-making, emphasizing, indeed, the requirement of unanimity in all matters of importance. Howard W. Hunter, “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, November 1994, 7–8.

9. Dallin H. Oaks, “Religious Values and Public Policy,” *Ensign*, October 1992, 60.

10. “Approaching Mormon Doctrine,” Newsroom, May 4, 2007: <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/approaching-mormon-doctrine> (accessed July 31, 2011).

11. Michael R. Ash, “Challenging Issues and Keeping the Faith, Part 10,” column in *Mormon Times*, a section of the *Deseret News*, July 13, 2009, <http://www.mormontimes.com/article/4534/Challenging-issues-and-keeping-the-faith-Part-10>. The series ran up through Part 17 during a two-month period. In mid-2011, the *Mormon Times* site was relocated under the general *Deseret News* site, as explained at <http://www.deseretnews.com/mormontimes/newsletter> (accessed July 10, 2011).

12. Ezra Taft Benson, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” *Liahona*, June 1981, 1–3 (published only in the *Liahona*, but not in the *Ensign*, as nearly as I have been able to determine); and Bruce R. McConkie, “The Seven Deadly Heresies,” June 1, 1980, *BYU Speeches* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1980).

13. I am attributing this revised introduction to McConkie on the basis of his central role in the entire process of producing the new editions of all four LDS standard works in 1979 and 1981. Carrie A. Moore, “Intro Change in Book of Mormon Spurs Discussion,” *Deseret News*, November 9, 2007, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/695226049/Intro-change-in-Book-of-Mormon-spurs-discussion.html> (accessed June 29, 2011). For the significance of my allusion to FARMS, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation\\_for\\_Ancient\\_Research\\_and\\_Mormon\\_Studies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_for_Ancient_Research_and_Mormon_Studies) (accessed June 29, 2011).

14. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Church Removes Racial References in Book of Mormon Headings,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 16, 2010, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home/50882900-76/mormon-book-changes-church.html.csp> (accessed June 29, 2011).

15. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Landmark ‘Mormon Doctrine’ Goes out of Print,” *Salt Lake Tribune* May 21, 2010, Religion Section, p. 1.

16. The Lattin interview appeared in the April 13, 1997, issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. SC-3, and in the *Chronicle*’s online publication *SF Gate*, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/1997/04/13/SC36289.DTL&type=printable> (accessed March 31, 2011). I felt sure that I recalled a similar attempt by President Hinckley to finesse

such questions in his April 7, 1996, interview with Mike Wallace on CBS's *60 Minutes* program, but I couldn't find it in the 2008 reprise of that interview at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/31/60minutes/main3775068.shtml> (accessed June 29, 2011). Perhaps I had yet another interview in mind.

17. The Van Biema interview appears in *Time*, August 4, 1997, 56, where President Hinckley first refers to people becoming gods as "an ideal," but eventually conceded that there is such a belief in the LDS Church. On the subject of whether God was once a man, the president again equivocated: "I don't know that we teach it. I don't know that we emphasize it. . . . I understand the philosophical background behind it, but I don't know a lot about it, and I don't think others [do]."

18. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Drawing Nearer to the Lord," *Ensign*, November 1997, 4. Yet ironically, as recently as June 27, 2011, in an extensive LDS Newsroom article discussing the nature of God and man, the allusions to human divinization were so oblique as to be missed altogether by many LDS Church members, to say nothing of the "public press" whose characterizations concerned Hinckley. A section titled "Identity" reads: "We know ourselves by knowing God"; the discussion of the "divine attributes" instilled in God's children is based entirely on Romans 8:17, not on any LDS scriptures or literature. The passage there about our being "heirs" of God and "joint heirs with Christ" can and will, of course, be read in the figurative way that such passages have always been understood by the rest of Christianity—and even by Mormons not well informed on the more exotic teachings of Joseph Smith. See <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/permanent-things-toward-an-understanding-of-mormons> (accessed June 29, 2011).

19. I found it convenient to copy this list from *Green Oasis*, <http://www.blakeclan.org/jon/greenoasis/?s=gospel+principles+changes> (accessed June 29, 2011). However, these and other changes between *Principles of the Gospel* and *Gospel Principles* are amply documented, chapter by chapter, in the website for the Mormon Religious Ministry, <http://mrm.org/gospel-principles> (accessed June 29, 2011). The claims in these unofficial sources accord well with my own findings in perusing the new manual. I found myself resonating strongly with the anonymous commentator on *Green Oasis*, who summarized poignantly that he could see the reasons for such changes; but "at the same time, I'm sad to see the leaders of the LDS Church continue to distance themselves from some of the doctrines that I cherished most as a member of their faith. These doctrines gave me hope and made Mormonism interesting. Without them, Mormonism becomes just another shade of Protestantism (*yawn*)." I would add that the ironic result, intended or not, is to make

Mormonism seem more convergent with Evangelical Protestantism—closing somewhat the “wide divide,” as it were. NOTE: Since I accessed this post originally, the site at the above URL reports that Green Oasis is “no longer being updated” (i.e., is defunct). However, the comment just quoted can still be accessed by going to “explore all of my past posts” and selecting “the-new-gospel-principles,” dated August 11, 2009.

20. The de-McConkie-ization of this manual was given special attention on the website *Confetti Antiques & Books*, <http://www.confettiantiques.com/book-reviews/gospel-principles-manual-changes-bruce-r-mcconkie-is-removed/> (accessed June 29, 2011).

21. Laurence R. Iannaccone and Carrie Miles, “Dealing with Social Change: The Mormon Church’s Response to Change in Women’s Roles,” *Social Forces* 68 (1990): 1231–50, esp. 1246.

22. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Mothers in Zion,” delivered at a Fireside for Parents at BYU, February 22, 1987, and widely disseminated as a pamphlet. Also available [http://fc.byu.edu/jpages/ee/w\\_etb87.htm](http://fc.byu.edu/jpages/ee/w_etb87.htm) (accessed June 29, 2011).

23. Quentin L. Cook, “LDS Women Are Incredible,” *Ensign*, May 2011, <http://lds.org/ensign/2011/05?lang=eng> (accessed June 28, 2011).

24. Julie B. Beck, “Mothers Who Know,” *Ensign*, November 2007, 76–78.

25. Andrea G. Radke-Moss, “Bickering over Beck: Mormon Women’s Petition Resistance to Julie B. Beck’s ‘Mothers Who Know’ Talk,” paper presented at the annual conference of the Mormon History Association, Springfield, Illinois, Session 3C, May 29, 2009.

26. In this paragraph I am relying on the account of the Radke-Moss paper provided by Emily W. Jensen, “Blogging over Beck: Analysis of Reaction to ‘Mothers Who Know,’” *Mormon Times*, May 27, 2009, [http://www.mormontimes.com/article/9209/Blogging-over-Beck-analysis-of-reaction-to-Mothers-Who-Know?s\\_cid=search\\_queue&utm\\_source=search\\_queue](http://www.mormontimes.com/article/9209/Blogging-over-Beck-analysis-of-reaction-to-Mothers-Who-Know?s_cid=search_queue&utm_source=search_queue) (accessed June 29, 2011). The full Jensen article appears at <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/2258988/posts-> (accessed August 1, 2011).

27. Seth Lewis, “Women Faculty No Longer a Rare Commodity,” *BYU Universe* online, April 11, 2001, <http://newsnet.byu.edu/story.cfm/30971> (accessed June 29, 2011).

28. Molly Farmer, “Working Mothers Not Alone in Feeling Judgment,” *Mormon Times*, October 3, 2008, reporting on the session: “Women and Careers: Role Conflict throughout the Lifespan,” a paper presented by Melissa Goates-Jones and Lisa Levitt, annual conference of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychologists, 2008, Salt Lake

City. See [http://www.mormontimes.com/article/10612/Working-mothers-not-alone-in-feeling-judgment?s\\_cid=search\\_queue&utm\\_source=search\\_queue](http://www.mormontimes.com/article/10612/Working-mothers-not-alone-in-feeling-judgment?s_cid=search_queue&utm_source=search_queue). The announcement of the AMCAP meeting appears on its website, <http://ldsamcap.ning.com/> (accessed June 29, 2011).

29. To find these vignettes, go to [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org), and navigate to “Our People,” then “I’m a Mormon.”

30. The 2010 LDS *Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Administering the Church*, Sections 21.4.3, 21.4.4, and 21.4.7, <http://lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church?lang=eng> (accessed June 29, 2011).

31. Non-Mormon journalist Eric Gorski, quoting a number of knowledgeable scholars, sees these developments as indicating a new visibility and voice for ordinary Mormon women. Gorski, “Mormon Women Emerging from Shadows,” *Mormon Times*, January 30, 2008, *Deseret News* archives, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705383405/Mormon-Women-Emerging-From-Shadows.html> (accessed August 1, 2011).

32. Such an evolution in the contents of these conferences will be apparent from comparing the published proceedings across time. See [http://mormonlit.byu.edu/lit\\_work.php?w\\_id=6608](http://mormonlit.byu.edu/lit_work.php?w_id=6608) (accessed June 29, 2011).

33. For Vice-President John Tanner’s official announcement of the closing of the Women Research Institute, see <http://news.byu.edu/archive09-Oct-womens.aspx> (accessed June 29, 2011). A skeptical and disappointed response by Keri Withington on Yahoo’s Associated Content is at [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2363642/brigham\\_young\\_university\\_dissolves.html?cat=9](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2363642/brigham_young_university_dissolves.html?cat=9) (accessed June 29, 2011).

34. Announcement through fliers distributed at the Mormon History Association annual meeting in 2010 and 2011 and also posted on its own website: <http://www.lds-women-offaith.org/> (accessed June 29, 2011). Authors have been told that the first book, an anthology of vignettes about women in the earliest years of the Church, will be published before the end of 2011.

35. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormon Feminism: It’s Back,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Lifestyle Section), August 13, 2010, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/lifestyle/50080435-80/women-church-mormon-lds.html.csp?page=1> (accessed June 29, 2011).

36. A good indication of the range and variety of Mormon feminist expressions is the symposium built around an earlier article by Kathryn Soper, “As Sisters in Zion.” See “Mormon Feminism: A Patheos Symposium,” <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Mormon-Feminism-A-Patheos-Symposium.html> (accessed June 29, 2011). See also *W.A.V.E.* (Women Advocating for Voice and Equality), [www.ldswave.org](http://www.ldswave.org) (accessed June 29, 2011), which is oriented toward ac-

tion as well as discussion. Some of these feminist sites, considered “mommy blogs,” have apparently attracted considerable interest from non-Mormon women as well. See [http://www.salon.com/life/feature/2011/01/15/feminist\\_obsessed\\_with\\_mormon\\_blogs/index.html](http://www.salon.com/life/feature/2011/01/15/feminist_obsessed_with_mormon_blogs/index.html) (accessed June 29, 2011).

37. Tresa Edmunds, “The Next Generation of Mormon Feminism,” August 9, 2010, *Patheos*, also uses “renaissance” to refer to the changed situation of Mormon women. <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/The-Next-Generation-of-Mormon-Feminism.html> (accessed June 29, 2011). One of the reviewers for this article made the cogent point that the feminist blogging is “primarily, but not exclusively, an exercise of connection and understanding and self-assertion”; and even though some of the content is also “insightful and profound,” it is instructive that “it’s producing very little angst among Church leadership, which suggests a significant departure from the theology-based, idea-based Mormon feminism of the past.”

38. David L. Paulson and Martin Pulido, “‘A Mother There’: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven,” *BYU Studies* 50, no. 1 (2010): 71–97. While I appreciated the research and discoveries in this article, I found the tone of it a bit disingenuous in places (e.g., 73–75, 85), where the authors leave the impression that the subject has never been considered off-limits by Church leaders. I suspect that certain LDS feminist authors of an earlier generation would strongly disagree with that facile dismissal of their experiences.

39. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Same-Gender Attraction,” *Ensign*, October 1995, 7–11; an “interview” on LDS Newsroom, [no date] 2006, with Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Lance B. Wickman: “Same-Gender Attraction,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/official-statement/same-gender-attraction> (accessed June 29, 2011); “Church Responds to Same-Sex Marriage Votes,” Newsroom, November 5, 2008: <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-responds-to-same-sex-marriage-votes> (accessed June 29, 2011); and “The Mormon Ethic of Civility,” Newsroom, October 16, 2009: <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/the-mormon-ethic-of-civility> (accessed June 29, 2011).

40. See, e.g., Ron Schow, Wayne Schow, and Marybeth Raynes, eds., *Peculiar People: Mormons and Same-Sex Orientation* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991); William S. Bradshaw, “Biology and Homosexuality,” LDS Resources for Latter-day Saints Dealing with Homosexual Attraction,” <http://www.ldsresources.info/professionals/bradshaw.shtml> (2007); and Fred Matis, Marilyn Matis, and Ty Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation: Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, an imprint of Deseret Book, 2004).

41. "Church Supports Nondiscrimination Ordinances," Press Release, LDS Newsroom, November 10, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-supports-nondiscrimination-ordinances> (accessed June 29, 2011); see also Rosemary Winters and Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Apostle: LDS Gay-Right Measures Could Work for State," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 11, 2009, [http://www.sltrib.com/lds/ci\\_13766464](http://www.sltrib.com/lds/ci_13766464) (accessed July 1, 2011).

42. Carol Lynn Pearson, "Elder Marlin K. Jensen Listens to Pain Caused by Prop. 8," Proclamation (online website maintained by Affirmation), September 17, 2010, <http://blog.affirmation.org/2010/09/elder-marlin-k-jensen-listens-to-pain-caused-by-prop-8/> (accessed June 29, 2011); also Holly Welker, "LDS Elder Marlin Jensen's Prop 8 'Apology': We Need Clarification," *Huffpost Religion*, September 27, 2010, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/holly-welker/elder-jensen-prop-8-apology\\_b\\_739609.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/holly-welker/elder-jensen-prop-8-apology_b_739609.html) (accessed June 29, 2011); and Joanna Brooks, "Mormon Leader: 'I'm Sorry' for Hurtful Legacy of Prop 8," *Religion Dispatches (rd magazine)*, September 28, 2010, [http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/sexandgender/3437/mormon\\_leader%3A\\_%E2%80%98i%E2%80%99m\\_sorry%E2%80%99\\_for\\_hurtful\\_legacy\\_of\\_prop\\_8/](http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/sexandgender/3437/mormon_leader%3A_%E2%80%98i%E2%80%99m_sorry%E2%80%99_for_hurtful_legacy_of_prop_8/) (accessed June 29, 2011).

43. See the 2010 *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Administering the Church*, Section 21.4.6; also the LDS Newsroom Q&A on the distinction between "feelings and inclinations" on the one hand, and behavior, on the other, posted July 18, 2011, <http://newsroom.lds.org/official-statement/same-gender-attraction> (accessed June 29, 2011).

44. See the following articles by Peggy Fletcher Stack in the *Salt Lake Tribune* during October 2010: "Apostle: Same-Sex Attraction Can Change," October 3; "Mormons Divided on LDS Apostle's Speech on Gays," October 4; "Apostle's Speech on Gays Changed on LDS Website," October 8; and "High-Ranking LDS Leader Weighs In on Same-Sex Attraction," October 25.

45. "Church Responds to HRC Petition: Statement on Same-Sex Attraction," October 12, 2010, Press release, LDS Newsroom, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-mormon-responds-to-human-rights-campaign-petition-same-sex-attraction> (accessed June 29, 2011).

46. Holly Welker, "The LDS Church's Unequal Treatment of Gay and Feminist Activists," *Huffpost Religion*, January 10, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/holly-welker/gay-activists-bear-their-\\_b\\_806542.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/holly-welker/gay-activists-bear-their-_b_806542.html) (accessed June 29, 2011).

47. Joanna Brooks, "Homosexual Thoughts and Feelings Not a Sin, Says New LDS Handbook," *rd Magazine*, November 11, 2010, <http://www.religiondispatches.org/disatches/joannabrooks/3720/homosexual>

\_thoughts\_and\_feelings\_not\_a\_sin%2C\_says\_new\_lds\_handbook (accessed June 29, 2011); compare John-Charles Duffy, "Are Mormons Changing Their Stance on Homosexuality? Actually the Church Has Dug Its Heels In Even Further," *rd Magazine*, December 22, 2010, [http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/sexandgender/3923/are\\_mormons\\_changing\\_their\\_stance\\_on\\_homosexuality/](http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/sexandgender/3923/are_mormons_changing_their_stance_on_homosexuality/) (accessed June 29, 2011).

48. The twists and turns in the LDS struggle with homosexuality are ably analyzed by Alan Michael Williams, "Mormon and Queer at the Crossroads," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 53–84.

49. Both Hunter and Hinckley had been supporters and protectors of Arrington's project in the face of strenuous opposition from other apostles, according to Leonard J. Arrington's autobiography, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 74–91, 214–15.

50. The only exception to this general statement of which I am aware, and the only one to receive any public notice, was the case of Grant H. Palmer in late 2004, who had written *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002). With the trappings of scholarship, this book was nevertheless, in effect, an exposé of serious inaccuracies in the official Church narrative of Mormonism's founding—inaccuracies, however, already well known to Mormon historians. Palmer was eventually disfellowshipped from the Church for his efforts. His case received considerable public attention because he had recently retired from decades of service in the Church Education System. Apparently the Strengthening Church Members Committee had provided a dossier on Palmer to his stake president. A brief news account of the Palmer case can be found in the archives of his publisher, Signature Books, December 12, 2004, citing an Associated Press account, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050306102953/www.signaturebooks.com/news.htm> (accessed June 29, 2011).

51. The authors are Margaret Blair Young, who teaches English at Brigham Young University, and Darius Aidan Gray, former president of the Genesis Branch, an auxiliary unit of the LDS Church founded originally in 1971 for black and mixed-race families and individuals who wish to attend as a supplement to worship services in their own home wards. The trilogy consists of *One More River to Cross* (2000); *Bound for Canaan* (2002); and *The Last Mile of the Way* (2003).

52. "Book Provides an Unflinching Look at Mountain Meadows Massacre," Press Release, LDS Newsroom, September 5, 2008, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/book-provides-an-unflinching-look-at-moun>



tain-meadows-massacre (accessed June 29, 2011). The second volume, reporting the aftermath and legal trials of the massacre, has not yet appeared.

53. Bushman's was published by New York publisher Alfred Knopf; Prince's and Wright's by the University of Utah Press; and Kimball's by the Church's Deseret Book, which (again) necessitated special negotiations for author prerogatives, the resolution of which led to the inclusion of a DVD with the book, containing material omitted from the printed text, earlier biographies of both Spencer W. Kimball and his wife, Camilla Eyring Kimball, photographs, and other supplementary material.

54. Clearly the same candor and transparency can be expected in the publication of the new multi-volume series of the JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, even though both the content and the publisher will ultimately be under Church control. See <http://lds.org/churchhistory/content/0,15757,4609-1-2335,00.html> (accessed June 29, 2011).

55. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890–1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 9–105. Quinn has put his troubled relationships with certain LDS General Authorities on the record in, for example, "The Rest Is History," *Sunstone* 18 (December 1995): 50–57; "150 Years of Truth and Consequences about Mormon History," *Sunstone* 15 (February 1992): 12–14, and his interview, in Philip Lindholm, ed., *Latter-day Dissent: At the Crossroads of Intellectual Inquiry and Ecclesiastical Authority* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011); reviewed in this issue.

56. "25-Year Retrospective Panel," Session 6-B, Mormon History Association annual conference, Springfield, Illinois, May 21–24, 2009.

57. See "'A Record Kept:' Constructing Collective Memory," Newsroom Commentary, LDS Newsroom, June 11, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/a-record-kept-constructing-collective-memory> (accessed June 29, 2011). A year later, McKay Coppins, a *Mormon Times* columnist, responded to reading Bushman's *Rough Stone Rolling* with a strong plea against censorship in Mormon history. "McKay Coppins: The Case against Mormon Censorship," *Mormon Times*, September 24, 2010, [http://www.mormontimes.com/article/17337/McKay-Coppins-The-case-against-Mormon-censorship?s\\_cid=queue\\_title&utm\\_source=dm\\_title](http://www.mormontimes.com/article/17337/McKay-Coppins-The-case-against-Mormon-censorship?s_cid=queue_title&utm_source=dm_title) (accessed June 29, 2011).

58. "MHA Launches Endowment Campaign," *MHA Newsletter* 42, no. 3 (July 2007): 1. The LDS Foundation is an agency of the Church under the Presiding Bishopric's jurisdiction.

59. See, for example, press releases from the LDS Newsroom in 2006 and 2007 on the Howard W. Hunter Chair at Claremont Graduate

University and the fuller 2008 treatment of Mormon studies in academia more generally. See <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/chair-for-mormon-studies-planned-at-claremont> (accessed June 29, 2011); <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/mormon-studies-and-the-value-of-education>; and <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/academic-interest-in-mormonism-rises> (accessed June 29, 2011).

60. The program appears on <http://lds.org/library/display/0,4945,510-1-3067-1,00.html> (accessed June 29, 2011). The proceedings of this conference were edited by John W. Welch and published by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at BYU and are available through Deseret Book, <http://deseretbook.com/Worlds-Joseph-Smith-John-W-Welch/i/4962212> (accessed July 3, 2011).

61. "Mainstreaming and Marginalization of Religious Movements," [http://www.cesnur.org/2009/slc\\_cyberpro.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/2009/slc_cyberpro.htm) (accessed June 29, 2011).

62. "Mormon Engagement with the World's Religions: Perspectives and Possibilities with the Abrahamic Traditions," University of Southern California, June 11–12, 2010, <http://fidweb.org/projects/fid-events/2010/mormonism-and-world-religions>. This site had been taken down as of June 29, 2011. Elder Porter's speech, however, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCso4wm3aZI> (accessed June 29, 2011).

63. "Church Represented at World Religions Conference in Kazakhstan," Press Release, LDS Newsroom, July 22, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-represented-at-world-religions-conference-in-kazakhstan> (accessed June 29, 2011).

64. Quentin L. Cook, "Partnering with our Friends from Other Faiths," contribution to a *Patheos* discussion on "The Future of Mormonism," <http://www.patheos.com/Topics/Future-of-World-Religions/Mormonism.html> (accessed June 29, 2011).

65. See the explanation appended to my contributor's note. The papers at this event have not been published as of August 10, 2011, but the four young organizers of the Bushman symposium are expecting to co-edit and publish the papers as a *festschrift* some time in 2012.

66. Mauss, *Angel and Beehive*, 170–71.

67. Even though I was present for Bushman's remarks, I am relying for these quotations on Peggy Fletcher Stack, "In This Mormon Moment, LDS Church History Blooms," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 27, 2011, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home2/52076094-183/church-mormon-history-lds.html.csp?page=1> (accessed June 29, 2011).

68. Ryan T. Cragun and Michael Nielsen, "Fighting Over 'Mormon': Media Coverage of the FLDS and LDS Churches," *Dialogue: A Journal of*

*Mormon Thought* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 65–104, perceptively argue that such changes in the LDS Church are an effort to achieve and maintain *legitimacy* in the national culture, rather than assimilation *per se*. They illustrate their conceptualization by reviewing the struggle of the Church to control the use of its traditional names (and therefore its “brand”).

69. For this important insight, expressed in somewhat different ways, see Ryan T. Cragun, “Moving Targets: Mormon Retrenchment toward the ‘New Mainstream,’” Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, annual conference, October, 2008, Louisville, Kentucky. All this is very theoretical, of course, and does not deal with the hard empirical question of how we might measure degrees of assimilation or retrenchment.

70. The most thorough and recent work on these events is Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, and Equal Rights* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005).

71. Strictly speaking, Otterson was made head of LDS Media Relations in 1997 and managing director of the Public Affairs Department only in 2008, thereby becoming the Church’s official spokesman.

72. Ups and downs in the Mormon public image have been traced in some detail by Jan Shippo, “Surveying the Mormon Image since 1960,” *Sunstone*, April 2001, 58–72.

73. See the extensive description of this new posture on the official LDS Newsroom site: “The Diverse Voices of Mormonism,” a Newsroom Commentary, September 28, 2010, <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/article/the-diverse-voices-of-mormonism> (accessed June 29, 2011).

74. Michael Otterson, “The Mormon Church and the Media’s ‘Cult’ Box,” a post on Sally Quinn’s “On Faith” site: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/on-faith/post/the-mormon-church-and-the-medias-cult-box/2011/07/19/gIQAZgj9NI\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/on-faith/post/the-mormon-church-and-the-medias-cult-box/2011/07/19/gIQAZgj9NI_blog.html) (accessed June 29, 2011).

75. For examples of official early LDS reactions to the musical, see <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-statement-regarding-the-book-of-mormon-broadway-musical>; and <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/on-faith-blog-why-i-wont-be-seeing-the-book-of-mormon-musical>. For the LDS PR blitz in New York City, see [http://www.abc4.com/content/news/top\\_stories/story/Mormons-blitz-Times-Square/TOVoDE5TFECpGrBUArY6uw.csp?rss=20](http://www.abc4.com/content/news/top_stories/story/Mormons-blitz-Times-Square/TOVoDE5TFECpGrBUArY6uw.csp?rss=20) and <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/mormon-nyc-ad-campaign-savvy-branding/story?id=13888304> (all accessed June 29, 2011).

76. Apostle M. Russell Ballard, who oversaw the Public Affairs Department until February 2011, is himself a great advocate of individual member initiatives in engaging the internet in conversations about their religion. See his “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” *Ensign*, July

2008, <http://lds.org/ensign/2008/07/sharing-the-gospel-using-the-internet?lang=eng> (accessed June 29, 2011). Since February 2011, Elders Tom Perry and Quentin Cook have been the apostles overseeing Public Affairs.

77. In contrast to Elder Dallin H. Oaks's warning Church members away from "alternate voices" two decades ago (Oaks, "Alternate Voices," *Ensign*, May 1989, 27–30), Michael Otterson expressed the new official position when he declared: "Do we cringe when we see unofficial voices? Absolutely not. Do we recognize that we have to do better and better to make our voice heard and be recognized as a valuable resource? Yes." [www.bycommonconsent.com/2009/06/09/interview-with-michael-otterson](http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2009/06/09/interview-with-michael-otterson) (accessed June 29, 2011).

78. Ballard, "Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet."

79. "Mormonism and Politics: Are They Compatible," May 14, 2007, <http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Mormonism-and-Politics-Are-They-Compatible.aspx> (accessed June 29, 2011).

80. Otterson's posts in the *Washington Post* are archived at [http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/michael\\_otterson/](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/michael_otterson/) (accessed June 29, 2011).

81. Michael Otterson, interviewed June 9, 2009, on By Common Consent, [www.bycommonconsent.com/2009/06/09/interview-with-michael-otterson](http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2009/06/09/interview-with-michael-otterson) (accessed June 29, 2011).

82. Cook, "Partnering with Our Friends from Other Faiths."

83. <http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2008/11/12-questions-for-the-lds-newsroom-part-two> (accessed June 29, 2011).

84. See reports on <http://publicaffairs.lds.org/pa/eng/> (accessed June 29, 2011).

85. Emily W. Jensen, "Today on the Bloggernacle," *Mormon Times*, December 7, 2009, [http://www.mormontimes.com/article/6706/Today-in-the-Bloggernacle?s\\_cid=search\\_queue&utm\\_source=search\\_queue](http://www.mormontimes.com/article/6706/Today-in-the-Bloggernacle?s_cid=search_queue&utm_source=search_queue) (accessed June 29, 2011).

86. See, for example, <http://www.mormonshare.com/forum/the-new-four-fold-mission-of-the-church>; <http://mormonlife.com/story/1245-is-the-churchs-threefold-mission-becoming-fourfold>; and <http://www.lds.net/forums/lds-gospel-discussion/28516-another-mission-church.html> (accessed June 29, 2011).

87. See, for example, Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Now Everyone Can View LDS Church Stances on Social Issues," *Salt Lake Tribune* (Lifestyle Section), November 19, 2010, recapitulated in [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/30/official-mormon-handbook-n\\_789361.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/30/official-mormon-handbook-n_789361.html) (accessed June 29, 2011). Volume 1, reserved for General Authorities, bishoprics, and stake, mission, and temple presidencies, is not publicly available.

88. See, e.g., Craig L. Bloomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997); and an extensive review by several LDS scholars at <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=11&num=2&id=318> (accessed June 29, 2011).

89. See, e.g., <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/historic-speech-at-byu-by-catholic-cardinal-historic-speech-given-at-brigham-young-university>; <http://worldmuslimcongress.blogspot.com/2008/04/mormons-muslims.html>; <http://www.mormontimes.com/search?l=10&q=interfaith+muslim&submit=>; <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-morlims2apr02,1,2488142.story?page=2> [http://www.jewishjournal.com/jews\\_and\\_mormons/](http://www.jewishjournal.com/jews_and_mormons/); <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/4/14/church-interfaith-mormon-jews/> (all accessed June 29, 2011).

90. However, there is reason to believe that the Church's role in the Proposition 8 campaign was widely appreciated among the more conservative faith communities. See, e.g., [http://www.mormontimes.com/article/11462/NY-Times-ad-denounces-violence-against-LDS?s\\_cid=search\\_queue&utm\\_source=search\\_queue](http://www.mormontimes.com/article/11462/NY-Times-ad-denounces-violence-against-LDS?s_cid=search_queue&utm_source=search_queue) (accessed June 29, 2011).

91. Sandhya Somashekhar, "High-Profile Mormons in Media, Politics, Advance Understanding of Church," *Washington Post* (On Faith section), February 7, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/07/AR2011020705607.html?hpid=moreheadlines> (accessed June 29, 2011).

92. Scott Taylor, "Mormons & Media: Revisiting 'Mormonism's Moment'?" *Washington Post*, February 15, 2011, (On Faith section), <http://www.mormontimes.com/article/19746/Mormons-Media-Revisiting-Mormonisms-moment> and <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/the-church-and-politics> (both accessed June 29, 2011).

93. See [http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/michael\\_otterson/2011/02/mormons\\_speak\\_for\\_the\\_faith.html](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/michael_otterson/2011/02/mormons_speak_for_the_faith.html) (accessed June 29, 2011).

94. Doree Ashcraft, "Life Portrayed in Mormon Ads Not Consistent with Reality," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 9, 2011 (Opinion section), <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/opinion/51357520-82/mormon-ads-hairless.html.csp> (accessed June 29, 2011).

95. On the gay rights issue, see Otterson's statement before the Salt Lake City Council. On the immigration issue: "Mormon Church Supports Principles of Utah Compact on Immigration," *Deseret News*, November 11, 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700080772/Mormon-Church-supports-principles-of-Utah-Compact-on-immigration.html>; and "N. Y. Times praises Utah Compact," *Deseret News*, December 6, 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700089118/NY-Times>

praises-Utah-Compact.html (both accessed June 29, 2011). On the “green” issue, see the 2010 LDS Newsroom’s press release about numerous examples across the years, “Timeline of Conservation Practices,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/ConservationPractices/> (accessed June 29, 2011).

# The Persistence of Mormon Plural Marriage

*B. Carmon Hardy*

This essay addresses the remarkable perseverance of Mormon polygamy.<sup>1</sup> I argue that its survival is chiefly explained by the emphasis it was given in the nineteenth-century Church. The cardinal significance early leaders granted plurality in their teachings, combined with spirited defenses in its behalf, so gilded the doctrine that its enduring attraction was assured. A great deal of research studying patriarchal marriage has occurred in the last thirty or so years. The history of Mormon polygamy rehearsed in this paper selectively appropriates that work, together with early Latter-day Saint discourse, to more fully exhibit the bright promise given plural marriage by the Church's founding generations. I will also recount the Saints' torturous detachment from the practice and, further supporting the paper's theme, summarize fundamentalist efforts to maintain a continuum with Mormonism's polygamous past. Finally, the essay concludes with comments of the implications for the persistence of plural marriage for official Mormonism and American society today.

Anxious that there be no doubt concerning their commitment to the monogamous home, contemporary spokesmen of the orthodox Church repeatedly issue firmly worded communiqués denying that their organization approves polygamous marriage or has any formal connection either with Mormon fundamentalists or other communities that do. In what is probably the most-often referenced statement of that kind, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley, in an interview with Larry King on CNN in 1998, said that the information he possessed was that only 2 to 5 percent of the Saints engaged in plural marriage, but added that it was a long time ago, was not now doctrinal, and was ended in 1890.

Hinckley went on to condemn its contemporary practice, emphasizing that it was illegal. Such statements are repeated on the internet and elsewhere by Church representatives who also seek to secure the use of “Mormon” exclusively for the mainline, monogamous denomination.<sup>2</sup>

By attempting to distance the Church from modern polygamous sects, however, official spokesmen obscure much of what we now know about the Church’s involvement with plural marriage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Statements such as Hinckley’s constitute a glossed appropriation of Mormon history. Not only do they minimize the number of participants involved when Mormonism did approve polygamy, but they also fail to acknowledge that what fundamentalists seek is reinstatement of a practice once counted by the Saints as among their most important. Only by recalling the imposing role given polygamy in the early Church can we understand efforts presently made by communities in Utah, Texas, and elsewhere to renew it. From the time of its first appearance in the nineteenth century, through the long but failed Latter-day Saint effort to win tolerance for polygamy, and now with fundamentalist reiteration, plural marriage displays a tenacious, reclaiming tendency—notwithstanding determined efforts to repress and forget it by the Church that gave it birth.

## I

While questions remain concerning the role of Joseph Smith’s social/sexual motivations in commencing the practice, the most compelling theological assumptions supporting plural marriage are found in teachings that evolved contemporaneously with it, doctrines still accepted as revealed truth by the Church today. These tenets contend that God once passed through a probationary existence similar to our own. By faithful behavior, He eventually acquired attributes of omnipotence and supernal majesty. And, the Prophet taught, all humankind could aspire to a similar metamorphosis.<sup>3</sup> One of the requirements, however, most completely set forth in Smith’s 1843 revelation on the subject, was that couples must marry and be “sealed” to each other in eternal unions, rituals performed by Church authorities today. Closely connected to this concept, and integral to the revelation as an an-



swer to Smith's question about why ancient patriarchs married multiple women, the Prophet was told that Abraham and others like him did so with divine permission that they might aggrandize their family estates through eternity. Both God Almighty and His faithful servants in those early days, the Prophet was instructed, took immense, even preeminent reward from the propagation of their kind (D&C 132:30–31, 55, 63).<sup>4</sup>

Smith was told that plurality so lifted such worthies that they sat “on thrones, and are not angels but are gods.” And in language unexcelled in an age flowing with grandiosities, Smith said he was promised that God would “bless him, and multiply him, and give unto him an hundred fold in this world of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children, and crowns of eternal life” (D&C 132:37, 55 *passim*). Benjamin F. Johnson, a close associate of the Church's founder, explained: “Dominion & Powr in the great Future would be commensurate with the no of Wives childin & Friends that we inheret here and that our great mission to earth . . . [is] to Organize a Neculi of Heaven to take with us.”<sup>5</sup> Gary Bergera perfectly summarized the concept: “For Smith, plural marriage represented the pinnacle of his theology of exaltation: the husband as king and priest, surrounded by queens and priestesses eternally procreating spirit children. As these spirit offspring enter mortality, they, by their obedience, accrue both to themselves, through their own children, and to their eternal parents additional glory, power, and exaltation—the entire process of exaltation cycling forever worlds without end.”<sup>6</sup>

So justified, the Prophet and several of his disciples conformed their lives to heaven's word. Smith's devotion to the practice was so great that the most recent investigation of his plural marriages counts them at over thirty-five and indicates that, before his assassination, he invited between two and three dozen other men to similarly enlarge their families. The vigor displayed by the Prophet and his confidants in forming such relationships resulted in scores of women being taken into the arms of men committed to the arrangement.<sup>7</sup> More than one of his associates commented that none was more active in such ventures than the Prophet himself. A nephew and later Church president, Joseph F. Smith, struck by his uncle's zeal in acquiring new wives, recalled it

as proof of the importance Mormonism's founder attached to the doctrine.<sup>8</sup>

Such activities inevitably brought scandal, arousing opposition in and outside the Church, inviting condemnation of such intimacies as no more than "abominations and whoredoms."<sup>9</sup> And this, combined with other difficulties, fed the whorl of events culminating in the murders of Joseph and his brother Hyrum. There may have been overstatement in Sidney Rigdon's claim that plural marriage was "the thing which put them into the power of their enemies, and was the immediate cause of their death." But it was a slight exaggeration only.<sup>10</sup>

Violence seemed to steel Mormon conviction. In the years immediately following the Smiths' assassinations and during the Saints' hegira to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, polygamous unions were formed in increasing numbers.<sup>11</sup> After their arrival, believing that vast plains and high mountains insulated them from persecution, the Mormons did little to conceal their enlarging households. Consequently, reports from forty-niners, non-Mormon government officials, and other itinerant "Gentiles" brought criticism, prompting Latter-day Saint authorities to fearlessly defend their new family order. And once launched, Mormon support for the Principle quickly assumed a surprisingly forthright character. In an 1852 address, described by Harold Bloom as "the most courageous act of spiritual defiance in all American history,"<sup>12</sup> at Brigham Young's invitation Apostle Orson Pratt asserted that the marriage of Mormon men to several wives was approved by the Bible. Mormon behavior, he said, was a heaven-inspired replication of deeds undertaken by father Abraham.<sup>13</sup> Another apostle, Orson Spencer, in a pamphlet so valued by the Saints that they later included it in a time deposit in the nearly completed Salt Lake Temple, said if he had the voice of a trumpet he would call on congresses and parliaments everywhere to hearken to the saving qualities of "this one great foundation of society," the Abrahamic polygamous household.<sup>14</sup> And in an address to the territorial legislature in 1855, Apostle Parley P. Pratt, Orson's older brother, urged that monogamy, with the laws supporting it, be "cast into the depths of the sea," like a "millstone," and there left to "sink with Great Babylon to rise no more." Not only Utah Territory, Pratt said, but all human societies could en-

dure only if they approved patriarchal homes emulating that of Abraham with his plurality of wives.<sup>15</sup>

An important strain in this anthem, one voiced by other religious reformers of the early nineteenth-century, was distrust for what Sidney Ahlstrom described as the “historical tradition[s] and accretions” of established Christianity.<sup>16</sup> Mormon founder Joseph Smith Jr. said that God told him Christendom had fallen away from the teachings of the primitive Church and from commandments given in earlier dispensations of Judeo-Christian history.<sup>17</sup> Consistent with the claim, Mormons faulted Catholics and Protestants for encouraging marriage doctrines that the Saints said led invariably to sexual immorality. By praising celibacy and approving monogamy, Mormons contended, not only had Christians departed from Jewish polygamous practice but by doing so had sown prostitution, adultery, and sexual decadence throughout the modern world. “The principal abominations upon the face of the earth,” said an 1853 editorial in Mormonism’s *Millennial Star*, were the product of marital practices introduced by Catholicism and persevered in by its Protestant offspring. Hence, it was said, “men must either take sides with the mother of harlots, and with her monogamy, and celibacy, and prostitution, or take sides with the Almighty, and with His holy law of polygamy, and sexual purity.”<sup>18</sup>

Carrying the argument of apostasy to its furthest extent, the Saints said that the rest of Christendom had turned away from the example of Jesus himself who, like God the Father, was both married and likely a polygamist.<sup>19</sup> It was to be expected that the Saints would seek to mirror their deities. A primary theme running through the revelation of 1843 was that, by marrying multiple wives and producing numerous offspring, the faithful not only magnified the glory of God but qualified themselves to stand with Him, His Son, and others who had earned the Almighty’s favor, adding to and enlarging the exaltation of all. While many non-Mormon observers thought it a pagan heresy to say heaven was full of gods, to insist that they also joined with multitudes of female divinities in eternal, reproductive coupling seemed nothing less than blasphemous.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Latter-day Saint advocates of plurality have, both in the early Church and among fundamentalists today, rooted their justifications for its employment in

descriptions of heaven's pantheon as family-centered and patriarchal—as a place where countless progeny, peopling and multiplying worlds, compound one's glory to infinity.

The Saints quickly developed additional arguments to recommend the system. One of these, only recently recognized for the importance it carried in nineteenth-century Mormon thought, was the claim that, if practiced as taught by their leaders, plural marriage would produce a generation of stronger, longer-living men and women, procuring for them the longevity of the ancients while saving their descendants from biological failings entailed by the alleged excesses of monogamy. By confining sexual intercourse to reproductive intent, the marriage of one man to several women accommodated greater male libidinous need within domestic boundaries while, at the same time, accomplishing the species' regenerative requirement and avoiding the dissipating, non-reproductive indulgences that Mormons believed sullied the monogamous bed.<sup>21</sup> As late as 1885, despite the grip of federal anti-polygamy laws, First Presidency members unequivocally identified monogamy with contemporary biological and social ills. Legally confining men to one spouse, they said, was not "God's system." For monogamy "did not meet man's wants. Those channels which God has provided for the lawful exercise of the appetites with which He has endowed man, under the system now in vogue, have been dammed up, and the history of Christianity informs us with what terrible results—the degradation and prostitution of woman, and the spread of the most terrible scourge known to humanity, the social evil, with its train of loathsome horrors. With our knowledge of God's laws we never can adopt such a system and call it civilization."<sup>22</sup>

Almost entirely forgotten by the modern Church, nineteenth-century Mormon advocates of polygamy were certain the practice could rejuvenate the species. One polygamous wife, repeating the teachings of her leaders, told a visitor to Utah in 1880 that polygamy was "given for the regeneration of humankind. There are no healthier, or better developed children than those born in polygamy."<sup>23</sup> George Q. Cannon said that, by obeying God's revelation approving plural marriage, Mormon offspring were becoming "healthy and vigorous," and were fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that God's people would live to the age of a tree.<sup>24</sup> It was an antici-

pation repeated by others. Charles W. Penrose, a Mormon newspaper editor who became an apostle in 1904, told how “celestial marriage, called by the world polygamy,” was giving rise among the Latter-day Saints to “stalwart sons and fair and robust daughters. . . . The mountain boys of Utah, powerful and well developed . . . are the first fruits of the Lord’s great work of regeneration.”<sup>25</sup>

Beyond its health-giving powers, plurality was recommended as a way to care for socially and economically marginalized females such as orphans, widows, or those enfeebled by age.<sup>26</sup> It also, said the Saints, made for happier households than monogamy.<sup>27</sup> It reinforced male authority in the home, restoring the domestic pattern of the ancient patriarchs and providing a remedy for what some believed was a serious structural ailment in the nineteenth-century family.<sup>28</sup> Altogether, plural marriage was held out as a tonic. In the words of Luke William Gallup, not then a polygamist but an advocate of the doctrine, those who practice plural marriage “are rewarded, becoming healthy & strong, and the Man who observes this & marries more than one wife for the sake of posterity will lengthen out his days, enjoying a long life & a happy one.”<sup>29</sup> Or as Charles Smith, who entered the Principle, put it to a yet-one-wifed friend: “I wish you were a polyomist [sic] there is Something immensely Godlike in it[.] It increases the powers of the mind, [and] brings forth in bold relief all the powers of the human Soul.”<sup>30</sup> The Mormon husband of two or more wives, another enthusiast said, did more for the race than “ten thousand monogamists who write and preach about morality and virtue.”<sup>31</sup>

Finally, the Saints were often told that only by entering plural marriage could they reach the highest level of glory in the next life. Eternal marriage and plurality of wives were inextricably connected. To forfeit one, it was said, would bring loss of the other.<sup>32</sup> The 1843 revelation was placed in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876 to buttress the contention of George Reynolds, then under indictment, that plural marriage was a commandment, a way of life required of him by his religion. By identifying the practice as a mandate imposed by Mormon doctrine, it was hoped that implementation of the Principle would find protection under the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment. Daniel H. Wells, a counselor to President Brigham Young, in support of Reynolds, stated in open court that any who were physically able to enter the order but

failed to do so “would be under condemnation, and would be *clipped in their glory* in the world to come.”<sup>33</sup> As Brigham Young once put it, all should at least have faith in the doctrine and not oppose it, for “the only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.”<sup>34</sup>

And this, the prospective meed of godly thrones, combined with plurality’s temporal gifts, illustrates the compelling sweep of expectations that nineteenth-century Mormons were told they could look for if they lived the Principle. One modern writer, puzzling over why Latter-day Saints undertook such emotionally challenged marriages, concluded that it could only have been from unquestioning obedience to God’s inscrutable command.<sup>35</sup> On the contrary, Church authorities told their followers that plural marriage brought unnumbered compensations, here as well as in the life to come. In the words of nineteenth-century apostle Orson Hyde, polygamy was supported by “such a tide of irresistible arguments, that, like the grand Mississippi, it bears on its bold current everything that dares to oppose its course.”<sup>36</sup>

Because of its transforming effects, plurality was said to have produced an unusual number of men raised to leadership in the Church and that its ethos resulted in an especially righteous and able generation of members.<sup>37</sup> Polygamy, some contended, would eventually be counted a blessing to everyone. Whether this meant that the Saints should engage in it only by themselves, leavening the social loaf through their polygamous practice alone, or whether it was a system suitable for humankind generally, was answered differently at different times. Especially when refuting charges that the Church sought to disseminate its domestic reform abroad, leaders emphatically denied that they intended doing so. It was, said Brigham Young, a commandment given by God only for his “faithful children.”<sup>38</sup> Heber C. Kimball described the practice as a means by which the Almighty intended to keep the Saints separate and distinct from the rest of the world.<sup>39</sup> Plurality, one Latter-day Saint pamphleteer stated, was to be confined geographically to Zion, a place intentionally set apart by God for that purpose.<sup>40</sup> And President John Taylor was told in a revelation that plurality was not to be proclaimed to nor urged upon the rest of the world unless they first accepted the “law of my Gospel and are governed thereby.”<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, moved by the lifting capacities claimed for patriarchal marriage, soaring expectations concerning its acknowledgment, if not its practice outside the Mormon fold, were also heard. After Orson Pratt's intrepid 1852 sermon, Brigham Young followed Pratt by predicting that the Principle would be accepted by "the more intelligent portions of the world" and praised as one of the best doctrines ever set forth.<sup>42</sup> Rather than an innovation, it was described as an ancient family pattern superior to the monogamy of modern Christian nations, one yet to be seen in non-Euro-American societies. George Q. Cannon asserted that a survey of these cultures proved polygamy, though practiced by peoples unfamiliar with Mormonism, brought "greater good to them than the practice of monogamy or the one-wife system."<sup>43</sup> Thus, said another authority, echoing plurality's alleged eugenic effects, "the most stalwart and physically powerful men known are not found in Christian monogamic nations, but in polygamic Asia."<sup>44</sup>

Mormon confidence in the superiority of plural marriage sometimes partook of a near hauteur. It was more than once described as their Church's "greatest gift" to humankind.<sup>45</sup> As late as the mid-1880s, when the national anti-polygamy crusade was near its height, Apostle Moses Thatcher reaffirmed that a major reason the Saints refused to give up polygamy was because, in his words, it was the "chief corner stone" by which they would establish a civilization "that will yet be the admiration of the world."<sup>46</sup> Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, writing near the same time, said Mormons were honored that the Almighty had chosen them to pioneer a domestic pattern that would bring greater health and happiness and that Mormons were the "advanced guard" for introducing this "practical reform in the marriage system."<sup>47</sup> Boasting that the Saints had the handsomest men and women, Apostle George A. Smith said this was because they better understood the correct relationship of the sexes and that Gentiles might properly envy them, for such unbelievers were "a poor, narrow-minded, pinch-backed race of men, who chain themselves down to the law of monogamy."<sup>48</sup> On account of their teachings, relocating to the valleys of the mountains was, a female Saint remembered, like "passing from one World to another!"<sup>49</sup> And a Mormon physician

and polygamous wife promised that, if plurality were universally accepted as taught by the Saints, the millennium would come.<sup>50</sup>

Owing to such enthusiasm, we know plurality was practiced to a greater extent than traditional Church estimates admit. Though the number of pluralists after 1860 declined relative to the entire population of the Church, inquiries into the question find that, on average, between a fourth and a third of households in pre-Manifesto, Mormon Utah could be counted as polygamous; settlements with even higher proportions existed but were exceptional.<sup>51</sup> As Lowell “Ben” Bennion, the foremost investigator of these matters, has suggested, even these percentages might have been larger except for demographic and other constraints, such as the number of eligible females. Beyond this, owing to their extensive social networks, most Mormons were closely connected in one way or another with friends and relatives who were pluralists. Because so many Church leaders were polygamous, an imprimatur that reinforced the doctrine’s importance, the mindset of Mormons both plural and monogamous was one that gave the Principle an august presence in their communities.<sup>52</sup> In a recent survey, Bennion and co-author Thomas R. Carter conclude that plural marriage, in all its aspects, “was prevalent enough to label Utah *polygamous* in spite of its monogamous majority.”<sup>53</sup>

Over the half century or more of Church approval for plurality, tens of thousands of men, women, and children lived beneath the roofs of Mormon Abrahams.<sup>54</sup> As such, excepting religious celibacy, the Mormon polygamous experience as a religio-cultural ideal as well as actual way of life, may have constituted the largest formal departure from monogamy in western European and American societies for centuries. After a visit to the American West, former Vice President Schuyler Colfax complained to Senator George Edmunds in 1882 that the Principle was so broadly embraced in Utah that he found monogamous Mormons committed to it just as poor whites in the South supported slavery.<sup>55</sup> With its theological prestige and socially suffused character, the comment of one adherent at the time of the national crusade against the practice is entirely comprehensible: “The ABANDONMENT OF POLYGAMY, that is considered by some to be so easy of accomplishment, is more untenable even than fighting. However much the people might desire to do this, they could not



without yielding every other principle, for it is the very key stone of our faith, and is so closely interwoven into everything that pertains to our religion, that to tear it asunder and cast it away would involve the entire structure.”<sup>56</sup>

## II

The energy Latter-day Saints brought to the support of their doctrine also explains the voltaic character of non-Mormon response. Sir Richard Burton commented on the level of passion displayed by the two sides in the debate over Mormon claims.<sup>57</sup> And Richard D. Poll, a twentieth-century Mormon historian, pointed out that attacks on the Saints and their polygamy were largely proportional to the intensity of Mormon attacks on the Gentiles and their monogamy.<sup>58</sup> The reaction of those opposing plurality was owing to widespread belief that, rather than what Latter-day Saints were saying, it was monogamous marriage that accounted for what was best in Western civilization. Ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan said in the 1870s that monogamy was an evolved form, winnowed and proven superior to other marital arrangements by experience.<sup>59</sup> If polygamy were tolerated, it was believed, civility would regress, the status of women would decline, the nation’s democratic sensibilities would erode, and rank immorality would spread. As non-Mormon Americans enveloped the Mountain West, the Saints were predictably challenged by antagonists who insisted that monogamy alone could bring a happy and ordered society.

Moved by such views, congressmen began enacting successively harsher statutes to suppress polygamy beginning in 1862, eventually patterning their laws on Reconstruction measures imposed on former Confederate states and subjecting Utah society to the political and judicial control of a federal commission. Mormon insistence that the freedom of religion clause in the First Amendment to the Constitution permitted them to configure marriage relations as they pleased was contradicted by the U.S. Supreme Court in the famous *Reynolds* case of 1879. In its decision, while affirming the authority of Congress to regulate marriage in territories such as Utah and establishing the rule that liberty under the First Amendment extended only to religious belief, not practice, the court also affirmed that “polygamy has al-

ways been odious among the northern and western nations of Europe, and, until the establishment of the Mormon Church, was almost exclusively a feature of the life of Asiatic and of African people.”<sup>60</sup>

Sarah Barringer Gordon has shown that the campaign against polygamy, among other things, rested on suppositions knitting the nuclear family and the American Constitution together. For many, this alliance was anchored in the traditional, Protestant monogamous home. It was the presumed threat to monogamy, more than all else, that raised vehement opposition to plural marriage and moved the nation’s reformist focus from Reconstruction in the South to Reconstruction in the West.<sup>61</sup> As expressed by the Utah Commission in its report for 1885, the nation’s anti-polygamy laws and imprisonment of Mormon pluralists occurred because of “the assault made by the Mormon Church upon the most cherished institution of our civilization—the monogamous system. The laws for the suppression of polygamy were chiefly inspired by the apprehension that if this practice should be . . . tolerated . . . in the United States it might one day become a serious menace to the institution of monogamy, which the world has come to consider the most potential factor for the advancement of civilization everywhere.”<sup>62</sup>

Exercising authority given them by Congress, law-enforcement officers arrested so many “cohabs” that western prisons filled, making it necessary to incarcerate some as far east as Detroit, Michigan.<sup>63</sup> In addition to the imprisonment of Church members by the hundreds and loss of properties, scores fled across the nation’s boundaries, establishing colonies in Mexico and Canada where they looked to freely cultivate what George Alfred Townsend described as the “banyan” redundancies of Mormon polygamy.<sup>64</sup> Most onerous, perhaps, anticipating representations made of today’s fundamentalists, were exaggerated portrayals of Mormon plural marriage as nothing more than a system encouraging the lustful exploitation of women and young girls.<sup>65</sup> Fear that Mormons threatened traditional family life inspired an unsuccessful but decades-long national campaign to amend the U.S. Constitution and so forever prohibit polygamy.<sup>66</sup> International attention to “Mormon marriages,” as they were sometimes called, led to legislation outlawing polygamy in Canada, anti-Mor-

mon pamphleteering in Europe, and condemnation by the Pope.<sup>67</sup> In the words of one observer at the time, Hubert Howe Bancroft, the federal crusade against Mormon polygamy was a program “without parallel in the history of American morals.”<sup>68</sup>

Though unrelenting, attacks on plurality were slow to extinguish Mormon attachment to the doctrine. The onslaught brought by their enemies seemed only to spur greater animation by defenders. As Mary Jane Mount Tanner put it to a family member in 1882, “Aunt Cornelia says why do I defend polygamy so strongly I tell her because she attacks it.”<sup>69</sup> Tempering their advocacy, Mormon leaders insisted they were not “propagandists” and had never actively sought universal adherence to “Bible marriage.”<sup>70</sup> At the same time, referring to the transforming power of plurality, those arrayed against them were, said Charles W. Penrose, seeking to “destroy the work of regeneration and reformation” Mormonism had brought to the world.<sup>71</sup> Further, Eliza R. Snow warned that those seeking to forcefully engraft monogamy on them would not only be divinely punished but, if they succeeded in making the Latter-day Saints forfeit polygamy, would bear a greater burden before God than any people except the ancient Jews.<sup>72</sup> They were, said the leaders, in circumstances similar to those of the Israelites in Egypt and the early Christians under Rome.<sup>73</sup> Church members were hated by the world, they were told, just as the righteous in every age had been. And fueling that “hate,” said George Q. Cannon, “head and front,” was Mormon audacity in urging plural marriage as a principle of religion.<sup>74</sup>

Still, the Saints were assured, if they would hold fast to the practice, keeping “every commandment,” that God would stand as their protector—a contractual obligation that some later said the Saints failed completely to fulfill, thus explaining why the Lord eventually took plural marriage away from them with the Manifesto.<sup>75</sup> But as part of this penultimate phase of the struggle, believers were told that the campaign against polygamy was a dimension of the long-expected persecution and upheaval expected to precede the world’s end. This vision was often communicated to the Saints by their leaders, explaining that, if they endured, Mormon suffering brought by their enemies would be assuaged by terrible reckoning at the hand of God.<sup>76</sup> That is why, until the late 1880s when the Church became especially committed to pro-

jecting a reformed image of itself so as to win statehood for Utah and thereby acquire greater autonomy from federal control, leaders said that allegiance to polygamy was more important than obedience to secular laws criminalizing the practice.<sup>77</sup> Too much smoothed from Mormon memory today, efforts by the Saints to perpetuate the “higher law,” submitting to humiliation, impoverishment, dislocation, and imprisonment, were heroic. Their perseverance constitutes one of the longest instances of civil disobedience in United States history.

As the bite of anti-polygamy legislation was more keenly felt, Church spokesmen bent their defensive strategy, projecting the Mormon image as overwhelmingly monogamous, hoping thereby to persuade the nation that they were little different from other Americans in their home life. A major feature of this tack involved shuttering the Church’s devotion to plural marriage from public view while abating their criticism of traditional monogamy. In 1888 Wilford Woodruff told General Authority colleagues that, if anyone should commence talking about plurality at a general conference, they should throw their hats at him.<sup>78</sup>

Church representatives attempted to persuade the government that the practice was nearly moribund, saying that the proportion of Latter-day Saints engaged in polygamy amounted to no more than 1 or 2 percent, and that those numbers were “diminishing with wonderful rapidity.”<sup>79</sup> At the same time, not only was approval for such marriages still given but, especially when speaking privately and within Church walls, authorities yet told members that the practice was essential for their highest exaltation in the hereafter and urged its observance.<sup>80</sup> Alarmed by their leaders’ public statements and fearing that a retreat in Church policy on polygamy was underway, Mormons serving time in prison complained to George Q. Cannon, a counselor in the First Presidency, that if this were true their sacrifices for the doctrine were in vain. Cannon assured them on October 2, 1888, that polygamy would not be given up.<sup>81</sup> Recognizing the Janus-like character of its response to the nation’s campaign against Mormonism’s marital ideal in the 1880s, especially in the last few years of that decade, helps us better understand how the Church could issue the 1890 Manifesto and yet continue to approve new plural marriages for the next quarter century.<sup>82</sup>

When in 1890 the Utah Commission impugned Mormon denials by announcing the discovery of dozens of recently solemnized polygamous unions and accused the Church of continuing to urge the doctrine, President Woodruff issued his famous Manifesto the week before October general conference. Consistent with what one critic called Mormonism's "wooden horse" tactic of seeking entry into the Union by publicly denying authorization of plural marriages while actually permitting them, Woodruff stamped the commission's allegations as false. He further declared his intent to personally submit to the laws of the land and "advised" other Latter-day Saints to do likewise.<sup>83</sup> The Mormon president indicated in his journal that he prepared the Manifesto to obtain "the Temporal Salvation of the Church."<sup>84</sup> And this was what the finished document, with its denials, genuflections to the law, and non-revelatory tone eventually accomplished. Consistent with earlier professions, using feint and circumvention, the object was to show federal lawmakers that they were *advising* members not to enter polygamous marriages, hoping thereby to obtain relief from the enforcement of anti-bigamy statutes, acquire statehood, but keep the Principle.

When it was learned that Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble, to whom a copy of Woodruff's statement had already been sent, would not accept it as persuasive unless ratified by Church members themselves, it was read and voted upon at a session of general conference, October 6, 1890. This was a significant step because members were now not only advised to obey the law but, by voting on the document, were making their obedience a rule of the Church. Although, in a statement following publication of the Manifesto as "Official Declaration-1" in contemporary editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, the vote on the Manifesto is reported to have been unanimous, it was not. Some of those present were deeply disturbed by the presentation. Nevertheless, enough lifted their hands that the statement passed and became official policy for the Church.<sup>85</sup>

Woodruff's pronouncement, however, failed to address several important matters relating to Mormon plural marriage. Were men and women who married as plurals before the document's issuance, for example, affected by its language and now to be separated?<sup>86</sup> Was the proclamation applicable outside the United

States, as in Mexico where dozens of plural families resided?<sup>87</sup> And what implications did the document have for Mormon men then prosecuted or serving time for polygamous cohabitation?<sup>88</sup>

None of these questions, however, proved so controversial as: Was the Manifesto a revelation? As already indicated, except that it was voted upon and made official policy, Woodruff's pronouncement differed little from other carefully worded retractions issued by the Church for years. Beyond this, nothing in its language resembled the style and form of revelations given by Church leaders in the past, including Woodruff's own of a decade before, in which the Almighty told him the nation would be punished for attempting to keep the Saints from "obeying the Patriarchal Law of Abraham which leadeth to a Celestial Glory."<sup>89</sup> When a Utah Commissioner said the Manifesto would have been more effective if it *had* been presented as a revelation, he was reproached by the editor of the Church's official newspaper who stated that when word came from on high it would be soon enough for the Church's president to say so.<sup>90</sup> Dissatisfaction on the question within, as well as outside of, the Church continued. Consequently, building on remarks made at the time of its presentation, President Woodruff was brought to affirm that the document was revealed and was a commandment from God.<sup>91</sup> More than this, in the 1891 hearings before the Master in Chancery dealing with escheated Church properties, the Church president, somewhat unwillingly, was led to say that his declaration required Mormon adherence to all provisions of the law of the land, including the need to discontinue living with plural wives married before the Manifesto, and that anyone entering a new plural marriage would be "liable to excommunication."<sup>92</sup>

Still, authorities see-sawed over the question for years. Disagreement on the matter fractured the Church's governing quorums. Some opposed permitting new polygamous marriages.<sup>93</sup> Others remained strongly committed to the Principle and secretly assisted faithful members wishing to take new wives into their homes. Supporting those who saw Woodruff's declaration as but a repetition of Church pretense in the 1880s was Apostle Mariner W. Merrill, one of those whom Woodruff consulted when the document was prepared. He said: "I do Not believe the Manifesto was a revelation from God but was formulated by Prest.

Woodruff and endorsed by His Councilors and the Twelve Apostles for expediency to meet the present situation of affairs in the Nation or those against the Church.”<sup>94</sup> Another apostle boldly stated in 1900 that the propagation of polygamous offspring would continue until the second coming of the Savior, adding, “I make this prophecy in the name of Jesus Christ.”<sup>95</sup> So far as deceit in the Church’s maneuverings is concerned, there was the alleged justifying remark of Apostle John Henry Smith that the Manifesto was but “a trick to beat the devil at his own game.”<sup>96</sup> It is significant that not only did those passages of the 1843 revelation commanding polygamy remain unchanged in the Doctrine and Covenants but also the Manifesto itself was not included in that canon until eighteen years after its formal presentation—and then, titled only an “Official Declaration,” was placed so far to the rear of the book that it followed both the index and concordance.<sup>97</sup>

Whatever qualifications are raised concerning it, the Manifesto and its interpretive development ushered the Church into an era of unprecedented agreement with the nation. Utah’s territorial legislature in 1892, after nearly a half century of refusal to do so, criminalized polygamous cohabitation.<sup>98</sup> The arrest and jailing of Mormon polygamists largely came to an end. Mormons aligned themselves with national political parties, and Utah Territory in 1896 was granted full membership with other states in the Union. Most importantly, public statements by leaders that new polygamous marriages were no longer condoned were repeated with increasing frequency, acquiring more credibility with members and nonmembers alike. Many who had long been critical of the Church were persuaded that the Saints had made a genuine concession, had turned away from plural marriage, and were now a fully American people.<sup>99</sup>

This said, nothing so speaks to the depth of the polygamous current in Mormon culture as the continued performance of new plural marriages during the 1890s and after, the Manifesto and promises by Church leaders notwithstanding. When word of such late unions emerged, Mormon spokesmen said they were the work of rebels and were few in number. Research shows, however, that high Church leaders, including members of the First Presidency, gave permission for many of these marriages, that they numbered in the hundreds, and that most who took additional

wives in the quarter century after the Manifesto could be described as among the most faithful in the Church. At least seven Apostles took new plural wives after Woodruff's 1890 declaration.<sup>100</sup> Churchmen did all they could to cloak such marriages from the majority of believers as well as outsiders, employing obfuscation, deception, and mistruth. What lay beneath this subterranean extension was the memory of strong commitments to "the higher law," commitments made again and again in holy places, memory of heroic sacrifices made in behalf of the Principle, sacrifices against which they were fortified not only by assurances that God would preserve both them and plural marriage but by the bold promise of polygamy's extraordinary rewards.

At the same time as officially approved post-Manifesto plural unions were occurring, the impetus of reform, both in fact and appearance, grew. Efforts to reconfigure the Church were energized by embarrassments arising from the B. H. Roberts and Reed Smoot cases in Congress. Roberts, who lived in a plural household and may have taken an additional spouse after the Manifesto, owing to vigorous criticism in both Congress and the nation's press, was refused his seat in the House of Representatives in 1900.<sup>101</sup> In the wake of this episode, with revived suspicion concerning Mormon truthfulness in the air, Utah's Senator-Apostle Reed Smoot was elected and seated but challenged. This four-year-long senatorial inquiry, one of the longest in congressional history to that time, while acquitting Smoot of marrying additional women, demonstrated that numbers of others, including Church authorities, had taken new brides and lived with them as plural wives since the 1890 Manifesto.<sup>102</sup> The awkward nature of these discoveries, abetted by urgings from Senator Smoot, persuaded President Joseph F. Smith to again strongly deny Mormon approval of plural marriage in 1904 and more resolutely halter other leaders in bringing the performance of such marriages to an end.<sup>103</sup>

In addition to public disavowals of polygamous relationships, a committee of apostles chaired by Francis M. Lyman, the quorum president, undertook the investigation of cases rumored to involve such unions.<sup>104</sup> But signals from the leaders remained confusing. After delivering a firm address condemning new plural marriages at general conference in April 1914, for example,



President Smith hosted an entertainment the same evening honoring those who had suffered in prison for polygamous cohabitation.<sup>105</sup> Confused by the conflicting character of what leaders said and did, some Church members remarked that it seemed the Church was going in two directions at once.<sup>106</sup> For the most part, however, inconsistencies diminished and fissures of disagreement between high churchmen over the question gradually closed. Officially approved new polygamous unions appear to have completely ceased by the time of World War I, and certainly by Smith's death in 1918.<sup>107</sup>

### III

The rhetoric of heaven-approved deviance, an important historical theme in the Saints' self-image and one to which plurality had powerfully contributed, never completely displaced the wish by many for respect from American society. This desire, combined with the Church's official statements, moved followers closer to the American mainstream. It was what Utah Commissioner John A. McClernand referred to in an 1887 remark to President Grover Cleveland—that every time Mormons made a statement claiming polygamy was no longer a part of their way of life, the greater the likelihood that such a description would become true.<sup>108</sup> Leo Lyman's characterization of events during the 1880s aptly describes the process of change occurring in Mormonism after 1890 as well: “[Church] concessions . . . relating to polygamy [were] intended mainly to pacify the public and their elected representatives. The efforts at conciliation were done without actually altering any aspect of the practice, other than perhaps making it less visible and more of an individual responsibility. But each time a statement was made, Latter-day Saints who heeded the words of their ecclesiastical superiors were encouraged in their resolves not to practice polygamy.”<sup>109</sup>

Growing acceptance by the larger membership of the Church of claims by their leaders concerning plurality's demise is the most significant alteration in Mormonism's countenance from the late 1880s and into the twentieth century. The contention that no more than 1 or 2 percent of their members had ever lived in plural arrangements became a fixed characterization of Mormonism's past, a generalization sincerely accepted as true by

members and, increasingly, by leaders themselves. The low figures adduced by Church defenders, sometimes lifted to 5 or 10 percent, were given throughout the twentieth century, as in President Hinckley's interview cited above.<sup>110</sup> And as part of the changes taking place, encomiums bestowed on Abraham as a polygamous model fell silent. Church authorities increasingly insisted that the sealing of a monogamous couple in the temple was what the 1843 revelation required, not a man's marriage to multiple wives.<sup>111</sup> Contradicting the evidence of decades, polygamy was described by one high Church spokesman as never having been a "vital tenet" in Church teaching. It was no more than "an incident," never an "essential" of what Mormonism taught.<sup>112</sup>

And with plurality's diminished profile, fashion and idiom in Latter-day Saint communities increasingly resembled that of their Gentile neighbors. Writing early in the twentieth century, describing how the Church's assumed discontinuance of polygamy transformed life in Utah, one observer said: "Mormons and non-Mormons [now] blend in the marts of trade, as in the ranks of the Bench and Bar, in the highways of travel, in society, in gatherings of all kinds, and only those who are acquainted could tell one from another."<sup>113</sup> The extent to which so many in the Church were brought to believe that God wanted Mormon men, at least in this world, to confine themselves to a single wife was one of Mormonism's most defining turns.

Because some dissenters yet held that polygamy was a binding requirement for the faithful and continued to enter such relationships, the First Presidency issued a harsh warning in 1933 to all who resisted the Church's new course. The statement not only claimed that, in abandoning polygamy, Mormon leaders were conforming themselves to divine will but that further attempts to revive the Principle were inspired by Satan, that new plural relationships were adulterous, and that the president of the Church alone had authority to approve plural unions—permission he no longer granted.<sup>114</sup> A further example of Mormonism's monogamous inflection occurred when Utah's state legislature enacted a criminal provision in 1935, supported by Church leaders, elevating conviction for polygamous cohabitation from a misdemeanor to a felony.<sup>115</sup> Mormon assimilation of the monogamous ideal was carried to such an extent that the Church's Commissioner of

Education, Franklin L. West, whose father and grandfather were both devoted pluralists, told an audience of the faithful in 1937 that monogamy had proven itself superior in the experience of the race and that the one-wife system best harmonized with man's inherent nature, the needs of families, and religious tradition.<sup>116</sup> Embracing these views, the Saints had completely wheeled round, using arguments identical to those made by critics of Mormon plural marriage during the anti-polygamy crusade.<sup>117</sup> Replacement of the Abrahamic polygamous ideal with firm Latter-day Saint endorsements of monogamy constitutes one of the most dramatic reversals in modern denominational history.

#### IV

Commitment to the Principle, however, was far from spent. Numbers of old modelers, nourished by Mormonism's prodigious archive of polygamous commendation, were determined to keep plural marriage alive. It is a common pattern with ultra-orthodox dissenters to focus on a traditional tenet of the parent denomination, often one of distinguishing prominence, in this case Mormon polygamy, and to contend that repudiation of the precept occurred because of capitulation to secular influence.<sup>118</sup> While most fundamentalists see official Mormonism as specially chosen in its youth, all consider it, in its maturity, to be a faith in peril. Replicating nineteenth-century Mormon indictments of Catholic and Protestant Christianity, Mormon fundamentalists accuse contemporary Latter-day Saints of no longer preaching the "fullness of the gospel," of surrendering to the world, especially on account of their retreats from plural marriage.<sup>119</sup> The fundamentalist shoots that sprouted from mainline Mormonism's trunk in the nineteen-teens, twenties, and thirties grew directly from memories of the high importance given polygamy by the old Church and the decades-long refusal to surrender it. The concealed but Church-approved performance of such marriages that continued into the early twentieth century not only instanced the Principle's endurance but provided encouragement to individuals committed to a fight that they saw others relinquishing. Official Mormonism's post-Manifesto, covert involvement with plural marriage thus became a template for fundamentalist polygamy itself.<sup>120</sup>

Increasingly active numbers of irreconcilables met privately in each other's homes, recalled the teachings of past leaders, and claimed that special authority for perpetuating polygamy was given them by Mormon President John Taylor when the Church was harassed and pressured to end the practice in the 1880s.<sup>121</sup> As their following grew, several families relocated to the high desert lands of southern Utah and northern Arizona. There, the fundamentalist community of Short Creek, now grown to become the municipalities of Hildale and Colorado City, suffered periodic attacks from public agencies. The best-known of these was a government raid in 1953 by Arizona National Guardsmen under the direction of Arizona Governor Howard Pyle.<sup>122</sup> The hardship created by the operation, combined with the exaggerations made to justify it and the financial costs incurred, led to a backlash in public opinion.<sup>123</sup> Nearly all taken in the raid later returned to the locale, plural marriage continued to be taught, and satellite communities were established as far away as Canada, Mexico, and, more recently, at the "Yearning for Zion" ranch near El Dorado, Texas. Most importantly, consistent with the major contention of this article, since the 1953 raid the number living in polygamous households in these settlements has increased from hundreds to thousands.<sup>124</sup> In 1991, considering themselves the authentic heirs of early Mormon preachment, the group officially named itself, "The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" (FLDS).

Another sect, the Apostolic United Brethren, emerged in the mid-twentieth century on account of controversy over leadership succession in the movement. Predominantly urban, members of this persuasion do not follow an antique dress code but firmly adhere to the importance of plural marriage. Living chiefly in and around Salt Lake City, colonies of AUB partisans have spread to other locations in Utah, to Montana, and a few even to Mexico, Germany, and the Netherlands. AUB and FLDS organizations together now tally their communicants at nearly 20,000. Other smaller organizations also exist, each claiming special endorsement from on high. Additionally, hundreds of men and women, unassociated with any formal group, steadfastly adhere to the polygamous ideals extolled by former Latter-day Saint leaders and their writings. It is estimated that these independents actually

constitute a majority of polygamous fundamentalists. Survey figures recently provided to me by Anne Wilde show organized and disparate adherents together totaling between 35,000 and 40,000 people, a substantial league of living advocates for the plural way of life.<sup>125</sup> And all, refusing to see God's hand in Mormonism's doctrinal evolution, view the official Church's opposition to plural marriage as evidence of its worldly thrall and oracular default.<sup>126</sup>

But even with their continuing increase, Mormon fundamentalists remain a slender troop when compared to the swelling legions of the better-known, monogamous, mainline Church. Grown to become one of the faster expanding religious bodies in the United States, counting more American adherents than either Episcopalians or Presbyterians, the Saints are now a formidable cultural force in certain regions of the country.<sup>127</sup> And this—the impressive growth of monogamous Mormonism—constitutes a daunting riposte to any who would say that, by stepping aside from polygamy, Church leaders lost their way. Given its acquisitions of power, wealth, and influence, one can understand why Mormon authorities are disinclined to recall, much less reinstate, practices that once brought imprisonment and scorn. Still, the success that monogamous Latter-day Saints enjoy has not spared them irritation from claims by and public notice given to their polygamous cousins. Annoyed by their perseverance, the orthodox Church sharply enunciates differences between itself and the dissenters. Mormon authorities have vigorously sought to suppress fundamentalist activities by excommunication, loyalty oaths, cooperation with government officials in making arrests, refusing Church welfare assistance to fundamentalist families, and advising that their children be denied baptism into the parent, Salt Lake City denomination until old enough to denounce the practice that brought them into the world.<sup>128</sup>

In concert with these policies toward contemporary polygamous groups, Latter-day Saint authorities give, at most, only cursory attention to their own Church's one-time commitment to plural marriage. Most approved biographies of early Mormon leaders say little, if anything, of their polygamous relationships. Almost no attention is given the subject in Latter-day Saint sermons, theological exposition, museum displays, or art.<sup>129</sup> Properly me-

morializing the courage of Mormon pioneers in their struggle against persecution, official accounts largely avoid discussion of what it was they were often persecuted for: the preaching and practice of polygamy. Anxious to present their history as doctrinally seamless and their teachings as unchanging, leaders must gray recollection of the most aberrant feature of their Church's past, cultivating what George D. Smith has termed "institutional forgetting."<sup>130</sup> When confronted with the impassioned advocacy of polygamy in the early Church, orthodox spokesmen call to their service exemptions permitted by "continuing revelation," a dispensation that with its approval of doctrinal amendment necessarily qualifies confidence in their leaders' prescience—as when President Heber J. Grant, condemning new plural marriages undertaken on the counsel of his predecessors, said "one living prophet [is] . . . worth twenty dead ones."<sup>131</sup>

To be sure, there are still vestiges within the mainline denomination that remind one of the profound place plurality once occupied in Mormon belief. Most conspicuously, the 1843 revelation justifying plural marriage is still a part of the Church's canon of scripture (D&C 132).<sup>132</sup> Sublimating the Principle, it is sometimes said that, while the Church gave up the practice, it did not disavow the doctrine and that it will be implemented again in heaven.<sup>133</sup> There is also the prospect, at odds with the Church's opposition to the revival of plural relations in the present life, given to Latter-day Saint widowers who remarry women not already eternally promised to a former husband, that they—the widower, his deceased wife, and the new wife—may all live together as eternal companions in the world to come.<sup>134</sup> And, though little noticed, the Church's 1995 declaration, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," exalting marriage and emphasizing the divinely mandated presence of both genders in marital relations, when literally read fails to exclude polygamy as an acceptable form of family life.<sup>135</sup> But these are anomalies, little diverting a Church now indefatigably crusading for the traditional, monogamous home.

## V

In contrast to Mormonism's opposition to renewed polygamy and to religious groups that espouse it, other developments sug-

gest that the nation itself may be moving in a more generous direction, hinting at acceptance of what Latter-day Saint leaders would as soon forget. The much-publicized “Yearning for Zion” FLDS ranch in Texas, raided by state authorities in 2008, as at Short Creek, Arizona, in 1953, has seen many of its dislodged polygamous inhabitants peacefully return to their homes.<sup>136</sup> While widespread American offense is aroused by the patriarchal authoritarianism of some of their leaders, the sentiment is by no means without exception, especially when it comes to the women, children and even the plural marital arrangement itself.<sup>137</sup> On a different front, some recommend plural relationships as having advantages for the elderly. Because of actuarial differences between the genders, plurality offers greater opportunities for companionship to widowed and older women, providing a partial remedy for the loneliness encountered by both sexes in their later years.<sup>138</sup> There is also now a non-religious website where single women seriously interested in joining polygamous families can advertise themselves.<sup>139</sup> And success of the television series, *Big Love*, portraying not only the persistence but general workability of a polygamous family in modern life, suggests a growing lenience for the practice on the part of its viewing audience.<sup>140</sup>

Although courts consistently uphold statutes criminalizing polygamy, there is evidence that greater permissiveness may be looked for in the future. In words that would have pleased the ears of earlier Mormons, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas’s delphic forecast in 1971 that “in time Reynolds will be overturned,” if not yet realized, foretells changing constitutional scenery ahead.<sup>141</sup> Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff deemphasizes prosecutions for polygamy as such, allowing fundamentalists to communicate less defensively with his office and thereby more effectively deter crimes such as under-age marriages and welfare fraud.<sup>142</sup> A Republican legislator in Utah bravely, but unsuccessfully, proposed that the state apologize to its fundamentalist citizens.<sup>143</sup> Canadians are examining the possibility of moderating their laws criminalizing plurality.<sup>144</sup> And the growing assent for the legalization of same-sex marriage both in the United States and abroad portends a more relaxed attitude generally toward marital relationships of many kinds between consenting adults—including plural wifery.<sup>145</sup>

The possibility that this shift in attitude may eventually become dominant raises the question of official Mormonism's response. Is it conceivable that the main body of the Saints could return to the much-married, grandly multiplied patriarch as an ideal this side of the veil? Admitting, as Michael Quinn suggests, that the growth of Mormon membership among peoples in third world countries where polygamy is practiced could lead the Church to a revised interpretation of the Manifesto, my own expectation is that this will not soon occur.<sup>146</sup> I am also certain that, until sentiment within the United States becomes yet more permissive on social issues, jealous of its improving public image the official Church will not hazard so reactionary a course.<sup>147</sup> Mormonism's "passion for respectability," long frustrated by its polygamous reputation, is not yet fully sated.<sup>148</sup> Although, without returning to the *practice*, it is reasonable to assume that, so far as respectful forbearance of polygamy's presence among others is concerned, consistent with its altered stands on controversial subjects before, we can eventually expect to see Mormonism "backing," as Klaus Hansen put it, "into the future."<sup>149</sup>

But this will most easily happen when leaders turn from obsession with the Mormon past as a proselytizing tool to an honest regard for its instructive potential.<sup>150</sup> An instance is found in one of the Church's responses when the nation's attack on its marriage practices became most intense in the 1870s and 80s. Departing from earlier policies, Church spokesmen began softening their censure of monogamy and took a broader, more pliant stance. While contending that plural marriage was the better way, and one that in all its requirements could be lived best only by Mormons themselves, inasmuch as polygamy and monogamy had existed together in other places, they observed, why not again—as, indeed, it did in Utah Territory at the time? Mormon polygamy, they pointed out, did not in fact endanger monogamy. So why not permit polygamy to be tried as an experiment, they asked, and then, based on observed effects, allow men and women freely to choose which marital philosophy to embrace? By showing no preference for a particular form of marriage in its laws, they argued, government would be "more complete and glorious . . . [permitting] the widest diversity in . . . social habits and institutions, as well as in religious faith."<sup>151</sup> As an increasingly respected convert to the nation's mo-



nogamous bias, but one knowing the wrath of those opposed to an unpopular social philosophy, a more liberally inclined Mormonism could plead an easing of society's penalty-laden policies toward modern pluralists, summon its one-time prayer for the coexistence of differing domestic systems, and anoint tolerance as a favored response to those different from itself.<sup>152</sup>

Beyond its relevance for relations with others, more open inquiry into the Church's polygamous past can bring special treasures to the mainline faithful themselves. As an organization claiming hallowed regard for early fathers and mothers, we should expect nothing less from the Saints than forthright accounts of those who courageously strove to do "the works of Abraham," multiplying wives and children on the promise that by so doing they were bringing greater radiance to their future estates.<sup>153</sup> If the family structure for which they toiled was set aside by a later generation, it does not diminish their immeasurable sacrifices in its behalf. Such lives are ill requited when accounts of what they believed in and died for are abridged. If Mormonism with its adherence to continuing revelation changed course, it does not disqualify the reverence owing men and women who, in their day, hearing a different call, followed a different furrow—one that they were promised would bring a greater harvest. The ancient Greeks sometimes went abroad to recover the bones of their heroes and wise men so as to give them an honorable place at home. It is said that their oracles told them that to do so would bless and prosper their native lands.<sup>154</sup> By more fully restoring the lives of polygamous pioneers to Mormonism's collective memory, Latter-day Saints will further venerate an already noble heritage.

## VI

In a 1930 essay marking the centennial of Mormonism's birth, Bernard DeVoto described the Church as a "tamed heresy."<sup>155</sup> However tamed and congruent this best-known native faith has become, its best-known heresy survives. More than only threads in modern Latter-day Saint scripture and ritual, or as the subject of socio-historical investigation and cinematic portrayal, Mormon plural marriage is most visible in the lengthening rosters of contemporary, protesting fundamentalists. And these separatists,

convinced that heaven is on their side, may be engaged in nothing less than the birthing of a new religion. Following the church/sect declension familiar to all students interested in the sociology of religion, modern polygamy's disciples present us with behaviors that not only commonly attend the founding of new faiths but ones that replicate Mormonism's own beginnings: claims of divine approval for their dissenting path; adherence to unpopular social constructions; and the cobbling of liturgical usages from what they see as the detritus of an errant predecessor.<sup>156</sup> If not yet fully coalescent in an institutional sense, Mormonism's polygamous, fundamentalist strands, as with Catholicism's dissevering reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, follow religious compasses that share a common doctrinal north.

In conversations over many years, I often heard that plural marriage would inevitably be given up and left to fade from the historical consciousness of the Saints. Though a major relinquishment, it was said, this was a predictable outcome of the Church's inclining, assimilationist arc. I am now convinced that, when considered in its entirety, including its perpetuation by today's fundamentalists, larger Mormonism's experience with the practice suggests a different conclusion. Given plurality's deep intertwining with the Church's restorationist, family expansionist theology, the Prophet Joseph Smith's determined commitment to polygamy's implementation, the earnest arguments made by his followers in its defense, and the considerable number of men, women, and children who lived in the system, valiantly defying U.S. law for decades to preserve it, there was set to work a powerful, replicating momentum.

Contemporary standard bearers of the plural way, inheritors of the early Church's theological justifications and tradition of resistance, obstinately adhere to the Principle. Building their lives around a marital ideal once exalted by the parent creed as a *labarum*, then folded and put away, these modern votaries proudly herald its colors once more. Merging polygamous fundamentalism's resilient course with the pattern of Latter-day Saint plural marriage generally, a recent observer concluded: "So many times in the history of Mormon polygamy the outside world thought it had the movement on the ropes only to see it flourish anew."<sup>157</sup> The Church's greatest heresy, succored from its earliest days by

the faith and sacrifice of Mormonism's best, despite all trials and abandonments stubbornly continues to reemerge, recruiting eager Abrahams and Jacobs again and again.

### Notes

1. Nineteenth-century Saints most often used the term "polygamy" interchangeably with "the Principle," "plural marriage," "celestial marriage," "patriarchal marriage," "Bible marriage," and "the higher law." I will use these historical terms rather than the anthropologically correct "polygyny" when referring to the simultaneous marriage among Mormons of two or more wives to the same man.

2. President Hinckley's comments regarding polygamy in the Larry King interview can be read in "Larry King interview—President Gordon B. Hinckley," <http://www.onlineutah.com/polygamyhinckley.shtml> (accessed July 18, 2011). Comments are in Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Hinckley on Polygamy: 'I Condemn It,'" *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 9, 1998, A1, A6. See also the remarks of Elder Quentin L. Cook where, admitting that plurality was "significant" in the Church's past, he states that it is not in the present. See "Polygamy: Not Practiced in the LDS Church," <http://www.lds.about.com/od/basicsgospelprinciples/a/polygamy.htm> (accessed April 10, 2009). A further review of Hinckley's statement and its implications is provided in Andrea Moore-Emmett, "Only for Eternity," *Salt Lake City Weekly* 15, no. 35 (January 28, 1999): 13–17. Reports of the Church's response to polygamists in Texas and elsewhere are numerous. Examples are: Newsroom: The Official Church Resource for News Media (hereafter cited as LDS Newsroom), "Church Seeks to Address Public Confusion over Texas Polygamy Group," entry posted June 26, 2008, <http://www.newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories> (accessed April 10, 2009); and Carrie A. Moore's review of official Church statements about fundamentalists, posted April 19, 2008, at "LDS Again Stress the Difference from FLDS," <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,695271948,00.html> (accessed November 14, 2009). Attempts by the LDS Church to wrest use of the appellation "Mormon" from fundamentalist use (including attempts to patent the term), preserving it exclusively for itself, are examined in Ryan T. Cragun and Michael Nielsen, "Fighting over 'Mormon': Media Coverage of the FLDS and LDS Churches," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 65–104. This journal is hereafter cited as *Dialogue*.

3. Numerous references to these doctrines are found in Mormon scripture and literature. See, e.g., Moses 1:39; D&C 76:58; Joseph Smith's famous King Follett Discourse in Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History*

of the *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols., 1902–12, Vol. 7, 1932; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973 printing), 6:302–17 (hereafter *History of the Church*); discussions provided by Brigham H. Roberts in his *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century 1*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints/Deseret News Press, 1930), 2:390–403; Kurt Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God: A Theological Evolution, 1830–1915* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2000), 108–26; and Blake T. Ostler, *The Attributes of God*, Vol. 1 in *EXPLORING MORMON THOUGHT*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2001–08), 1:9–25 *passim*.

4. Two recent explorations of Smith's 1843 revelation and its meaning for Mormon doctrinal development are Newell G. Bringhurst, "Section 132 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants: Its Complex Contents and Controversial Legacy," in Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds., *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 59–86; and Craig L. Foster, "Doctrine and Covenants Section 132 and Joseph Smith's Expanding Concept of Family," *ibid*, 87–98.

5. Benjamin Franklin Johnson, Letter to George F. Gibbs, 1903, Benjamin Franklin Johnson Papers, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City. The multiplication of progeny was an assumed accompaniment of plural marriage and one often stressed in the nineteenth-century Church. As but two of many examples, see Brigham Young's statement concerning himself on September 9, 1860, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: Franklin D. Richards et al., 1855–86), 8:178–79; and "Remarks by Prest. Heber C. Kimball," *Deseret News*, February 25, 1857, 405.

6. Gary James Bergera, "Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists, 1841–44," *Dialogue* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 4. The expansive aspiration encouraged by such a view, repeated in Mormon explanations for polygamy throughout the nineteenth century, was remembered in the twentieth century by plural wife Annie Clark Tanner who said she was taught that the larger the family, the greater the kingdom over which the ruling male would preside in worlds to come. See her *A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund and University of Utah Library, 1973), 221.

7. George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "... but we called it celestial marriage"* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 310 and Table 4.8, 311–12. For differing but generally parallel estimates, see Todd Compton's "Prologue: A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Wives," in his *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*

(Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 1–23; D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in Association with Smith Research Associates, 1994), 587–88; Quinn’s companion volume, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1997), 178–79; Bergera, “Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists,” 1–51; and the appendix titled, “Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives: Total Number, Reasons for, and Methods of Selection,” in Bringhurst and Foster, *The Persistence of Polygamy*, 290–98. For commentary on Smith’s dynastic proclivity, see Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, 188–92. And for the role played by polygamy in cementing loyalty to the Prophet in times of crisis, see Kathryn M. Daynes, “Family Ties: Belief and Practice in Nauvoo,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 8 (1988): 63–75. For comparisons with utopian and other groups of the time, see Lawrence Foster’s often-referenced *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). The best narrative overview remains that of Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 1–81.

8. “Discourse Delivered by Elder Jos. F. Smith,” *Deseret News Weekly*, September 11, 1878, 498. See also William Clayton, “Celestial Marriage: How and When the Revelation Was Given,” *Deseret Evening News*, May 20, 1886, 2; and George A. Smith’s remark as remembered by Lorenzo Snow, and quoted in *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880–1945 Abridged* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), January 6, 1901, 280.

9. Preamble, *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (June 7, 1844): 1.

10. Sidney Rigdon, Letter to Mr. Editor, “Communications,” *Messenger and Advocate*, June 1846, 474–75; and the comment by Joseph Smith’s widow, Emma, to William Clayton that “it was secret things that had cost Joseph and Hyrum their lives.” George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1991), 144.

11. See the tallies of George D. Smith in his *Nauvoo Polygamy*, Tables 4.8–10, 312–22, and summary p. 354.

12. Harold Bloom, *American Religion: The Emergence of a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 108.

13. Pratt’s sermon was printed with the minutes of, and other addresses given, at a special conference held in Salt Lake City on August 28–29, 1852. All are published in *Deseret News, Extra, Containing a Revelation on Celestial Marriage, A Remarkable Vision . . .*, September 18, 1852, 14–22. The Prophet’s revelation approving polygamy was, for the first time in Church history, published in the same organ and then again in

subsequent years. For a history of these printings through the mid-1860s, see “Plurality of Wives,” *Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, March 4, 1866, non-paginated.

14. Orson Spencer, *Patriarchal Order, Or Plurality of Wives!* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 8. David Whittaker provides an excellent summary of Spencer’s life as a Mormon apologist with analyses of other defenders of polygamy in “Early Mormon Polygamy Defenses,” *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 43–63.

15. “Marriage and Morals in Utah,” *Deseret News Weekly*, January 16, 1856, 356–57; then, as a separate pamphlet: *Marriage and Morals in Utah, An Address by P. P. Pratt*. . . (Liverpool: Orson Pratt/London: LDS Book & Star Depot, 1856).

16. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 448.

17. The foundation on which, more than any other, Mormonism is built was the first-claimed revelation to Joseph Smith Jr. in which he was told that, of the many Christian denominations existing in 1820, none was correct. More than this, the fifteen-year-old Smith later reported that the deities appearing to him described all Christian persuasions at the time as “an abomination.” *History of the Church*, 1:5–8. The “great apostasy” is a common Mormon phrase referring to the loss of Christian truths after the death of Jesus, leaving humankind to wander in darkness for centuries. The “restoration” of these truths is commonly viewed by Mormons as Smith’s primary purpose and accomplishment. While many Mormon works treat the theme, the few cited here are representative: James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy Considered in the Light of Scriptural and Secular History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909); Brigham H. Roberts, *The Falling Away or the World’s Loss of the Christian Religion and Church* (n.p., 1929); T. Edgar Lyon, *Apostasy to Restoration: Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1960); Hugh Nibley, *When the Lights Went Out: Three Studies on the Ancient Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976); Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 84–87. An overview of Mormon restorationist thought is provided in Jan Shipp’s “The Reality of the Restoration and the Restoration Ideal in the Mormon Tradition,” in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, edited by Richard T. Hughes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 181–95. Some recent Mormon historians, using contemporary scholarship, emphasize a more selective interpretation of “the falling away” from divine truth in early Christianity, an approach that looks to more closely define what was essential in the “restoration.” Mormonism’s nineteenth-century criticism of Catholic and Protestant

marriage practices has yet to be addressed by this revision. See Todd Compton, "Apostasy," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 1:56–58; and Eric Dursteler, "Inheriting the 'Great Apostasy': The Evolution of Mormon Views on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," *Journal of Mormon History* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 23–59.

18. Editorial, "Monogamy, Polygamy, and Christianity," *Millennial Star* 15, no. 32 (August 6, 1853): 517. Statements of this kind are numerous. As but a sampling, see Orson Pratt, *Deseret News Extra*, September 18, 1852, 20; an unsigned essay probably written by John Taylor while editing the *Mormon* in New York City: "Polygamy vs. Monogamy," *Mormon* 1, no. 42 (December 8, 1855): 2; "Remarks by Pres. Heber C. Kimball," *Deseret News Weekly*, August 12, 1857, 179; "Remarks by President Brigham Young," *Deseret News Weekly*, August 6, 1862, 41; and "Epistle of the First Presidency," April 4, 1885, in James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833–1964*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 3:11.

19. Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," *Seer* 1, no. 10 (October 1853): 158–60, and no. 11 (November 1853): 172; Jedediah M. Grant, August 7, 1853, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:346; "Lecture by Elder Orson Hyde," *Deseret News Weekly*, October 19, 1854, 1; and Benjamin F. Johnson, *Why the Latter Day Saints Marry a Plurality of Wives . . .* (San Francisco: Excelsior, 1854), 13–15. This position is now described as "opinion" and not official Mormon "doctrine." See "LDS Do Not Endorse Claims in 'Da Vinci,'" *Deseret Morning News*, May 17, 2006, at <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed July 18, 2011). There is also Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Andrew C. Skinner, and Thomas A. Wayment, *What DaVinci Didn't Know: An LDS Perspective* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006). For affirmations of the Church's earlier view by Mormon fundamentalists, see Ogden Kraut, *Polygamy in the Bible* (Salt Lake City: Kraut's Pioneer Press, 1983), 162–247; and David A. Dye, ed., *The Marriage of Christ: Sacred LDS Teachings* (Mona, Utah: privately published, 2007). The best account of the controversy over Jesus's marriage that I have read, especially as it relates to LDS teachings, is Scot Denhalter's review of Vern Grosvenor Swanson's *Dynasty of the Holy Grail: Mormonism's Sacred Bloodline* (2006), in *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no.1 (Winter 2009): 213–21.

20. Already astonished by Mormon descriptions of heaven, Victorians must have been staggered to hear one Church leader state that the gods reproduced spirit children in the same way offspring were conceived by mortals. "Remarks by Pres. H. C. Kimball . . . Nov. 29 1857," *Deseret News Weekly*, December 9, 1857, 315. For much the same from

Lorenzo Snow, see his quotation in *Heber J. Grant Diaries*, October 1, 1890, 123.

21. The Saints echoed non-Mormon, nineteenth-century health reformers who described the race as suffering from serious physical decline. See Lorenzo Niles Fowler, *Marriage: Its History and Ceremonies, with a Phrenological and Physiological Exposition . . .* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1847), 10–11, 12; “Have Americans Degenerated?” [New York] *Daily Graphic*, November 21, 1873, 139; and the Frenchman, Benedict Morel, as discussed in Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 14–17. Mormons argued that monogamy led men to cruelly impose on their wives when already pregnant, to visit prostitutes, and to generally surrender to sexual excess and lascivious habits. These tendencies, they said, were inherited by their offspring, dissipating their energy and hastening the moral and physical decline of the race. Mormons believed polygamy would remedy these faults. For the most extensive examination, see B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 84–126; with documents in B. Carmon Hardy, *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy, Its Origin, Practice, and Demise* (Norman, Okla.: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 2007), 91–100, 130–40; and with Dan Erickson in “‘Regeneration—Now and Evermore!’ Mormon Polygamy and the Physical Rehabilitation of Humankind,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (January 2001): 40–61.

22. “Epistle of the First Presidency,” April 4, 1885, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:11. Repeating the same sentiment, an editorial in the Church’s newspaper stated: “It is only godless, human law that has written monogamy upon the institutions of marriage, and a pretty mess men have made of it.” “Monogamy and the Home,” *Deseret Evening News*, December 5, 1885, not paginated.

23. Mary Jane Mount Tanner, Provo, Utah, Letter to Hubert Howe Bancroft, holograph, October 29, 1880, P-F12, Hubert Howe Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

24. George Q. Cannon, “Improvement of Our Species,” *Western Standard* 2, no. 22 (August 7, 1857): 2. Cannon’s interpretation of scripture here is strained. See Isaiah 65:22.

25. For this and much else, see Charles W. Penrose, “Physical Regeneration,” *Millennial Star* 29, no. 32 (August 10, 1867): 497–99. Nor was it necessary to wait for such improvements in one’s children. Heber C. Kimball, a close friend of Brigham Young and a counselor in his First Presidency, in a statement often humorously quoted without sufficient regard for the serious eugenic promises that underlay it, valorously an-



nounced he could “promise a man who is sixty years of age, if he will take the counsel of br. Brigham and his brethren, that he will renew his age. I have noticed that a man who has but one wife, and is inclined to that doctrine, soon begins to wither and dry up, while a man who goes into plurality looks fresh, young, and sprightly.” “Discourse by President Heber C. Kimball, 6 April 1857,” *Deseret News*, April 22, 1857, 52. Again, the volume of expression contending for this view is surprising. For some of what are many possible illustrations, see Louis Alphonse Bertrand, *Mémoires d'un Mormon* (Paris: E. Jung-Treuttel, [1862]), 208; Albert Carrington, “Plurality of Wives—Physiologically and Socially,” *Millennial Star* 28, no. 22 (June 2, 1866), 340–41; Mary Jane Mount Tanner, Letter to Mary Bessac Hunt, Provo, Utah, July 16, 1882, in Mary Jane Tanner, *A Fragment: The Autobiography of Mary Jane Mount Tanner*, edited by Margery W. Ward and George S. Tanner (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund and the University of Utah Library, 1980), 188; Joseph Birch, “Is Polygamy Unnatural?” *Millennial Star* 36, no. 4 (January 27, 1874), 49; George Q. Cannon, statement to Journalists, March 20, 1882, Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), LDS Church History Library; a British visitor’s comment that one of “the strong arguments” made to her by the Saints was that polygamy alone would produce “a fine healthy race.” Catherine Bates, *A Year in the Great Republic*, 2 vols. (London: Ward and Downey, 1887), 2:225, 228; Eliza Roxcy Snow asserted that plurality was “producing a more perfect type of manhood mentally and physically, as well as . . . restoring human life to its former longevity.” Eliza Roxcy Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” in *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 17; Eliza Roxcy Snow, Statements to Martin Luther Holbrook, editor of the New York *Herald of Health*, reproduced by Jill Mulvay Derr and Matthew J. Grow, “Letters on Mormon Polygamy and Progeny: Eliza R. Snow and Martin Luther Holbrook, 1866–1869,” *BYU Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 139–64.

26. For an analysis of how the Mormon polygamous marriage market worked, see Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001). Mormon polygamy also permitted married men to restore the ancient Jewish practice of the levirate wherein widows were married by a near relative of the deceased husband for the purpose of raising up children to his name, thereby enlarging his eternal kingdom. For Mormon endorsement of the practice, see John Jaques, “Polygamy: Is It Consistent with the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?” *Mil-*

*lennial Star* 15, no. 6 (February 12, 1853): 99, 147; Jaques, "Polygamy," *Millennial Star* 15, no. 10 (March 5, 1853): 147–48; and the trying arrangement described by Mary Lois Walker Morris in Melissa Lambert Milewski, ed., *Before the Manifesto: The Life Writings of Mary Lois Walker Morris* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007), 115–16, 122–23.

27. A former monogamist testified in the tabernacle that "no better time have I had in thirty years of married life than when I had three wives given me of God, . . . [all] occupying one habitation [together]." Henry W. Naisbitt, March 8, 1885, *Journal of Discourses*, 26:124. Brigham Young, August 19, 1866, *Journal of Discourses*, 11:271, claimed that there was at least ten times as much trouble in monogamous homes as in polygamous families. As but one of many additional examples, see Albert Carrington, "Plurality of Wives—Physiologically and Socially," *Deseret News Weekly*, March 29, 1866, 340–41. The claim that polygamy brought greater domestic bliss than monogamy persisted beyond the time of the Church's formal endorsement of the practice. See Apostle John A. Widtsoe, "Evidences and Reconciliations: Why Did the Church Practice Plural Marriage in Earlier Days," *Improvement Era* 46, no. 3 (March 1943): 191. The question of whether polygamy actually brought greater happiness to Mormon families than monogamy is probably impossible to establish in any general way. But studies finding a surprising amount of divorce in such households should be acknowledged. See Eugene E. Campbell and Bruce L. Campbell, "Divorce among Mormon Polygamists: Extent and Explanations," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 4–23; Phillip R. Kunz, "One Wife or Several? A Comparative Study of Late Nineteenth-Century Marriage in Utah," *The Mormon People: Their Character and Traditions*, Vol. 10 in CHARLES REDD MONOGRAPHS IN WESTERN HISTORY, edited by Thomas G. Alexander (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 68–69; Lawrence Foster, "Polygamy and the Frontier: Mormon Women in Early Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 284–88; and Daynes, *More Wives than One*, 141–70.

28. See, e.g., the following articles in *Deseret Evening News*: "Discourse by President Brigham Young," September 21, 1856, 235–36; "Discourse by Jedediah M. Grant," October 26, 1856, 275; "Discourse by Elder Orson Hyde," October 4, 1857, 251; documents, with comments, in Hardy, *Doing the Works of Abraham*, 125–29; and his "'Lords of Creation': Polygamy, the Abrahamic Household, and Mormon Patriarchy," *Journal of Mormon History* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 119–52.

29. Luke William Gallup, summary of a letter to his family, December 1866, in "Reminiscence and Diary," May 1841–March 1891, LDS Church History Library.

30. Charles Smith, Letter to Henry Eyring, February 1869, Charles Smith, Diaries, microfilm of typescript copy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).

31. "The Only Remedy," *Deseret News Weekly*, July 31, 1867, 244.

32. Orson Pratt, *Seer* 1 (April 1853), 58; Charles W. Penrose, "Plural Marriage," *Millennial Star* 45, no. 29 (July 16, 1883): 454; Penrose again in "Eternity of the Marriage Covenant," *Deseret Evening News*, February 20, 1886, not paginated; and "Discourse by Prest. Geo. Q. Cannon," *ibid*, January 12, 1884, 1. Responding to pressures of the anti-polygamy crusade, Church leaders commenced saying that the two were not inseparable and that it was only eternal marriage, not polygamy, that they urged on their followers. See note 111, below.

33. "The Reynolds Trial," *Deseret News Weekly*, December 15, 1875, 732; emphasis his. In his 1852 address, Orson Pratt described plural marriage as not only a part of Latter-day Saint religion but as "essential" and "necessary for our exaltation." *Deseret News Extra, Containing a Revelation on Celestial Marriage, A Remarkable Vision . . .*, September 18, 1852, 14.

34. Brigham Young, August 19, 1866, *Journal of Discourses*, 11:269. Some, attempting to justify the renunciation of polygamy by the present Church, point to Young's remark in this sermon that, "if it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife at a time, the Lord will reveal it by and by, and he will put it away that it will not be known in the Church" (268). But Young's comment was not a prophecy or prediction, only an acknowledgment of God's sovereign freedom to do as He pleased when He pleased. Moreover, if one's purpose is to determine Young's larger intent with the address, any fair reading of the entire text shows it to have been a strong affirmation of the high importance of the doctrine and the necessity of the Saints to live it. Young also spoke emphatically on other occasions of the need to live in plurality if one wished to obtain the highest blessings of God. See, e.g., his sermon on July 14, 1855, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:264-67.

35. Kunz, "One Wife or Several?," 69.

36. "Lecture by Elder Orson Hyde," *Deseret News Weekly*, October 19, 1854, 1.

37. Comments to this effect were heard from sundry sources in orthodox Mormon congregations when I was a boy, sixty years ago. The contention that polygamy was responsible for producing many who were leaders in the Church was cited by one Utah authority in the 1930s as evidence of plurality's divinity when discussing the subject with a member of the Reorganized Church. LeGrand Richards, Letter to Mrs. Mary S.

Gilstrap, November 22, 1935, fd. 78, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri. The same view was often heard from Mormon colonists in Mexico where polygamy was both common and approvingly perpetuated well after the Manifesto. See, e.g., Leroy Eyring, Oral History, interviewed by Leonard R. Grover, April 24, 1980, Scottsdale, Arizona, typescript, 7–8, Polygamy Oral History Project, Charles Redd Center, Brigham Young University (hereafter cited as BYU Polygamy Oral History Project); and from the same collection, Katherine Cannon Thomas, Oral History, interviewed by Leonard Grover, March 25, 1980, Provo, Utah, typescript, 2, 7. The most comprehensive treatment of the incidence of polygamy among Mormon leaders is that of Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, Appendix 2, 641–725.

38. Brigham Young, July 14, 1855, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:265.

39. Heber C. Kimball, April 4, 1866, *Journal of Discourses*, 11:210.

40. Jesse Haven, *Celestial [sic] Marriage and the Plurality of Wives* . . . (*Cape Town, South Africa: W. Foelscher, 1853*), 2.

41. “Celestial Marriage: Rev[elation]s Purportedly Given John Taylor, 25, 26 June 1882,” LDS Church History Library. A Mormon editorial intended to answer concerns that polygamy would spread if Utah were admitted as a state explained that, because Utah’s laws were more liberal than in most other states, marriage was left to individuals. “Bible marriage,” as the editorial called polygamy, was no more legally prescribed than monogamy. Plurality was not likely to become popular on account of its economic and emotional requirements. Only when reinforced by religious guidance could it be successfully implemented. Therefore, the nation had no reason to fear Utah’s entrance into the Union. “Shall Polygamy Become National,” *Deseret Evening News*, October 21, 1878, 2.

42. Orson Pratt, [Address], *Deseret News Extra, Containing a Revelation on Celestial Marriage, A Remarkable Vision*, September 18, 1852, 25.

43. George Q. Cannon, October 9, 1869, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:202.

44. The entirety of Albert Carrington’s article, beyond the quotation used, is remarkable. See his “Plurality of Wives—Physiologically and Socially,” 1–4.

45. Esther Romania Bunnell Pratt Penrose, microfilm of hand-written memoir, 1881, 6–7, LDS Church History Library. For a few of many statements expressing similar sentiments, see the following *Deseret Evening News* reports: “Provo Conference: Remarks by Prest. Brigham Young,” November 14, 1855, 282; Editorial, “Plurality of Wives, March 8, 1866, 108; George A. Smith, “The Opposers of Celestial Marriage,” October 27, 1869, 452; and “Discourse by Apostle George Teasdale,” February 6, 1884, 35.

46. "Remarks by Apostle Moses Thatcher," *Deseret News Weekly*, May 7, 1884, 242.

47. Helen Mar Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage: By a "Mormon" Wife and Mother . . .* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 53–55. The same writer remembered that her father, Apostle Heber C. Kimball, expecting widespread recognition of the practice's advantages, prophesied that the United States would, in no more than half a century from his time, pass laws permitting polygamy. See her "Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," *Woman's Exponent* 10 (November 1, 1881): 83.

48. George A. Smith, April 6, 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:291.

49. Hannah Tapfield King, "Brief Memoir of the Early Mormon Life of Hannah T. King," (1880?) P-F12, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

50. Romania Bunnell Pratt, "Extract from Dr. R. B. Pratt's Lecture," *Woman's Exponent* 10 (June 15, 1881): 16.

51. Regarding the post-1860 relative decline of polygamous marriages, see the quantitative patterns in nineteenth-century Manti: Daynes, *More Wives than One*, Table 3, Figure 3, pp. 101–2. Studies enlarging the percentage of nineteenth-century Mormon polygamous households beyond the single-digit figures commonly given by the Church have accrued for decades. See, e.g., Dean L. May, "People on the Mormon Frontier: Kanab's Families of 1874," *Journal of Family History* 1 (1876): 172; James E. Smith and Phillip R. Kunz, "Polygyny and Fertility in Nineteenth-Century America," *Population Studies* 30, no. 3 (November 1976): 468–71; Lowell "Ben" Bennion, "The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy in 1880: 'Dixie versus Davis Stake,'" *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 27–42; Bennion, Alan L. Morrell, and Thomas R. Carter, *Polygamy in Lorenzo Snow's Brigham City: An Architectural Tour* (Salt Lake City: College of Architecture & Planning, University of Utah, 2005), 26; Larry M. Logue, *A Sermon in the Desert: Belief and Behavior in Early St. George, Utah* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 44–71; Irwin Altman and Joseph Ginat, *Polygamous Families in Contemporary Society* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 460–61; Marie Cornwall, Camela Courtright, and Laga Van Beek, "How Common the Principle? Women as Plural Wives in 1860," *Dialogue* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 152–53; Daynes, *More Wives than One*, 100–101; and most recently, Lowell C. "Ben" Bennion and Thomas R. Carter, "Touring Polygamous Utah with Elizabeth W. Kane, Winter, 1872–1873," *BYU Studies* 48, no. 4 (2009): 159–92.

52. Logue, *A Sermon in the Desert*, 51–52; Bennion, "The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy," 41–42; Bennion, Morrell, and Carter, *Polygamy*

in *Lorenzo Snow's Brigham City*, 26; and especially Bennion and Carter, "Touring Polygamous Utah," 164–65, 183–85. For more on the emergence of polygamy as a centerpiece of the Mormon self-image, especially during the national crusade against the Saints, see Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, 44, 329–30. For the incidence of polygamous marriage among Mormon bishops, see D. Gene Pace, "Wives of Nineteenth-Century Mormon Bishops: A Quantitative Analysis," *Journal of the West* 21, no. 2 (April 1982): 51. On its prevalence among men in positions of authority between 1845 and 1888, see again Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, 180. For patterns of polygamous practice, as well as doctrinal, demographic, and geographic influences, see all of both Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987); and Daynes, *More Wives than One*.

53. Bennion and Carter, "Touring Polygamous Utah," 164, 183–85; emphasis theirs. See also Bennion, "The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy," 41; Bennion, Morrell, and Carter, *Polygamy in Lorenzo Snow's Brigham City*, 26; and Logue, *A Sermon in the Desert*, 51–52. The Utah Commission found Utah society in 1887 to be identical with Bennion and Carter's description: "While all did not enter into polygamy, all believed it right as a divine revelation and upheld it in those who chose to enter into the relation. The system was united by ties of kindred with nearly every Mormon family in the Territory." "Report of the Utah Commission," *Report of the Secretary of the Interior: Multi-Volume Compilation of Messages and Documents Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress by the Secretary of the Interior Annually, Containing Reports by Territorial Governors and, from 1882 through 1896, Reports of the "Utah Commission"* (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1887), 2:1325–26.

54. Responding to Mormon claims in 1879 that, if anti-polygamy laws were enforced, 50,000 women and their children would be left homeless, the *Salt Lake Tribune* stated that the actual figure was closer to 10,000. But even this, if extrapolated to the entire period during which the Church formally endorsed polygamy, would amount to many thousands of people. For the controversy, see these *Salt Lake Tribune* articles: "More Lies from the Hens," January 16, 1879, 1; "Washington," January 23, 1879, 4; and "Address to Congress," February 9, 1879, 2. George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, 310, provides as likely an estimate as seems presently possible: "Before it was closed down as an option for mainstream LDS members, tens of thousands of polygamists were generated from the culture Smith began in the Midwest and Young amplified in Utah."

55. Quoted in O. J. Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 473.

56. An Old Timer, "Expressions from the People," *Deseret Evening News*, April 14, 1885, 4. See similar statements by Heber C. Kimball, October 12, 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 5:203-4; and by George Q. Cannon as quoted in Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 275.

57. Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints and across the Rocky Mountains to California*, edited with an introduction and notes by Fawn M. Brodie (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 478-79.

58. Richard D. Poll, "The Mormon Question, 1850-1865: A Study in Politics and Public Opinion" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1948), 25.

59. Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society; or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (London: Macmillan, 1877), 512. See also William E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, 2 vols. (London: Longman's Green & Co., 1869), 2:294-95; and "Evolution of Marriage," *Boston Herald*, February 26, 1884, 1.

60. See *Reynolds v. United States* (1879), 98 U.S. beginning at p. 153. Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 233, points out that the court's distinction between belief and action has become more complicated on account of twentieth-century decisions. See her analysis of the Reynolds case in the shift from Reconstruction in the South to Reconstruction in Utah (119-45). See also the helpful commentary in Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 151-59.

61. Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 183-220, emphasizes that opposition to political and economic monopoly also contributed to anti-polygamy rhetoric at the time.

62. "Report of the Utah Commission," *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1885), 2:887-88.

63. B. Carmon Hardy, "'The American Siberia': Mormon Prisoners in Detroit in the 1880s," *Michigan History* 50, no. 3 (September 1966): 197-10. The number of works treating the anti-polygamy crusade is large and growing, but one can make a good start by reading in Robert J. Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah: A Study in Religious and Social Conflict (1862-1890)*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971); Gustive O. Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif:

Huntington Library, 1971); Richard D. Poll, "The Legislative Anti-Polygamy Campaign," *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 107–21; Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Joan Smith Iversen, *The Antipolygamy Controversy in U.S. Women's Movements, 1880–1925: A Debate on the American Home* (New York City: Garland Publishing, 1997); David L. Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896*, Vol. 2 in KINGDOM IN THE WEST: THE MORMONS AND THE AMERICAN FRONTIER, general editor Will Bagley (Spokane, Wash: Arthur H. Clark, 1998); Gordon, *The Mormon Question*; and, carrying Gordon's attention further to racial concerns as motivating anti-polygamy reformers, Kelly Elizabeth Phipps, "Marriage and Redemption: Mormon Polygamy in the Congressional Imagination, 1862–1887," *Virginia Law Review* 95, no. 435 (April 2009): 435–87.

64. George Alfred Townsend, *The Mormon Trial in Salt Lake City* (New York: American Press, 1871), 11. For more on the Mormon colonies in Mexico, see Moisés González Navarro, *La Colonización en México 1877–1910* (México: Talleres de impresión de estampillas y valores, 1960), 63–70; Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938); and F. LaMond Tullis, "Early Mormon Exploration and Missionary Activities in Mexico," *BYU Studies* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 289–310. For settlements in Canada, see "Brief Account of the Early History of the Canadian Mission, 1887–1895," typescript, n.d., LDS Church History Library; Archie G. Wilcox, "Founding of the Mormon Community in Alberta" (M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, Calgary, Canada, 1950); and Dan Erickson, "Alberta Polygamists? The Canadian Climate and Response to Mormonism's 'Peculiar Institution,'" *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 155–64.

65. Descriptions of this kind are countless. As but one example, from an organ especially active in purveying such images, see "Beauties of Polygamy," *Anti-Polygamy Standard* 1, no. 1 (April 1880): 1.

66. One researcher found no fewer than seventeen congressional proposals for an anti-polygamy amendment during the 1880s. Herman Ames, *Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the United States during the First Century of Its History* (1896; rpt., New York: Lenox Hill, 1970), 272. It became a staple of Utah Commission recommendations. See, for example, the 1887 "Annual Report of the Utah Commission," 2:1354. And, with equal zeal, Mormon leaders opposed such measures. Quoting from the *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer*, the campaign for a constitutional curb on polygamy had become, the Mormon editor said, as wearisome as that against "free whiskey." See editorial, "Constitutional



Amendment Craze," *Deseret Evening News*, November 22, 1883, not paginated.

67. The Canadian law, drafted in response to Mormon polygamous settlements in Alberta, is found in *Statutes of Canada*, 53 Victoria, c. 37, sec. 11, subsections a–d (1890). For extended accounts of anti-polygamous sentiment in both Mexico and Canada and its legal reification, see B. Carmon Hardy, "Mormon Polygamy in Mexico and Canada: A Legal and Historiographical Review," in *The Mormon Presence in Canada*, edited by Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis (Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 186–209; and Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 167–82. Anti-Mormon pamphleteering in Europe, of course, had occurred for years. See, e.g., Craig L. Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics: A Critical Analysis of Anti-Mormon Pamphleteering in Great Britain, 1837–1860* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2002). And such criticism persisted beyond the Manifesto: Malcolm R. Thorp, "'Mormon Peril': The Crusade against the Saints in Britain, 1910–1914," *Journal of Mormon History* 2 (1975): 69–78; and Peter J. Vousden, "English Editor and the 'Mormon Scare' of 1911," *BYU Studies* 41, no. 1 (2002): 65–75. Condemnation by the Pope can be read in, *Encycl., Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, sec. 13, February 10, 1880.

68. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Literary Industries: A Memoir*, Vol. 39, in THE WORKS OF HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT (San Francisco: The History Company Publishers, 1890), 759. Another scholar described it as "unequalled in the annals of federal law enforcement." See Orma Linford, "Mormons and the Law: The Polygamy Cases," Pt. 2, *Utah Law Review* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1965): 585.

69. Mary Jane Mount Tanner, Letter to "Dear Aunt Mary," June 18, 1882, in Tanner, *A Fragment*, 186.

70. "An Epistle from the First Presidency," October 6, 1885, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:36. The appellation "Bible marriage," used at least as early as 1878, represented a Mormon attempt to juxtapose anti-polygamy sentiment in the nation to a form of matrimony permitted in the Bible. For examples of its use, see "Shall Polygamy Become National," *Deseret Evening News*, December 21, 1878, 2; and "Marriage as a Test," *Deseret Evening News*, August 5, 1879, 2.

71. Editorial, "Secret Leagues," *Deseret Evening News*, November 21, 1883, not paginated. The number of messages delivered to the Saints in this vein is quite large. See, e.g. from the *Journal of Discourses*: Charles W. Penrose, August 17, 1879, 20:296–99; Franklin D. Richards, October 6, 1879, 20:312–16; Erastus Snow, October 8, 1879, 20:374; Moses Thatcher, April 7, 1883, 24:111; and Joseph F. Smith, April 8, 1883, 24:173. See

also George Teasdale, quoted in January 25, 1885, in A. Karl Larson and Kathryn Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:642.

72. Eliza R. Snow, "Joseph the Seer's Plural Marriages," *Deseret News Weekly*, October 22, 1879, 1.

73. The practice of contrasting themselves to secular society and comparing the Saints to the righteous who were persecuted in previous dispensations was a drumbeat-like theme repeated again and again from the 1850s into the 1890s. See, as only a few examples, Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," *Seer* 1 (May 1853): 75; Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, typescript, 9 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1983-91), February 18, 1873, 7:123; Henry Eyring, "Reminiscences," January 27, 1883, typescript, LDS Church History Library; Gibson Condie, *Reminiscences and Diary*, March 3, 1889, film of holograph, LDS Church History Library; and "Discourse Delivered by President George Q. Cannon, at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, February 23, 1890," in Brian H. Stuy, comp. and ed., *Collected Discourses Delivered by Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others, 1886-1889*, 5 vols. (Burbank, Calif.: BHS Publishing, 1987-92), 2:15.

74. George Q. Cannon, December 7, 1884, *Journal of Discourses*, 26:42-44.

75. It was not an unwillingness to enter new plural marriages that led some later to say the Saints failed to meet God in the bargain. Rather, illustrative of the private anguish many felt in their conjugal lives, it was belief that too many had surrendered to the pleasures of sexual indulgence with their plural partners. See B. Carmon Hardy, "Self-Blame and the Manifesto," *Dialogue* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 43-57. An example of leaders urging perseverance with promise of support from heaven is: "An Epistle from the First Presidency," October 6, 1885, First Presidency Circular Letters, 1855-1996, Box 1, fd. 1, LDS Church History Library.

76. See the excellent chapter, "Millennialism and the Anti-Polygamy Campaign," in Dan Erickson, *"As a Thief in the Night": The Mormon Quest for Millennial Deliverance* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 179-211.

77. Speaking in the Tabernacle, Wilford Woodruff told his listeners that God had revealed to them "the Patriarchal order of Marriage & has said if we do not obey it we shall be damned. Congress has said if [we] do obey it we shall be damned. Now, which shall we obey God or Congress? For it is God & Congress for it. The assembly shouted in By acclamation we will obey God." Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, January 9, 1870, 6:518-19. See also "Shall Polygamy Be Put in Abeyance," *Deseret News*, August 30, 1879, not paginated; Orson Pratt, October 6,

1879, *Journal of Discourses*, 20:327; and the “promise” exacted from members as described in Larson and Larson, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, March 27, 1880, 2:491–92; George Teasdale, January 13, 1884, *Journal of Discourses*, 25:19–22; and George Q. Cannon, November 20, 1884, *Journal of Discourses*, 26:8–9. Statements were often nuanced, as when President John Taylor told members to fulfill the law so far as was “practicable” while yet observing “principle.” They should, he said, “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” John Taylor, April 9, 1882, *Journal of Discourses*, 23:67–68.

78. Woodruff, Letter to Franklin S. Richards and Charles W. Penrose, April 12, 1888, Wilford Woodruff Letterpress Copy Book, LDS Church History Library.

79. Portrayals of this nature occurred again and again throughout the 1880s. See statements and low estimates given by Franklin S. Richards in U.S. Congress, *Admission of Utah as a State in the Union. Memorial of Citizens of the Territory of Utah Asking for the Admission of Utah as a State in the Union*, April 27, 1882, House Misc. Doc. 43 (47–1) 1882, Serial 2046, 6–7. See also “Epistle of the First Presidency,” April 4, 1885, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:11; the slightly higher figures (5–7 percent) given by the same authorities in “An Epistle from the First Presidency to the Officers and Members of the Church,” October 6, 1885, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:31; Angus M. Cannon, quoted in “Church Suits,” *Deseret Evening News*, February 29, 1888, 3; U.S. Congress, *Admission of Utah: Argument of Hon. Jeremiah M. Wilson, Made before the House Committee on Territories, January 19–22, 1889* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 11–12; and “Mormons Abandon Polygamy: President Woodruff Says the Church Means to Obey the Law,” *New York Herald*, October 13, 1889, 17. Representations of this kind became especially pronounced in the two or three years preceding the Manifesto. In addition to a precipitous decline in published defenses of the practice in organs such as the *Deseret News*, the proposed state constitution (art. 15, sec. 12), which was included with the 1887 petition for statehood, barred “bigamy and polygamy.” Of course, both “bigamy” and “polygamy” were formal, legal terms that left the private ceremonies joining Mormons in plural unions as untouched as the language in the old Morrill Act of 1862. It was a ruse that fooled nobody, which was one reason Congress rejected the 1887 petition for statehood. See my *Doing the Works of Abraham*, 328–29. “Polygamy Prohibited,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 5, 1887, 3; “Constitution,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 8, 1887, 2. Finally, any overview of Mormon efforts to blunt the anti-polygamy crusade and obtain statehood cannot ignore the Church’s vigorous lobbying of important political figures. The commanding study of these activ-

ities remains Lyman, *Political Deliverance*, who points out that the Church's posturing was "intended to be but a temporary stance until after statehood was accomplished" (291). Anthony W. Ivins once described such efforts as attempts "to sail into the union under false colors." *Heber J. Grant Diaries*, July 25, 1887, 36.

80. Senator George F. Edmunds commented on the surprising resilience of Mormon plurality in his "Political Aspects of Mormonism," *Harper's* 64 (January 1882): 287. And the "Annual Report of the Utah Commission," *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1884), 2:517-18, said that, during the early 1880s, "Mormon fanaticism" had been "blown into a flame" and that there was "a polygamic revival" among the people. See also Stanley S. Ivins's tabulation in his pioneering article, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," *Western Humanities Review* 10, no. 3 (Summer 1956): 231-32. Apostle Francis M. Lyman later commented that because "the principle" was urged with such energy during the 1880s he could understand why some Mormons continued to enter the practice after the 1890 Manifesto. *Heber J. Grant Diaries*, January 3, 1911, 293. An example of continued commitment to the Principle by authorities in those years is the case of Malinda Jane Morrill. When she asked President John Taylor if the monogamous marriage to her husband, sealed in the temple, was not enough to earn them a place in the highest echelons of heaven, she was told that plural marriage alone brought that reward. Malinda Jane Morrill, Letter to President John Taylor, January 2, 1883, John Taylor Presidential Papers, 1877-87, Box 13, fd. 9; and Taylor's reply, copied into Thomas Memmott, *Journals: Quotation Book—Book of Genealogy*, Reel 3, 98-100, both in LDS Church History Library. As another female writer reminded her readers, when it came to polygamy, "None can disobey it, and be exalted in His presence." Mary F., "Patriarchal Order of Marriage," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 16 (January 15, 1882): 121.

81. M. Hamlin Cannon, ed., "The Prison Diary of a Mormon Apostle," *Pacific Historical Review* 16, no. 4 (November 1947): 401; see Franklin D. Richards's similar comment in *Heber J. Grant Diaries*, December 20, 1888, 89. That equivocation was sometimes felt by the leaders is illustrated by Apostle John Henry Smith's 1888 suggestion that the Church should consider temporarily suspending plurality. John Henry Smith, Letter to Joseph F. Smith, April 3, 1888, John Henry Smith Letterbooks, George A. Smith Family Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. A deeper allegiance, however, was shown on September 16, 1890, only ten days before President Woodruff penned his Manifesto, when Smith told an audience of believers in southern Utah that "no principle or revelation that God ever gave to his

people was to be laid on the shelf as a thing of the past." Quoted in Larson and Larson, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2:718.

82. The axial nature of the Church's posturing in the 1880s as constituting a more crucial, reorienting phase in Mormon history than the 1890 Manifesto has been stressed by scholars for some time. See Henry J. Wolfinger, "A Reexamination of the Woodruff Manifesto in the Light of Utah Constitutional History," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (Fall 1971): 328-49; Lyman, *Political Deliverance*, 43-46, 60; and Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 53-55.

83. "Official Declaration-1" appears in editions of the Doctrine and Covenants printed since 1981. The "Annual Report of the Utah Commission," *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1890), 3:414-21, describes the continued teaching and performance of plural marriages by the Church. For the Commission's earlier allegation that Mormons were publicly denying what they were secretly doing for the purpose of obtaining statehood, and therewith engaging in a "wooden horse" policy, see "Annual Report of the Utah Commission," *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1888), 3:669. Territorial Governor Arthur Thomas described Church spokesmen as employing "evasions, meaningless words, or words of double meaning, hypocritical pretenses, false assertions, and every helpful evasion of word or act." "Report of the Governor of Utah," *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1889): 3:496, and *ibid.* (1890), 3:660-61.

84. Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, September 25, 1890, 9:112-14. See also Leo Lyman's account of pressures and events surrounding the issuance of the document in his "The Political Background of the Woodruff Manifesto," *Dialogue* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 21-39.

85. For other examples contending that the vote was unanimous, see "Official Declaration," *Deseret Weekly*, October 11, 1890, 526; Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1892-1904), 3:746; "Official Statement from the First Presidency," June 17, 1933, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:324; and Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 495. For more extensive treatment of events attending the preparation of and presentation of the Manifesto, see Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 127-38.

86. Uncertainties surrounding the Church's policy on continued cohabitation with plural wives married before 1890 can be read in the distressed conversations of apostles reported in the Abraham Hoagland Cannon, Journal, November 11 and 12, 1891, and April 1, 1892. Contending that the Saints were a law-abiding people, one modern author argued that most Mormon polygamists stopped living with their plural wives when the first Edmunds Act was passed in 1882. Paul E. Reimann,

*Plural Marriage Limited* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing, 1974), 130–32, 134–35. An actual survey of their cases, however, found that so far as the General Authorities of the Church were concerned, “a substantial majority” continued to live with their plural wives after the Manifesto. Kenneth L. Cannon II, “Beyond the Manifesto: Polygamous Cohabitation among LDS General Authorities after 1890,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 24–36.

87. Scores of Mormon colonists residing in Mexico and Canada both entered and lived in polygamous marriages after the Manifesto. Mexico proved more convenient than Canada. Church authorities continued to send couples wishing to be married in plurality there until the settlers were temporarily forced to leave Mexico at the time of the Mexican Revolution in 1912. For a discussion of this practice, in both Mexico and Canada, especially with regard to legal issues involved, see Hardy, “Early Mormon Polygamy in Mexico and Canada,” 186–209.

88. On December 19, 1891, the entire First Presidency and all twelve apostles in a formal petition to U.S. President Benjamin Harrison asked that Mormons charged with the crime of polygamous cohabitation, whether in prison or hiding from officers of the law, be granted amnesty. It explicitly referred to polygamy as “celestial marriage” and admitted that it was taught as necessary for exaltation “up to a short time before September, 1890.” Then, the petition stated, President Woodruff was given divine permission to suspend “the law commanding” its practice. Inasmuch as the Mormon people had now “put aside” something that all their lives they had believed was a sacred principle, the petition asked that all be granted forgiveness just as those who arose in rebellion against the Union had been forgiven at the close of the Civil War. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:229–31. The “Annual Report of the Utah Commission,” *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1892), 3:428, called it “the most important of the documents the church has issued, and contains the most direct and positive statements of its desires and promises for the future which has yet come from that source.” To Woodruff’s disappointment, however, Harrison’s proclamation of amnesty in early January 1893 pardoned only those who had neither taken new plural wives since nor lived with those married before November 1, 1890. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, January 5, 1893, 9:235; Lyman, *Political Deliverance*, 189–90, 205; and Jean Bickmore White, ed., *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1990), 264–66.

89. “A Revelation given to Wilford Woodruff in the Wilderness of San Francisco Mountain in Arizona On the 26 day of Jan 1880,” in *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 7:615.

90. "A Utah Commissioner's Perversions," *Deseret News Weekly*, October 11, 1890, 2. For more on this episode, see Hardy, *Doing the Works of Abraham*, 348.

91. Because fundamentalists yet question the Manifesto as an authentic revelation, the modern Church has sought to refute their doubts by reprinting statements by Woodruff indicating his belief that the document was heaven inspired. "Excerpts from Three Addresses by President Wilford Woodruff Regarding the Manifesto," appended to Official Declaration-1, 1981 D&C pp. 292-303. For a fuller account illustrating Woodruff's step by step, sometimes uneasily articulated advance to fully embracing his declaration as divinely willed, see Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 146-52; and, with illustrative documents, Hardy, *Doing the Works of Abraham*, 341-56. For Woodruff's views on inspiration/revelation generally, see Thomas G. Alexander, "Wilford Woodruff and the Changing Nature of Mormon Religious Experience," *Church History* 45, no. 1 (March 1976): 56-69.

92. "The Church Cases," *Deseret News Weekly*, October 24, 1891, 577-79. For the apostles' dissatisfaction and Woodruff's admission that, in answering the master in chancery's questions, "he was placed in such a position . . . that he could not answer other than he did." Abraham Hoagland Cannon, *Diary*, August 22, 1891.

93. Illustrative of emphatic declarations that the Church had discontinued plural marriages after the Manifesto is a statement to the press by Church President Lorenzo Snow, made at the time of the Brigham H. Roberts case in Congress: "I declare most emphatically . . . ever since the issuance of the manifesto on this subject by President Wilford Woodruff, my predecessor in office, polygamy or plural marriages have entirely ceased in Utah." "Mormon Head to the World," *New York World*, December 30, 1898, 177. For studies documenting new plural marriages approved both before and after Snow's denial, see note 100, below.

94. Marriner Wood Merrill, *Journal*, 6 vols., holograph, August 20, 1891, LDS Church History Library. See also Abraham Hoagland Cannon, *Diary*, August 20, 1891.

95. Apostle Abraham O. Woodruff, quoted in Juarez Stake Conference, clerk Joseph Charles Bentley, "Journal and Notes," November 18-19, 1900, 61, LDS Church History Library. See Apostle Marriner W. Merrill's nearly identical statement quoted in Rudger Clawson, *Diary*, July 11, 1899, Box 4, bk. 11, 39, Special Collections, Marriott Library. Declarations of this kind were made in the highest councils of the Church both before and after the 1890 Manifesto. See quotations in *Heber J. Grant Diaries*, May 17, 1888, 79 (Wilford Woodruff); April 1,

1896, 219 (Marriner W. Merrill and Lorenzo Snow); and January 6, 1901, 280–81 (Lorenzo Snow).

96. Walter M. Wolfe, quoted in “Manifesto Only Trick to Beat Devil at Own Game,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 16, 1906, 1–2. On the use of mistruth, see Appendix I, “Lying for the Lord: An Essay,” in Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 364–88.

97. Doctrine and Covenants, 1908 edition, pp. 543–44. Richard O. Cowan, *The Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), 33, mistakenly contends that President Joseph F. Smith directed that the Manifesto be added to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1904.

98. “An Act to Punish Polygamy and Kindred Offenses,” *Laws of the Territory of Utah* (1892), 30th sess., ch. 8, sec. 2:5–7.

99. Plural marriage was but one of many challenges facing Mormonism and requiring adaptation. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986). On the question raised at that time and continuing today about whether Mormonism is an “American religion,” including the complicated issue of Mormon responses to surrounding society throughout its history, see Klaus Hansen’s superb historiographical review: “Mormon History and the Conundrum of Culture: America and Beyond,” in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, edited by Newell G. Bringhurst and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2004), 1–26.

100. For extensive documentation on the performance of Church-approved, post-Manifesto plural marriages, see D. Michael Quinn, “LDS Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890–1904,” *Dialogue* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 9–105; and Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 167–335.

101. For the official record, see U.S. Congress, *Case of Brigham H. Roberts of Utah . . . Report [to accompany H.Res. 107] January 20, 1900*, House Report 85, 2 pts. (56–1) 1900, Serial 4021. A good secondary study is Davis Bitton, “The B. H. Roberts Case of 1898–1900,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (Winter 1957): 27–46. For Roberts’s account, see his *Comprehensive History*, 6:363–74.

102. The implications of the Smoot hearings are treated with particular skill by Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). The question of whether Mormonism was genuinely “American,” as it arose in connection with the hearings, is further explored in Konden R. Smith, “The Reed Smoot Hearings and the Theology of Politics: Perceiving an ‘American’ Identity,” *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 118–62. For the hearings, see U.S. Congress, Senate, *Proceedings before the Committee on Privileges and Elec-*



tions of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat, 4 vols. Senate Doc. 4865 (59-1) 1906, Serial 2932-35 (hereafter Smoot Hearings).

103. *Seventy-Fourth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Held in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, April 3rd, 4th and 6th, 1904 . . .* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1904), 75-76; Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:84-85; and the discussion in Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 60-73.

104. On the Lyman committee, see Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 67-68. The number of new plural marriages discovered by the committee was so great that Apostle Heber J. Grant, a member of the committee, remarked on how "refreshing" it was when one couple was at last found to be falsely charged in the matter. *Heber J. Grant Diaries*, January 25, 1916, 306.

105. *Heber J. Grant Diaries*, April 7, 1914, 301-2.

106. Tanner, *A Mormon Mother*, 223; Juliaetta Bateman Jensen, *Little Gold Pieces: The Story of My Mormon Mother's Life* (Salt Lake City: Stanway, 1948), 134-36; and the confusion expressed by John Mills Whitaker, *Journal*, November 1, 1917, typewritten transcript, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

107. It was, however, a passage in Church history strewn with intramural conflict, especially the expulsion of Matthias F. Cowley and John W. Taylor from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. For this and related tensions, see Victor W. Jorgensen and B. Carmon Hardy, "The Taylor-Cowley Affair and the Watershed of Mormon History," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 4-36; Hardy, "Late Efforts and Polygamy's Decline," in *Solemn Covenant*, 310-35; and Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 60-73.

108. John A. McClernand, Letter to President Grover Cleveland, June 30, 1887, in Grover Cleveland Papers, ser. 1, film, reel 50, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

109. Lyman, *Political Deliverance*, 294.

110. Exemplary of many instances, see President Joseph F. Smith, *Smoot Hearing*, 1:108-9, 324-25; John Henry Evans, *One Hundred Years of Mormonism: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1805 to 1905*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909), 481; John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations: Aids to Faith in a Modern Day* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1943), 85; Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Heber J. Grant, Seventh President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1941), 159; Heber J. Grant, quoted in William E.

Berrett and Alma P. Burton, eds., *Readings in LDS Church History from Original Manuscripts*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953–58), 3:122–23; earlier authorities quoted in Reimann, *Plural Marriage, Limited*, 111–15; and, Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 199. Importantly, some Mormon historians are beginning to acknowledge the large numbers of nineteenth-century Saints who practiced polygamy. See, e.g., Danel W. Bachman and Ronald K. Esplin, “Plural Marriage,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 3:1095.

111. An early example, possibly prepared for defensive purposes, saying that polygamy was practiced by permission only, that it was not mandatory, and that “celestial” marriage was not synonymous with polygamy, is John Taylor, *On Marriage: Succession in the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1882), 5. The distinction continued to be drawn in succeeding years and is accepted as doctrinally correct today. Evans, *One Hundred Years*, 476–77; Joseph F. Smith, testimony in *Smoot Hearing*, 1:133; deliberations described in a typewritten extract from a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, February 17, 1908, Stanley Snow Ivins Collection, Box 11, fd. 10, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City; First Presidency circular to stake presidents and counselors, January 31, 1914, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:326; and Church spokesman Dale Bills as quoted in Moore-Emmett, “Only for Eternity,” 14. For an illustration of attention to Abraham without discussing his polygamy, see Spencer W. Kimball, “Example of Abraham,” *Ensign*, June 1975, 3–7. Acknowledgment of Abraham’s relationship with Hagar occurs but is not cited as polygamous or as part of the restored “Abrahamic covenant,” still binding on the Saints in modern times. “Eternal marriage” and “celestial marriage” are terms used in connection with Abraham but not “plural marriage.” See, as examples, in the quasi-official *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*: E. Douglas Clark, “Abraham,” 1:7–9; Ellis T. Rasmussen, “Abrahamic Covenant,” 1:9–10; and Joel A. Flake, “Gospel of Abraham,” 2:555–56. As but one of many instances where polygamy is now ignored when describing advancement to the celestial kingdom of heaven, see Renato Maldonado, “The Three Degrees of Glory,” *Ensign*, April 2005, 62–65.

112. James E. Talmage, *The Story of “Mormonism” and the Philosophy of “Mormonism”* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), 89. See also Evans, *One Hundred Years of Mormonism*, 476–77.

113. *History of the Bench and Bar of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Interstate Press Association, 1913), 51.

114. “An Official Statement from the First Presidency of the Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Deseret News*, June 17, 1933, Church Section [later named *LDS Church News*], 1–4; also reproduced in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:315–30. The best scholarly account of J. Reuben Clark and his role in preparing the statement is D. Michael Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1983), 179–86. The 1933 declaration was preceded by at least nine other pronouncements of similar substance, commencing with President Joseph F. Smith's well-known 1904 statement of denial. A list, with dates, is in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:194.

115. "Unlawful Cohabitation," March 21, 1935, ch. 112, sec. 103–51–2, *Laws of the State of Utah* (1935), 220.

116. Franklin L. West, quoted in "Utah Liquor Chief Urges Effective Prohibition, at B.Y. Leadership Institute," *Deseret News*, January 27, 1937, 13.

117. The irony of contemporary Mormonism's hostility toward renewed plurality and the similarity of its criticisms of those continuing the practice to those directed at its own attachment to the system in the nineteenth century has been observed for decades. See, e.g., Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 417; Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 2d ed. rev. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 401; Davis Bitton, "Mormon Polygamy: A Review Article," *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 101; and Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 234.

118. Fundamentalist movements generally focus on "a rediscovery of founding principles." John C. Super and Briane K. Turley, *Religion in World History: The Persistence of Imperial Communion* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15. As described by a leading scholar of the phenomenon, it involves looking back to an earlier order, "determined to rebuild the original faith" by relying on "Scripture," which is interpreted "literally and often reductively." Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 90.

119. Using the same language as nineteenth-century Mormons, the first issue of fundamentalism's best-known journal contended that modern Christian society was collapsing on account of monogamy. Polygamy as taught by the nineteenth-century Church, with its "great social law" of correct sexual behavior, was the only remedy. "Announcement," *Truth* 1 (June 1, 1935): 1. See also Joseph W. Musser, comp., *Celestial or Plural Marriage: The Mormon Marriage System* (Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing, 1944), 132–33; Lynn L. Bishop and Steven L. Bishop, *The Keys of the Priesthood Illustrated* (Draper, Utah: Review and Preview Publishers, 1971), 321–24; Dennis R. Short, comp., *Questions on Plural Marriage* (Salt

Lake City: Author, 1974), 5, 8, 39. For a compilation of early orthodox (and now Mormon fundamentalist) comments on the transformative powers of sexual relations when used primarily for reproductive purposes, see [Gilbert Fulton?], *The Law of Chastity* (N.p.: Gems Publishing, n.d.). And, of course, apart from sexual requirements attending its practice, fundamentalists remain firmly allegiant to Mormonism's earlier emphasis on the necessity of living polygamy to attain the greatest glory in the next life. Anne Wilde, *An Essential for Exaltation: Celestial Plural Marriage Essential for the Highest Degree of the Celestial Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1998).

120. Joseph W. Musser made this point in his *Celestial or Plural Marriage*, 147. See also the case of Eslie D. Jenson, described in Brian C. Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2006), 219, 233 note 34; and Short, *Questions on Plural Marriage*, 22.

121. The authenticity of President Taylor's alleged revelation authorizing the continued performance of plural marriages elicits vigorous debate. Fundamentalists, however, commonly reference it and describe the experience as confidently as orthodox Mormons do when talking about the first visions of Joseph Smith. One can commence a survey of literature on the subject with B. Harvey Allred, *A Leaf in Review of the Words and Acts of God and Men Relative to the Fullness of the Gospel*, 2nd ed. rev. by Rhea Allred Kunz et al. (Draper, Utah: Review and Preview Publishers, 1980), 183–93, Appendices I and II, pp. 229–38; all of Fred C. Collier, "Re-examining the Lorin Woolley Story," *Doctrine of the Priesthood* 1, no. 2 (February 1981); and the recounting by President Taylor's grandson, Samuel W. Taylor, *The Kingdom or Nothing: The Life of John Taylor, Militant Mormon* (New York City: Macmillan Publishing, 1976), 364–68. For more critical accounts, see Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 183–88; Brian C. Hales and J. Max Anderson, *The Priesthood of Modern Polygamy: An LDS Perspective* (Salt Lake City: Northwest Publishing, 1992), esp. 45–78; and Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism*, 37–41, 146–48, 152–57 passim. A good précis of the Mormon polygamous, fundamentalist movement is provided by Jessie L. Embry in her *Setting the Record Straight: Mormons & Polygamy* (Orem, Utah: Millennial Press, 2007), 59–66.

122. Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Kidnapped from That Land: The Government Raids on the Short Creek Polygamists* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993); Wiley S. Maloney, "Short Creek Story," *American West* 11, no. 2 (1974): 16–23, 60–62; Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism*, 309–15.

123. "Too Many Wives?" *Newsweek*, November 21, 1955, 98–99; and

Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 195–208. Addressing parallels between the 1953 Short Creek raid and that at Eldorado, Texas, in 2008, Martha Sonntag Bradley points to the need for greater caution by government authorities in dealing with polygamous communities. See her “A Repeat of History: A Comparison of the Short Creek and Eldorado Raids on the FLDS,” in Cardell K. Jacobson and Lara Burton, eds., *Modern Polygamy in the United States: Historical, Cultural, and Legal Issues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–39. The same volume includes the insightful chapter: Gary Shepherd and Gordon Shepherd, “Learning the Wrong Lessons: A Comparison of FLDS, Family International, Branch Davidian Child-Protection Interventions,” 237–58.

124. See the examinations provided in D. Michael Quinn, “Plural Marriage and Mormon Fundamentalism,” *Dialogue* 31, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 1–68; and the many publications by Kenneth David Driggs, including: “After the Manifesto: Modern Polygamy and Fundamentalist Mormons,” *Journal of Church and State* 32, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 367–89; “Imprisonment, Defiance, and Division: A History of Mormon Fundamentalism in the 1940s and 1950s,” *Dialogue* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 65–95.

125. The figures used here first appeared in Brooke Adams’s “LDS Splinter Groups Growing,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 9, 2005, B1, B6, where it was described as an “informal survey” prepared by Anne Wilde of Salt Lake City. Wilde mailed a copy of the survey to me in 2010. It is a one-page bar graph titled, “Fundamentalist Mormons by Affiliation.” Other recent estimates, while varying, are close in their aggregates to Wilde’s findings. See, for example, Heber B. Hammon and William Jankowiak, “One Vision: The Making, Unmaking, and Remaking of a Fundamentalist Polygamous Community,” in Jacobson and Burton, eds., *Modern Polygamy*, 73 note 1; Ken Driggs, “Twenty Years of Observations about the Fundamentalist Polygamists,” in *ibid.*, 88–89; Janet Bennion, “History, Culture, and Variability of Mormon Schismatic Groups,” *ibid.*, 103–8; and Arland Thornton, “The International Fight against Barbarism: Historical and Comparative Perspectives on Marriage Timing, Consent, and Polygamy,” *ibid.*, 272. Because these groups are constantly growing, the figures cited here undoubtedly understate the magnitude of contemporary Mormon fundamentalist movements. See also the listing in Andrea Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel: The Extortion of Sex for Salvation in Contemporary Mormon and Christian Fundamentalist Polygamy and the Stories of 18 Women Who Escaped* (San Francisco: Pince-Nez Press, 2004), 25–29; and the map showing locations of fundamentalist communities in the western United States in Jacobson and Burton, eds., *Modern Polygamy*, xvi.

126. As but two of numerous examples, see Ogden Kraut, *Compromise and Concession* (N.p.: Kraut's Pioneer Press, 1977); and the fundamentalist advertisement, authored by Joseph L. Jensen, Chair of Star of Truth Publishing, "Shall We Excommunicate Joseph Smith?" *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 30, 1980, A3.

127. For Mormonism's American membership compared to that of other churches, see "Largest Religious Groups in the United States of America," based on a National Council of Churches survey at [http://www.adherents.com/rele\\_USA.html#bodies](http://www.adherents.com/rele_USA.html#bodies) (accessed July 23, 2009). For the Church's emergence as a unique Judeo-Christian development, see Jan Shipp, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), esp. 148–49; and Rodney Stark's analysis and projections based on Mormonism's dramatic membership growth, "The Rise of a New World Faith," in Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Mormonism*, edited by Reid L. Neilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 139–46. However, for a more sobering description of flat-lining membership growth and possible causes, see in this issue, Frederick Mark Gedicks, "Mormonism in Western Society: Three Futures," and Armand L. Mauss's "Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability," examining what seems like greater sensitivity to assimilation issues.

128. Evidence for these policies and more can be read in "Mass Excommunications," *Truth* 1 (March 1936): 114–21; "State Rests Case in Polygamy Trial," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 11, 1935, 7; "Excommunications," *Deseret News*, March 29, 1939, 13; See also "An Official Letter," *Truth* 5 (November 1939): 141–42; "Forty-Six Seized in Three-State Polygamy Drive," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 8, 1944, 1, 2; "LDS Leaders Uphold Action to Stamp Out Polygamy," *ibid.*, 1; "The Mark E. Petersen Letter," *Truth* 10 (January 1945): 207–8; and what appears to be a copy of the loyalty oath in Stanley Snow Ivins Collection, Box 12, fd. 13, Utah State Historical Society. For secondary accounts, see Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 195–98; Bradley, *Kidnapped from That Land*, 16–17, 52–63, 86–87; Bradley, "Changed Faces: The Official LDS Position on Polygamy, 1890–1990," *Sunstone* 14 (February 1990): 26–33; Quinn, "Plural Marriage and Mormon Fundamentalism," 26–27; Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism*, 248–49, 254–55; and Marianne T. Watson, "The Fred E. Curtis Papers: LDS Church Surveillance of Fundamentalist Mormons 1937 to 1954," paper presented at Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 10, 2001.

129. Bradley, "Changed Faces," 32–33. For the controversy aroused by a Church manual's failure to acknowledge Brigham Young's plural marriages, see Vern Anderson, Associated Press, April 4, 1998, "Mor-

mon Church Manual Paints Polygamist Young as a Monogamist,” <http://www.lds-mormon.com/byoung.shtml> (accessed August 10, 2009).

130. George D. Smith, “The Forgotten Story of Nauvoo Plural Marriage,” *Journal of Mormon History* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 163–65. Institutional efforts to avoid any suggestion of continued Mormon acceptance of the Principle sometimes had sad personal consequences. In the early twentieth century, when members of approved plural marriages were yet alive, they were sometimes told to separate their households geographically to be less conspicuous. The son of an approved, early twentieth-century polygamous marriage was offended because Church leaders did not acknowledge surviving plural wives and families when speaking at a deceased’s funeral. The daughter of polygamous parents told how she was instructed as a child to use mistruth at school to mask her polygamous parentage. References to these cases are found, in the order mentioned, in Grant Ivins’s memories as related in A. C. Lambert, “Heber J. Grant Would Have Totally Ruined the Mormon Church,” handwritten account of conversation with Heber Grant Ivins, A. C. Lambert Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah; the recollection of Guy C. Wilson Jr., *Memories of a Venerable Father and Other Reminiscences*, a published interview with B. Carmon Hardy (Fullerton: Oral History Program of California State University, Fullerton, 1988), 105–6, 111–12; and Katherine C. Thomas, interviewed by Leonard Grover, March 25, 1980, Provo, Utah, typewritten transcript, 3–4, BYU Polygamy Oral History Project.

131. *Heber J. Grant Diaries*, March 15, 1921, 317. Focusing on this point, Fundamentalists say that by yielding to the world and its “humanism,” Mormon doctrine has changed so much that what was “a holy principle” one day has become “a sin the next.” Joseph L. Jensen, Chairman of Star of Truth Publishing, “Shall We Excommunicate Joseph Smith?” *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 30, 1980, A3.

132. Despite the Church’s one-time approval of plural marriage and the continued inclusion of the revelation approving the practice in its canon of scripture, inattention to polygamy in official study guides and manuals is sometimes glaring. See, for example, Lesson 45, “The Family Is Ordained of God,” *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 260–65. For what *may* have been an attempt (though clearly an unsuccessful one) to edit the revelation on polygamy out of popular summaries of the Doctrine and Covenants in the 1930s, thus reducing its visibility, see Ken Driggs, “A New Future Requires a New Past,” *Dialogue* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 73.

133. Numerous individuals have said they believe the Principle will

be revived, whether here or hereafter, and that it has only been “suspended.” This was, in part, how B. H. Roberts was reconciled to the Woodruff Manifesto. John Sillito, ed., *History’s Apprentice: The Diaries of B. H. Roberts, 1880–1898* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 2004), February 10, 1893, 226–27. See also the comments of President Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon. Abraham Hoagland Cannon, *Journal*, April 5, 1894, 18:70–71; expectations voiced by Church members in the twentieth century in the BYU Polygamy Oral History Project, as illustrated by Winnie Haynie Mortensen, interviewed by Leonard R. Grover, January 26, 1980, 20–21; and Leroy Eyring, interviewed by Leonard R. Grover, April 24, 1980, 7. See also Edward Christian Eyring, quoted in Nelle Spilsbury Hatch and B. Carmon Hardy, comps. and eds., *Stalwarts South of the Border* (Anaheim, Calif: privately published, 1985), 150. Finally, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated: “Obviously the holy practice [of plural marriage] will commence again after the Second Coming of the Son of Man and the ushering in of the millennium.” *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 578. This work has now officially been taken out of print.

134. For this practice and the distress it causes some Mormon women, see anonymously authored “Spiritual Polygamist,” *Sunstone* 22, no. 1 (March–April 1999): 3–5; Moore-Emmett, “Only for Eternity,” 15, 17; and Lisa Miller’s “Beliefwatch: Ever After,” *Newsweek*, September 3, 2007, 13. As it relates to divorced men, see the anonymously authored “Spiritual Polygamist.”

135. This document was first formally presented by President Gordon B. Hinckley at the women’s general conference session in September 1995 and has been reprinted several times. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, November 1995, 99–100. The language used throughout endorses families involving “a man and a woman” and “a father and a mother” as families of which God approves, descriptions that clearly accommodate plural relationships. It is also significant that Apostle Boyd K. Packer, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, described the statement as “revelatory” and “scripturelike in its power.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: Building Up a Righteous Posterity* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2008), 5. But cf. Scott Trotter, Church spokesman, October 8, 2010, <http://www.ksl.com/index.php?nid=299&sid=12749665&pid=1> (accessed October 12, 2010).

136. The amount of press coverage and commentary on this episode is enormous. See the many blog entries in <http://texaspolygamy.blogspot.com/>; and “Post Raid Events,” “Court Rulings,” and “Other



Criticisms” in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YFZ\\_Ranch#cite\\_note-88](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YFZ_Ranch#cite_note-88) (both accessed June 29, 2010).

137. For examples of at least quasi-sympathetic description, with photos, of family life among YFZ residents, see Alex Tresniowski et al., “This Is Home,” *People*, March 23, 2009, 60–61; the editorial essays, “State vs. Church,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 2008, A16; and “Texas Officials Stung by Fallout from FLDS Raid,” *ibid.*, May 31, 2008, A1, A14; the summary provided in “Nation Reacts to Texas Raid on FLDS Compound,” *Sunstone*, July 2008, 70–73; and, finally, the scholarly concern with the way state authorities handled the 2008 episode that is expressed in study after study gathered in Jacobson and Burton, eds., *Modern Polygamy*.

138. Victor Kassel, “Polygyny after Sixty,” *Geriatrics* 21 (April 1966): 214–18; and Alf Pratte’s description of the findings of sociologist Jerry H. Borup, in “Sociologist Sees Future Rebirth of Polygamy,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 6, 1986, B4. Not all news concerning polygamy and health is positive. Some have alleged that FLDS members living in socially enclosed communities are vulnerable to genetically induced diseases inherited from common ancestors. See Kevin Duignan, “Fumarase Deficiency and the FLDS: A Tragic Secret,” [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/724053/fumarase\\_deficiency](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/724053/fumarase_deficiency) (accessed September 1, 2009). This, however, should be read in connection with the comments of Deborah L. Cragun and Ryan T. Cragun, “The Intricacies and Ethics of Parental Genetic Testing,” in Jacobson and Burton, eds., *Modern Polygamy*, esp. 338–41. But the old biological arguments with which pluralists were pelted in the nineteenth century—saying that a plurality of wives was causing Mormons to deteriorate into an inferior species—have no more foundation now than then. For the nineteenth-century allegations, see Lester E. Bush Jr., “Mormon ‘Physiology,’ 1850–1875,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 56 (Summer 1982): 218–37. Following the 1953 raid on Short Creek, a federal investigation of allegations that polygamist children were physically and socially injured by the practice of plural marriage found no evidence to support them. Except that underage girls were sometimes co-opted into plural unions and could thereby be characterized as juvenile delinquents, and that conditions in some households were “Spartan,” the hearings concluded that children in the community were generally healthy, well cared for, and well behaved. U.S. Senate, *Juvenile Delinquency (Plural Marriages): Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency of the Committee on the Judiciary, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., Pursuant to Sen. Res. 62, April 28 and May 2, 1955* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955).

139. 2Wives.Com. The descriptive note accompanying the site

reads: "If you *really* seek for 2 wives or more in your family, then 2Wives.com is the *real* place for you! 2Wives.com is a non-religious site for **good people** seeking **polygamy** (or, more specifically, polygyny)" (emphasis in original).

140. Regarding the show's popularity with the American public, see Mary McNamara, "Big Love': Disillusioned But Still Smitten," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 2010, D1, D9. An eastern journalist remarked that *Big Love* was raising tolerance for polygamy in a manner similar to that enjoyed by advocates of gay marriage. John Pomfret, "Polygamists Fight to Be Seen as Part of Mainstream Society," *Washington Post*, November 21, 2006, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/21/AR2006112100206.html> (accessed June 11, 2009). And an LDS reviewer remarked that the series was succeeding because of the "surprising *normalcy*" (emphasis in original) of the show's polygamous family. Kent R. Bean, "Mark V. Olsen and Will Scheffer, Creators, *Big Love*, Season 1 (2006) and Season 2 (2007); HBO Pictures," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 2 (2008): 184. See also the approving review by Margaret M. Toscano, "Mark Olsen and Will Scheffer, Co-Creators, Writers, and Producers: *Big Love*, the First Four Seasons on DVD, Home Box Office," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 30 (2010): 239-44.

141. William O. Douglas, in *Wisconsin v. Yoder et al.*, 406 U.S. 205 (1971), 247. Suggestions bearing on the legalization of polygamy reach back decades. See, for example: Ralph Slovenko, "The De Facto Decriminalization of Bigamy," *Journal of Family Law* 17 (1978-79): 297-308; and G. Keith Nedrow, "Polygamy and the Right to Marry: New Life for an Old Lifestyle," *Memphis State University Law Review* 11 (Spring 1981): 303-49. See also Firmage and Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts*, 129-209; the letter of Richard Eugene Harris to the editor, "Legalize Polygamy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 19, 1979, A13; "ACLU Seeks Overturning of Polygamy Laws," *Sunstone* 14 (October 1990): 63; comments in Quinn, "Plural Marriage and Modern Fundamentalism," 63-65; and more recently the letter of Vincent Marcus, Secretary of the Utah Libertarian Party, "Decriminalize Polygamy," *Salt Lake City Weekly*, 28, no. 10 (July 28, 2011), 4.

142. Articulating his policy repeatedly in recent years, Mark Shurtleff has shared views with law-enforcement agencies in other states and Canada. Hoping to increase dialogue between pluralists and the government in Utah, he discussed his approach with polygamists, attorneys, and law officers at a special conference titled, "Family or Felony? Polygamy and the Law," Snowbird, Utah, September 25, 2009. On another occasion, regarding Utah's polygamous community, Shurtleff was quoted as saying: "This is a big group of people. They are not going away. You

can't incarcerate them all. You can't drive them out of the state. So they are here. What do we do about it?" Pomfret, "Polygamists Fight to Be Seen as Part of Mainstream Society."

143. Representative David Zolman of Taylorsville, Utah, reported January 25, 2005, by Dan Harrie, <http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=> (accessed July 23, 2009).

144. Events in Canada are changing so rapidly it is difficult to remain current with them. But one can begin with Dean Beeby, "Federal Study Urges Canada to Scrap Ban on Polygamy," *Toronto Star*, January 13, 2006, A2. For this reference and other relevant developments, I am indebted to Amy J. Kaufman, Public Services Librarian, Lederman Law Library, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. See the work by her and Martha Bailey, *Polygamy in the Monogamous World: Multicultural Challenges for Western Law and Policy* (Santa Barbara, Calif: Praeger, 2010), 143–87.

145. There is extensive evidence of growing diversity in sexual and marital relationships in the United States, some of it purposefully non-traditional. "Multiple Intimate Relationships: A Summary of Liberated Christians' Views," <http://www.libchrist.com/> (accessed November 15, 2009). Also see Carol J. Williams, "Same-Sex Marriage Gains Legal Ground—Gradually; Even in States that Ban it, Court Decisions on Divorce, Custody and More Give Incremental Rights to Gay Couples," *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 2009, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed July 18, 2011); and Kate Linthicum, Ari Bloomekatz, and Scott Gold, "Data Show State Families Changing; U.S. Census Figures Reveal a Strong Increase in Nontraditional Households," *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 2011, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed July 18, 2011).

146. Quinn explored this question in his article, "Plural Marriage and Mormon Fundamentalism," 61–65.

147. Mormon assimilation into the American mainstream and efforts by the Church to retain a distinct religious image is most extensively explored in Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). See also his more contemporary analysis, "Rethinking Retrenchment," in this issue.

148. The phrase is taken from the "Epilogue" of Fawn M. Brodie in her *No Man Knows My History*, 401.

149. Klaus Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 205.

150. Encouragement for such a development may be taken from Carrie A. Moore's finding, reported in "LDS in Survey Call for Unvarnished History," *Deseret Morning News*, May 27, 2007, <http://www>.

proquest.com (accessed July 18, 2011). Considering the support given by the Church to Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard to produce *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), one wonders if similar candor on the part of Church leaders regarding the history of polygamy can be far behind. See Phillip L. Barlow, "Roundtable on Massacre at Mountain Meadows," *Dialogue* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 114–27; and Klaus Hansen's review of the same volume as a possible "turning point in Latter-day Saint historiography," *Journal of American History* 96, no. 2 (September 2009): 503.

151. "Utah," *Deseret Evening News*, July 18, 1877, 1. For other relevant articles at or near the same period, most being editorials in the *Deseret Evening News*, see "If the Mormon People Had Taken Our Advice," May 4, 1877, 2; "The 'Christian Advocate's' 'Parity of Reasoning,'" May 5, 1877, 2; "The Marriage Question," June 9, 1877, 2; "Anti-Polygamic Failures," January 23, 1878, 2; "Marriage as a Test," August 5, 1879, 2; "Not for General Practice," November 23, 1885, not paginated; and "Monogamy and the Home," December 5, 1885, not paginated.

152. President Gordon B. Hinckley instructed Church members: "We must not be clannish . . . we must never adopt a holier-than-thou attitude." This statement may be portentous. "Leader Tells Mormons to Welcome Non-Mormons," *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 2001, B18. A more recent statement is that of President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, quoted in Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Embrace All," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 6, 2010, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed April 14, 2010); and Marlin K. Jensen, "Those Who Are Different," *Ensign*, August 2010, 44–46.

153. Church members are told not only to search out their ancestors but to reverently acquaint themselves with the history of their religion's past. Those living now, the Saints are told, cannot be saved without their forebears, nor those who lived before without those presently alive. See Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. and comps., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 10. Mormon preachment is rich in admonitions on the importance of Church history and its significance for LDS worship. See, as recent General Authority statements published in the *Ensign*: Marlin K. Jensen, "Remember and Perish Not," May 2007, 36–38; Henry B. Eyring, "O Remember, Remember," November 2007, 66–69; Eyring, "There Shall Be a Record Kept among You," December 2007, 28–33; Russell M. Nelson, "Salvation and Exaltation," May 2008, 7–10; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Heeding the Voice of the Prophets," July 2008, 5; and M. Russell Ballard, "Learning the Lessons of the Past," May 2009, 31–34.

154. As told in Martin P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion*, trans. F. J. Fielden, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), 235–36.

155. Bernard DeVoto, “The Centennial of Mormonism,” *American Mercury*, January 1, 1930, 7.

156. For an overview of distinctions between cults, sects, and churches as well as heuristic accounts of the way sects split from established churches, with a history of such theories, see Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), esp. 19–37, 99–125. So far as Mormon fundamentalist sects are concerned, Martha Sonntag Bradley, “A Repeat of History,” 24, points out that they have become increasingly “distinct” over the decades of their estrangement from mainline Mormonism. Kathryn Daynes sketches differences between modern fundamentalist polygamy and that of the nineteenth-century Mormon Church in her “Differing Polygamous Patterns: Nineteenth-Century LDS and Twenty-First-Century FLDS Marriage Systems,” in Jacobson and Burton, *Modern Polygamy*, 125–48.

157. Scott Anderson, “The Polygamists: An Exclusive Look inside the FLDS,” *National Geographic*, February 2010, 57.

# Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology

*Taylor G. Petrey*

*Whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens. (D&C 132:46)*

The issue of homosexual relationships is among the most public struggles facing religious groups in America today.<sup>1</sup> The issue is not as simple as gay people versus religious groups, as rhetoric on either side often suggests; but it has become increasingly apparent that there is a significant overlap of people who identify both as homosexual and religious. Mormon writing on homosexuality often has had a pastoral character, aimed either at easing the transition for those seeking to leave the Church or smoothing the way for those who desire to remain within it.<sup>2</sup> Those who have thought to advocate change with the LDS Church and culture have focused primarily on “attitudes” toward homosexuality encouraging “understanding and tolerance for homosexual people.”<sup>3</sup> Too often this discussion of homosexuality has focused on either its etiology, or its relationship to the will, though neither the appeal to nature nor nurture resolves the question of ethics and meaning.<sup>4</sup>

Alan Michael Williams suggests that the question that Latter-day Saints must face is “how the Mormon ‘family’ can continue to make sense soteriologically when it does not represent the diversity of American families.”<sup>5</sup> Williams’s question is ultimately a social one—about a soteriology “making sense” in the context of an America where Mormon notions of family look increasingly anachronistic. For Latter-day Saints, the question is not simply a

social one, but a theological problem of soteriological significance. The theological and theoretical work that may serve as a basis for reimagining the practices of the Church with respect to homosexual relationships has yet to begin with any seriousness.

What follows is a thought experiment on the question of how Mormons might imagine different kinds of sealing relationships other than heterosexual marriage. Such an experiment neither constitutes Church doctrine nor intends to advocate itself as Church doctrine. Rather, this essay provides an occasion to think critically about the intellectual and theological problems posed by the reality of alternative relationships outside of heterosexual norms. This essay treats the theological resources that can account for and make legible particular kinds of homosexual relationships within Mormonism. I use the term “homosexual relationships” to describe the particular dilemma for Mormon thought. Though contemporary Mormon discourse distinguishes between homosexual desires and sexual practices, permitting the former but rejecting the latter, both desires and practices obscure relationships as a dimension of homosexual experiences.

The opacity of the term “homosexuality” and its multiple and limiting meanings make it particularly unhelpful. The artificiality and historical contingency of our terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” to describe “species” of persons is problematic for thinking socially and theologically.<sup>6</sup> Given that Mormonism imagines ideal heterosexuality, not as desires or practices, but as eternal relationships, could this same framework help us to reimagine the permissibility of homosexual relationships within Mormonism?

The LDS theological focus on marriage is not reducible to “sexuality” since there are many circumstances in which marriages may be entirely celibate, such as the case of physical incapacitation. Nor should we reduce homosexual relationships to “sexuality,” since such an equation also distorts not only the actual practice of such relationships but is inconsistent with our own understanding of the salvific character of relationships per se—not the details of sexual practices performed within those relationships.

Any attempt to think creatively and theologically within Mormonism to reconcile the tension between the LDS Church and

those who identify as homosexual must investigate the ideologies and theologies that inform the current tension. Some may feel that no reconciliation is possible, that LDS teachings cannot and should not accept homosexual relationships as intelligible. This position is certainly viable, though it requires defense rather than simply repetition and assertion. We are forced to diagnose either way what is problematic with homosexual relationships according to current LDS theology.

As I understand it, much of the theological objection to homosexual relationships lies in current LDS understandings of the afterlife and the kinds of relationships that will exist there. First, these relationships are frequently understood to be reproductive relationships, at least among those who occupy the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.<sup>7</sup> Second, the ordinance of sealing binds these reproductive families together, sealing only those who can presumably reproduce either in this life or the next. Finally, heterosexual pairs of men and women should possess the proper “gender,” which is eternal. Homosexual relationships cannot be eternal because they are not able to reproduce by means of natural biological methods and confuse the natural gender they should possess. I will address these claims in order to suggest how it may be possible to imagine sealed homosexual relationships as compatible with key doctrines of Mormonism.

### Celestial Reproduction

The belief in divine reproduction constitutes a central tenet for many Mormons, in spite of its rather thin canonical support. Even defining what exactly is meant by this belief in divine reproduction can be particularly unclear. At issue is determining exactly what is meant by the belief that human beings are a “spirit son or daughter of Heavenly Parents.”<sup>8</sup> For instance, in a recent essay exploring “common ground” between womanist theology and LDS theology, professors of political science at Brigham Young University Valerie M. Hudson and Alma Don Sorenson asserted: “The primary work of God is to have children and nurture them into godhood.” In a clarifying footnote, the authors backed away from this bold statement with the significant caveat: “Actually, *have* is not the right word here. In LDS theology, God does not create intelligence; rather, God *organizes* intelligences to the



point that they can be called God's children, a process that is known as 'spirit birth.'"<sup>9</sup> The ambivalence on this point is a persistent tension in Mormon thought. That is, the doctrine of spiritual birth stands at odds with the doctrine of eternal intelligences, and to this day Mormonism has not resolved this tension.<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, "spirit birth" is a divine reproduction that mirrors human reproduction, requiring a male and female partner; and on the other hand, "spirit birth" is a more metaphorical "organization" that bears little resemblance to reproduction as a result of sexual intercourse. The former model of spirit birth depends on a heterosexual pair (at least if divine bodies are biologically constrained without access to the kinds of technologies human bodies may benefit from) and is often used as the prototype for the heterosexual family, as the authors quoted above argue. The latter model of spirit birth, however, requires nothing in particular about the sexual or reproductive acts of God, whose organization of spirits likely has little to do with the reproductive organs he or she (or his or her partner) might have.

This doctrine of spirit birth faces a few significant challenges. In Doctrine and Covenants 93—and repeated in many other of Joseph Smith's speeches, translations, and revelations—individual human identity is thought of as eternal, perhaps in explicit disagreement with the doctrine of spirit birth as it was developing among some of his disciples in 1843–44.<sup>11</sup> The doctrine of spirit birth seeks to reconcile itself with this doctrine of eternal intelligences by positing a four-fold progressive anthropology: from intelligence, to spirit, to mortal body, and finally to a glorified body. In this view, Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother may not be the "parents" of intelligences, but are parents of spirits—in some sense having given "birth" to them. Advocates of "spirit birth" based on heterosexual reproduction generally insist that it is similar, if not identical, to the birth of mortal bodies. As it is frequently imagined, the process of male-female mutual divinization entails not only a sexual relationship, but also a reproductive one in order to populate future worlds. Such a notion may be tied to the promises of eternal increase, "a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19) in the revelation given on celestial marriage. In this view of the marital relationship, mixed-sex

couples are eternally engaged in the reproduction of spirit children.

While articulating the spirit birth process as providing the intelligence with a spirit in a way analogous to how mortal birth provides the spirit with a physical body, the analogy is strained to the point of breaking. If reproduction as we know it now offers a model for heavenly reproduction so as to exclude homosexual relationships by definition, then must we imagine that male gods deposit sperm in the bodies of female gods (who menstruate monthly when they are not pregnant), that the pregnant female god gestates spirit embryos for nine months and then gives birth to spirit bodies? While some LDS thinkers imagine an eternally pregnant Heavenly Mother, I see no reason why we must commit to this kind of literal pregnancy as the reason for divine female figures.<sup>12</sup> In mortal birth, parents with bodies provide lower-stage spirits with bodies in order to bring them to the same level. However, in this view of spirit birth, divinized parents provide intelligences with spirits, two levels below their own stage of progression. Mortal bodies give birth to equal mortal bodies, yet in this understanding of spirit birth, glorified bodies give birth to inferior spirit bodies. There is no equivalency between the two understandings of birth because they accomplish very different things in very different circumstances.

What would it mean for homosexual relationships if we were to substitute the tentative doctrine of literal divine reproduction for other models of “birth”? For instance, the process of “birth” is not used to describe each of the series of progression from intelligence to spirit to mortal body to resurrection. Resurrected bodies need not be born from resurrected beings but are organized from matter. We need not consider that spirit bodies must be literally born but may be “organized” in an analogous way to the resurrection. Even baptism, which marks a spiritual rebirth, may be thought of as a model for how spirit children are born to divinized parents. In such models, biological reproduction is not needed to explain celestial parentage. Such ideas are certainly not the logical consequence of the notion of divine embodiment.

The issue of God’s embodiment is not as clear cut as it may initially appear. While we recognize continuity in appearance and even substance with the future exalted body, we also acknowledge

that it is quite different. As Blake Ostler explains, “The sense in which the Father’s body is like a human body must be qualified.”<sup>13</sup> For instance, a divine body is not constrained by space and time in the ways that mortal bodies are. From scriptural accounts, divine bodies can appear, disappear, pass through walls, and resist entropy. While these scriptural accounts affirm that it is possible for divine bodies to perform functions such as eating and drinking, they also suggest that there is no necessary requirement that they do so in order to sustain life. Why then, do we imagine that sexual union as we know it in mortality is a necessary function for the production of life in divine bodies if these bodies are so dissimilar in every other way from mortal bodies? Could not sexual union be a possibility for divine bodies but not be a necessity for creation, just as alimentary functions may be possible but not necessary?

In addition to the resurrection, the creation provides a better model for thinking about how this “spirit birth” might occur than the process of mortal parturition. In both the canonical and ritual accounts of creation, women are entirely absent.<sup>14</sup> Creation of the earth, organization of the elements, and even the creation of the living bodies of Adam and Eve all occur without the presence of female figures. The creation as we know it is capable of being performed with an all-male cast. This has the effect of not only making women superfluous to creation and salvation, but also of putting a male-male relationship as the source of creativity, productivity, and the giving of life itself.

The story of Adam and Eve in LDS scripture and ritual is often cited as the example of divinely authorized heterosexuality.<sup>15</sup> Yet the creation of both Adam and Eve does not in any way affirm heterosexual reproduction as the method of divine creation either spiritually or materially. Indeed, creation according to God’s “word” is attested in all scriptural accounts available to Latter-day Saints (Gen 1–2; Moses 2–3; Abr. 4–5). Adam’s body is formed “from the dust of the ground . . . but spiritually they were created and made according to my word” (Moses 3:7). Both spiritual and material formation takes place without any sexual union. Furthermore, males alone perform the creation of Adam’s body. Even Eve is “reproduced” from a male body with the help of other males. The Lord penetrates the body of Adam and creates Eve.

The capacity for Adam's body to reproduce by means of another male provides scriptural precedent in the foundational story of humanity to the variety of possibilities available for Latter-day Saints to conceive of reproduction independent of heterosexual union.

Jesus's birth from Mary may also provide a way of thinking about the process of giving birth that does not involve heterosexual union. While the male-male creation and male-female creation may be found in Mormon thought already, perhaps the model of the virgin birth—of female pregnancy without male penetration—could serve as an example of how female-female relationships might reproduce with only minimal assistance of a male participant, like the sperm donor for the modern female-female reproductive relationship. Though some early speculation in LDS thought suggested that God the Father did have sex with Mary, Mary's virginity has been affirmed in official LDS doctrine.<sup>16</sup> Rather than seeing the conception of Jesus as a wholly exceptional event, James E. Talmage has suggested that this method of procreation was, "not in violation of natural law, but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof."<sup>17</sup> While with Adam we have seen that male bodies may reproduce on their own, or with the help of another male, with Mary we see that female bodies may also reproduce without sexual intercourse. Or perhaps even the model of Adam reproducing Eve parthenogenically might also be a capacity of divine female bodies. Both scriptural accounts offer models of divine creation and reproduction not based on heterosexual union.

Though we have models of reproduction and creation that might suggest their possibility for same-sex partners, we Latter-day Saints face another theological question: Are creation and salvation male-only priesthood activities? The possibility of reproduction in the female-female relationship does not address the centrality of the male-only priesthood in LDS thought. A male-only priesthood represents a significant limitation for female-female relationships, linking the exclusion of women from exercising priesthood power and authority to the exclusion of women's homosexual relationships. The fact that males can hold the priesthood allows the possibility for male-only creative relationships (like the male members of the Godhead) since priest-

hood may be held and exercised entirely independent of women in LDS practice. But if women do not have access to the priesthood—whatever we may mean by that term—, would they not be able to create without men? The autonomy afforded to males to create in Mormon tradition comes at the expense of females.

Historical precedents of women healing and blessing notwithstanding, most of the functions of the priesthood have not been exercised by women.<sup>18</sup> Further, promises to women that they would be given the priesthood (or in some sense share it) were conditional on their relationship to their husband.<sup>19</sup> Feminist concerns about the ability of men to act independently in the Church, while women are subject to male partnership as a prerequisite for their actions, are magnified in the consideration for female-female relationships. We may need to rethink women's dependent status with respect to the priesthood in tandem with rethinking the possibility of homosexual relationships. Thinking through what the priesthood means in an eternal context—which would presumably not include things like the authority to ordain officers, bless the sick, administer sacraments and other administrative or temporally bounded notions of priesthood authority—is an essential task for thinking about whether women might be excluded from the eternal priesthood activities of creating and saving.

If divine creation and reproduction cannot be used to exclude the possibility of nonheterosexual relationships in LDS theology, what about mortal reproduction? How can the command to “multiply and replenish” the earth be fulfilled (Gen 1:27)?<sup>20</sup> In the context of the Church's endorsement of ballot initiatives in several states to define marriage as between a man and a woman in the 2008 elections, the Church explained its interest in the issue in a document called “The Divine Institution of Marriage” that appeared in the online LDS Newsroom on August 13, 2008.<sup>21</sup> The issue of producing children is presented as a central reason for defining marriage as a heterosexual institution. Its authors reason, “Only a man and a woman together have the natural biological capacity to conceive children.” This argument is repeated later, stating that marriage is “legally protected because only a male and female together can create new life, and because the rearing of children requires a life-long commitment, which mar-

riage is intended to provide.” Marriage should be restricted to mixed-sex couples because “marriage and family are vital instruments for rearing children and teaching them to become responsible adults.”<sup>22</sup>

While from a public policy perspective the Church asserts the necessary link between marriage and procreation, in practice having children is neither a requirement for Latter-day Saint marriages after they have been sealed, nor is the ability to have children a prerequisite for sealing. Neither marriage nor sex is thought of in exclusively procreationist terms.<sup>23</sup> While LDS teaching may consider procreation a religious *desideratum*, it cannot and should not be a reason to exclude someone from receiving the blessings of sealing, especially if afterlife creation has nothing to do with mortal procreation. There is no requirement or expectation of natural fertility to qualify for marriages, even sealings, in Latter-day Saint practice.<sup>24</sup> There is no reason to exclude nonreproductive couples from the blessings of sealing on the basis of reproductive capacity alone. But this lack of capacity to reproduce in no way diminishes the responsibility to provide for and rear children. Indeed, the wording of this obligation to rear children is not connected to reproductive capacity at all, but rather to the obligations that able couples have to provide children, by means of adoption or other forms of reproduction technology available today, with the education and formation to become responsible adults. Further, it is certainly the case that it is, in fact, possible for nonheterosexual couples to take care of children, either their own from previous relationships, through medical assistance, or by means of adoption. The authoritative teaching that families should care for and rear children into responsible adults suffers no harm if we continue to teach that all families, heterosexual or not, take this as a religious responsibility.

### Sealings as Kinship

The LDS rite of sealing is currently practiced as a means of authorizing relationships between heterosexual couples and their children.<sup>25</sup> Past and present practices of sealings also point to ways that we might reconceive of sealing as untethered from the heterosexual biological family. I suggest that the practice of sealing is about ritually producing kinship relations that are not re-

ducible to reproductive couples and bloodlines. Kinship may be defined as the practices of ritually marking relationships of care, trust, and bonding that are greater than friendship or community. That is to say, there are not predetermined relationships that count as kinship, but rather kinship emerges as a special kind of relationship within society. Sexual and reproductive relationships are one way that human societies practice kinship, but by no means the only way. Indeed, the biological basis for kinship is neither universal in human society, nor is it the only way that Latter-day Saints think about kinship. Rather, kinship is a way of making the biological results of sexual reproduction meaningful. Judith Butler suggests, "Kinship is itself a kind of doing, a practice that enacts that assemblage of significations as it takes place. . . . [T]hat norm acquires its durability by being reinstated time and again."<sup>26</sup> In this understanding, reproduction *acquires* the significance of kinship rather than being constitutive of it.

Studies of kinship over the last century have emphasized its central role in human society.<sup>27</sup> Psychoanalytic, functionalist, and structuralist analyses of kinship suggested that it was the key to the development of subjectivity and to the very existence of civilization itself. The LDS teaching that "the family is the fundamental unit of society" owes its debt to this modern cultural assumption.<sup>28</sup> The hypothesis that kinship structures require a father and a mother is a feature of some twentieth-century theorists' work on kinship.<sup>29</sup> This view, built on the Oedipal drama, assumes that the subject comes into being and culture by passing through this privileged social structure.<sup>30</sup> This argument is implicitly used to justify the insistence upon both a father and a mother in "The Divine Institution of Marriage."<sup>31</sup> In this claim, the relations between the sexes gain significance only through reproduction, which marks reproduction as the foundational element in kinship.<sup>32</sup> The problem is not simply the insistence that heterosexual kinship guarantees the continued transmission of culture, but that the argument is more often that culture must guarantee the continued transmission of heterosexuality.<sup>33</sup>

Recent anthropological work has challenged the assumption that broader models of kinship are identical structurally (father-mother-child) to the modern Western nuclear family. The topic specifically at issue here is whether nonheterosexual kin-

ship may qualify as a recognizable form of kinship. Certainly, there are numerous forms of kinship that do not conform to the reproductive heterosexual family organized by legal marriage. This model for defining kinship does not coincide with the way that kinship relations are established in African American,<sup>34</sup> gay and lesbian,<sup>35</sup> and some rural Chinese cultures,<sup>36</sup> at the very least.<sup>37</sup> Such post-kinship studies denaturalize the biological family as the basis of kinship and complement alternative ways of ordering society.<sup>38</sup>

LDS sealings for nonheterosexual relationships could offer a set of regularizing terms under which such existing social relationships are ritually legitimized.<sup>39</sup> For the Church to acknowledge nonheterosexual unions would be to acknowledge what already happens in practice—namely, that homosexual relationships of care and commitment, including the raising of children, exist. As it stands, the Church legitimizes heterosexual marriage as the only acknowledged way of marking kinship. To expand this definition is not to authorize any and all practices. Rather, same-sex marriage is really modeled on heterosexual practices of establishing legitimacy by means of long-term relationships of filiation. Homosexual activists have not universally accepted this project of privileging state-authorized marriage as the only way of establishing kinship.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, many see gay marriage as a profoundly conservative means of filiation.<sup>41</sup> For the Church to accept gay marriage would be to continue to privilege certain kinds of kinship over others, excluding certain sexual and relational possibilities. The relevant questions for sealing nonheterosexual couples are not the legal issues that link health care, hospital visitation, and tax benefits to marital status. For Latter-day Saints, the sense of purpose and divine partnership, as well as spiritual safeguards and consolation in life and death that sealings endow, are blessings that might apply to kinship relationships beyond the heterosexual, reproductive family.

These broader understandings of kinship practices not only serve as a better anthropological model for the multiplicity of culture, including modern Western culture, but also better explain historical precedents of the LDS sealing ritual, which similarly created kinship in nonreproductive relationships.<sup>42</sup> Though discontinued by President Wilford Woodruff in 1894, many men and



women (most often married couples) were sealed to prominent nineteenth-century Church leaders through the “law of adoption” regardless of blood or reproductive relationships.<sup>43</sup> Prior to the Woodruff reform, the adoption sealing was intentionally a means of establishing new kinds of kinships other than familial-reproductive, though utilizing the vocabulary of the family. As Samuel Brown explains, “The Mormon heaven was emphatically not the Victorian hearth of the increasingly popular domestic heaven. . . . Smith’s heaven consisted of one boundless family of eternal intelligences.”<sup>44</sup> The practice of “adoption,” in which men and their families were sealed to other men and their families points to alternative ways of establishing kinship.<sup>45</sup> Instead of sealing genealogical chains, this system of kinship connected new social units of nonbiological families with the ultimate goal of uniting all of humanity into one sacred network.<sup>46</sup> In Orson Hyde’s “Diagram of the Kingdom of God,” he envisions the universal family tree made up of different branches with prophets at the head of each branch. To each prophet is sealed large kingdoms. From each of these branches extend still smaller branches, with even smaller branchings from them. Hyde describes how, in this patriarchal order, “every man will be given a kingdom and dominion, according to his merit, powers, and abilities. . . . There are kingdoms of all sizes, an infinite variety to suit all grades of merit and ability.”<sup>47</sup> This sense of rulership is not meant to suggest that the prophets are the literal fathers of the greatest number of people, but rather that, because of righteousness (not fecundity), their kingdoms are the greatest. In Parley P. Pratt’s terms, the “royal family” is one singular family that consists of “friends and kindred.”<sup>48</sup> This bond is not forged by a genealogical link, but by the sealing itself. As Joseph Smith proclaimed in the King Follett Discourse, “Use a little Craftiness & seal all you can & when you get to heaven tell your father that what you seal on earth should be sealed in heaven.”<sup>49</sup>

It wasn’t until after Woodruff’s temple reforms that proxy temple sealings were administered for deceased ancestors, including those who had rejected the faith in mortality. In 1894, the Utah Genealogical Society was formed as a response to this new interest in proxy temple work made possible by the new revelation and policy shift.<sup>50</sup> Woodruff explained the new practice which re-

versed the previous ban on sealing children to deceased parents: "The Lord has told me that it is right for children to be sealed to their parents, and they to their parents just as far back as we can possibly obtain the records, and then have the last obtainable member sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith."<sup>51</sup> This new practice centered on biological families, but also relied on the earlier notion of kingdoms, with Joseph Smith as the adoptive father of this dispensation. In time, the notion of dispensational kingdoms would recede even more behind kingdoms based on individual lineage, thus paving the way for the contemporary emphasis on the nuclear family.<sup>52</sup> The new proxy sealings of married couples reduced the need for proxy adoption and also introduced greater flexibility in who could be sealed to whom, allowing for those who hadn't been members of the Church in mortality to be sealed posthumously to living spouses or for ancestors to be sealed to one another. Less emphasis was placed on getting the earthly sealings absolutely correct, shifting the ultimate decisions about validity of a sealing from earthly ordinances to justice in the afterlife, noting that there "all will be made right."<sup>53</sup> More important than making sure that one was sealed to a righteous person was performing the sealing itself.

One need not return to this earlier notion of the sealing as kinship for examples of nonreproductive or biological relationships but may rather explore the misrecognition of how the ritual is practiced today to link nonreproductive or biological kin. The clearest example is the current understanding of the theology of LDS adoption after the reformation of the adoption practices in the late nineteenth century. The case of nineteenth-century adoptions as a practice of establishing kinship in ways that are not biologically based poses a challenge to the assumption that biology is the basis of kinship.

Anthropologists have traditionally distinguished between "true" and "fictive" kinship, though this distinction rests on an assumption that privileges the nonbiological relationship regardless of how families themselves treat such children. But the assumption that parents have a different relationship to nonbiological than to "fictive" kin fails to account for how kinship may be extended at all.<sup>54</sup> It is, of course, often the case that families make no distinction between biological and adoptive children and, indeed, often

reject the premises of the distinction. In LDS practice, nonbiological children are ritually incorporated into a new kinship structure by means of the sealing following legal adoption.

Perhaps one might suggest in anthropological terms that the LDS sealings of legally adopted children do mark adoptive kin as separate from those “born in the covenant.” The ritual itself certainly marks the crossing of a boundary, but the point is that, after the ritual, there is no meaningful distinction between biological and adoptive kin. In fact, though incredibly rare, it is possible that even those who were “born in the covenant” may be sealed anew to adoptive parents.<sup>55</sup> Rather than consider the biological child who has been born within a LDS kinship structure as already covered by the blessings of sealing *a priori*, it is possible for this child’s sealing to take place in the adoptive family. Here, the sealing ritually marks how the kinship structure takes precedence over and replaces the biological family.<sup>56</sup>

The case of divorce and the cancellation of sealings further reinforces the principle that biology is less important than the sealing itself. President Ezra Taft Benson explained that the children of parents whose sealing was cancelled “are entitled to birthright blessings, and if they remain worthy, are assured the right and privilege of eternal parentage regardless of what happens to their natural parents or the parents to whom they were sealed.”<sup>57</sup> Benson’s view here represents a continuation of the reforms under Woodruff that emphasized the sealing itself as important, not necessarily to whom one is sealed. Further, it distinguishes biological kin from the blessings of kinship through sealing, promising kin on the basis of the sealing even if biological kin cannot fulfill that role.

When kinship replaces reproduction in the logic of the sealing, we may consider how alternative relationships of care, modeled on, but not identical to parent-child and husband-wife, as well as those not yet regularized or named, offer a better model for understanding both the purpose and possibilities of the sealed relationship, whether those sealings entail a sexual relationship between partners or not. Mormon models of kinship, both past and present, displace and replace the biological and the sexual relationship as markers of kinship, suggesting alternative modes and models for establishing such relationships. The heteronormative

notion of family neither corresponds to a universal ideal nor reflects the actual practice of kinship among Latter-day Saints. Understanding sealings as ritually marking and normalizing relationships as kinship offers a more accurate understanding of how sealings have been practiced and are practiced today, as well as how they may be practiced at some future time.

### **Eternal Gender**

The concept of “gender” remains an important term in LDS discourse about homosexuality and is a necessary site of critical inquiry.<sup>58</sup> The question of homosexual relationships is intimately bound up in conceptualizations of gender differences. The semi-canonical 1995 document “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (hereafter “Proclamation”) announces: “Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”<sup>59</sup> The notion of an eternally persistent gender functions to regulate normative behavior that is believed to correspond to the attributes of an eternally “gendered” subject. “The Divine Institution of Marriage” suggests that same-sex marriage causes “gender confusion,” with the result that “the rising generation of children and youth will find it increasingly difficult to develop their natural identity as a man or a woman.”<sup>60</sup> It further asserts that there are “inherent differences between the genders.”<sup>61</sup> The appeal to a “natural” and “inherent” sexual identity that is at risk of being “confused” presumes a certain kind of sexual difference rooted in heterosexuality. LDS concepts of gender difference are as much about rejecting homosexuality as they are about ordering the relationship between men and women. It is necessary to address the ideas of incommensurable “genders” as the basis of heterosexual priority in the Church.

What exactly is meant by the term “gender” in LDS discourse? Since second-wave feminism divided biological “sex,” meaning male and female bodies, from socially constructed “gender,” meaning culturally assigned social roles, the sex/gender distinction has had a great impact on how the term “gender” is understood in American society. Yet in my reading of LDS statements on the subject, this distinction is not operative, and significant attention to defining the term is absent. The term “gender” seems

to be deployed without a single definition of what is meant, leaving the broadest possible semantic range.

Gender as a category is variously applied to cover three separate aspects of human identity, though they are often conflated under this single term. As one example, an official LDS booklet *A Parent's Guide* published in 1985 explains: "Gender identity involves an understanding and accepting of one's own gender, with little reference to others; one's gender roles usually focus upon the social interaction associated with being male or female."<sup>62</sup> Parsing this definition reveals that first, gender refers to the morphological bodies of males and females—what is taken to be self-evidently "one's own gender." Second, gender refers to an "identity" that males and females are supposed to possess that corresponds with their bodies, including heterosexual desires. Third, gender refers to the differing "roles," purposes, and responsibilities that some Church leaders understand to be assigned to males and females. These three definitions refer to quite different things, which makes it difficult to know how exactly the term is used in different contexts.<sup>63</sup> When one adds the idea of gender as an eternal characteristic, these three definitions become even more complicated. I will examine each of these three notions of "gender" as they might serve as an objection to homosexual relationships.

First, "gender" is understood to refer exclusively to the morphological differences between bodies labeled "male" and "female." In this sense, "gender" is simply a synonym for "sex," the identifiable bodily characteristics of maleness and femaleness. If we restrict the understanding of "gender" to mean simply bodily difference, it is not clear that homosexual relationships would be impacted at all. Homosexual relationships do not interfere with this minimal definition of "gender," since male and female bodies persist as such in these relationships. Nonheterosexual relationships, it would seem, do not require a changed belief in an eternal "gender" at all, as long as "gender" is understood to refer exclusively to bodily morphology. In the same way that the sex/gender distinction was deployed by second-wave feminists to argue for a fixed notion of different sexes, while suggesting that the way those differences were given meaning in culture were changeable, one could argue that homosexual relationships also affirm a

fixed, eternal notion of sex, while seeing the particular configurations of relationships as variable.

Yet we might be wary of conceding this point too quickly. The notion of a morphological binary system of “sex” rooted in “nature” serves as an attempt to naturalize a particular division. Monique Wittig has argued, “The categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ . . . are political categories and not natural givens.”<sup>64</sup> The notion that sexual difference is political, rather than natural, suggests that the emphasis on the mark of sexual difference as reproductive capacity is rooted in the social and political world, even while appealing to “nature” as an outside authority.

In this way, a sexual difference that claims to be rooted in “nature” is always already heterosexual, thus concealing its political import.<sup>65</sup> One must be aware that the binary division between male and female, taken to be on the order of not only nature, but also God’s will, has as its goal the sanctification of heterosexual sex.<sup>66</sup> There must be strict gendered correspondence between a spirit and a body, it is believed, because of God’s providence over creation. This view of the premortal gendered spirit is often put to use against transsexuality and intersexuality.

The problem with this view arises in explaining not only the real experiences of transsexual persons, but also the existence of intersexed persons whose bodies resist categorization in the gender binary. Anne Fausto-Sterling has suggested that as many as five “sexes” occur in nature.<sup>67</sup> The idea of a natural or inherent binary sexual difference in LDS discourse makes a legible “sex” the prerequisite to personhood, rendering the differently sexed “accidents of nature” illegible as children of God and divine potentials.<sup>68</sup>

The notion of an eternal gender, referring to physical differences alone, also faces significant theological problems. If gender is “an essential individual characteristic of premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose,” then presumably the premortal spirit of each individual necessarily corresponds in appearance to the body it inhabits as a kind of facsimile. The challenge with such a view is in saying what kinds of bodily characteristics correspond to one’s preexistent spirit. What is the relationship between one’s eternal identity and one’s contingent genetic makeup, including “sex”? What are the characteristics that make up a morphological

sex? Is it just the genitals, or are premortal bodies also capable of reproduction? Do things like performed gender differences, relative height and weight, chemistry, hormones, and muscle build also factor into what makes the “genders” eternally different? Do premortal spirits have chromosomes? What defines physical “gender” that it can persist eternally?

The whole question of the relationship of the premortal spirit to the mortal body is at stake in the claim that “gender” belongs to both equally. If any of the particularities of one’s genetic and environmental circumstances may be said to not preexist with a particular spirit in a deterministic way, why then is sexual difference the exception? To assert that “gender” is more fundamental to one’s identity than these other contingent features begs the question: Of the many different features of human identity, why does sexual difference—whatever that may refer to—occupy a privileged place in the account of the eternal nature of the human being?<sup>69</sup>

In the second understanding of “gender,” the term refers not only to particular bodies, but also to an “identity” that is supposed to match to those bodies. What is meant by “identity,” and on what grounds is it done correctly or incorrectly? Gender identity is the relationship between sex, gender, and desire; and it is done correctly when all three align according to heterosexual norms. Early twentieth-century discourse about homosexuality thought of it in terms of pathological gendered “inversion,” suggesting that men and women who engaged in homosexual activity mistook their proper sexual identity as a result of confused social roles.<sup>70</sup>

Current LDS discourse uses the term “gender confusion” to speak about homosexuality.<sup>71</sup> Here, the stereotypical notion of male homosexuals as effeminate and female homosexuals as masculine functions to explain homosexuality. A correct gender identity can only be thought of in terms of heterosexuality. In this discourse, the transsexual and homosexual are indistinct since both have identified with a “sex” or “desire” that does not correspond correctly to their body. Such “identities” are rendered failures—or even impossible—in a framework that recognizes only some identities and is the impetus behind the pathologization of nonconforming gender identities.

Church teachings assert two ideas about gender identity that

are in significant tension: first, that gender is an eternal, immutable aspect of one's existence; and second, that notions of gender identity and roles are so contingent that they must be constantly enforced and taught, especially to young children.<sup>72</sup> To say that one "is" a particular gender by virtue of that individual's body and also that one's disposition or identity is of that gender suggests that, in the latter case, gender is not a question of ontology but of achievement. "The Divine Institution of Marriage" manifests this tension by appealing to an "inherent . . . natural identity" with respect to gender, but also positing that nature is so unstable as to require heterosexual marriage to make sure that it can "develop."<sup>73</sup> In this understanding, male and female "identity" is not secured by the possession of a male or female body alone but must be enforced and made legible as "male" or "female" through practices like heterosexuality.<sup>74</sup> As Douglas A. Abbot and A. Dean Byrd put it, heterosexuality must be "encouraged" in children in order for it to take.<sup>75</sup>

But gender "identity" cannot be both inherent and taught. The contingency of "gender identity" here reveals that it is not, in fact, "natural" at all but rather must be maintained and enforced juridically. Gender is constantly at risk of failing to correspond to the sexed body. As Judith Butler explains, "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results."<sup>76</sup> The idea that gender is performed, not possessed, reveals just how unstable it is as a category for defining people.<sup>77</sup> Such a view—that gender is something that develops, or is achieved—suggests that there is no true or false gender, nor one that coheres with a precultural "nature."

The use of the category of "gender" to describe one's desires and sexual practices has been heavily discredited over the last several decades.<sup>78</sup> Rather, given the vast variability of gender "identities" of culturally recognized "masculine" or "feminine" traits among those who identify as either heterosexual or homosexual, the assumption that any given gender performance corresponds to a particular object of desire is entirely contingent. The old binary categories of hetero and homosexuals—with the caveat of bisexuals—does little to capture the wide variety of gender performance and sexual preference. The experiences of transexuals, transgender, drag, intersexuality, and the variety of gender per-



formances in gay, lesbian, and straight cultures are not adequately understood through the category of gender as a system that matches “masculine” and “feminine” sexual desires to “male” and “female” bodies. The history of this categorization of sexual preferences in connection with gender relies on the same heterosexual matrix that it attempts to explain. Gender simply fails as a category for thinking about sexuality, and LDS discourse should move beyond such an infelicitous conflation.

The third understanding of “gender” in LDS discourse sees it as more than bodies and identity, but also as comprising roles—or as the “Proclamation” puts it, “eternal identity and purpose.” Gendered “purposes” or roles are laid out in the document: “By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.”<sup>79</sup> Earlier teachings of Church leaders suggested an even more expansive notion of gender roles that included prescribed ways of dressing and acting so as to appear properly male or female.<sup>80</sup> Like gender identity, gender roles must also be taught to children in order for them to be carried on.<sup>81</sup> This notion of “gender” as roles operates as a critique of homosexual relationships because at least one “confused” partner fails to conform to his or her “proper” gendered identity as masculine or feminine. Such a view of gendered roles may not include any assumed correspondence to capacity, but rather to responsibilities which each gender is meant to assume.<sup>82</sup>

This view may be used to object to homosexual relationships because such relationships may include one or both same-sex parents as subverting the role assigned to their “gender.” In this sense, “gender confusion” is the result, not of the presence of both “masculine” and “feminine” parents, but the failure of these traits to be possessed by men and women respectively. The notion that women are more innately caring and nurturing reinforces the instruction for women to reproduce and be the primary caregivers of their children. In recent LDS discourse, the title “mother” does not refer to a period in a woman’s life, one particular aspect of how a woman’s identity may be performed, or a particular category of women who have children. This view was expressed in its most extreme form by Sheri Dew, speaking as second coun-

selor in the Relief Society general presidency, when she asserted that a “woman” is defined wholly as a “mother” since “motherhood is the essence of who we are as women.”<sup>83</sup>

In spite of the emphasis that parents must act as both masculine and feminine (ideally by males and females, respectively), LDS discourse has increasingly emphasized “equality” in the marital relationship. The “Proclamation” teaches both that “fathers are to preside over their families” and that “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.” The tension between these two positions—fathers presiding but both parents as “equal partners”—remains largely unresolved. Indeed, what it means to preside and what it means to be equal are left entirely unexplained. When differences are minimized between the sexes, Elder L. Tom Perry can say, “There is not a president and vice-president in a family. We have co-presidents working together eternally for the good of their family. . . . [T]hey lead, guide, and direct their family unit. They are on equal footing.”<sup>84</sup> Yet while the rhetoric of equal partnership could and would apply to parents of the same sex, when it comes to the issue of “gender confusion” in homosexual relationships, the question of who presides is much more important than the fact that there is an equal partnership. The retention of earlier language about “presiding” alongside more modern emphasis on “equal partnership” reveals the hierarchical views of males and females in marriage as a necessary aspect of marking same-sex relationships as illegitimate.

The problem with an interpretation in which “gender” refers to roles is that it cannot explain what these roles might be in premortal and postmortal life. The current Relief Society General President, Julie B. Beck, asserts: “Female roles did not begin on earth, and they do not end here. A woman who treasures motherhood on earth will treasure motherhood in the world to come.”<sup>85</sup> Here, a woman’s eternal role is defined as “treasuring motherhood.” Motherhood is connected explicitly to mortal and post-mortal realms, perhaps referencing the belief that divinized women will perform the same reproductive functions of “motherhood” as defined by mortal bodies. However, she avoids exploring how motherhood is understood as a “role” for premortal spir-

its, or even beyond birthing, the roles a Heavenly Mother might expect to perform in postmortality.

These predefined roles apply to men as well. President Gordon B. Hinckley stated that women do not “resent the strong leadership of a man in the home” and that the man “becomes the provider, the defender, the counselor, the breadwinner and lends support and gives support when needed.”<sup>86</sup> Yet in LDS discourse, Heavenly Father takes on the role of a single parent nurturing His children, while Heavenly Mother does little that could be called mothering from the perspective of mortal persons. If we accept a definition of “gender” that suggests that men’s role is being a “breadwinner” and women’s role is caring for children, cooking, cleaning, and other hallmarks of the twentieth-century American family division of labor, this understanding of gender is meaningless in an eternal realm.<sup>87</sup>

Further, the problem with dehistoricizing modern American divisions of labor is that such divisions fail to describe “gender” historically and cross-culturally. Anthropologists and theorists have shown the variability of “sex roles,” demonstrating not only the cultural, but also the historical, contingency of what is considered to be masculine and feminine, which is what precipitated the theoretical division between sex and gender in the first place.<sup>88</sup> Even if one restricts gender roles to reproductive function, stripping away the divisions of household labor or access to public power as contingent features of mortal life, it is not clear that such roles could be construed as applying equally to the three phases of one’s eternal—premortals, mortals, and postmortals—life. The main problems for any theology that begins with a fixed notion of roles, gender binarism, or innate characteristics of what constitute masculinity and femininity is that it is rooted in a fantastic idealization of such differences rather than any universal instantiation.

Finally, I would like to address the frequent charge that homosexual relationships constitute gender “separatism.”<sup>89</sup> Valerie Hudson has gone so far as to call same-sex relationships “gender apartheid.”<sup>90</sup> The assertion faces a number of problems. In this understanding of same-sex relationships, the only meaningful and politically valuable mixed-sex interactions happen in marriages and procreation. But this assumption that nonheterosexuals cannot or

will not engage in meaningful interactions with members of the opposite sex, including parents, siblings, children, co-workers, neighbors, and friends has no basis. The kinds of “separatist” feminist and gay and lesbian movements from earlier eras were more of a response to the injustice of patriarchal, heterosexual culture than a desire to cease all interaction with members of the opposite sex. If learning to interact with members of the opposite sex (or gender) really does hold a privileged position as a means to salvation over learning to master other kinds of relationships—such as those of different social, economic, racial, linguistic, national, or even religious backgrounds—there is no reason to suppose that same-sex companions cannot or would not develop those relationships. But the question of why mixed-sex relationships should be privileged above others must be seriously asked and explored.

### Conclusion

At the turn of the twentieth century, as the Church began to embrace the new post-polygamy conception of families and formally ended the “law of adoption” as it had been practiced between adults, Wilford Woodruff prophetically suggested that there were more changes to come: “I have not felt satisfied, neither did President Taylor, neither has any man since the Prophet Joseph who has attended to the ordinance of adoption in the temples of our God. . . . [W]e still have more changes to make, in order to satisfy our Heavenly Father, satisfy our dead and ourselves. . . . [W]e have got to have more revelation concerning sealing under the law of adoption.”<sup>91</sup> The possibility of creating theological space within Mormonism for homosexual relationships rests not on the abandonment of any central doctrine of the Church, but rather on the revival of past concepts, the recovery of embedded theological resources, and the rearticulation of existing ideas in more expansive terms in order to rethink the possibilities of celestial relationships. At the heart of this recovery is a displacement of biological reproduction as the sole way of imagining kinship as well as the model for celestial (pro)creation. In both cases, reproduction fails to offer a universal foundation for meaningful kinship relationships as well as being a doctrinally suspect account of divine relationships. Such a recovery project has the benefit not only of including homosexual relationships, but also of laying a

more solid ground for nonreproductive heterosexual relationships and other forms of kinship.

The numerous critiques of the category of gender in recent years cannot be ignored, even if Latter-day Saints opt for a continued emphasis on binary sexual difference. Whether from the critique of gender roles, gender essentialist notions of innate characteristics, or even the notion of biological difference itself, LDS theology faces serious credibility issues by continuing to hold to precritical assumptions about sexual difference. At the same time, however, there is nothing preventing Latter-day Saints from moving past these assumptions in order to more clearly focus on Mormonism's distinctive teachings about kinship and salvation, which does not require an appeal to the suspect category of gender at all. The unimportance of gender as a category for salvation is significantly affirmed in both ancient and modern scripture: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28) and "he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God" (2 Ne. 26:33).

Or perhaps by appealing to the social basis of gender, rather than a supposed eternal standard, we may better make sense of its place and significance in our theological thinking. To admit the social basis of gender does not entail the elimination of gender, nor does it require a leveling of difference toward some androgynous ideal. Quite the opposite. Instead, we may see more of a proliferation of "genders," released from the constraints of fantasies about a neat gender binary. Just as we do not imagine that only one (or two) races, body types, and hair colors are represented in the resurrection, we may also see a variety of "genders," understood as either different kinds of bodies, different kinds of identities, and even different roles. We need not abandon the idea of "eternal gender," but rather we can embrace the possibilities that it opens for us once freed from its artificial constraints. As one LDS manual puts it, backing away from its earlier claims about the fixed nature of gender: "There is nearly as much variation within each gender as there is between the genders. Each human being is unique. There is no one model except the Redeemer of all mankind. Development of a person's gifts or interests is one of life's

most enjoyable experiences. No one should be denied such growth.”<sup>92</sup> Perhaps LDS ritual and rhetoric may embrace this variation, including homosexual relationships in the blessings of growth offered by sealing.

### Notes

1. For an excellent set of scholarly essays addressing the claim that scripture and tradition prohibit same-sex unions in Christianity and Judaism, see Mark D. Jordan, Meghan T. Sweeney, and David M. Mellott, *Authorizing Marriage?: Canon, Tradition, and Critique in the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

2. Many of these works have appeared in the form of how-to guides for “overcoming” homosexual “problems.” In recent years, some works have appeared that seek to accept LDS and homosexual identity side by side. See, for instance, Carol Lynn Pearson, *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons around Our Gay Loved Ones* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Pivot Point Books, 2007); and Fred Matis, Marilyn Matis, and Ty Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation: Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, an imprint of Deseret Book, 2004).

3. Lowell L. Bennion, “Foreword,” in *Peculiar People: Mormons and Same-Sex Orientation*, edited by Ron Schow, Wayne Schow, and Marybeth Raynes (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), xi.

4. As an example, witness the discussion framing of the causality of sexuality as *either* a genetic question *or* a question of social conditioning in William S. Bradshaw, “Short Shrift to the Facts,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 171–91.

5. Alan Michael Williams, “Mormon and Queer at the Crossroads,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 75.

6. Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995); David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 15–40.

7. On the degrees of the celestial kingdom, see D&C 131:1–4. Though “celestial marriage” was a synonym for polygamous marriage in the early LDS Church, today it refers exclusively to any marriage sealed in a temple.

8. First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” <http://lds.org/family/proclamation?lang=eng> (accessed July 19, 2011).

9. Valerie M. Hudson and Alma Don Sorenson, “Response to Professor [Linda E.] Thomas [on Womanist Theology],” in *Mormonism in Dia-*

*logue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*, edited by Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2007), 327.

10. Blake T. Ostler, "The Idea of Preexistence in Mormon Thought," in *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine*, edited by Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 141.

11. D&C 93:29–33: "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. . . . For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy." Hale notes, "While it seems certain that Smith taught that gods procreate, he did not specify that their offspring are necessarily spirits. And it is equally unclear if the alternative possibility, that the offspring of the gods are physical children, would be any more plausible in the prophet's thinking." Van Hale, "The Origin of the Human Spirit," in *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine*, edited by Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 122.

12. Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 3–21.

13. Blake T. Ostler, *The Attributes of God*, Vol. 1 in EXPLORING MORMON THOUGHT (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2001), 352.

14. The reference to the plural "Gods" in the creation account in the Book of Abraham 4–5 may include both male and female actors grammatically. However, in general Heavenly Mother's creative role is limited to the creation of spirits, emphasizing her role as bearer of children rather than in the governance or creation of the earth. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven."

David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "A Mother There': A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven" *BYU Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 85, extensively document statements by LDS Church leaders on the existence and roles of Heavenly Mother, offering a view that "marshals evidence against some claims that General Authorities and other Church leaders have limited Heavenly Mother's role to reproduction." The sources they cite, as I read them, nevertheless tend to remain within a framework in which reproduction is a central role for Heavenly Parents, even if not the only role for women. With perhaps one exception from Charles W. Penrose in 1904, the evidence that they cite from Church leaders that Heavenly Mother is a "co-creator" does not clearly claim that her creative act extends beyond spiritual reproduction.

15. Examples are abundant from both Church leaders and in conservative LDS theology. See, for instance, Jeffrey R. Holland, "Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October

2007, <http://lds.org/ensign/2007/10/helping-those-who-struggle-with-same-gender-attraction?lang=eng> (accessed July 19, 2011): "At the heart of this plan is the begetting of children, one of the crucial reasons Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden (see 2 Ne. 2:19–25; Moses 5:10–12). They were commanded to 'be fruitful, and multiply' (Moses 2:28), and they chose to keep that commandment. We are to follow them in marrying and providing physical bodies for Heavenly Father's spirit children. Obviously, a same-gender relationship is inconsistent with this plan." Hudson and Sorenson, "Response to Professor Thomas," 329, argue: "God created only two beings at the dawn of human history: a man named Adam and a woman named Eve. We infer that no male-male or female-female relationship can substitute for the critical importance of male-female relations."

16. Camille Fronk, "Mary, Mother of Jesus," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:863–64.

17. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 6th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1922), 81.

18. Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37 (Winter 2011): 1–85; Linda King Newell, "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and the Priesthood," in Hanks, *Women and Authority*, 23–44.

19. Gregory A. Prince, *Power from On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 204–8.

20. In the document, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," the unnamed authors explain, "The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force."

21. The introduction to the document identifies its author only as "the Church." This document, "explains [the Church's] reasons for defending marriage between a man and a woman as an issue of moral imperative." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Divine Institution of Marriage," LDS Newsroom, August 28, 2008, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/the-divine-institution-of-marriage> (accessed July 19, 2011).

22. *Ibid.*

23. LDS discourse on sexual relations within marriage have come to see the purpose of sex as having to do with both procreation and relationships between spouses. Terrance D. Olson explains, "The purpose of appropriate sexual relations in marriage includes the expression and building of joy, unity, love, and oneness. To be 'one flesh' is to experience an emotional and spiritual unity. This oneness is as fundamental a



purpose of marital relations as is procreation." Terrance D. Olson, "Sexuality," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1306. Much of the shift in emphasis coincides with the acceptance of birth control. See Melissa Proctor, "Bodies, Babies, and Birth Control," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 159–75.

24. Joseph Smith was sealed in celestial marriages to women who were well past child-bearing years, like Patty Bartlett Sessions (age forty-seven), Elizabeth Davis Durfee (age fifty or fifty-one), Rhoda Richards (age fifty-eight), and Fanny Young (age fifty-six). Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 4–6. This practice continues today. Of the numerous examples one could note, Elder Dallin H. Oaks was sealed in 2000 to Kristen Meredith McMains, who was in her early fifties at the time, presumably unable to naturally conceive.

25. Paul V. Hyer, "Temple Sealings," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1289, explains, "Among members of the Church sealing refers to the marriage of a husband and wife and to the joining together of children and parents that are to endure forever."

26. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 126.

27. For a sustained argument against Levi-Straussian and Lacanian arguments for heterosexuality as a necessary structure for childhood development, see *ibid.*, 118–27; and her *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life & Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 68–73.

28. First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."

29. Notably, Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

30. In previous anthropological theories of kinship, David Murray Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 123, has observed: "It is simply assumed that for all human beings, for all cultures, genealogical relatedness (however defined) is of value and is of significance . . . that it is, in short, privileged."

31. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Divine Institution of Marriage." Ironically, the studies it relies on do not indict two same-sex parented families, but single-mother families, which are fully permissible in the Church. David Popenoe, *Life without Father: Compelling New Evidence That Fatherhood and Marriage Are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society* (New York: Martin Kessler Books, 1996) and David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). However, studies show that there is no persuasive evidence that children of same-sex parents or one

homosexual parent face any risks or disadvantages relative to children in heterosexual homes. Child Welfare League of America, "Position Statement on Parenting of Children by Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults," <http://www.cwla.org/programs/culture/glbtposition.htm> (accessed July 20, 2011).

32. For an example of a scholar who sees the only meaningful exchange between males and females in reproduction and heterosexual marriage, see Valerie Hudson Cassler, "Some Things That Should Not Have Been Forgotten Were Lost': The Pro-Feminist, Pro-Democracy, Pro-Peace Case for State Privileging of Companionate Heterosexual Monogamous Marriage," *SquareTwo* 2, no. 1 (2009), online journal, <http://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleCasslerMarriage.html> (accessed July 21, 2011).

33. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 118–27.

34. Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

35. Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia, 1991).

36. Cai Hua, *A Society without Fathers or Husbands: The Na of China*, translated by Asti Hustvedt (New York: Zone Books, 2001).

37. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*, 43–94, focuses his study on the Yapese, who initially did not consider sexual coitus to be significant in establishing kinship.

38. Schneider asks the simple question: "Are all genealogies equal?" *Ibid.*, 124. His answer is "no" for two reasons: "One is that the defining features of the genealogy may be variously valued and have different meanings or significance in different cultures. The other is that when the nature and content of the genealogical relationship is taken into account—and these are known to differ from one culture to another—then the assumptions of the equivalence of the parent-child relationship is brought into serious question." The question is of keen importance for Latter-day Saints who are engaged in the practice of tracing genealogies across time and cultures. If, for instance, our particular configuration of genealogical kinship does not accurately reflect those configurations operative in the times and cultures of our ancestors (not to mention our otherwise-cultured contemporaries), have we adequately sealed kinship units together, even if they force our own understanding of kinship in a foreign way? That is to say, the genetic relationship is not necessarily the source of the value established in any particular form of kinship. We may think of marriage laws and customs as ways of regulating and normalizing certain kinds of kinship structures, but this is not to say that such customs are universal in practice or even universally desirable. If the proxy sealing practice for those who have died serves to replicate the kinship

relationships of our ancestors in order to provide them with the blessings of eternal “families,” we would do well to better understand how their kinship relationships were structured.

39. Alan Michael Williams, “Mormon and Queer at the Crossroads,” 67, poses the question: “Is a queer family any less a family because it is queer? Official Mormon discourse has not yet addressed the familiness of these households, even while they are increasing.”

40. Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

41. Theodore B. Olson, “The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage: Why Same-Sex Marriage Is an American Value,” *Newsweek*, January 9, 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/01/08/the-conservative-case-for-gay-marriage.html> (accessed July 19, 2011).

42. While I have earlier defined kinship as a relationship that is ritually marked as other than friendship, it is useful to consider how the adoptive sealing may have functioned to make friendship a basis for kinship, as a disruption to family-reproductive relationships as the only basis for kinship. We may here consider what D. Michael Quinn in *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 66–73, describes the “intense homosociality” of nineteenth-century Mormon culture as manifest in the way that kinship structures were being rethought. On July 23, 1843, in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith taught, “Friendship is one of the grand fundamental principles of ‘Mormonism’; [it is designed] to revolutionize and civilize the world, and cause wars and contentions to cease and men to become friends and brothers.” Joseph Smith et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948 printing), 5:517. Here, friendship is posited as the basis of civilization, in contrast to the kinship structures described by later LDS teachers. Rather, Smith suggests that kinship (“brotherhood”) must be established through friendship, rather than the other way around. It is friendship that then serves as the basis for kinship. The significance of such a notion is that friendship, as in nonreproductive relationships, may be seen as equally desirable as kinship relationships, ritually marked through sealing, as a civilizing force.

43. Jonathan A. Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 53–117. Stapley notes (p. 66) that, in the Nauvoo period, women and men were adopted at roughly the same rate. Most often men and women were sealed as couples, though there are some unmarried men that were adopted by sealing, as well as at least one case where an unmarried girl was adopted by sealing. Willard and Jeanetta Richards adopted a young woman (age

eleven) whom they had cared for, for a period. Jonathan Stapley, email message to Taylor Petrey, July 22, 2011. See also Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830–1900," *BYU Studies* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1974): 291–314. See *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011) for Samuel M. Brown, "Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation," 3–52, and Jonathan A. Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," 53–118.

44. Samuel M. Brown, "The Early Mormon Chain of Belonging," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (2011): 1–52.

45. D. Michael Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 136–40, rightly rejects the idea that such relationships constitute "same-sex marriage." However, his claim that "this was an institutionalized form of mentor-protégé relationships between Mormon men" downplays the language of kinship—"father" and "son" of such relationships—even though he notes that, for instance, John D. Lee temporarily assumed the family name of Brigham Young, his spiritual father.

46. Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," 55.

47. Orson Hyde, "Diagram of the Kingdom of God," *Millennial Star* 9 no. 2 (January 15, 1847): 23.

48. Parley P. Pratt, "Celestial Family Organization," *Millennial Star* 5, no. 12 (May 1845): 193.

49. Scott G. Kenney ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 2:364–65, quoted in Brown, "The Early Mormon Chain of Belonging," 1.

50. For the relevant events, see Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," 106–12.

51. Abraham H. Cannon, *Journal*, April 5, 1895, quoted in *ibid.*, 108. Stapley notes that, over time, the quest to find one's dead proved an endless task and the idea of linking to Joseph Smith was eventually dismissed or forgotten: "In 1922, editors removed the instructions about sealing ultimate ancestors to Joseph Smith." *Ibid.*, 114.

52. *Ibid.*, 111.

53. Woodruff and Joseph F. Smith, Letter to John D. T. McAllister, April 26, 1894, quoted in *ibid.*, 116.

54. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*, 124, observes, "If there is a bond created in the process of reproduction, that bond must be culturally significant to count for anything."

55. I am personally aware of one occurrence in the past decade where an adopted child who was "born in the covenant" was sealed to the adoptive parents. The adoptive parents were informed by letter how rare their situation was.

56. Other examples of kinship that are not based on reproduction or biological relation are prevalent in LDS practice. Many members of the Church are “adopted” into the House of Israel, even while others are considered to be direct descendants. Discourse on Israelite identity has variously been asserted in terms of lineage and in terms of adoption. Armaund Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 17–40. While some versions of this doctrine imagine a change in the “blood” of the adoptee as part of this process, the very possibility of adoption across bloodlines already points to a kinship structure that precedes the reproductive family. Further, the notion of transformation itself, here in terms of transracial identity, as the result of the adoption may offer a model for transsexuals, who might also be ritually “adopted” into a new sex, perhaps as a part of a patriarchal blessing.

57. Ezra Taft Benson, quoted in Elaine Walton, “Children of Divorce,” *Ensign*, August 2002, 40–41, (<http://lds.org/ensign/2002/08/children-of-divorce?lang=eng> (accessed July 20, 2011)).

58. Williams, “Mormon and Queer at the Crossroads,” 67, adduces, “The issue of homosexuality for the Church is, at its core, about gender, as accepting same-sex parented families in full communion would upset the ecclesiastical relationship between men and women rather than necessarily disrupt theological ideas of marriage and parenthood.”

59. The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

60. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Divine Institution of Marriage.”

61. *Ibid.* The text repeatedly emphasizes the centrality of a stable, heterosexual framing of gender: “gender differentiated parenting,” “gender differences are increasingly dismissed,” the need for a “clear gender identity,” and the erosion of “gender development.”

62. *A Parent’s Guide* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), “Chapter 4: Teaching Children: From Four to Eleven Years,” <http://lds.org/manual/a-parents-guide/chapter-4-teaching-children-from-four-to-eleven-years?lang=eng> (accessed June 23, 2011).

63. The fact that the manual is anonymously authored, though presumably reviewed by General Authorities and the Correlation Review Committee, makes it impossible to deduce a more precise definition based on the authors’ backgrounds.

64. Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 13–14.

65. *Ibid.*, 11–12.

66. See also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 3–44.

67. Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough,” *The Sciences*, March–April, 1993, 20–24. See also her book-length treatment on the sciences of sexual difference and gender, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

68. Presumably intersexed persons are dismissed when President Kimball suggested, “With relatively few accidents of nature, we are born male or female. The Lord knew best. Certainly, men and women who would change their sex status will answer to their Maker.” “God Will Not Be Mocked,” *Ensign*, November 1974, 8. With respect to transsexuality, Elder Boyd K. Packer has declared, “There is no mismatching of bodies and spirits. Boys are to become men—masculine, manly men—ultimately to become husbands and fathers.” *Conference Reports* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 1976), 101. This talk was later published in pamphlet form, Boyd K. Packer, *To Young Men Only* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976).

69. For a brief overview of the history of the doctrine of eternal gender and some of the theological problems it raises for intersexual and transsexual persons, see Jeffrey E. Keller, “Gender and Spirit,” in *Multiply and Replenish: Mormon Essays on Sex and Family*, edited by Brent Corcoran (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 171–82.

70. See, e.g., Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, translated and edited by James Strachey, 4th ed. (1962; New York: Basic Books, 2000). The American Psychiatric Association (APA) got rid of its diagnosis of homosexuality as a disorder in 1973. Gender Identity Disorder (GID) remains in the *DSM-IV*'s diagnostic catalogue, which is used by groups such as the National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) as a predictor of homosexuality. NARTH seeks to “correct” homosexuality through psychological treatment. LDS psychologist and activist against homosexuality A. Dean Byrd has served as president of NARTH. The connection between gender identity and sexual desires and practices remains murky at best. For a critique of the diagnostic assumptions about gender identity, see Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 75–100.

71. This view appears in many recent descriptions of homosexuality in LDS discourse. For instance, “If governments were to alter the moral climate by legitimizing same-sex marriages, gender confusion would increase, particularly among children.” No author, “Strengthening the Family: Within the Bonds of Matrimony,” *Ensign*, August 2005, 17, <http://lds.org/ensign/2005/08/strengthening-the-family-within-the>

bonds-of-matrimony?lang=eng (accessed July 19, 2011). See also Boyd K. Packer, "I Will Remember Your Sins No More," *Ensign*, May 2006, <http://lds.org/ensign/2006/05/i-will-remember-your-sins-no-more?lang=eng> (accessed July 19, 2011); The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Divine Institution of Marriage."

72. *A Parent's Guide*, "Chapter 4: Teaching Children: From Four to Eleven Years," asserts: "But members of the Church must not be deceived about one immutable truth: there is eternal significance in being a man or a woman. The history of the gospel from Adam to this final dispensation documents equal respect for the roles of men and women and the need for all men and women to develop their gifts to the utmost through living the commandments of God. But within that same gospel framework are some realities about differences between the two genders. This means that there are some exclusive things men are to do and some that women are to do. A most appropriate time for this development is the interlude between early childhood and adolescence."

As recently as 2009, Elder Bruce Hafen of the Seventy defended the idea that homosexuality is the result of a prepubescent "block" on "normal emotional-sexual development." He continued, "Adult men who have had such childhood experiences can often resume their normal development by identifying and addressing the sources of their emotional blockage, which usually includes restoring healthy, appropriate male relationships." "Elder Bruce C. Hafen Speaks on Same-Sex Attraction" Evergreen International nineteenth Annual Conference September 19, 2009. The full address is posted at <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-bruce-c-hafen-speaks-on-same-sex-attraction> (accessed July 19, 2011).

73. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Divine Institution of Marriage."

74. The notion that youth is a particularly vulnerable time for the "confusion" of gender identity is a frequent theme in some LDS discourse. For example, Boyd K. Packer teaches, "Now, I must speak of another danger, almost unknown in our youth but now everywhere about you. Normal desires and attractions emerge in the teenage years; there is the temptation to experiment, to tamper with the sacred power of procreation. These desires can be intensified, even perverted, by pornography, improper music, or the encouragement from unworthy associations. What would have only been a more or less normal passing phase in establishing gender identity can become implanted and leave you confused, even disturbed. If you consent, the adversary can take control of your thoughts and lead you carefully toward a habit and to an addiction, convincing you that immoral, unnatural behavior is a fixed part of your nature. With some few, there is the temptation which seems nearly over-

powering for man to be attracted to man or woman to woman. The scriptures plainly condemn those who ‘dishonour their own bodies between themselves . . . ; men with men working that which is unseemly’ (Rom. 1:24, 27) or ‘women [who] change the natural use into that which is against nature’ (Rom. 1:26).” “Ye Are the Temple of God,” *Ensign*, November 2000, <http://lds.org/ensign/2000/11/ye-are-the-temple-of-god?lang=eng> (accessed July 19, 2011).

75. Douglas A. Abbot and A. Dean Byrd, *Encouraging Heterosexuality: Helping Children Develop a Traditional Sexual Orientation* (Orem, Utah: Millennial Press, 2009).

76. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 33.

77. Butler explains: “Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.” *Ibid.*, 179.

78. *Ibid.*, 9–44, 173–77.

79. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

80. President Kimball, “God Will Not Be Mocked,” *Ensign*, November 1974, 8, stated: “Some people are ignorant or vicious and apparently attempting to destroy the concept of masculinity and femininity. More and more girls dress, groom, and act like men. More and more men dress, groom, and act like women. The high purposes of life are damaged and destroyed by the growing unisex theory. God made man in his own image, male and female made he them. With relatively few accidents of nature, we are born male or female. The Lord knew best. Certainly, men and women who would change their sex status will answer to their Maker.”

81. One official manual teaches that proper gender roles are communicated through positive feelings that parents have about gender roles: “We should also help children understand gender roles. This will help a child have a good feeling about being a girl or boy. Parents who feel good about their roles as men and women pass this feeling along to their children.” “Lesson 9: Chastity and Modesty,” *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women, Part A* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000), <http://lds.org/manual/the-latter-day-saint-woman-basic-manual-for-women-part-a/lesson-9-chastity-and-modesty?lang=eng> (accessed July 19, 2011).

82. Current official statements on eternal gender suggest a kind of role complementarity, “The nature of male and female spirits is such



that they complete each other.” Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, Section 1.3.1. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), <https://lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/families-and-the-church-in-gods-plan?lang=eng#1.3.1> (accessed July 20, 2011).

83. Sheri L. Dew, “Are We Not All Mothers?” *Ensign*, November 2001, <http://lds.org/ensign/2001/11/are-we-not-all-mothers?lang=eng> (accessed July 19, 2011).

84. L. Tom Perry, “Fathers’ Role Is Anchoring Families,” *LDS Church News*, April 10, 2004, 15.

85. Julie B. Beck, “A ‘Mother Heart,’” *Ensign*, May 2004, 76, <http://lds.org/ensign/2004/05/a-mother-heart?lang=eng> (accessed July 19, 2011).

86. Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in Kristen Moulton, “Fathers Urged to Lead Their Families,” *Daily Herald* (Provo, Utah) April 25, 1998, A1, A2, quoted in Camille S. Williams, “Response to Professor Reuther,” in *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*, 288.

87. “Girls ought to be taught the arts and sciences of housekeeping, domestic finances, sewing, and cooking. Boys need to learn home repair, career preparation, and the protection of women. Both girls and boys should know how to take care of themselves and how to help each other. By example and by discussion, both sexes need to learn about being male or female, which, in summary, means becoming husbands and fathers or wives and mothers, here or hereafter.” *A Parent’s Guide*, “Chapter 4: Teaching Children: From Four to Eleven Years.”

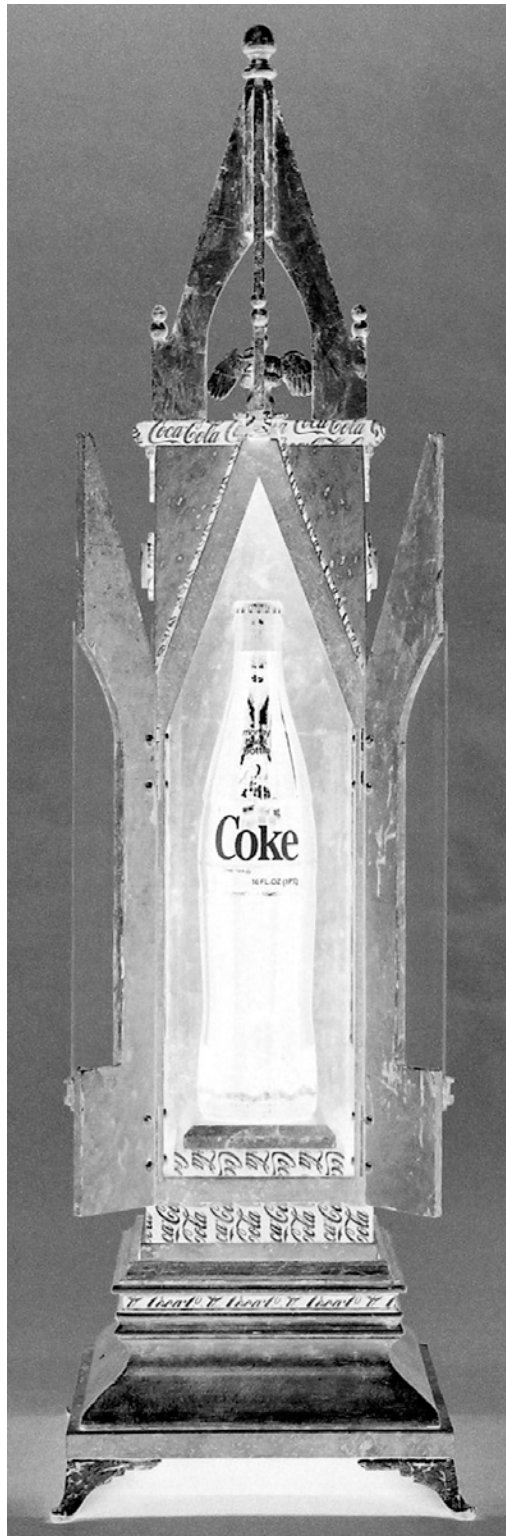
88. For an excellent history of this division, see Shira Tarrant, *When Sex Became Gender: Perspectives on Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

89. Didi Herman, *The Antigay Agenda* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 107.

90. Hudson Cassler, “Some Things That Should Not Have Been Forgotten.”

91. Wilford Woodruff, quoted in Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” 109.

92. *A Parent’s Guide*, “Chapter 4: Teaching Children: From Four to Eleven Years.”



Jason Lanegan,  
*Reliquary for an  
American Icon,  
Coke 1*



Jason Lanegan,  
*Reliquary for an  
American Icon:  
Mickey*  
with detail

# Mormonism in Western Society: Three Futures

*Frederick Mark Gedicks*

*Note: This article was first presented as a Forum Address at Southern Virginia University, Buena Vista, Virginia, on April 8, 2011.*

Let me start with an explanation of my title. It may seem odd that I would restrict my focus to “Mormonism in the West” in an era in which everything has gone global. The LDS Church is a worldwide phenomenon with a presence in more than 150 countries, and more members and more growth outside the United States than within it.

The worldwide growth of the Church points to a premise of my remarks today. While Mormonism is a truly global phenomenon, its growth is much stronger in what is now called the global South—Africa, Central and South America, and parts of Asia—than it is in the global West—Europe, North America, Australia, and other societies tied closely to Western values. Anyone who has served a recent mission in Europe knows that the Church is struggling to maintain a demographic peak that was never very high. Church membership has rarely exceeded one-tenth of 1 percent of the population of any European country; and even in the United Kingdom, where the Church has its largest concentration of European members, Mormons constitute only three-tenths of 1 percent of the population, despite a historical presence since the 1840s. (See Appendix.)

Church membership is, of course, much stronger in the United States. Mormons make up nearly 2 percent of the U.S. population, with notable concentrations in California, Utah, and other

states of the interior West.<sup>1</sup> Even here, however, are disquieting signs of the challenges we face. Membership growth in the United States has been flat for the last decade; independent survey evidence shows that about as many people now leave the Church each year as join it.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, convert baptisms in the United States have been declining during that last decade, which means that most of our U.S. growth has been internal.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps most disturbing are declining activity rates among young adults. Our Church is more successful than most at retaining teenagers, an age when many other religions tend to lose their youth. Among members your age, however—young people in their twenties and thirties—we struggle, especially with singles.<sup>4</sup> The reasons for this are complex, but one likely factor is the many ways in which Western culture is growing away from LDS values and beliefs. President Monson described this distance as a “chasm.”<sup>5</sup> Most of you are familiar with that divide from your own experience, and you know how deep and real it is.

How might the Church engage a society—Western society—that is becoming ever more distant from Mormon beliefs, practices, and values? How should its members engage that society individually? These are recurring theological questions for many religions, captured in the familiar injunction to be “in the world, but not of the world” (John 15:19; Rom. 12:2).<sup>6</sup> Religions call upon their members to live out their beliefs in a particular place and time; this requires that religious leaders and their followers make decisions about whether and how to engage the society in which they live.<sup>7</sup> One of the best-known accounts of the ways in which Christians might engage the world is H. Richard Niebuhr’s *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), which described five different strategies, from complete withdrawal from society at one extreme to a fully acculturated integration with society at the other.

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In this vein, I will suggest three possible ways of thinking about how Latter-day Saints and our Church might engage contemporary Western society, drawn from three recent statements by members of the Quorum of the Twelve. In October 2011, President Boyd K. Packer condemned same-sex orientation and sexual

permissiveness as sinful choices wholly within human control.<sup>8</sup> In February 2011, in a lecture to the student body of the religiously conservative Chapman University in southern California, Elder Dallin H. Oaks lamented the decline of religious influence in the United States and endorsed the active defense of religious freedom and traditional values by political interfaith coalitions.<sup>9</sup> And on August 9, 2010, Elder Quentin L. Cook celebrated interfaith dialogue, service, and friendship, participating with other commentators in an online blog symposium sponsored by an interreligious website.<sup>10</sup> Each of these declarations represents a different style or mode of engaging contemporary Western society and culture: a strict or fundamentalist mode, a social conservative mode, and an assimilationist mode.

Let me emphasize that I am not trying to classify these General Authorities; rather, I am simply using their statements as exemplars or types of different modes of engaging Western society. Nor am I suggesting that these three modes are an exhaustive catalogue. For example, one might construct a social liberal mode from the Church's recent endorsement of antidiscrimination ordinances that protect the civil rights of gays and lesbians, its signing of the progressive Utah Compact on immigration reform, its green initiative for Church buildings and sites, and its deep commitment to serving the poor and rendering other humanitarian service.

But while one might imagine other modes of engagement, these three are particularly salient today. Not only has each of them been manifest in a recent statement by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, but each of them also corresponds to scholarly analyses in the history and sociology of religion. Perhaps most important, each of them represents a plausible way in which the Church as an institution, and each of us as individual members, might approach the problem of being in, but not of, the world, and thus each one offers a different window onto a possible future for the Church and its members in the West.

\* \* \*

Let me start with that most difficult of terms, "fundamentalism." In contemporary American usage, "fundamentalist" is sometimes used as a synonym for "extremism." The meaning of "funda-

mentalism” that I intend, however, originated in the Protestant revivalism of the early twentieth century, when evangelicals called for a return to the “fundamentals” of reformed Christianity in response to the corruption, permissiveness, and immorality of the newly industrialized and urbanized United States.<sup>11</sup> Fundamentalist Protestantism was (and still is) characterized by resistance to modernism, scriptural literalism, insistence on absolute and unchanging truth, and nostalgia for earlier eras when Americans were thought to be more faithful to their God.<sup>12</sup>

The academic meaning of “fundamentalism” is now used more generally to describe religions that endorse strict and uncompromising fidelity to their authorities, doctrines, and practices, without making any compromise or concession to contemporary life. This academic meaning preserves the dual original meaning of antipathy to current values and yearning for a return to the more righteous ways of the past.<sup>13</sup>

The defining characteristics of this sort of fundamentalism are on full display in President Packer’s talk. The talk begins with a general rejection of contemporary values, emphasizing the “confusion,” “danger,” and “turmoil” that they cause. It contrasts worldly values with revelatory ones, declaring that the commandment to “multiply and replenish the earth” has “never been rescinded,” framing sex as “the power to create life” without mention of an independent role in expressing love and intimacy, and endorsing traditional marriage between “a man and a woman” as the foundation of society and the only legitimate place for sexual expression.

In contrast to worldly values, God’s commandments are portrayed as clear, universal, timeless, and unavoidable: “There are both moral and physical laws ‘irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world’ that cannot be changed. History demonstrates over and over that moral standards cannot be changed by battle and cannot be changed by ballot. To legalize what is basically wrong or evil will not prevent the pain and penalties that will follow as surely as the night follows the day.”<sup>14</sup> In President Packer’s view, God’s laws and punishments precede and condemn any political settlement that does not honor them—they apply whether one accepts them or, indeed, whether one even believes in God.

President Packer's talk is classically prophetic in the Old Testament sense. It describes pornography and immorality as "plagues" that will destroy us if we do not change. It is a voice crying in the wilderness, calling the wicked to repentance, urging members and nonmembers alike to make themselves pure and to conform themselves to righteousness, the only and true way to peace and happiness.

\* \* \*

On now to social conservatism. Some years ago, the prominent American sociologist James Davison Hunter popularized the use of "warfare" as a metaphor for American social conflict in his *Culture Wars*.<sup>15</sup> According to Hunter, cultural conflicts stem less from religious difference than from "political and social hostility" rooted in "different systems of moral understanding."<sup>16</sup> On one side of these conflicts he places "progressives," cultural liberals with a libertarian social agenda defined by rationalism and individual choice. The liberal instinct is to reject a constant and common American morality in favor of constant moral reinterpretations according to the varying assumptions of contemporary life.<sup>17</sup> On the other side of the culture wars, Hunter places the "orthodox"—social conservatives who are committed to transcendent authority and unchangeable values that tell us "what is good, what is true, how we should live, and who we are."<sup>18</sup> This contrast of "progressive" and "orthodox" across denominational lines is now a standard way of interpreting conflicts over social values.

Elder Oaks's Chapman address clearly aligns the Church with Hunter's social conservatism. It is closely reasoned and carefully supported, so I caution that I cannot capture its depth and nuance in this brief summary. The address argues that religious belief and practice are entitled to special protection in the American constitutional order because of their preeminent place in the text of the First Amendment and their special contributions to Western democracy; religious freedom "undergirds the origin and existence" of the United States, the address declares, "and is the dominating civil liberty." Consequently, it condemns the abandonment of special constitutional protection for religious liberty, which is attributed to the "ascendancy of moral relativism." It argues that these developments affect all religions that



stand for principles of traditional morality and endorses Francis Cardinal George's appeal for Catholics, Mormons, and others to stand together against the secularism of American public life. The address concludes with its own call for a "broad coalition" of religions based on the "common belief that there is a right and wrong in human behavior that has been established by a Supreme Being."

Unlike President Packer's talk, Elder Oaks's address barely mentions LDS doctrine or beliefs. Its focus is instead on the shared interest of all religions in the free exercise of beliefs and practices, whose specific content is left largely undefined. It nonetheless speaks primarily to socially conservative religions as these are defined by Hunter. Its references to the Christian origins of the United States and the historically unique place of religion in its Constitutional order resonate with the conservative Protestant contention that the United States is a Christian nation that need not apologize for its Judeo-Christian tradition. The address places "religion" apart from and in opposition to worldly values, decrying the view that "a religious message is just another message in a world full of messages," and concluding that this relativism ends in anger against religious beliefs and practices. The supporting quotations are almost entirely from Roman Catholic, Evangelical, and Mormon clerics, or from socially conservative academics. Finally, in the few places where some specific content is given to the term "religion," it is the opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage, and gay rights that is associated with socially conservative religions. The talk disclaims any partisan objective. Its argument, however, speaks primarily if not exclusively, to social conservatives.

\* \* \*

The third approach, "assimilation" is a familiar concept to sociologists and historians of new religious and social movements. Genuinely new movements challenge society at its deepest level.<sup>19</sup> Think, for example, of the polygamous, economically cooperative, theocratic Mormonism that arose in the midst of Victorian capitalist democracy in late nineteenth-century America. Faced with such a challenge, society will either assimilate the new movement by eliminating its most threatening features, or destroy it.<sup>20</sup>

Again, note the example of nineteenth-century Mormonism, which was ultimately forced to abandon its most distinctive characteristics of polygamy, economic experimentation, and theocracy as the price of obtaining Utah's entrance into the Union.<sup>21</sup>

New religious movements that are subjected to violent persecution, like nineteenth-century Mormonism, may well experience assimilation as a positive. It reduces cultural distance from the social mainstream and thereby eliminates the principal ground for persecution. If the new religion becomes wholly assimilated to mainstream culture, however, it loses its separate identity and disappears into the majoritarian mass. Mormon sociologist Armand Mauss calls this dynamic the tension between "disrepute" and "respectability."<sup>22</sup> A new religious movement can achieve respectability while still preserving its unique identity by finding the proper balance, narrowing the cultural distance enough to achieve acceptance, but not enough to lose its distinctive characteristics. Perhaps another way of describing this kind of development is that a successful social movement assimilates to the point—but *only* to the point—where it can plausibly say that what unites it with the mainstream is more important than what sets it apart.

Elder Cook's online essay illustrates the assimilationist mode of engagement. Like Elder Oaks's address, Elder Cook's essay does not discuss LDS doctrines or beliefs. It actually begins with an endorsement of social conservatism, noting Cardinal George's forum address at Brigham Young University on February 23, 2010, and the shared moral interests of Mormons and Catholics. But this reference to social conservatism turns out to be mostly a means of pivoting toward assimilation: "Becoming partners in the defense of shared moral principles," it suggests, "starts with sincere efforts by religious faiths to understand and to learn from each other."<sup>23</sup>

I'm not certain, actually, that mutual understanding must necessarily precede political coalitions, though it certainly doesn't hurt. Political coalitions are built on shared outcomes that obviously depend on some minimum level of understanding and respect. Even so, political coalitions can form and function without any friendship and with little respect, as the Proposition 8 episode taught us. Elder Cook's essay seems to be talking about a different kind of interfaith relationship, one that is not essentially in-

strumental or pragmatic, but one that has value in itself apart from any political goal or purpose.

For example, Elder Cook relates his wonderful experiences in accompanying leaders of other faiths on pre-dedication temple tours, observing that such exposure has helped these leaders “to know and understand us better” and, at the same time, has given him “a greater understanding and appreciation for their beliefs.” “It is heartwarming,” the essay continues, “that those of other faiths would take the time to appreciate something that is deeply personal and meaningful” to Latter-day Saints. He gives a similar account of the interaction of Latter-day Saint volunteers with a Protestant congregation in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina, which ended with the declaration by the pastor that “the Mormons are now our friends.”<sup>24</sup>

Elder Cook emphasizes that these relationships are not ecumenical. They are not expected to bring agreement on doctrine or theology but rather to develop “mutual respect for others’ beliefs and a desire to collaborate on important issues where we find common ground.”

It closes with this call for interfaith service: “Whether it is helping the victims of disaster through humanitarian aid, providing relief to communities in economic need, or supporting religious liberty, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members often stand shoulder to shoulder with other faiths. The future of Mormonism in the public sphere will, in part, be a shared one as we work with other like-minded faiths to follow the gospel of Jesus Christ in reaching out to our fellow citizens.”<sup>25</sup>

In short, Elder Cook suggests that the cultural distance between Mormonism and the Protestant-Catholic mainstream might be closed by avoiding doctrinal discussion and emphasizing shared Christian values of friendship, dialogue, and service to those in need.

\* \* \*

Fundamentalism, social conservatism, and assimilationism each represent a different mode of engaging the Western world, and thus each foreshadows a different future for Mormonism in the West. There is no question, for example, that fundamentalist engagement would clearly set Mormons apart from and against

the dominant trends of contemporary American society. Consider the repeated emphasis on Mormon doctrine in President Packer's talk; it does not acknowledge any source of truth or knowledge outside LDS scripture and revelation. It gives no quarter to moral pluralism—that is, to the possibility that the moral questions it addresses might have more than one correct answer. Nor does the talk acknowledge the claims of science. In its view, same-sex orientation is a temptation of the devil that can be overcome by spiritual obedience and priesthood power, and scientific pronouncements to the contrary are simply dismissed as wrong. The documented trends of contemporary American belief—personal choice and convenience, cafeteria-style consumerism, declining faith, reluctance about personal sacrifice, uncertainty about worship, rejection of absolute truth—none of these find any place in the rhetoric of this talk. It also brooks no compromise with secular social trends—smaller families, two-career couples, sexual permissiveness, gay rights, and multiculturalism. These are all implicitly and in some places, explicitly, condemned.

There is and has always been a market for religious fundamentalism in the United States, particularly in times of cultural change and uncertainty like the era in which fundamentalist Protestantism first emerged. President Hinckley urged us to “stand for something,”<sup>26</sup> and Mormonism in this mode will indeed make crystal clear what it stands for. But the market for fundamentalism is by now a small market, not a mass market, at least in the contemporary West. Unapologetic stands on unchangeable Mormon truths would inevitably enlarge the already considerable cultural distance between orthodox Mormonism and mainstream American society. The wilderness metaphor is instructive: The prophet is portrayed as preaching in a wilderness because hardly anyone lives in a wilderness; the few out there who heed his words are dwarfed by the many who have already left for the great and spacious buildings of the city.

With a fundamentalist mode of engagement, the Church may well maintain a strong presence in the United States, maintaining its numbers and perhaps modestly growing them. It may even maintain its membership levels in Europe, Australia, and other Western societies despite current suggestions of decline. But explosive growth like that of the past will come, if at all, from Africa,

Central and South America, and other countries of the global South—not from the West. An LDS Church marked by fundamentalist engagement with the Western world will eventually lose its identity as a vital and growing demographic force in the West; its Western members will be active, committed, doctrinally pure, socially idiosyncratic—and relatively few.

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Elder Oaks's address overlaps in many respects with President Packer's. They both, for example, defend Mormon morality, though Elder Oak's does so mostly implicitly while President Packer is explicit in that defense. Even so, the social conservatism illustrated by Elder Oaks's address suggests a very different Mormon future in the West.

Returning to Hunter, perhaps the most provocative aspect of his argument is the conclusion that the divide between social liberals and social conservatives cuts across religious and denominational lines.<sup>27</sup> Hunter argues that social and political conservatives within American religions and denominations are often socially and politically closer to each other than they are to their more liberal brothers and sisters within the faith.<sup>28</sup> Political battle lines are thus drawn on the basis of social and cultural attitudes rather than denominational doctrine or religious belief. Noting the extent to which Latter-day Saints have entered into political alliances with theologically conservative Christians in recent years,<sup>29</sup> Hunter predicts that this will be the dominant way in which all religions will relate to each other in the future.

Mormonism in its social conservative mode would be powerful—or, at least, it would have powerful friends. Mormons themselves are barely 2 percent of the U.S. population, but a Mormon alliance with Roman Catholics and conservative Protestants would approach a political majority. One can imagine that, over time, such a coalition might be sufficiently powerful to restore and to maintain the preeminent place of religion in the American constitutional order and in public life generally. It might succeed in slowing or even halting the legal tide running in favor of sexual permissiveness, abortion, gay rights, pornography, and other legally protected activities that currently challenge traditional morality and values. The benefit for Mormons, of course, would be

the reestablishment of communities that are generally more consistent with the belief and practice of Mormonism than communities built on contemporary worldly values.

The LDS Church is already widely viewed as socially conservative; although the membership of the Church currently contains substantial numbers of social liberals and moderates, they constitute a numerical minority. Were the Church to consistently and tightly bind itself to the kind of conservative interfaith alliances described in Elder Oaks's address, one might expect Western liberals and some Western moderates, both in and out of the Church, to find membership less attractive. To think about this another way, consider that polling data puts self-described "liberals" at 20 percent of the U.S. population, "moderates" at 37 percent, and "conservatives" at 42 percent.<sup>30</sup> These numbers are skewed more toward the left in Europe. These figures suggest that, while Church membership might not diminish in the West with social conservative engagement, it would likely become more socially conservative—in the long run exchanging conservatives for existing liberal and some moderate members. Missionaries would be more likely to find converts among social conservatives, while liberals and some moderates born in the Church might reduce their activity or even leave the Church altogether because of its increasingly strong social conservative identification.

One might hope that interfaith alliances defending socially conservative values would break down theological animosity, such as that commonly exhibited by some conservative Protestants who persist in treating the Church as a non-Christian cult. Personally, I am skeptical. Political alliances are marriages of convenience which often do not change the hearts and minds of those involved in them; when a political alliance becomes inconvenient, it quickly dissolves.

Take, for example, Proposition 8 and its aftermath. That campaign involved the Church in a successful interfaith initiative campaign to reverse the judicial legalization of same-sex marriage in California. The success of the campaign was generally attributed to the intervention of the Church, which together with its members supplied about half of the funds and the majority of the volunteer manpower deployed in support of the proposition. Although the coalition included large numbers of Evangelical and

conservative Protestant Churches and organizations, there seems to have been no softening of the long-standing theological antipathy of such Protestants toward Mormonism. As you know, in the aftermath of the campaign, some LDS buildings were vandalized, some Church members were pressured economically at the cost of their jobs or businesses, and the Church and its members were generally subject to strident demonstrations and criticism. Despite all we had done for the pro-8 coalition, no Evangelical or conservative Protestant leader of note came to our defense, though many Catholic leaders did.<sup>31</sup> Conservative Protestant leaders continue to reject the Church's claims to be Christian, and recent polls continue to show that conservative Protestants are hardly more likely to vote for a Mormon presidential candidate now than they were in 2008 before our Proposition 8 involvement.<sup>32</sup>

In sum, social conservative engagement may lead to a more powerful Church, but one with more conservative members that is still no closer to the American theological mainstream.

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Elder Cook's essay shows that assimilationism is yet another mode of engaging the West that leads to a different future than social conservatism or fundamentalism.

This kind of engagement is evident as much from the venue in which Elder Cook's appears as from the substance of what it says. The essay is among twenty linked in alphabetical order to an online symposium sponsored by *patheos.com*, an interreligious, non-LDS website that describes itself as offering "balanced views of religion and spirituality."<sup>33</sup> The particular authors in this symposium are from diverse backgrounds that diverge from those of Elder Cook and other LDS General Authorities. Many are academics, a third are women (including feminists), a few are not LDS, and some of the LDS authors appear less than conventionally orthodox. Unlike President Packer's general conference talk and Elder Oaks's address to the Chapman student body, which were delivered in venues that underscored their authority, Elder Cook's essay literally appears as just one view among many.

One sees the assimilationist mode also in the substance of the essay, and not just in its presentation. There is a softness in the

rhetoric that blurs the hard lines of dogma and exclusivity drawn by fundamentalism and, at the same time, opens itself to social liberals and moderates as well as conservatives. The essay advocates mostly charity and friendship—charity in our dialogue with others, in our views of their beliefs and practices, and in our service to others, and focuses on the sincere and mutual friendship that this charity might generate. These are values shared by all Christians; indeed, they transcend Christianity to all of humankind, believers and unbelievers alike.

An assimilationist future, then, might be one in which the Church experiences the most growth, or the least contraction, in Western society. It would close the cultural gap between Mormonism and the American religious mainstream by deemphasizing both doctrinal and social differences in favor of values widely shared among all religions and people. One might also look for more diversity and even idiosyncrasy among “active” Mormons, as friendship displaces doctrinal orthodoxy or positions on social issues as a mode of living the gospel. An assimilationist Mormonism would be more open to difference, warm to strangers, and anxious to serve the poor both in and out of the Church in body and in spirit.

Assimilationist Mormonism, however, could also be less distinctive, if not wholly indistinct, in Western society. The challenge of assimilation is always how to join one’s movement to the mainstream without sacrificing the very differences that make the movement new and different. If Mormon doctrine softens and Mormonism becomes more accepting of everyone on the doctrinal or social-political spectrum, then why become a Mormon? Although openness might seem to represent the greatest potential for missionary converts, it would actually undermine the conversion imperative if taken too far. The result then could be a Mormon Church that everyone likes and admires but that no one feels the personal need to join.

Being a Mormon involves many commitments, of which one of the most important is respecting the order of the Church. Discerning the Lord’s will about emphasizing fundamentals, aligning with like-minded faiths, and assimilating to the mainstream will be challenging. The manner in which the institutional Church engages Western society in the years ahead is in the hands



of the Prophet, the First Presidency, and the Twelve, all of whom are entitled to receive revelation for the Church.

The manner in which each of you engages the West as an individual, however, is in your own hands. All of us should think regularly and seriously about what the gospel requires of us in our relationships with others in United States and the rest of the Western world. Many of us will feel a greater attraction to one mode of engagement than the others, and different people will make different choices. Though each of us can decide this for ourselves, none of us can speak for the Church, so we should respect the choices of others, remembering that all of these modes are authentically Mormon.

I am not a prophet, and I do not know the future of our Church. So I will leave you with some things that I do know. My great-grandparents were among the first converts to the Church in Nova Scotia, Canada, in the early twentieth century; and a portion of their family remained committed to the Church through the decades despite the absence of Church organization and other members for fellowship and support. My mother was part of that faithful remnant. She converted my Lutheran father, and they were sealed in the temple, so I was blessed to grow up in the covenant even though we lived in areas without a strong Church presence. I think often of what I owe to the early pioneers whose sacrifice and vision made possible the place where I'm grateful to work; but I have always in mind my family, whose faithfulness in the face of different but still difficult trials, made me into the kind of person who could work there.

I have felt the peace promised by the Savior as I have tried to live His gospel. I am blessed with a wife and children who love me more than I deserve. I know the hope that, when we call upon God in our desperate moments, He hears us. As I stood during the priesthood session in April general conference to sing "Redeemer of Israel" with hundreds of thousands of men all over the world, I felt blessed to be part of this great work.

Whatever future unfolds for our Church, these are the truths that will endure for me.

**Appendix:  
LDS Membership in Europe**

NOTE: *Frederick M. Gedicks's compilation from the 2010 CIA World Factbook (January 15, 2009), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed July 27, 2011) and from the Deseret News 2010 Church Almanac (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009).*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>LDS Membership</i>	<i>Stakes</i>	<i>Districts</i>	<i>Wards</i>	<i>Branches</i>	<i>Total Congregations</i>	<i>Missions</i>	<i>Temples</i>
Albania	3,659,616	1,838		1		10	10	1	
Andorra	84,525	58				1	1		
Austria	8,214,160	4,215	2		13	5	18		
Belgium	10,423,493	6,043	2		10	8	18		
Bulgaria	7,148,785	2,214		2		21	21	1	
Croatia	4,486,881	513		1		6	6	1	
Czech Republic	10,201,707	2,093		2		14	14		
Denmark	5,515,575	4,362	2		13	10	23	1	1
Estonia	1,291,170	969		1		4	4	1	
Finland	5,255,068	4,548	2	2	15	15	30		1
France	64,057,792	34,906	9	2	59	58	117	1	
Germany	82,282,988	37,539	14	3	92	83	175	2	2
Greece	10,749,943	693				5	5	4	
Greenland	57,639	23				1	1	1	
Hungary	9,880,059	4,474	1		5	14	19		
Iceland	308,910	241				2	2	1	
Ireland	4,250,163	2,799	1	1	4	9	13		
Italy	58,090,681	22,886	5	9	31	71	102	1	
Latvia	5,517,969	1,025		1		7	7	3	
Lithuania	3,345,319	847		1		5	5	1	
Luxem- bourg	497,538	290			1		1		
Malta	406,771	132				1	1		

Country	Population	LDS Membership	Stakes	Districts	Wards	Branches	Total Congregations	Missions	Temples
Moldova	4,317,483	285				2	2		
Netherlands	16,783,092	8,709	3		18	16	34		1
Norway	4,676,305	4,164	1		7	15	22	1	
Poland	38,463,689	1,552		2		12	12	1	
Portugal	10,735,765	38,188	6	4	35	40	75	2	
Romania	22,181,287	2,736		2		19	19	1	
Russia	139,390,205	19,946		13		102	102	8	
Serbia	7,344,847	277		1		3	3		
Slovakia	5,470,306	139				4	4		
Slovenia	2,003,136	380		1		4	4	1	
Spain	40,548,753	44,304	9	9	61	61	133	4	1
Sweden	9,074,055	8,966	4	1	24	18	43	1	1
Switzerland	7,623,438	7,939	5		23	16	39	2	1
Ukraine	45,415,596	10,557	1	4	8	51	59	3	1
United Kingdom	61,284,806	186,082	45		282	65	347	6	2
<b>Total</b>	711.040 mil	466,932	112	63	701	778	1,479	49	11

### Notes

1. *Deseret News 2011 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 185–86.

2. See, e.g., Barry A. Kosmin et al., Graduate Center of the City University of New York, *American Religious Identification Survey* (2001), 24–25 (data showing that LDS membership growth in the U.S. was flat in 2001); Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Religious Identification Survey* (2008), 26 (data showing that net LDS membership in the U.S. declined slightly in 2007). See also Peggy Fletcher Stack, “LDS Church’s Worldwide Growth Slows Down; Mormon Myth: The Belief the Church Is the Fastest Growing Faith in the World Doesn’t Hold Up; Church Growth Slower than Believed,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 26, 2005.

3. I am unaware of official Church reports of the number of annual U.S. convert baptisms. Annual *worldwide* convert baptisms during the

last decade have fluctuated, but the trend over this period suggests, at best, no growth in the annual number:

Year	Convert Baptisms
2000	273,973
2001	292,112
2002	283,138
2003	242,923
2004	241,239
2005	243,108
2006	272,845
2007	279,218
2008	265,593
2009	280,106
2010	272,814

Statistical reports announced at April general conference for 2001 through 2011 are available at [lds.org](http://lds.org) (accessed July 27, 2011). To find, enter “[year] Statistical Report” in “Search all LDS.org” site search engine. See also Roger Loomis, “Mormon Church Growth,” paper presented at 2002 meeting of the Association for the Society of Religions, Chicago, August 15–17, 2002; he concluded that the rate of LDS membership growth worldwide slowed substantially during 1983 through 2001. Paper available at <http://www.lds4u.com/growth2/Index.htm> (accessed July 27, 2011). Growth rates in the global South, however, are substantially greater than such rates in the West. Rick Phillips, *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 10, no. 1 (2006): 52, 56–57, reported substantially higher growth rates for Chile and Mexico than for Australia, Austria, and Canada. Although one cannot be sure without the actual data, it seems unlikely that the rate of growth in convert baptisms is as high in the United States as it is in Africa, Central and South America, and the other nations of the global South.

4. See Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Loss of Members Spurred LDS Singles Ward Changes,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 26, 2011, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/51700209-78/lds-single-ballard-lake.html.csp> (accessed July 25, 2011). During the recent disbanding of “singles wards” and the creation of “young single adult” stakes, Church leaders in Utah reported over the pulpit an activity rate of 29 percent among young single adults living along the Wasatch Front.

5. President Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” April 2, 2011,

*Ensign*, May 2011, <http://lds.org/general-conference/2011/04/priesthood-power?lang=eng> (accessed July 25, 2011).

6. See, e.g., Elder James A. Cullimore, "To Be in the World but Not of the World," *Ensign*, June 1974, <http://lds.org/ensign/1974/01/to-be-in-the-world-but-not-of-the-world?lang=eng> (accessed July 25, 2010).

7. Angela C. Carmella, "Theological Critique of Free Exercise Jurisprudence," *George Washington University Law Review* 60, no. 3 (1992): 782, 784–85.

8. President Boyd K. Packer, "Cleansing the Inner Vessel," general conference address, October 3, 2010, edited version: <http://lds.org/general-conference/2010/10/cleansing-the-inner-vessel?lang=eng&query=Packer+cleansing+inner+vessel> (accessed March 14, 2011).

9. Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "Preserving Religious Freedom" (Chapman University, February 4, 2011), transcript, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-oaks-religious-freedom-Chapman-University> (accessed March 14, 2011).

10. Elder Quentin L. Cook, "Partnering with Our Friends from Other Faiths," in Symposium: The Future of Mormonism, <http://www.patheos.com/Topics/Future-of-World-Religions/Mormonism.html> (accessed March 14, 2011).

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20. Ibid., 31.
21. Ibid., 33.
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23. Cook, "Partnering with Our Friends from Other Faiths."
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something* (New York: Three Rivers, 2000).
27. Hunter, *Culture Wars*, 42–43.
28. Ibid., 47.
29. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 100, 129–30, 145, 181.
30. Gallup Poll, "In 2010, Conservatives Still Outnumber Moderates, Liberals," June 25, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/141032/2010-conservatives-outnumber-moderates-liberals.aspx> (accessed July 26, 2011). The number of conservatives relative to the other two groups is the highest since 1992; in 2008, for example, conservatives and moderates each constituted 37 percent of the population, with liberals at 22 percent.
31. I discuss these matters in depth in Frederick Mark Gedicks, "Truth and Consequences: Mitt Romney, Proposition 8, and Public Reason," *Alabama Law Review* 61 (2010): 337; <http://www.ssrn.com/id=1354175>.
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33. Cook, "Partnering with Our Friends from Other Faiths."

# from “A Paris Journal”

*Lance Larsen*

July 5, 2009. What an idea, a Sunday outdoor market in Paris featuring not antiques, imported fruit, or cast-off clothing, but birds. As good a way as any to worship, so we take a quick detour on our way to church, which is near the Pompidou. The *we* equals Jacqui and me and our two children, Dylan, thirteen, and Tessa, ten. We pass through aisles of finches, parakeets, parrots, and dozens of birds I can't name, cataloguing the ones we would like to own. If only we could do away with the cages, if only the birds loved their owners enough to return once set free.

\* \* \*

Lance: Do people laugh differently in French?

Jacqui: I haven't heard much laughing.

\* \* \*

A humid, overcast, slightly breezy morning: our fasting in a foreign land carries not just hunger, but curiosity, beauty, even portent. We pass five or six homeless congregated around a bench, the only woman in the group wolfing potato chips, like a character from Dickens.

\* \* \*

Jacqui brainstorming on scratch paper for her upcoming art show. A series of skirts and dresses: Thistle Gown, Whisper Dress, Dress of Lights, Birthday Dress, Babel Ball Gown, Alphabet Dress, Letters Dress, Graffiti Skirt, Patisserie Party Dress, and the Life Voyage Dress.

\* \* \*

So far the only testimony I've understood completely: a tourist from Japan speaking in English and being translated into French. He arrived this morning and was still undecided: attend church or head to the hotel to rest? He prayed in the bathroom and received

his answer—go to church. And now a testimony by a bald, articulate American who admits he used to roll his eyes at President Monson’s homey stories till President Monson became prophet. Now a year later, he loves those stories and has learned from them. And for a finale, another American—a sober, emotional man, who shares in French his love of the members after serving a mission here thirty years ago. In front of us, a black woman, hair wrapped in a pink scarf, who has been eating snacks and swigging bottled water the entire meeting, claps quietly to herself at something he said.

\* \* \*

For the closing hymn we sing “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” and Jacqui begins to cry. She leans over to me: “In two years we’ll be doing the same thing in a testimony meeting somewhere in Andalusia when Derek finishes up his mission.” Derek is our oldest son, who has been serving in Malaga, Spain, since March.

\* \* \*

Dylan: “Would you rather eat a bowl of question marks for breakfast or a plate of exclamation points for dessert?”

\* \* \*

We hear the music outside the Pompidou before we see the orchestra. We draw closer to the crowd. Wait, not an orchestra at all, but a boom box, and beside it an artist, bandanna tied around his head, painting a face upside down in white acrylic. He follows the violin swells, his whole body feeling the moment—first with his paint brush, then his hand. A kind of publicly orchestrated ecstasy, performance art. He finishes the painting at the same exact moment that the music reaches its crescendo, then dies away. He lifts the painting from the easel, spins it around till it’s right side up, and voilà—Barack Obama.

\* \* \*

Between Les Halles and Saint Eustache, a complex of gardens, walkways, and water. Yes, fountains, ponds, small rivers—an ingenious maze of liquid. And nearly all of it neglected: stagnant, moss everywhere, scum, leaves, floating plastic bottles, garbage bags, stench. And no attempt to clean it up. I keep wanting to convert this into an allegory, but of what? And if this scene were an al-



legory, which pond, if I cleared away the moss, would feature my name written on the bottom?

\* \* \*

In the subway station, a full six-person band playing what sounds like Spanish folk music: upright bass, guitar, trumpet, trombone, recorder, and accordion. Celebration tinged with melancholy. Our daughter Tessa clicks a picture and we step back into our hunger and the next train home to break our fast. What simple delicacies we will add to our everyday diet back in Springville: green olives, feta cheese, hummus, arugula, dark European chocolate, baguettes. But where, where do you get real baguettes in Utah?

\* \* \*

The Cluny/La Sorbonne metro station tosses us up right beside some Gallic-Roman baths dating from the third century, which we circle indifferently on our way to the Cluny Medieval Museum. How quickly we grow accustomed to things beautiful and old, especially when they're falling apart.

\* \* \*

And when you look up above the tapestries, multiple arches, like spider webs, like fireworks exploding. Of the smaller icons, the reliquaries mesmerize me the most. Of course, they are all closed and behind glass, their icons and pieces of tunic and ancient locks of hair and shriveled thumbs of saints long ago removed, which leaves my ten fat fingers twitching and hungry.

\* \* \*

Self-assignment one: write a poem about the way blood behaves in religious paintings. Self-assignment two: write a poem that repeats the word "hands" in every line.

\* \* \*

The Unicorn Tapestries: because they date from the fifteenth century and hang in a circle with the viewer in the middle, because the room is darkened, because the lighting is from above and dim and therefore vaguely celestial, because each tapestry offers a unicorn (Mary's symbol), because the murmuring of patrons is hushed and in French, because docile animals are part of

the pattern here, one feels not returned to Eden, but further exiled.

\* \* \*

In the frigidarium, partially restored, we look from one column fragment to the next. Carved tusks, a pair of crucified Christs. And now my eye travels upward to an arch on the second floor, where I stood just five minutes ago on a balcony overhang. There beside one of the most iconic metal crosses I've ever seen, not the Virgin, but a middle-aged woman with gray hair wearing a pant suit in tacky bright blue. How we're always trying to insert ourselves into the sacred. If not her, then me. Maybe she's from Omaha or a small town in Texas, this museum visit part of a two-week, whistle-stop tour of Europe. She looks down, tries to show interest in our concerns, then shrugs and wanders away.

\* \* \*

During the Revolution, the untutored mob attacked Notre Dame itself. Mistaking the stone sculptures of Jewish kings for secular French kings, dissidents lopped off the stone heads. The story goes that some prescient individual gathered them up, spirited them away, and buried them. As one website puts it, "For nearly two centuries, the kings' heads lay hidden in the foundations of a Paris bank before work to upgrade the bank's computer system in 1977 led to the extraordinary discovery of the lost treasure."

\* \* \*

Fifteen white worry stones, eleven black—side by side, a way of cataloguing our daily troubles?

\* \* \*

Back home for yogurt, then out again, this time to Jardin de Plantes, a popular destination on Sunday evenings. We make a couple of laps on the tree-lined avenues inside the park before spying an empty bench. Behind us, his back inches from our own, sits a shriveled leathery man, alone with his stuffed sleeping bag and rolled pad. He's trying to read a book. His feet scrape the dirt, he repositions himself, his mouth lets out a sigh (or is it more of an audible grimace?), then in a fit he grabs his face, some sort of private agony, as if bugs were chewing his cheeks from inside.

\* \* \*

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. 4:12).

\* \* \*

Whistles, shouted instructions, several uniforms on patrol: it is almost closing time, which is strictly enforced in Jardin de Plantes. A frail old man with a pointy nose stands up from the grass, plucks from a tree a sprig of yellow flowers, and twirls it between thumb and finger, like a child.

\* \* \*

A pair of young fathers pushing strollers eases by. Another grimace, and the man behind us shakes his head once, then twice, to free himself of gremlins. Dead leaves everywhere. A pigeon as black and fat as a crow begs cookie crumbs. Jacqui sketches, Tessa reads, Dylan designs on his sketch pad a utopian city without a name. We must all do something, it seems, to justify the minutes we've been given on this planet. The birds in the cathedral of branches above have already beat us to the singing.

## POETRY

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### Four Passes on Mount Horeb

*1 Kings 19:11-12*

*for Matthew Lyman Rasmussen*

*Les Blake*

#### *Pass I*

In winters it soothed me,  
the wind blistering peals  
through naked willows in the dark  
outside my bedroom window,  
while warm and bound I marked  
lost spirits sounding in the cold.

But summer waned,  
the threshold pressed upon my racing ear  
for Father's midnight pacing, broke with  
stark measured swearing  
at what death blew through the wheat crop  
in that godless zephyr's breath.

#### *Pass II*

Stakes driven into loose dry beans,  
each anchored root waits proof  
that nothing holds in quake  
outside a roof of holy soil.  
Atop each grating plate a voice  
bodes, layered in the noise—  
“There is no other ground or stand  
that I cannot destroy.”

*Pass III*

The ingredients are spare—  
heat, fuel, air.  
I saw the conflagration  
of a several-story pine,  
a wildland fire, south Utah,  
just prior jumped its line.  
Felled branches melting bootsoles  
dry O<sup>2</sup> crisp in lung,  
a desperate snap consumed by  
one last worse and cloven flame.  
Before I could exhale  
the same, black and white  
the burns the ash  
immersing whole the frame.

*Pass IV*

This is the new tongue.  
This will be your tongue.  
Hold your breath, your pain.  
Root yourself to the still-moving mount.  
Feel the heat of the word refrain  
as God rushes by  
bosom bent to the Earth.  
Straining.  
Straining.  
Strain.

## Dark Energy

*Dixie Partridge*

*"One of the newest, most daring hypotheses,  
is that the explanation lies somewhere weird, near  
yet far: in extra dimensions. As in the land of Narnia . . ."*  
—Charles W. Petit, on yet unexplained mysteries of the  
universe, "Science & Society," U.S. News and World Report

Mathematicians say the universe is a leaking wonder  
of heat and cold: immense pressures  
sucking and exhaling, not elegant  
as they'd imagined . . . "preposterous."  
Above our hilled skyline: an indigo fluorescence  
lines a vapor trail, man's faint longevity  
streaking like a mote of stellar dust,  
a sub-atomic comet. As Mars comes visible,  
a random arc in thought  
brings *dark horse* to mind—  
and the image of black traces against snow  
the winter my father took me to the cutter races,  
a hard-packed track sliced by blades  
until ground bled through.  
The winning horse, my father's favorite,  
was onyx black, eclipsing champions,  
all melodrama and muscled movement.

Out there, the anti-gravity of dark matter  
ever expands the unknown vast . . . amazing  
and no more amazing than this shadow universe  
of nightfall, where reading of dark energy  
after dusk, fifty years (or just moments)  
since those winter races,  
I've been pushed back through a narrow tack of time  
until what opens out are the small nebulae  
of my father's frosty breaths  
that rose in a rhythm like my own,  
both of us reddened with excitement and cold,  
the hooves in my heart bearing down too soon  
on the yellow flag of finish.

## Visible from Here

*Dixie Partridge*

### After the First Acres Sell

I put down the phone and stare at nothing,  
everything of my farm past settled into a moment  
like colors pushed back through a prism  
gone singular and clear:  
Hill farmland of my father's and grandfather's birth,  
our mural childhoods . . . sold piecemeal.  
My brother's long-distance  
grief, my own and my sisters' cleaving  
to the native speech of stones;  
days coming back in a clamor of rock-picking;  
short growing seasons of heat  
and stream irrigation; the nearly dry creekbed,  
the faint *om* of cobbles coming through an ice trace.  
Out my windows now, over Horse Heaven Hills  
from one white cloud  
roots of the lowering sun enlarge  
until colors like a whole brass chorus spread.  
I go out to stand antiqued in it.  
As light turns flushed, a fresco  
calicoes into being, bright and shadow flicker  
in cottonwoods like a second coming . . .  
    slumped farm buildings straighten and mend,  
    and rising along hill pasture:  
    the fluid forms of horses.

## Vitae

*Dixie Partridge*

### **Clearing the Farmhouse Attic for My Siblings**

Lost stories stir up with the dust,  
accented in Swedish: the voyage  
and train rides bringing Grandmother west;  
another linking Grandpa Lee's drowning  
to a card shark and a debt.  
Down narrow stairs we maneuver old trunks  
and frames, a wooden 'twenties photo viewer.  
Gauzy pieces of childhood  
hover like last night's drifting dreams,  
only an impression they were there  
    like my long, clear memory of the field pond—  
    where I believed I'd waded—turning cloudy  
    when Father said it vanished during dry years  
before I was born. He'd mourned it out loud so long,  
pointing out that low place in fields,  
we all wanted it back.

Is it what we remember or forget  
that defines us most, or all we imagine in between?  
We wager our days for what seems livelihood  
and come to learn the forms of drought.  
My father tried to teach us  
    *Know what you can afford to lose*  
    *and risk less.*  
What we presume to discard  
hangs over us like reproach.



With hollyhocks that went missing over decades  
outside the lichened picket fence,  
what's real keeps shifting:

    how two brothers wrecked a milk cart;  
    which Navy uncle gave us nickels for music  
    at the lodge where Snake River ran,  
    its blackness at night a current

    I'm sure I know:

my father swept downstream, his bay horse  
finally swimming him to shore  
as he clung exhausted to the saddle—

    all before he had us, but I can feel the gasping  
    against high rapids, smell the fear the horse could smell.

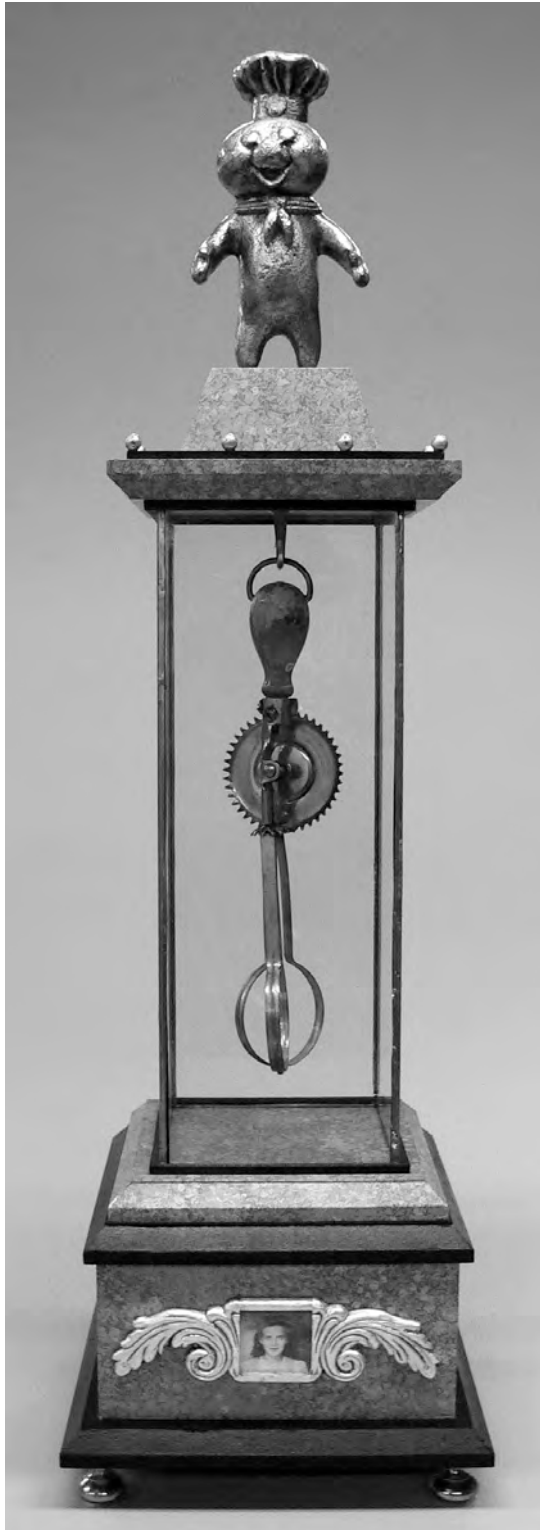
*All horses are good swimmers*

    my father told me to remember.

Outdoors, the landscape is clear,  
buoyant; no need to choose what to keep.  
Morning's shadow of the hillside  
scrolls up its slopes like the lifting of a weight.



Jason Lanegan,  
*A Piece of the  
American Diet*



Jason Lanegan,  
*Reliquary for  
Great-Aunt Ruth*

# Scaling Never

*Carys Bray*

There are so many kinds of never. There's the never that Jacob's Mum uses when she says, "Never talk to strangers; it's dangerous," and there's the never his Dad uses when he says, "Never play with your food; it's bad manners." But Mum talks to loads of people she doesn't know, and Dad breaks Oreos in half to lick the creamy bit. Issy used to say, "I'll never be friends with you again if you don't play with me." But she didn't mean it. And sometimes she said, "I'll never eat sprouts." She did mean this; and if Mum is right, and death is definitely the end of being alive, Issy will absolutely *never* eat sprouts. However, Jacob has noticed something. Never is a word that doesn't always mean not-on-your-nelly and absolutely no way. Sometimes never means not yet.

The house is full of sadness. It's packed into every crevice and corner like snow. There are bottomless drifts of it beside Issy's Cinderella beanbag in the lounge. The sadness gives Jacob the shivers, and he takes refuge in the garden. Like the house, it is higgledy and unkempt. The lawn is scuffed and threadbare in places like a grassy doormat that's felt too many feet, and it is speckled with fallen leaves. Overgrown flowerbeds stream along the length of each of the old, red-brick garden walls, all the way to the end wall, which is partially concealed by a hornbeam hedge. Randomly planted apple trees poke out of the lawn like twisted, witchy hands. Clusters of green fruit cling to bent branches, which are already almost bare of leaves. Windfalls pepper the grass, and Jacob kicks them as he makes his way to the end of the garden. Some of the fallen apples are rotten and they detonate, spraying pulp and larvae. Others are hard and thwack on contact like tennis balls.

Last year, Mum supervised an apple-picking operation before the trees dropped their fruit. There were bags and bags full. Mum took lots of the bags to church. Dad made an announcement in

sacrament meeting that anyone who wanted a bag of apples could come and get one from the car boot afterwards. Lots of people wanted free apples, and Mum smiled at them and said, "You're welcome" a lot. She wrapped the apples that she didn't give away in newspaper and put them in empty shoeboxes in the cupboard under the stairs. When she opened up the boxes, several months later, the apples were pink and yellow, and soft. "I had no idea this would happen," she kept saying, as if it was the most incredible thing she'd ever seen. She made everyone come and look. It *was* a surprise that the apples weren't Brussels sprout green and sour anymore, but Mum said it was miraculous.

This year, she hasn't bothered. No one has bothered. Even the trees themselves seem to be fed up with balancing fruit in their knobbly branches, and there are so many fallen apples to kick that it takes Jacob a long time to reach the end of the garden. When he gets there, he stares at the hedge, which is covered in crispy leaves that look like giant bran flakes. A few of them have fallen off, but he knows that most of them will cling on throughout the rest of the autumn and into the winter. He knows this because last winter he and Issy played unseen in the gap between the hedge and the wall, hidden from view by the screen of lingering leaves.

\* \* \*

It was Issy who found the dead bird. Most of it was under the hedge, but one wing lay on the lawn, spread out in a feathery fan. It had probably been killed by next door's cat. Issy picked the wing up. Jacob opened his mouth but then closed his lips over the words he had been about to say: "Put it down; it's unhygienic." It was a sentence that belonged to Dad. Besides, Jacob was suddenly keen to touch the wing himself. The feathers were shiny blue-black, and he had to know if they were both as sharp and as soft as they looked. Issy let him hold the wing, and he touched the feathers with his eyes closed. They were soft and fluffy at the tips and coarse and strong at the base where the shafts were thicker.

They buried the bird and its wing behind the hedge. They dug a hole with two plastic, seaside spades from the garden shed. Jacob placed the bird in the hole. One of its black eyes stared blankly at the sky.

'Don't put soil in the birdie's eye,' Issy said.

“We have to do it properly,” Jacob replied. Although it was the first burial he had ever attended, he was pretty certain that it wouldn’t count if he left part of the bird peeping out from under the soil. “Why don’t you say a prayer?” he suggested.

Issy prayed. She said the prayer that she said at every meal-time, saying “bird” instead of “food.” She said it quickly, as they did when they were hungry and didn’t want to wait any longer for their food.

“Dear Heavenly Father. Thank you for the bird. Please bless it. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Jacob covered the bird with soil and patted it down with the back of his spade. They stood in the gap between the wall and the hedge for a few moments, flanked by dark red brick and brittle, hornbeam leaves.

‘I think we should sing a song,’ Issy said.

“Okay,” he replied. “What song?”

“One about birdies.”

“Okay.” He tried to think of a song about birds. “I think ‘In the Leafy Treetops’ has some birds in it.”

“No.” Issy smoothed the soil of the bird’s grave with the tip of her trainer. “Something good.”

“I don’t know.” He shrugged. He’d had enough. He was ready to do something else.

Then Issy started to sing:

We will find a little nest  
 In the branches of a tree.  
 Let us count the eggs inside;  
 There are one, two, three.  
 Mother bird sits on the nest  
 To hatch the eggs all three.  
 Father bird flies round and round  
 To guard his family.

He gave her a brief round of applause.

“Do you think that it was a mummy birdie or a daddy birdie?” Issy asked as they pushed themselves out from behind the hedge and onto the lawn.

“Dunno,” he said. “We could have checked for a willy, but it’s too late now. Maybe it was a child bird.”

“Oh.” Issy looked surprised. “That *would* be sad.”

Jacob thinks he can remember the spot where they buried the bird. At first, he isn’t sure if he will do anything. He stands next to the hedge, daring himself. Then he dashes back to the shed, as if he is worried that something might stop him from fetching the spade.

Spade in hand, he pushes through the hard, scratchy criss-cross weave of branches and into the space between the wall and the hedge. He starts to dig. Nothing at first. He moves along a bit, his elbow grazing the wall. He disturbs more soil, and he can suddenly smell clay and damp. He stops digging for a moment as he remembers.

\* \* \*

He didn’t want to go to the funeral. Mum was very upset when he said this. How could he not want to go to his sister’s funeral. How *could* he? As he had expected, the funeral was just more church, different from Sundays only in that they had to sit on the front row, except for Dad who sat up on the stand as usual so that he could do the service. There was an opening and a closing prayer, there were some hymns, and Dad did a talk about not being sad while tears coursed down Mum’s face and sprinkled into her lap, watering her hands.

Afterwards everyone drove to the cemetery. There was a very deep hole in the ground. When Jacob asked about it later, Dad said it had been dug by a digger. Someone had placed a fake grass carpet over the pile of earth that had been dug up, and Jacob stood on a corner of it, scratching the soles of his shoes along its prickles.

Dad and some of the funeral men carried the coffin from the car to the graveside. When they put it down on two planks of wood that had been placed over the hole, Mum started to make a noise. Dad moved away from the coffin and went to stand next to her. He put his arm around her shoulder, but the noise continued. It was a bit like a dog howling, and it sent a zigzag of fear from Jacob’s heart to his willy. A squirt of wee leaked into his pants and spread in a warm circle. Dad shushed Mum, but she wouldn’t stop,

so he fished in his suit pocket and pulled out a handkerchief. He put it in Mum's hand. She just stood there, so he lifted her hand and held it over her mouth for her. The handkerchief muffled the noise. Eventually Dad let go and Mum carried on, holding the handkerchief over her mouth, but the noise leaked past its edges.

Dad had to say a prayer to dedicate the grave. He said it loudly so that people could hear him over Mum. It went on for a while, and Jacob wished that he would hurry up. After Dad finally finished, the funeral men made the coffin go down. When someone walked up and threw a handful of soil into the hole, Mum stopped making the noise. She moved the handkerchief away from her mouth. "*Don't* do that," she said.

People left quickly. Dad said that Mum should say good-bye to everyone. Jacob heard her saying that she didn't see why she should, as she was going to see them all again in a few minutes for the food, back at the chapel. But she walked with Dad toward the parked cars anyway.

Jacob moved off the plastic grass and onto the real stuff. He edged toward the hole. Issy's coffin was a long way down and it was spattered with dirt. He knelt at the lip of the grave. The earth was damp, and he could feel the wet soaking into the knees of his best trousers. He had been hoping for a miracle. Sister Anderson was always going on about them in CTR lessons on Sundays. Some miracles happened a long time ago, like Noah's Ark. Not many people seem to have thought about it; but once when he couldn't sleep, Jacob had imagined how much poo the animals must have made, and how much trouble it must have been for Noah to stop them all from eating each other. It had made him realise that Noah's Ark was an ace miracle, right up there with Father Christmas's flying sleigh. There were other good miracles from the olden days, like the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and Balaam and the Talking Ass—a miracle with a rude word in it.

Dad said that miracles happen all the time. Sister Anderson thought so, too. She said that Brother Anderson's cancer treatment was proving to be a modern-day miracle. Maybe she was right, but Brother Anderson's head looked like an enormous egg, and Jacob had been imagining a much bigger miracle than that for Issy, one that would see her alive and with hair. His tummy



hurt. His underpants and knees were wet and cold, and a damp, sticky smell was wafting out of the hole in the ground. It reminded him of the bag of modelling clay that Mrs Slade kept on the side, next to the sink, in the school classroom. He looked at the soil speckles on the coffin's little silver plaque. It read, Isabel Rachael Bradley. He couldn't understand why anyone would want to throw dirt on Issy.

Sister Anderson crouched down next to him. "It's very sad, isn't it?" she said.

"It was meningitis," he told her.

Mum had made him say the word again and again. "People will ask, so you must learn how to say it," she said. He practised it until it stopped sounding like a sticky eye infection—mengy-eye-tus—and started to sound more like men-ingiantis—a band of giants who had magicked Issy into the celestial kingdom.

"Are you all right, sweetheart?" Sister Anderson asked.

He wanted to say that he was fine. He wanted to tell her to go away. But his bottom lip began to wobble, and it wouldn't stop, even when he bit it quite hard. Sister Anderson helped him to his feet. She put her arms around him and pulled his face into her squashy tummy. Her dress was pink and velvety. His tears soaked into its softness. She patted his head gently and said, "It's such a shame."

When he had finished crying, he stepped away from her. A rope of snot stretched from his nose to the front of her dress, like a bridge.

\* \* \*

Jacob unearths a feather and knows that he is in the right spot. The feather is matted and patchy, which is disappointing, but he keeps digging. As he digs, he thinks about the apples, hiding in old shoeboxes in the cupboard under the stairs. He knows that, like the apples, the bird will look different when it is uncovered, and he hopes that the transformation will be a good one.

There are more feathers, though most of them are not very feathery anymore. He digs especially carefully now. He has seen an enormous book on Egypt in the school library. There is a section about digging stuff up. There are pictures of the tiny brushes people use so as not to damage anything. The corner of his spade

grazes something hard. Jacob puts it down and begins to move the soil away with his fingers. Here is the bird's back. He follows its knobbls, brushing the dirt away. The bird is mostly bones. This is not the transformation he has been hoping for. The bird's insides, and most of its outsides, have melted into the soil. Its skeleton is a brownish-grey colour. It's hard, but brittle, like crisps. He wipes soil from the bird's wing-twigs which, stripped of feathers, look like dirty icicles. Lastly, he moves the soil away from the bird's skull. The eye has gone. In its place is a hole that seems far too big. His finger may even fit inside. It does.

\* \* \*

Mum used to read a fairy tale each night from the old, fat, book that she had been given as a present when she was a little girl. Afterwards, she would get the Bible and the Book of Mormon picture books out and read a story from one of them, too. Jacob's favourite fairy tale used to be *The Wolf and the Seven Goats*. The best bit was the part where the mother goat opened up the wolf and her kids tumbled out of his big furry belly. *The Wolf and the Seven Goats* is just made up. But the story of *Jonah and the Whale* actually happened in real life. Jonah got stuck in a whale and survived. In the Bible and the Book of Mormon, there are even better stories than *Jonah's*. There are stories about people who died and then came back to life, like the story of *Lazarus*. Jacob remembers it because there's a bit where *Lazarus* is *so* dead that Martha says, "He stinketh." After they read about *Lazarus*, Mum sometimes said, "Who stinketh?" when someone did a trump. There's the story of *Jairus's* daughter too. Everyone thought she was dead, and people were crying. But Jesus told *Jairus* to believe; and when they reached the house, the girl wasn't dead any more. She was just sleeping. With God all things are possible—that's what it says on the picture of a big bird with its wings spread wide in flight on the kitchen wall.

After the funeral, Jacob asked Dad why he hadn't resurrected *Issy*. Dad explained it to him in the special, extra-patient voice he uses when he's explaining something that people should already know. He said that priesthood holders can't just go around resurrecting everyone. He said that Heavenly Father decides if people live or die. Jacob replied that it wasn't always like that—sometimes

people *believe* and then miracles happen. Dad said it was true, but not in Issy's case. He said, "Ours is not to question why." He said that sometimes believing things will turn out all right in the end is a better kind of faith than the faith that raises people from the dead.

Jacob felt cross. "So it's *all right in the end* for Issy to be dead?" he asked. "Didn't you even try to make a miracle happen? What's the point of being in charge at church if you can't do miracles?"

Dad said that Jacob would understand it better when he got older. But Jacob understood something right then. If he wanted Issy back, he was going to have to make it happen himself.

\* \* \*

The bird's eye socket rings the tip of Jacob's finger. He has been praying for the bird to come back to life for a whole week. It seemed sensible to start with something little, with a small miracle, for practice.

Sister Anderson once said that faith can be as small as a seed. She brought some mustard seeds to Primary for everyone to see. They were tiny. Jacob knows that his faith is bigger than a mustard seed; it's at least as big as a toffee bonbon, maybe bigger.

He moves his finger out of the bird's eye socket and picks up the spade. Then he puts it down. If he reburies the bird, he will have to dig it up and, if nothing has happened yet, rebury it again. He will have to keep checking on it. As the autumn sets into winter, there will be days when it is raining and days when the ground is stiff with frost. It will be much easier if he can find a safe place to put the bird.

He pushes his fingers into the soil on either side of the bird's chest and lifts gently. The head is the first thing to fall off, followed by the wing that the cat didn't damage. He is left holding a little cage of ribs; and as he places a finger under the spindly, dangling legs, they break off, too. He thinks he might cry as a rush of salty prickles gather at the top of his nose, but he doesn't. He puts the ribs down and pulls the bottom of his T-shirt out with one hand. Then he picks the little pieces of bird up, one at a time, and drops them into his makeshift pocket. He bends to sniff the soily bones. They smell of earth. They definitely don't stinketh.

He doesn't kick any apples on his way back up the garden. If

he is lucky, he will get up to his room without being noticed. Dad is at a church meeting. It's Mum he needs to watch out for. On Saturdays she usually cleans. According to the song they sing in Primary, Saturday is the day we get ready for Sunday, and Mum always says that Sundays are easier to face with a clean house. But today she might just be sitting at the table in the kitchen, wet-faced and dribbly-nosed, staring at nothing.

The back door is half wood and half glass. Jacob approaches stealthily, ready to duck if necessary, but the kitchen is empty. He opens the door, then sneaks along the linoleum. He tiptoes down the hall and turns to climb the stairs. He is halfway up when he hears the toilet flush. He has to pass the bathroom door to reach his bedroom. He starts to run. The bird pieces jiggle in his T-shirt. He hears the rush of the taps and the clink of the towel ring as Mum dries her hands. He is quick. His door closes as the bathroom door opens, and he listens to Mum pad slowly down the stairs as he kneels on the carpet, behind the door, his heart jumping.

He isn't sure where to put the bird. Mum will be certain to find it if he puts it in the wardrobe. He could put it in the bottom of Issy's toy box, but he doesn't want to touch her stuff because it gives him tummy ache. He shuffles across the carpet on his knees until he reaches the bunk bed. He puts the bird pieces on the floor and then lies down on his tummy and commando-crawls under the bottom bunk. There is dust along the skirting boards like the grey fluff that collects in the tumble drier. Under the bed, he discovers a couple of plastic soldiers who have deserted and one of Issy's books which must have slipped down the side of her bunk. He moves the book and the soldiers out from under the bed, and then he carefully delivers the bird bits into the far corner underneath.

After he crawls out from under the bed, he kneels again. He folds his arms, bows his head, and says a prayer. "Dear Heavenly Father. I have faith that you can resurrect the bird. This is a real prayer. It's not like asking for a bike or something. It's very important. When you resurrect the bird, I will have even more faith. And then there can be even better miracles. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."

As he gets to his feet, there's a tap at the door. Mum's head ap-

pears followed by her body and the Hoover. "It's Saturday," she says as she moves one of the toy boxes with her foot, in search of the wall plug. "The day we get ready for Sunday," she sings part of the Primary song to him with a half smile, as if she is hoping that he will join in. He doesn't. He picks the soldiers and Issy's book off the floor, climbs the ladder to his bunk, and waits for the scream of the Hoover.

But Mum pauses for a moment. "Would you . . . do you think we should . . . Are Issy's things *bothering* you?"

"Not really," he fibs, his tummy clenching as he stares down at the orphaned jumble of Duplo, dolls, and ponies with bright nylon hair. If he tells her the truth, she might throw them all away; and then Issy won't have anything to play with when she comes back.

Mum's voice jellies around her words as she says, "We could sort them out, if you like."

"Don't cry," he says quickly.

"I wasn't . . ." She wipes a hand over her face, as if to make sure.

"Good. Leave Issy's things. It's okay. She might want them back—"

"Jacob, I've told you that we won't see her again until—"

"After she's resurrected, she might want them back," he explains cunningly. "Everyone gets resurrected at the end of the world, Dad said so."

Mum lets out a big puff of air. "That's a long way off."

"You never know," he says in a grown-up voice.

She smiles at his imitation of her and switches the Hoover on. He watches as she pushes it back and forth, mowing the carpet. She unclips the wiggler attachment and worms it into the gap between the toy boxes. It sucks along the skirting board, uncurling and stretching like an elephant's trunk.

Then she kneels down. And Jacob suddenly feels marooned on the top deck of the bunk, the captain of a vessel that is rapidly approaching Niagara Falls.

'Haven't you finished?' His question pierces the Hoover's greedy moan like a rescue shout.

'I'm just going to do under the bed,' she calls up to him. "Goodness knows when I last did it." She leans forward on her

knees and thrusts the wiggler about as if she is trying to capsize him.

“You don’t have to do it today,” he exclaims, his thoughts paddling against the current of her decision like frantic hands.

There’s a sound like the clatter of homemade shakers filled with uncooked rice and pasta, and his stomach sways as the bird bones rattle up the wiggler. He wants to launch himself off the top bunk and bodyslam the hoover like a professional wrestler, but he sits still as it sucks up his hope.

“Have you got some Legos under here?” Mum starts to lie down on the floor to get a proper look under the bed.

“No,” he shouts down to her. “I think it must be some . . . rubbish.”

She gets up and switches the hoover off. “I’ll check for Legos when I empty it later, just to make sure.” She clips the wiggler back in place, unplugs the cord, and closes the door on her way out.

Jacob stays on his bunk for a bit, looking down at the room. Mum will probably forget to check the hoover, which means he’s not likely to get into trouble. That’s good; it’s something to feel happy about. He tries to feel happy. He pushes his cheeks up with his fingers and lifts his face into a smile but his mouth pops open and a small sob spills out. He is disappointed to find himself so far from happy. He pulls back the duvet, lies down on his tummy, and buries his head in the pillow. A series of sobs shakes out of him and rattles into the pillow, grazing the back of his throat like tiny bones.

Eventually, he climbs down the ladder. With God all things are possible. God helps those who help themselves, and He loves a trier. If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, try again. Remembering all this about God makes Jacob feel ever-so-slightly better. He puts the stray soldiers in his toy box, but he keeps hold of the book that was under the bed. It’s the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. He opens it to the middle page, which is a special, fold-out picture of the beanstalk; its tip is hidden by clouds. He knows that Jack and the Beanstalk is not a miracle. It’s just a fairy tale. No one could get some magic beans. It could *never* happen: not-on-your-nelly and absolutely no way. Fairy-tale nevers are not the kind of nevers that Jacob is looking for. He is in search of nevers that can be slipped under, scaled, or tiptoed around. But even though he

knows that fairy-tale nevers are impossible to bend, he wishes that he had a beanstalk. He wishes that Sister Anderson would bring magic beans to Primary instead of mustard seeds. He wishes he could plant the magic beans at the bottom of the garden, behind the hedge, and watch an enormous stalk twist and stretch skyward. And even though Dad says that heaven is not actually in the sky, he wishes he could climb the stalk right up into the clouds and find Issy. That would be ace.

# Walking into the Heart of the Questions: An Interview with W. Grant McMurray

*Note: Gregory A. Prince, a member of Dialogue's board of editors, conducted an interview with W. Grant McMurray, who served as president of Community of Christ (1996–2004), on February 22, 2010, at the Prince home in Potomac, Maryland. Both the historic name of the Church (the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1860–2001) and the current name (Community of Christ, 2001–present) are used according to the period under discussion in this interview. Following are a few excerpts from the interview. The full interview is available online at [dialoguejournal.com/2011/walking-into-questions](http://dialoguejournal.com/2011/walking-into-questions).*

*Greg:* I'd like to start by talking about the Community of Christ (and its predecessor, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) in the early twentieth century. My recollection is that your faith tradition, like mine, went for a long time mostly holding onto traditions and not worrying too much about substantive change. Is that an adequate way of putting it? If you go back to 1860, you have basically a century where holding the line was primary?

*Grant:* I think that's fair to say. For Community of Christ—or the other names that have been used for it, but we'll just use that name as representative of the entire period of time—the formative identity of the movement was built around two principles. One was an opposition to the practice of polygamy, which was a key identity element of the LDS Church in the West for most of the nineteenth century; and the second principle was a support for lineal succession as the proper mode of succession for the Church. There were various other modes—seven or eight of them—that can be documented historically as being expressed at some point by Joseph Smith Jr. Of course, the Mormon Church in the West accepted the



mode of succession through senior leaders in the Council of Twelve Apostles.

But at the time of the dispersion of the various elements of the Church following the assassination of Joseph Smith Jr., Joseph Smith III, the eldest son, was eleven years old, and there was not any realistic expectation that he could serve in that way. And so the branches that stayed in the Midwest, rather than following Brigham Young to the West, believed that a successor would come from the Smith family. There were various elements involved in calculating who that might be. It wasn't always necessarily thought to be the eldest son. But over the years, between the death of Joseph in 1844 and the formal organization of the Church that would subsequently be named Community of Christ, those sixteen years, the branches remained in the Midwest as independent branches looking for a leader to emerge. There were a number of claimants to leadership, but most of those branches were looking for a lineal successor.

As Joseph III grew into manhood, there came to be an expectation that he would be the one who would come forward. There was quite a process of exploring that possibility with him before he eventually, in 1860, took leadership of the Church. About four years prior to that, there had begun to be a more formal coalescing of some of those branches under the leadership of Jason Briggs and Zenos Gurley in particular.

But in 1860, Joseph Smith III came to a conference of hopeful would-be members, called as he said, "of a power not my own," to accept the leadership of the Church and to begin a term of office that lasted for fifty-four years, an amazing period of time.

During those fifty-four years, from 1860 until his death in 1914, I think it would be fair to say that the Community of Christ was experiencing something of an identity crisis. It seemed to mark the movement's history to follow the ways in which the Church was trying to define itself. I sometimes refer to it with appreciation for the word *anomie*, which means an uncertain sense of self. I think as you look back—I'm not sure they would have necessarily described themselves in that way—it would appear clear that there was a search for really defining who the Church was. For many of those years, that definition—that identity—was laid over and against the Mormon Church: trying to define how we

are different, how we are legitimate, how we are authentic, how we are accepted in the larger community. Whereas the Church in Utah had the experience of drawing away from the larger national experience and finding its own voice as pretty well an indigenous church, strong in the developing stages of the movement out in the West, it began over time to become somewhat controversial. That controversy was generated particularly by political efforts to resist the national ideology that opposed polygamy as a principle of life for any denomination. So there was a conflict about that in the West.

I think, as that conflict grew nationally, the Reorganized Church made stronger and stronger efforts to establish itself as the legitimate extension of the Latter Day Saint movement founded by Joseph Smith Jr. Opposition to polygamy became very important in those years, in particular, as the RLDS Church developed its identity.

So it was a search, I believe, for some real clarity as to what the Church actually stood for. I think that same search brought us into the present time. Some of the more contemporary things that have been accomplished over the last two or three decades still carried with them an effort on the part of the Community of Christ to explain, first to itself, and then to others, who it really was, what its focus was, and what its core ministry and identity in the world were.

*Greg:* Is it fair to say that, in that first century, you had a few core principles, and most of the effort was to refine those? That you weren't doing quantum leaps from here to there?

*Grant:* I think, to be honest, there was a sense of the historical rootedness of the movement: a belief in the prophetic leadership of Joseph Smith, a kind of not-thoughtfully-examined relationship with those founding principles, but just an appreciation of them. Given the understandings that were available during that time, in terms of documents and historical explorations, not much was readily available. So there was this comfort level of being a "True Church." The masthead of the *Saint's Herald*, the Church magazine in the nineteenth century, carried at one point a little banner that said, "All Truth." That was the purpose of the magazine and of the Church—to exemplify, to embrace, to embody truth. I think that,

over the years, we have come to a somewhat more humble understanding of our faith, as perhaps not necessarily embodying all truth in its purity. But there was a sense in this small church—and I experienced it as a child, being the only kid in my school who was a member of that church that had a long and funny name. Here I was, living in the midst of a community where hardly anybody even knew anything about our church, where there was just a little building on a nearby street where our church was established; and yet somehow, as a kid, I needed to deal with the fact that we understood ourselves to be the One True Church—not just vis-à-vis the Mormons, but vis-à-vis all other expressions of Christianity.

And so, much of that identity formation in those early years came around defining how we were different from everybody else—especially the Mormons, but not limited to the Mormons; also how we were different from the mainstream Christian denominations. It seemed we did that in large part because it seemed that was what people wanted to know: “How are you different? What distinguishes you?”

Moving into the twentieth century, I think the Church had found a comfortable way of defining itself as a traditional embrace of the founding experiences of the early Church, a clear position, even into the twentieth century, of rejecting any notion that Joseph Smith might have been involved in polygamy, and living comfortably with the prophetic leadership of the Church being connected to the Smith family.

As we moved into the post-war period in the 1950s, in American culture it was a time when a lot of people were in the pews. Churches were active, and people felt comfortable with their faith and their relationships with other churches, as well as having strong commitments to their own faith communities.

*Greg:* In the pews because of the war?

*Grant:* I think that the post-war economic boom was accompanied by efforts to normalize things. There wasn't a lot of deep questioning and exploration, certainly not among the people in the pews. People were just comfortable. People went to church just because it was what people did. Many of them who were there were less-than-frequent participants, and there was not a lot of challenging of faith.

Those were my growing-up years. That was the Church I learned as a young man. I was interested; I was pretty inquisitive; but I was sort of satisfied by knowing that smart people, writing on behalf of the RLDS Church, were supporting that principle of “this is the One True Church.” I would think to myself, “If they think that, then surely it must be true.”

But then the 1960s came. In the 1960s there was kind of a cultural revolution: opposition to the Vietnam War, the development of the civil rights movement, the status of women in society—all of these kinds of things were questions. Institutions were challenged, and churches did not escape that challenge. People who were questioning authority in terms of government, politics, business, and universities were also questioning authority in terms of Church life and theological dispositions of people. Our Church got caught up in that as well.

President Wallace B. Smith was ordained as president of the Church in 1978. It was in 1984 that he brought to the Church what we call Section 156 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which had two primary messages. The first would be that the time had come to begin to ordain women to the priesthood. Heretofore, only men had been called to the priesthood. There had been some efforts during the preceding years, now and then, where pastors felt a conviction that a certain woman had ministerial capacity and had a calling; they would actually pass recommendations up the line. That was actually referenced in President Smith’s statement, something like: “These calls have been submitted from time to time, and have been awaiting further decision, and now is the time to move forward in that direction.”

This was a *huge* step, a very big issue. In the very same document, there was also a call to begin to build the temple. RLDS members—Community of Christ people—always believed that we were called to build a temple in Independence, but in our polity, in our particular Church, nobody had any idea what a temple would be. What would we do with it?

*Greg:* But you had a pretty good idea what it *wouldn’t* be, and that was what we did?

*Grant:* That’s right. We knew that it wouldn’t be what the Mormons had. It wouldn’t have secret or private rituals, sealings, en-

dowments, and all of those things. They had never been part of the Community of Christ since its formation in 1860. So the call to build the temple came there, and then came what I believe was transformational language. In that document it said, “The temple shall be dedicated to the pursuit of peace” (D&C 154). That became, I think, one of the most important statements appearing in any of the canonical literature of the Community of Christ.

Little did I know that, in the years to follow, the temple would be built, but it would become *my* responsibility, as Church president, to say, “Now that we have built this temple, with its strange design of a spiral to the heavens, this is what it means to be a people who build a defiant building like that, and declare themselves to be dedicated to the pursuit of peace.”

*Greg:* Is that transition still happening?

*Grant:* Sure, and I think it will continue always to be one of those dynamic things that keeps redefining us, forcing us to look again and again at what this means. As issues in the world change, as issues come upon us, how do we confront those? What is our position as a Church, or as a disciple of Christ? It’s important to stay current on how the Church speaks to the culture and the society. Otherwise, we have no worth. There is no point to the Church if we don’t have something to say to our own time. That needs to be alive.

*The full interview, with more discussion about the ordination of women and other instances of the process of change in response to revelation in the Community of Christ, and more of President McMurray’s personal recollections of his service as Church president, is available online at [dialoguejournal.com/2011/walking-into-questions](http://dialoguejournal.com/2011/walking-into-questions).*



Jason Lanegan,  
*A True Piece of a Barbie*

## REVIEWS

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### Canon: Open, Closed, Evolving

David F. Holland. *Sacred Borders: Continuing Revelation and Canonical Restraint in Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 275 pp. notes, index. Hardcover: \$65. ISBN-13: 978-01-9975-361-1

*Reviewed by Samuel M. Brown*

*Sacred Borders* represents a rigorous and compelling consideration of various traditions about the state of the biblical canon in American religion. For bookish Latter-day Saints, this volume will provide much-needed context for early Mormon beliefs about their open canon as well as a subtle and sympathetic view of both sides of the debate over the closed canon. While the style is highly accessible, given the complexity of the subject matter, a reader may benefit from having digested a book like Brooks Holifield's *Theology in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005) or perhaps the survey by Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Many of Holland's arguments will make more sense when the reader recognizes some of the actors, concepts, and traditions involved. Even so, I believe that *Sacred Borders* will be useful to non-specialist audiences. Holland, a recent Stanford graduate and assistant professor of history at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, is an important new voice in American religious history and Mormon studies. For expository clarity, I have divided the review into three sections.

#### **The Canon Problem in the American Traditions**

The notion that the Bible is a single book directly relevant to modern readers is a conceit, albeit a useful one, often invoked in shorthand as the biblical "canon." Holland makes quite clear that canon has occasioned considerable controversy over many centuries of American religious history. As scholars commonly remind us, "Bible" is an Anglicization of a Greek word (*[ta] biblia*) probably better, if idiomatically, translated "library" or "anthology." The canonized Bible was written, rewritten, and edited by a mixed assortment of "sacred penmen" over many centuries.

Canon in American Protestantism is not just a question of spurious versus actual authorship of sacred texts; it is also a belief about a book that is binding on modern Protestants. Beyond their diversity, the books of the Bible contain accounts of myriad strange, supernatural happenings, events that may have little direct resonance in the lives of modern Christians.

Despite certain logical obstacles, many Christians have embraced a closed canon for a variety of persuasive reasons. American Protestants used the closed canon to reject enthusiasm, to denounce Anglican and Catholic ecclesiology, to imagine that God's mind could be comprehended, and to battle Deists, among other applications. Where enthusiasts threatened ecclesial anarchy with outpourings of God's spirit, the canon offered protection and stability. Where Catholics and Anglicans saw the Church as wielding great power, American Protestants saw the Bible "alone" as a counter to ecclesial dictatorship. In Holland's phrase, they were thereby attempting "to keep religious tyrants at bay" (24). A closed canon also gave hope for believers that they might master the tasks presented to them in their religious tradition: Within a closed canon, "Christian discipleship was no moving target" (24).

I agree with Holland's argument that a closed canon favors the educated because exegetical aptitude is valued, even as he emphasizes that it would be wrong to collapse the question of canon to a question of elite hegemony (29). Thinkers like Jonathan Edwards revered the canon, not just because it favored their particular cognitive and expository skills, but because it made sense of their world and struck them as fundamentally consistent with the nature of God. Holland also reminds readers that, misconceptions notwithstanding, believers in the closed canon thought that God continued to speak. They believed that He did so through Providential expressions of His sovereign will. In elaborating this point, Holland provides a highly useful treatment of the intersections of Providence and revelation in American Protestantism, including an arresting, summary turn of phrase to describe Ann Hutchinson's stillbirth (a personal tragedy by which critics of her prophethood found divine sanction for their criticism): "An active God spoke through a mangled fetus to declare that he had not spoken through a living witness" (40-44).



On the other hand, Holland reminds us, an open canon—"a Bible with the back cover torn off" (209)—has intuitive, even logical appeal. The God of the biblical anthology is manifestly a God who speaks, and it is only natural to expect that God will continue to speak today. In the terms of an ancient Latin truism that Holland employs to good effect, *si Dii sint, divinatio est*: "If Gods exist, revelation exists." (Latter-day Saints may recall Hugh B. Brown's famous 1955 "Profile of a Prophet" speech on this point.<sup>1</sup>)

In believers' hands, an open canon was a claim at once rational and irrational, though. Nothing could be simpler than an extension of the biblical pattern into the modern day, but the wide chasm between the supernatural lives of the "sacred penmen" and modern readers strained credulity. What seemed reasonable when represented in sacred history seemed absurd or even fanatical in early modern America. Various Protestants admitted as much in their profoundly circular logic that there would be no new revelation unless, of course, there were new revelation (21–22). In the phrase of famed liberal Congregationalist Horace Bushnell, "arguments for the possibility [of an open canon] are good, but evidences for the fact do not correspond" (134).

Holland makes the compelling argument that canon is a story about the character of God (216). I applaud the return of this theological question to a theological arena. I strongly agree with his rejection of merely sociological accounts of the canon (94); I also concur with his argument that one need not invoke esoteric traditions to understand the attraction of an open canon or active prophecy (169). The closed canon was an organic, reasonable attempt to make sense of God in the world, just as the open canon was a logical response to the particular claims and compromises of the closed canon.

I have only two minor complaints about Holland's treatment of the canon question in American Protestantism. I wish he had explored the co-identity of Christ as The Word and the Bible as word, a theme to which Matthew Bowman reminds us to return in his excellent dissertation, "The Urban Pulpit: Evangelicals and the City in New York, 1880–1930" (Georgetown University, 2011). Images of the Divine Word in both these senses have been important to Protestants for centuries and surely played a part in their unitary identification of the biblical canon. I also wish, given my

on-going fascination with the topic, that Holland had spent more time pondering oral versus written culture and the meaning of the infidelity of human language. Though he appropriately mentions this problem, I found that I wanted just a little bit more detail.

### **The Mormon Question**

Mormon readers will likely be most interested in Holland's treatment of Mormons per se (141–57), but I have waited to consider this section until now to emphasize the point Holland is making implicitly: that Mormonism cannot be understood without first comprehending its context within American religion. Holland pushes back gently against Nathan Hatch's well-known social argument in *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), wanting to emphasize that Methodists and Mormons were not just fighting against social hierarchy; they were also criticizing America's epistemology (142). Mormonism is an important chapter in America's canon history, and American canon traditions are crucial to understanding Mormonism.

Mormons, like many others, highlighted important facts about the Bible: The process of canonization itself was external to the biblical texts; translation and scribal transmission may have muddied the original text; different groups advocated different canons. Many Protestants agreed with these specific claims and accommodated them within either closed or open canon models. More important to Mormons, though, was the anti-cessationist argument that God's mode of revelation did not vary by geography or time. Believers should expect that every nation and every generation would have access to records as valid as scripture as the Bible itself (with the logically complex exception of times of "apostasy"). Their Book of Mormon, ancient America's Bible, was a powerful proof of concept, one they followed with another lost Egyptian-Hebrew scripture (the Book of Abraham), recovery of a lost Book of Moses and Prophecy of Enoch, and several truly modern scriptures by which early Mormons inscribed their own life stories into holy writ.

Holland makes a very important point that bears repeating: The opening of the Mormon canon was distinct from most other

approaches to opening the canon, of which there were many. The new revelation of early nineteenth-century Shakers, for instance, purified the Bible of some of its dangerous remnants, but the Book of Mormon provided no such protection. Any of the horrifying elements of the biblical narrative, including even patriarchal polygamy, could return under the right circumstances, according to the Mormon lost scripture (148). Mormonism's canon was not a way to secure a worldview by detoxifying the Bible; it augured instead the possibility that the strangely miraculous world of the Bible would return.

The first Mormon scripture knew well that it addressed the problem of canon. The Book of Mormon seemed to taunt the Bible's canonical failings. In place of faceless committees and councils, the Book of Mormon was ultimately canonized by one man, its eponymous prophet. The Book of Mormon ruptured the biblical canon in more ways than one.

Holland also draws attention to some of the limitations of an open canon; *Sacred Borders* is not an apologia for Joseph Smith and his heirs in any traditional sense. A truly open canon, however endorsed in early Mormon scripture, was not entirely possible, as Protestant critics were quick to point out. When prophetic competitors arose within the movement, their new scriptures and revelations were rejected, and they were often excommunicated. The openness of the Mormon canon within a few decades had evolved as well. Mormonism now seems to have adopted a more Catholic model, in which the Church can direct its course through revelation while the canon (the "standard works" in Mormon parlance) remains largely closed. These shifts and complexities speak to the point that the notion of open canon is in some respects oxymoronic. Canon by its very nature is restrictive, closed, exclusive. Even when additions are tolerated, they are additions to a canon, which excludes other texts. What many people mean by an "open" canon may be better understood as an "evolving" canon, a complex hybrid of restriction and inclusion.

I have a few quibbles with Holland over the material in his treatment of Mormonism, but these are minor and probably self-serving. First, Smith's relationship to Hebrew and pure language is rather more complex than suggested in Holland's brief comparison (188) to Transcendentalist Theodore Parker (who, as

Holland notes, also studied with Joshua Seixas, teacher for the Mormon's Kirtland Hebrew School). Second is the relative absence of the *Book of Commandments* and Doctrine and Covenants, beyond a discussion of Smith's polygamy revelation, which entered the Mormon canon three decades after his death. This deficit may be driven by the exigencies of physical space and word count; if so, I understand completely. Nevertheless, the revelations issuing directly from Joseph Smith are strikingly different from the American Bible he translated as the Book of Mormon. And the differences are relevant to the meaning of "open" and "canon" in early Mormonism.

Oliver Cowdery's public and notorious quarrel with Smith over the editing and updating of revelations for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants speaks to the heart of the problem of the open canon. It is one thing to say that the Bible canon failed to include other ancient scripture, as many Protestant readers allowed in their attempts to come to terms with "lost" texts like the book of Enoch mentioned in Jude 14–15. It is quite another to say that new scripture can be written in antebellum America. Smith, as few—if any—others, combined those two modes. Was it a natural transition for Smith, from discovering and translating "lost books" to promulgating revelation directly as the American namesake of the Egyptian patriarch Joseph? Understanding the dynamics of Smith's transition from ancient to modern scripture might illuminate substantially the operation of the open canon in a new religious movement.

Third, Holland argues that Mormons embraced personal revelation as a way to avoid the tyranny threatened by an open canon. This threat is one American Protestants associated with "prelatic" or "papist" religion or ecclesial structure. Where the canon is open, a leader may exercise disproportionate or even tyrannical power over followers. Early Mormons lived the tension between "prophetic hierarchy" and "revelatory democracy" (154–55). Holland, employing a statement from Brigham Young (153), argues that the open canon favored balance in early Mormonism, but I am not entirely persuaded. Mormons drew on anti-cessationist traditions about spiritual gifts in general, and early Mormons often embraced the irony well-observed by Nathan Hatch that populist religion frequently accommodated dominating lead-

ership styles. Holland does not explicitly consider, for instance, that the revelation announcing that all Mormons could prophesy was radically constrained early on because its applications proved too schismatic.

Holland's treatment of the broad arc of canon within American religion generates many questions for students of Mormonism that fall well beyond his historical period. How does canon play into the plausible deniability of modern Latter-day Saints confronted by beliefs widely held by the first generations of Mormons? Even in a movement that strongly emphasizes the openness of canon, there are reasons to require that canon persist. Such persistence is a reminder that canon is a way for a community to agree together what its standard beliefs will be. Does the image of Kolob as God's throne belong to the modern Church? Widely held in the early Church, this belief is not univocally confirmed in the canon. What about polygamy? The Manifesto ending the practice has been canonized, but the 1843 revelation authorizing its performance (to which fundamentalists turn to justify on-going practice of polygamy) has not been decanonized. More generally, what does one make of modern LDS biblical literalists? Their philosophical stance seems far from that of early Mormonism, and there is no (LDS) canonical support for strict biblical literalism, but such literalists appear to constitute a vibrant and persistent subculture within modern Mormonism.

### **Metatextual Problems and Illuminations**

I hope that this book and others like it will represent a face of Mormon studies in our intellectual era. In recent decades, Mormon history has transitioned from denominational to bibliographic to interpretive and contextual; and although I am as much a child of my generation as any child of any prior generation, I favor what is happening now in Mormon history. Scholars are attempting to situate Mormonism within relevant contextual traditions and to ask broad interpretive questions.

Such a model is more plural than it may appear at first blush. There is wide latitude even within this general emphasis on context and interpretation. Where Terryl Givens's illuminating *When Souls Had Wings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) speaks to the traditions of intellectual history/history of ideas in his con-

sideration of human preexistence, *Sacred Borders* declares its allegiance primarily to historians of American religion. Feminists and demographers and sociologists and literary theoreticians and many others may approach Mormonism contextually and interpretively, writing from their own core intellectual tradition. Each school or tradition will and should be represented in our explorations of the contexts and meanings of Mormon belief and experience.

Holland's implicit and my explicit claims for the importance of contextual, interpretive Mormon history should elicit objections from many consumers of Mormon-themed publications. Mormon history has benefited greatly from the assiduous work of non-Ph.D. historians sometimes termed (with intermittent and sometimes defensive derision) "amateur" or "hobbyist" or "devotional." But contextual and interpretive history requires the kinds of painstakingly obtained primary data that only graduate students and non-Ph.D. historians seem willing to unearth. The identification and collation of primary data are crucial, and Mormon history is richer for the on-going participation of non-Ph.D. historians.

Of course, questions about who should be writing Mormon history are themselves questions of canon. Whose voice will be heard? What standards will regulate access to the accepted corpus of Mormon history? What is a credential? What do we make of chemists and mathematicians and linguists and attorneys who seek to contribute both in the more traditional and in the more current methods of Mormon history? On the other hand, contextual, interpretive history requires a substantial burden of review of material that may be intrinsically uninteresting to the historian whose inquiry is driven by a love for and fascination with the Mormon traditions. Presbyterialist politics and sectarian controversies over liturgy may command little direct interest for many Mormon readers. I hope that a useful model will develop wherein Ph.D. historians do their laborious work on context/interpretation and non-Ph.D. historians continue their laborious work in Mormonism's complex and abundant primary sources. This seems to me a dynamic symbiosis in which the boundaries between the two sets of participants can remain fruitfully porous.

Well beyond Mormonism proper, Holland's work speaks to a

generational transition within academic history. The older model of professional history required extensive use of relatively inaccessible archives. A professional life's work might culminate in an accurate synthesis of materials discovered and collated over decades. The recent explosion of information access is shifting that landscape. Sources once available only on a funded research sabbatical are now a few keystrokes away from anyone with a live internet connection. Holland confesses, in an appendix (219–20), his use of electronic scans of primary texts in his research. To a younger audience, this appendix will seem quite strange, if not utterly idiosyncratic. Why would he not have used scans from Google or other sources in his research? But the canons of professional history are themselves undergoing dramatic change, and Holland's book stands self-consciously in the midst of this change.

The former canonical approach of reviewing physical copies of old texts has helped to define how historians practice their craft. There may be no change in the actual content when a document is viewed electronically, but it is approaching the "text" in a different, more convenient way, one that might threaten the traditional power of the scholar. Almost any reader can now check obscure primary sources within moments. There is a risk that the work of history will suffer through the acontextualization that such ready access to texts provides. Texts may come to represent "hits" in a contextless "query." Having found a text in an archive or historical society used to mean an inevitable conversation with the archivist, the occasional serendipitous discovery of a related document. The advantage of the older system is that the professional scholar has spent a decade in the sources and can quickly and appropriately contextualize documents in a way that a less contextual scholar may not appreciate. On the other hand, patterns in word usage may appear through electronic searches, contexts unconstrained by the vagaries of physical archiving. What were originally considered to be unique textual phenomena may prove to reflect much broader currents. Here again, I believe that a mixed model will be required, and Holland's book proves an excellent example of the hybridity characteristic of the modern practice of history.

By way of brief summary, David F. Holland's *Sacred Borders* is a balanced, engaging exploration of the state of the biblical canon

in American history. It is an important advance in our understanding of Mormonism and a key entry in the expanding world of the interpretive, contextual school of Mormon studies. More broadly, the book calls us to consider questions of canon well beyond just the sacred anthology we call Bible.

#### Note

1. Hugh B. Brown, *Profile of a Prophet* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1955).

## Mormons, Southerners, and American Assimilation

Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 264 pp. Notes, index. Hardcover: \$29.95. ISBN 13: 978-0-19-974002-4

*Reviewed by Mark Brown*

Patrick Mason has recently been named to the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont University. He was granted a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame; and his dissertation, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Mob," examined violence against religious minorities and outsiders in the post-bellum American South. This book builds upon that research, and it also expands the narrative to include the legal, theological, and cultural objections to Mormonism in the Old Confederacy in the generation following the Civil War and Reconstruction. The book focuses primarily on the causes and patterns of violence against Mormons but also includes a chapter that treats problems encountered by other religious minorities.

While Mormonism is often thought to be a uniquely American faith, *The Mormon Menace* demonstrates conclusively, repeatedly, and in great detail just how offensive the Latter-day Saint faith was to Americans in the late nineteenth century, especially to southern Americans. A Southern Baptist official said: "It [Mormonism] incarnates every unclean beast of lust, guile, falsehood,



murder, despotism, and spiritual wickedness" (103). This book situates the American response to Mormonism in the aftermath of the Civil War and illuminates how residents of Dixie and Deseret, though separated by thousands of miles, influenced the way Americans saw themselves. This is not so much a Mormon history as an American history. It explores questions of religious freedom, vigilantism, federalism, and the role of the state in defining marriage and regulating sexual behavior.

Although the description of violence might be discomfiting to many readers, it is impossible to tell the story of Mormonism's encounter with the post-bellum South without it. The first two chapters relate the harrowing details of the murder of Elder Joseph Standing at Varnell's Station, Georgia, and the murders of Elders William Berry and John Gibbs, along with a local member, Martin Conder, at Cane Creek, Tennessee. Local newspapers printed articles encouraging and justifying the violence. Mason explores the causes of the murders against the backdrop of polygamy and the particular phenomenon of Southern honor, whereby men are bound to defend the sanctity of the Christian home and the chastity of white women:

In the nineteenth century, honor was a defining concept for most Americans, holding particular sway in the South and West. Honor was a socially constructed characteristic in which the collective estimation of the community dictated the social reputation of each individual. . . . When a man's honor was impugned, it was imperative that he confront the aggressor in order to save face. . . . In serious cases, violence against the offender was often the only way to restore lost honor. . . . No insult to a man's honor was more egregious, and thus more deserving of a violent response, than a serious imputation on the character of a close female relative. . . . The violent enforcement of honor was thus a powerful means of social control in which both southern law and custom asserted that the family, particularly the wife and her sexuality, was the exclusive preserve of the male head of household (5).

Itinerant LDS missionaries came into this milieu spreading a religion that practiced plural marriage and taught a doctrine of gathering. When people converted, they often went west; and when a woman or girl of marrying age joined the Restoration and left her home, her male relatives were duty-bound to save her from a fate worse than death. The sexual insecurity of southern

men was already in play after the Emancipation, in the form of the specter of the recently freed male African slave:

One result of emancipation was that blacks were free to wander the countryside at will, a fearful image for many white men who projected their own longtime sexual abuses of black women onto their black counterparts. This translated into largely irrational fears that political liberty for blacks would also lead to unrestrained sexual liberty, which meant that attacks on white women were imminent and must be stopped at all costs. Whites characterized blacks in various ways, but one of the common tropes was that they were uncivilized, savage brutes who would, without proper controls, descend into orgies of rape and murder, targeting in particular the innocent white women they lusted after. . . . Especially in the late 1880s and 1890s lynching became a primary means of controlling this “black beast rapist” and preventing him from carrying out his malevolent designs. (66–67)

Mormon missionaries without purse or scrip were a close second in these nightmares. Mason demonstrates how the charges of licentiousness and illicit sexual behavior that were often made against the elders served to bring hatred and violence upon them, even though the charges were without merit.

In later chapters we read about the theological objections to Mormons, and some of those objections are still current. It is interesting to see how the questions of whether America is a Christian nation and exactly what that means are still being answered. Mason gives insight into the way that the principle of federalism was understood by both Mormons and Southerners. Mormons thought the practice of plural marriage should be an issue best left to the individual states. Southerners, who a decade or so previously had ostensibly gone to war over the principle of states’ rights, decided that the federal government wasn’t so bad after all and succeeded in influencing the government to place restrictions upon the way Mormons practiced their faith. Mormons had to give up plural marriage and theodemocracy in order to become fully American; Southerners had to give up vigilantism and Jim Crow. The way the people of Old Confederacy approached Mormonism helped them to integrate back into citizenship in the new United States.

The chapter on other religious minorities is helpful because it looks at religious persecution without considering Mormons. The

persecution of black Christians, Jews, and Catholics provides insight into the violence that accompanied America's attempts at religious pluralism. It is especially interesting to learn that more Catholics were lynched in the South than any other group except black Christians—more than Mormons and Jews combined. However, the victims were Italians and Mexicans who, we can assume, were at least nominally Catholic, and their murderers were Irish Catholics. In these cases, at least, ethnicity and race appear to be more salient than religion, so the violence doesn't technically qualify as religious persecution.

A review would be incomplete without mentioning that the book is a pleasure to read. Mason has command of facts and details but nonetheless manages to keep the narrative moving without getting bogged down in minutiae. Readers are reminded that the skirmishes over religious freedom and individual rights are not settled and really never have been. In addition, we also see fascinating hints at several other avenues of fruitful research that lie beyond the scope of this book, including the way that the experiences of missionaries in the Southern States Mission shaped the way the Church related to the rest of the United States in later years, the influence of Southern converts on the Utah church, and the way young men's mission experience informed their leadership in later years when they served in the leading quorums of the Church.

## **Can Mormonism Have a Systematic Theology?**

Charles R. Harrell. *"This Is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011. xii, 583 pp., index, chapter endnotes. \$34.95. ISBN 1589581032

*Reviewed by Matthew Bowman*

This is a wide-ranging and detailed book, consisting of an extensive examination of a wide variety of topics in Mormon theology from the time of scripture to the present. Harrell announces his methodology in the first chapter: "Theology: A Divine-Human Enterprise." He wants to examine "how LDS doctrines taught to-

day were understood in early Mormonism and even earlier Biblical times” (12). His overall argument is that Mormon doctrine changes. This may seem a rather unexceptional point, but Harrell’s work is methodical, exhaustive, and not infrequently, impressive simply for its scope.

But though his effort is to be respected, one at times gets the sense that Harrell may have attempted to do too much. The book has the sort of carefully wooden structure of a work struggling to wrap its arms around the entirety of a hugely sprawling and messy subject. It is organized by topic—some obvious, like “Atonement,” some fuzzier, like “The Gospel Plan,” which includes within it everything from ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood to the notion of making one’s calling and election sure. Harrell chops each topic up into chronological subcategories: the Old Testament, the New Testament, American Protestantism at the time of early Mormonism, “early Mormonism” (into which Harrell categorizes the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants), “Nauvoo Mormonism” (in which Harrell includes the Book of Abraham), and “present day Mormonism.” In each subcategory Harrell discusses whatever teachings or material is relevant to the topic. In some cases, this commentary is extensive; in others, Harrell restricts himself to a sentence or two, saying, for instance, “There are no prophecies in the New Testament that can be reasonably construed as references to Joseph Smith,” followed by a scant handful of sentences about a few passages that enthusiastic Mormons have understood as references to Smith (13).

The book is probably most useful as a reference tool, a handy encyclopedia for quickly assessing the key notions about, say, “Satan” or “the fall and nature of humanity,” or “the preexistence” in the Kirtland period or contemporary Mormonism. Harrell’s citations will be useful for other scholars seeking to get a quick sense of the primary sources, and his thumbnail sketches—all the space, likely, which such an expansive effort allowed—raise a number of questions they might pursue.

But the book unfortunately suffers from a title that’s doubly a misnomer. Perhaps unintentionally, Harrell’s premises raise interesting questions about what “doctrine” may be. He does not sketch out epistemological issues with any great depth; but his very premise—that people Mormons regard as authorities be-

lieved different things at different times—carries with it theological implications about the nature of doctrine and belief that he never quite explores fully. Harrell is largely content to disrupt what we think we know rather than sketching out a new way of understanding Mormonism. Second, though the book claims to illustrate the “development” of ideas, the firm lines of Harrell’s structure inhibit the natural growth of that sort of argument and complicate its status as a true work of history. Harrell seems overwhelmed by his own ambitions.

So the question follows: What precisely does Harrell understand himself to be doing: theology or history? Harrell’s first chapter, “Theology: A Divine-Human Enterprise,” makes explicit a theological argument for how we should best understand Mormonism. He argues, basically, that all theology can be broken down along an axis whose poles he labels “liberal” and “conservative.” According to Harrell, conservatives believe in scriptural inerrancy and prophetic infallibility and hence believe that all doctrine is “uniform”: pristine, eternal, and, most of all, taught unchangingly from the mouths and pens of God’s representatives from Adam and Moses on down to Neil L. Andersen. On the other hand, liberals can still be “faithful” but may see evidence of “cultural conditioning” or “inconsistencies” in these sources of authority and hence are more comfortable with ambiguity (3–4).

To make this case, Harrell relies very heavily on an odd assortment of writers—and on them heavily. Very heavily. Each paragraph seems to introduce a new name, always introduced as “Protestant scholar” or “LDS theologian” or “Catholic thinker,” a tic which grows slightly annoying and only emphasizes the extent to which Harrell appears more or less ignorant of the history of theology. He seems to see little amiss in citing a contemporary Anglican and a medieval Catholic and a nineteenth-century Protestant Evangelical to make the same point. This is, oddly enough, a scholarly version of the prooftexting Harrell decries in his “conservatives.”

In that first chapter, for instance, he leaps from the analytic Mormon theologian Blake Ostler to the radical Catholic Hans Küng to the Protestant scholar and founder of “canonical criticism” Brevard Childs, to (blink) Benjamin Warfield, the late-nineteenth-century Princeton professor who did the intellectual

spadework behind the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. All of them are described as advocates of the “creative coparticipation” (4) of God and humans in scripture. This may be true to a very superficial extent, but the vast and yawning gulfs between, say, Ostler and Warfield on the question illustrate how facile Harrell’s simple dichotomy is.

Further, if Harrell does understand himself to be making theological arguments, his approach seems strange, particularly when he deals with scripture. His analysis of the Bible is entirely dependent upon the historical-critical method, which seeks to interpret these texts as historical documents reflecting the interests and preoccupations of their presumed authors. Such a reading concludes, for instance, that “Christians since New Testament times have traditionally held that Isaiah 53 is a direct reference to Christ’s suffering. Scholars, however, are less sanguine” (278). Isaiah 53 is one of the prophet’s “servant songs,” a poem describing a figure who suffers pain and abuse but who is, nonetheless, a chosen messenger of God. While Christians see prophecy in this figure, historical-critical scholars prefer to read in it and the other servant songs allegories that are representative of Israelite culture around the time of the Exile: Isaiah himself, for instance, or the nation of Israel suffering under foreign invasion. Thus, Harrell argues that it would be anachronistic to the author of that particular section of Isaiah to connect such suffering to redemption from sin.

This is an entirely respectable scholarly argument and one on which Harrell cites “Jesuit professor of Christology Gerard O’Collins” and “Anglican theologian N. T. Wright.” They are undoubtedly learned and pious men; but critically, the argument in question is not theological. The biblical text seen through the lens of historical critical scholarship is not necessarily the same text—nor even relevant—to the biblical text seen through the lens of theology. It is thus unclear what sort of relevance Harrell believes his recapitulation of the work of scholars of the higher criticism on topics like priesthood and atonement in the Bible should have to Mormon theology. Put another way, I am unclear as to what Harrell would like us to do: Simply acknowledge that “Gee, what Isaiah seems to say about the Messiah sure isn’t what Samuel Hopkins or Joseph Smith or Harold B. Lee thought he said”? This

conclusion would require a radical revision of the ways Mormons use their canon, and it's not clear that Mormons should, in fact, be reading scripture in the same ways that critical scholars do. Had Harrell read more of Brevard Childs (or Walter Brueggemann, another scholar whom he cites, or say, Hans Frei), the difference between historical critical work on scripture and theological work that takes historical criticism into account, like Childs's own canonical criticism, might have been better developed here and a greater sense of thematic continuity preserved.

But perhaps Harrell does not understand himself to be doing theology but simply intellectual history, tracing the arc of thought on such diverse topics as "priesthood" and "Jesus Christ" and "the creation" and "salvation for the dead" and a dozen and a half others from the Hebrew scriptures to contemporary Mormonism. Put that way, such a summary seems magnificently ponderous; and indeed, perhaps the only thing Harrell can be faulted for here is biting off more than he can chew.

With such a massive task, an author could go either of two ways: first, he or she could make a work heavily thematic, arguing something specific about the nature of theological change, or using, as many systematic theologies do, a particular idea or concept as a governing structure. Second, he or she could avoid such broad arguments and focus instead on particulars, leaving out any number of examples and producing a work that reads like a reference book or encyclopedia rather than a monograph. This is the route that Harrell has taken; and I believe, unfortunately, it's the weaker of the two choices.

He claims in his title to be studying the "development" of Mormon theology, but there's very little sense of continuity, evolution, or change over time in any of his treatments. Little connection is drawn between his periods; indeed, Harrell tends to emphasize contrast rather than continuity. While it is quite clear that Mormon doctrine (if Harrell's examination of the Bible can be called "Mormon doctrine") has changed over time, we are not given any real reasons why, or what such change might tell us about Mormonism in total. And because the book covers such a vast expanse of time and theme, Harrell, by necessity, cannot spend more than a few hundred words in any given section. The reader might spend seven or eight minutes examining the four

paragraphs that cover the concept of “foreordination” in the Bible and the eight that cover it in nineteenth-century American Christianity, including Mormonism, and be left with the vague sense that there must have been more to it than this. And indeed, there is.

Harrell’s book is representative of a long stream of works in Mormon theology. Deep attention here is paid to the familiar voices: Joseph Smith, Orson and Parley Pratt, James E. Talmage, and Bruce R. McConkie. Mormonism is contextualized in a rather oversimplified, early nineteenth-century American evangelicalism. The language of theology is used haphazardly by authors as well as by those Mormon thinkers they study. There is little effort to systematize Mormon doctrine or to relate its changes to deeper developments in Mormon culture, American culture, or to the context of American Christianity more generally in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The value of this sort of work should not be downplayed, and I want to stress that I believe Harrell’s work will be useful in any number of ways to scholars of the future. But Mormon historiography is changing, and Harrell’s work is monumental for reasons other than those which now seem most pressing.

## Inside the “Loyal Opposition”

Philip Lindholm, ed. *Latter-day Dissent: At the Crossroads of Intellectual Inquiry and Ecclesiastical Authority*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011. 236 pp. Notes, index. Paperback: \$24.95. ISBN: 1589581288

*Reviewed by Stephen McIntyre*

Few books convey the pain and poignancy of Mormon ecclesiastical discipline as compellingly as *Latter-day Dissent: At the Crossroads of Intellectual Inquiry and Ecclesiastical Authority*, a newly published paperback from Greg Kofford Books. The volume is the product of editor Philip Lindholm’s conversations with several prominent Mormons whose writings and speeches have provoked the ire of the LDS Church. While these dissidents’ recollections and reflec-



tions take center stage in *Latter-day Dissent*, Lindholm uses their stories to advance a reinterpretation of Mormon intellectual history. In his telling, opposing intellectual traditions—one advocated by the LDS hierarchy, the other by lay scholars and activists—arose during the latter half of the twentieth century. The irreconcilability of these philosophies led to the purge of the 1990s, when the LDS Church began disciplining the most outspoken constituents of its “loyal opposition.”<sup>1</sup> Though Lindholm expresses hope that the future will bring greater tolerance of dissenting voices, his interviews provide little basis for optimism.

Philip Lindholm is probably not a household name among even the savviest of Mormon readers. The holder of a doctorate in philosophical theology from Oxford, Lindholm has an impressive (and eclectic) resume. He has produced documentaries for the BBC, studied acting, and contributed to the books *Metallica and Philosophy* and *Poker and Philosophy*. He has presented on Mormonism at the Sunstone Symposium and at Cambridge University. Lindholm himself is not a Mormon, but LDS readers may not pick up on this. The ease with which he converses on Mormon topics reflects a deep familiarity with Mormon theology, thought, and culture.

*Latter-day Dissent* is a collection of interviews that Lindholm conducted with several outspoken Mormons who have undergone ecclesiastical discipline. The book’s primary subjects are the “September Six”—the group of feminists and intellectuals whom the LDS Church excommunicated or disfellowshipped in September 1993. The book contains lengthy discussions with five September Six alumni: Lynn Kanavel Whitesides, Paul James Toscano, Maxine Hanks, Lavina Fielding Anderson, and D. Michael Quinn. Avraham Gileadi, the lone September Six excommunicant to formally return to the fold, declined Lindholm’s interview request. Lindholm also sat down with Janice Allred, Margaret Toscano, and Thomas Murphy, each of whom was disciplined—or, in Murphy’s case, threatened with discipline—subsequent to September 1993. The volume concludes with a dialogue between Lindholm and Donald Jessee, a former bishop, stake president, mission president, and a “former employee” of the Church’s Public Affairs Department. (Lindholm was referred to Jessee after sev-

eral interview requests with General Authorities were denied.) Each interview took place in 2003 or 2004.

Lindholm's stated purpose in conducting and publishing the interviews is to "collect [the dissidents'] ongoing stories, compare their reflections, and assess the implications" (ix). To facilitate this goal, each chapter is divided into topical sections ("Excommunication," "Reflection," and "Belief and Doctrine," to name a few), most of which are consistent from interview to interview. Lindholm repeats a number of questions across chapters as well. This organizational and substantive consistency highlights both striking variance and unexpected similarity in the interviewees' experiences. While Paul Toscano, Maxine Hanks, and Lavina Fielding Anderson have pursued markedly different religious paths since September 1993—Toscano confides that he has "lost [his] faith," Hanks recounts her journey to Gnosticism, and Anderson poignantly describes serving as "permanent substitute organist" in her local ward's Relief Society (43, 61, 78–79, 96)—each received a profound spiritual witness prior to being excommunicated. In "what seemed like a remnant of a dream," Toscano was visited by four heavenly messengers, who informed him that he would be excommunicated; he was summoned to a Church court that very day (26). A "divine feminine figure" appeared to Hanks in a series of dreams in 1993; though Hanks "saw what was coming and longed to avoid it," she knew her excommunication would serve a purpose (61–62). In the spring of 1993, Anderson received "a very clear answer" to prayer: that she would be excommunicated in September, and that "it would be 'some time' before [she] would be reinstated" (90). The spiritual fortitude with which the dissenters approached and coped with their disciplinary proceedings is one of *Latter-day Dissent's* major themes.

Another conspicuous—and unnerving—parallel between chapters is the sobering terms with which the interviewees describe the disciplinary process. Thomas Murphy, whose stake president abruptly halted disciplinary proceedings when they began to attract media attention, states that facing Church discipline "hurt a lot more than I ever thought it would. I really felt rejected. . . . Excommunication is a more powerful weapon than I ever realized" (201). Paul Toscano similarly acknowledges that "the pain of . . . excommunication did turn out to be greater, different, and

prolonged, and it seeped into me more deeply than I thought it would have. Excommunication is terrifying” (48). Margaret Toscano likens her excommunication to physical punishment: “What they did to me in the disciplinary council was violent” (176). (Elsewhere in her interview, she states, perhaps inadvertently, that she knew she was going to be “executed” [168].) Though necessarily one-sided—as Donald Jessee reminds us, because the LDS Church does not publicly comment on individual disciplinary actions (215)—the interviewees’ accounts effectively communicate the tragedy of ecclesiastical discipline. Regardless of how one feels about the particular excommunications at issue in *Latter-day Dissent*, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Church discipline should be approached with sobriety, executed with an eye toward compassion and fairness, and reserved for extraordinary circumstances.

As enlightening as these conversations are, *Latter-day Dissent* is not merely a series of interview transcripts. Lindholm proposes a reinterpretation of twentieth-century Mormon intellectual history and portrays his subjects as living proof of his thesis. In his introduction, Lindholm posits that beginning in the mid-twentieth century, two divergent ideological currents arose in Mormonism: the “dialogical movement” and “correlational movement.” Lindholm traces the dialogical movement to the advent of the New Mormon History. As Fawn Brodie, Juanita Brooks, Sterling McMurrin, Brigham D. Madsen, and other scholars introduced academic training and rigor to the study of Mormonism, “an alternative perspective rooted in a spirit of free inquiry” began to take hold in LDS thought (xiii). The correlational movement was the LDS Church’s institutional response to this trend. The Church established a Correlation Committee in 1961 to standardize Church teachings and programs; and by 1987, Correlation Department approval was required for all Church publications. During these decades, the Church took action to limit the influence of LDS intellectuals, including removing Leonard J. Arrington (a professional scholar) from his position as official Church Historian in 1981.<sup>2</sup> In the face of institutional antagonism from the 1960s onward, “frustrated scholars and intellectuals . . . evolved into a group with values antithetical to those of correlation” (xiv). The establishment of *Dialogue* (1965) and *Sunstone* (1974) during this

period provided organized forums for uncorrelated Mormon thought. According to Lindholm, the growing conflict between the correlational and dialogical movements culminated in the discipline of the September Six.

The problem with the dialogical movement, however, was not simply its emphasis on free inquiry and academic rigor. The main problem was its publicity. The movement's constituents did not merely hold unorthodox opinions, but shared (even advocated) them openly in magazines and academic journals, and at symposia and other gatherings. This leads to Lindholm's central thesis in *Latter-day Dissent: The September Six* and other dissidents "were not expelled for having personal concerns or scholarly disagreements, but for sharing them in public" (xiv). LDS leaders' insistence that those with alternative views keep quiet or face official discipline, he says, has resulted in an "ideological vacuum" within the institutional Church, in which the presence of diverse and competing views is not even acknowledged (xxiii).

And Lindholm's interviews, in large measure, support this proposition.<sup>3</sup> Janice Allred's excommunication provides a case in point. In 1992, the Provo mother of nine presented a paper, "Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother," at the Sunstone Symposium. Shortly thereafter, Allred's stake president called her into his office and informed her that, as a result of the speech, Church headquarters had requested that he investigate her. After several more meetings, he instructed her to not publish the paper. Though Allred had no immediate plans to publish it, she said she would notify him if she later chose to do so. When she accepted an offer in early 1994 to publish the paper in *Dialogue*, she planned to notify her stake president just prior to its release; but as it happened, he caught wind of the pending publication before she contacted him. The stake president demanded that she withdraw the article; she refused, and her bishop scheduled a disciplinary council in response. At the Church court, the bishop threatened to excommunicate Allred unless she agreed not to publish a more recent presentation she had given on prophetic fallibility. When she refused, he placed her on formal probation.

Throughout the disciplinary process, Allred kept in contact with the press, doing several radio and television interviews. "The publicity, in and of itself," she says, "became an issue" (140).

Her priesthood leaders became “increasingly upset” with Allred’s public statements and continued presentations (she participated at both the Sunstone Symposium and Counterpoint Conference in 1994), culminating in the scheduling of a second disciplinary council (142–43). This proceeding again centered on Allred’s unwillingness to abide by her bishop’s and stake president’s gag order: In refusing to submit her speeches and writings for prior approval, her priesthood leaders reasoned, she had committed apostasy—even though Allred’s case did not clearly fit within the definition of “apostasy” then mandated by the *General Handbook of Instructions* (143–44).<sup>4</sup> The bishop excommunicated Allred, just before Mother’s Day 1995.

For his part, former Church spokesperson Donald Jessee does little to controvert Lindholm’s argument. If anything, he endorses it—repeatedly. In the book’s final chapter, Jessee emphasizes that Church members “can think anything they want, and . . . believe anything they want, so long as they keep it to themselves” (225); that members may “speculate all [they] want on any issue or topic as long as [they] keep to [themselves] those matters that are not in harmony with truth and the Church and its teachings” (219); and that it “violates the teachings of the Church” to publicly teach or philosophize about theological issues about which “both the prophets and the scriptures are silent,” such as the doctrine of Mother in Heaven (218). While Jessee is reticent when asked about specific cases, he makes little effort to mask his contempt for dissenters. To him, Church critics are morally suspect individuals whose public disagreement with the Church “lead[s] members astray and destroy[s] faith in God” (218). Whereas many of Lindholm’s interviewees maintain that ecclesiastical discipline is justified only in cases of serious crime or abuse, if at all (e.g., 16, 39, 62, 151). Jessee speaks of contradicting the Church in the same breath as murder, sexual sin, crime, abortion, and idol worship (213–14, 215, 219). Jessee personifies the hostility that *Latter-day Dissent*’s other subjects ascribe to the LDS Church itself.

Brother Jessee’s over-the-top rhetoric makes him an easy target—and something of a straw man. Although the chapter begins with a disclaimer that Jessee does “not speak for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on any issues,”<sup>5</sup> as the Church’s sole defender in *Latter-day Dissent*, it is tempting to impute his

rigid views to that institution. Lindholm himself succumbs to this trap, fallaciously (and a bit carelessly) equating Jessee with “the Church” in the introduction (x, xxiii). That said, scholars like Lindholm face a dilemma in approaching the September Six and similarly sensitive topics: so long as LDS Church leaders refuse to speak out in an official capacity, their scholarship remains vulnerable to the criticism of being “one-sided.” In declining to comment, General Authorities pass the buck; they avoid taking responsibility for the Church’s actions, while reserving the prerogative of disclaiming those who, like Jessee, undertake the (sometimes unenviable) task of defending the Church’s past. No, Jessee does not officially represent the Church, but it is difficult to imagine a General Authority being any more willing to acknowledge ecclesiastical error in the September Six trials.<sup>6</sup> Lindholm deserves credit for including an apologetic foil to his unorthodox subjects.

*Latter-day Dissent* makes an invaluable contribution to the literature on dissent in Mormonism. The volume is not as scholarly as previous works,<sup>7</sup> but it showcases, with minimal editorializing, the stories of some of the most prominent Mormon dissidents of the past two decades. Lindholm is a skilled interviewer, delicately prompting his subjects to relive difficult experiences while respectfully interjecting challenging and thought-provoking questions. That at least one of Lindholm’s subjects has at times expressed reluctance to comment on his excommunication heightens *Latter-day Dissent’s* value.<sup>8</sup>

The book’s major shortcoming is that it already feels dated. Whereas the September Six excommunications occurred nearly two decades ago, Lindholm conducted most of his interviews at the ten-year anniversary. Lindholm leaves his readers wondering how his subjects would reflect on their disciplinary proceedings today. And except for a brief acknowledgement of the rise of Mormon-themed blogs and the increased acceptance of Mormon studies within the academy (xxiii–xxiv), *Latter-day Dissent* does little to situate controversies involving intellectual inquiry and dissent in the context of present-day Mormonism.

If the correlational and dialogical movements culminated in the crackdown of the late twentieth century, how will intellectual inquiry and religious dissent fare in twentieth-first-century Mor-

monism? Over the past decade, the Church has taken a more conciliatory tone toward professional Mormon academics; one of its official historians even co-authored (with a BYU professor and a headquarters Historical Department employee) a serious scholarly work on the Mountain Meadows Massacre.<sup>9</sup> And yet, while we have not seen the type of centrally orchestrated, en masse excommunications that occurred in September 1993, intermittent controversies involving outspoken Mormons underscore the LDS Church's continued ambivalence toward its "loyal opposition."<sup>10</sup> The Church and the academy may very well be at a "crossroads"; perhaps the Church really is becoming reconciled with "the vibrant scholarship being produced within its own walls" (xxiv). But then, as Lindholm concedes—and as his interview with Donald Jessee portends—"Perhaps not" (xxv).

### Notes

1. At the August 1993 Sunstone Symposium, Levi Peterson presented a paper entitled "The Art of Dissenting among the Mormons," in which he asserted that an "unorganized loyal opposition has always existed within the Mormon church." These "friendly dissenter[s]," Peterson explained, "provid[e] an inside, corrective criticism without which an organization becomes spiritually inert." Levi S. Peterson, "The Art of Dissenting among the Mormons," *Sunstone*, February 1994, 33, 37. The "September Six" crackdown ensued the following month. At October general conference the next month, Apostle James E. Faust stated: "In some legislative assemblies of the world, there are some groups termed the 'loyal opposition.' I find no such principle in the gospel of Jesus Christ." James E. Faust, "Keeping Covenants and Honoring the Priesthood," *Ensign*, November 1993, <http://lds.org/general-conference/1993/10/keeping-covenants-and-honoring-the-priesthood> (accessed June 30, 2011).

2. For more on Arrington's tenure as Church Historian, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

3. Paul Toscano may be the exception. Both he and his wife Margaret admit that his excommunication probably owed more to the flippancy, irreverence, and insults that he directed at his priesthood leaders than to his scholarship (23, 26, 160–61).

4. Under the 1989 edition of the *General Handbook of Instructions*, the following acts constituted apostasy: "(1) repeatedly act[ing] in clear, open, and deliberate public opposition to the Church or its leaders; (2)

persist[ing] in teaching as Church doctrine information that is not Church doctrine after being corrected by their bishops or higher authority; or (3) continu[ing] to follow the teachings of apostate cults (such as those that advocate plural marriage) after being corrected by their bishops or higher authority.” Quoted by Faust, “Keeping Covenants and Honoring the Priesthood.”

Allred states that she “never claimed to be giving official Church doctrine” (142); and although she did publicly take on the issue of prophetic fallibility, one would not ordinarily consider public disagreement to constitute “clear, open, and deliberate public opposition.” But then, Church leaders have seldom drawn a distinction between disagreement and disloyalty. As Apostle M. Russell Ballard stated in 1999, “One is either for the kingdom of God and stands in defense of God’s prophets and apostles, or one stands opposed.” M. Russell Ballard, “Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers,” *Ensign*, November 1999, <http://lds.org/general-conference/1999/10/beware-of-false-prophets-and-false-teachers> (accessed June 30, 2011).

5. The disclaimer states in full: “The statements that follow are my own opinions. I am not speaking for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on any issues, including the issues below. Only the Church president speaks for the Church” (209).

6. In a rare example of a General Authority discussing the September Six, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told Helen Whitney, director of the PBS documentary *The Mormons*, that “we don’t discipline people in this church for very much. In a church of over 12 million people, I keep hearing about the September Six.” He explained that the Church has historically been “very, very generous”; but when members cross certain lines—“chief among these is the issue of advocating against the church”—the Church “cannot retain its identity and still allow that.” “The Mormons,” Interviews: Jeffrey Holland, <http://www.pbs.org/mormons/interviews/holland.html> (accessed June 13, 2011).

7. To cite but one example, Bryan Waterman and Brian Kagel’s *The Lord’s University: Freedom and Authority at BYU* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998) provides a meticulously researched examination of the events and controversies surrounding the 1990s crackdowns.

8. Both John Dehlin and John Larsen, producers of the “Mormon Stories” and “Mormon Expression” podcasts, respectively, have indicated that D. Michael Quinn has declined their interview requests. “186–187: Mormon Stories Broadcasts Live with John Larsen and You!”, <http://mormonstories.org/?p=1109> (accessed June 13, 2011).

9. Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard, *Mas-*



*sacre at Mountain Meadow: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Richard E. Turley is the LDS Church's Assistant Church Historian.

10. Former LDS Institute teacher Grant Palmer was disfellowshipped in 2004 for publishing *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002). In 2008, Peter and Mary Danzig, both members of the Orchestra at Temple Square, resigned their membership in the Church after Peter was threatened with excommunication for publicly criticizing the Church's stance on homosexuality. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Fallout from Debate over Gays Leads Musician to Leave LDS Church," *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 24, 2008, <http://archive.slttrib.com/article.php?id=8345693&itype=NGPSID> (accessed June 13, 2011).

## A Missionary Model Misapplied

Reid L. Nielson. *Early Mormon Missionary Activities in Japan, 1901–1924*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010, 214 pp. Photographs, endnotes, bibliography, and index. Paperback: \$29.95. ISBN: 978–0–87480–989–3

*Reviewed by Andrew R. Hall*

Reid L. Nielson, the managing director of the LDS Church History Department, takes as his topic a relatively small and limited chapter in early twentieth-century Mormon history but uses it to tell a larger story that goes beyond Mormon studies. From the time the Japanese Mission opened in 1901 until its closure in 1924, the number of missionaries never rose above 1 percent of the total LDS missionary force, and their results were meager. Yet in one short book, Nielson not only fully analyzes the Mormon efforts in Japan but also deftly describes the range of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American Mormon views of Asians, analyzes the nature of worldwide Mormon missionary efforts, and places those efforts within the context of the larger Christian milieu.

The LDS Japanese Mission was active for only twenty-three years, with a total of fewer than ninety missionaries sent over from the United States. They managed to baptize 166 Japanese converts, but few remained in the faith community for long; and by

1924, there were only a dozen or so active churchgoers. The resumption of Mormon missionary work after World War II nearly had to begin from square one.

The heart of Nielson's work is his comparison of late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American Protestant and Mormon missionary efforts. Latter-day Saint evangelists differed from Protestants in both the scale and methods of their activities in East Asia. Protestants, then at the heyday of their missionary efforts, focused their efforts on the largely non-Christian areas of East Asia and the Levant. Mormon General Authorities, on the other hand, focused their work on North America and Europe, where they sent nearly 90 percent of their missionaries, while never assigning more than 1 percent of their missionaries to East Asia. Nine to 10 percent of Mormon missionaries were sent to the Pacific Islands, while Latin America, like East Asia, remained below 1 percent throughout the early decades of the twentieth century.

By the late nineteenth century, Mormonism had developed a unique method of evangelism, which Neilson calls the "Euro-American Mormon missionary model." The model featured the use of amateur, short-term missionaries who lived on the charity of those they met in the field. They spent the majority of their time doing personal contacting, including distributing religious literature (tracting) and holding street meetings. They spent relatively little time providing education or social welfare for those they sought to teach. American Protestant missionaries, in contrast, tended to be long-term, highly educated, salaried professionals. They spent much of their time opening and running schools, hospitals, and orphanages, relegating direct evangelical messages to a secondary emphasis in their work.

Christian missionaries had their greatest success in Japan in the 1870s and 1880s, when Japan had just opened itself to the West, and the Japanese were especially impressed by the education and social welfare offered by the Western missionaries. In the 1890s, however, a wave of Japanese nationalism and distrust of foreign religions considerably slowed the evangelical work. The LDS missionaries arrived in 1901, during this fallow period. Despite benefiting from the work of others who had introduced the Japanese to Christianity and provided translations of the Bible,

the Mormons converted the Japanese at a significantly slower rate than the various American Protestant sects, even those who sent far fewer missionaries. Nielson attributes the poor results to the Mormons' inability to adjust the Euro-American Mormon missionary model to conditions in Japan.

In 1924 President Heber J. Grant, who had opened the mission as an apostle twenty-three years earlier, announced the decision to close the mission. A First Presidency announcement which ran in the *Deseret News* stated that the decision was made, "in consideration of existing conditions in Japan and because of the almost negligible results of missionary effort in that country since the mission was opened" (143). Nielson tries to go beyond that explanation by evaluating why there were "negligible results." He places the blame squarely on the Mormons' inappropriate application of the Euro-American missionary model, rather than on outside forces or the receptivity of the Japanese, as some participants and later observers have speculated. Nielson finds that, besides the unwillingness to take on educational and social work, the Church leaders failed to find explanations for their relative lack of success and therefore did not try to understand Japanese culture, adapt their message to the Japanese audience, or provide adequate language training to the missionaries. Also "the homogeneity of the missionaries' personal backgrounds, lack of missionary preparation and costly financial burdens, together with the church's relative neglect of the Japan Mission's need for human resources . . . compounded these problems" (121-22).

Nielson rejects as insignificant outside pressures, including the devastation of the great Tokyo earthquake of 1923 and the rising antipathy towards Americans caused by the Immigration Act of 1924, which barred further immigration to the United States. He argues persuasively that neither event negatively impacted the evangelical efforts. Nielson also implicitly discounts the reasons most often given by the missionaries themselves, that the Japanese as a people had rejected their message, despite the missionaries' valiant efforts. This rejection was often linked to the racialist doctrine of the necessity of "believing blood" among the receiving population. For example, Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson in the April 1913 general conference said, "We have not had success among the Latin or Oriental races, or among the

Chinese or Japanese. There may be some of the blood of Israel among them, but so far we have discovered but a very little" (122).

While I applaud Nielson's efforts to examine flaws in the Mormon approach, rather than blaming the native listeners, his approach fails to treat the Japanese as active participants in their own choices. While Nielson succeeds in showing that American Protestant mission efforts were more successful than those of the Mormons in the early twentieth century, the fact remains that the early twentieth century was a fallow period for all Christian evangelical efforts in Japan. There clearly were historical and cultural factors at work, deeper than the short-term anger caused by the 1924 Immigration Law, involved in the Japanese rejection of Christianity.

For that reason, I hope that Nielson will continue the story with an examination of the growth of the Latter-day Saint Church in Japan in the years after World War II. From 1946 to the early 1990s, the Church enjoyed limited but significant growth, so that today there are stable congregations in all medium- to large-sized cities, nearly total indigenous leadership, and plans for a third temple. In the early 1990s, growth slowed down nearly to a halt; and since then, the number of active members has stagnated.<sup>1</sup> For example, the number of LDS congregations (wards and branches) in Japan actually shrank from 289 in 1993 to 286 in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Was either the growth or the subsequent decline due to major changes in evangelical models?

I would argue that the Euro-American Mormon missionary model has changed little, with the exception of better language and cultural training for missionaries coming from outside of Japan. Missionaries still spend most of their time in vain attempts to elicit religious discussions with an increasingly secular population, rather than engaging in education (other than poorly taught English language lessons) or social work. Even if they did switch their focus toward education and social work, it is doubtful that they could offer much to a country as wealthy and advanced as Japan.

Rather than changes in the missionary model, then, I think post-war changes in growth have more to do with the needs and interests of the Japanese themselves. Many Japanese after World War II were impressed by American military power and economic

success, and young American missionaries were among the most visible representations of American youth available. By the 1990s, however, the novelty of young American faces had worn off, and the murderous rampage of the doomsday Aum Shinrikyo sect scared many Japanese away from organized religion. Today the Church in Japan is stable, with strong leadership and many indigenous missionaries, but little real growth is occurring. The Church is not withdrawing from Japan this time, but it has cut the number of missionaries assigned to the country nearly in half since the peak years of the early 1990s.<sup>3</sup> Cumorah does not footnote the second figure, but I can certainly vouch for it from my conversations with the mission presidents over the years. The number of missions in Japan declined from ten in 1991–95 to six since June 2010. By the way, the low 2011 numbers I am using are pre-earthquake; but several missionaries in the Tokyo and Sendai missions were asked to go home a month or two early after that calamity. Tokyo is back up to pre-earthquake strength in missionary numbers, but Sendai is not.

How do Japanese Mormons themselves think about this inconsistent history of missionary work and the limited spread of the gospel among their own people? Surprisingly, although the racist idea of the potency of the “believing blood” of Israel is thankfully fading in the general Mormon consciousness, one can still see remnants of it in Japan. Some Japanese members are animated by the far-fetched possibility of historical bloodlines going back to the House of Israel. Although it is not taught from the pulpit, members often share their theories of Mosaic law archetypes in traditional Japanese practices. For example, some speculate that the red *torii* gates to Shintô shrines are connected to the Passover lamb’s blood painted on the doorposts, and link the *mikoshi* portable shrines carried through the streets in festivals with the Ark of the Covenant. These theories were discussed in a series of articles by LDS Church translator Masao Watabe in the official Japanese-language Church magazine in 1961.<sup>4</sup> Rather than accepting the nineteenth-century Mormon ideas of the geographic dispersal of Israelite blood in which they are not included, they have created their own discourses of inclusion. Neilson does not discuss these theories, which apparently did not develop until after the period of his study; nor is it a major theme about Japanese

Mormons, although a talk or lesson alludes to it once or twice a year. But it does suggest that for some Japanese Saints, at least some elements of the early “believing blood” arguments which Nielson discredits in this history still hold a certain appeal.

Despite my wish for more consideration of social and historical causes for native interest, I find this book to be a remarkable work, striking a fine balance between thoroughness and readability. Nielson provides a welcome bridge between Mormon studies and the wider world of missiology.

### Notes

1. Jiro Numano, “Perseverance amid Paradox: The Struggle of the LDS Church in Japan Today,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 140–41.

2. Unit figures in Japan, [www.cumorah.com](http://www.cumorah.com) (accessed July 2011); David Stewart, who maintains the Cumorah website, apparently derives these figures from the annual *Church News* for the respective years. My own observations from living in Japan periodically during the last twenty years confirm this stagnation.

3. [www.cumorah.com](http://www.cumorah.com) (accessed July 2011), states: “In 2000, there were approximately 1,000 full-time missionaries serving in Japan, 18% of which were native Japanese. By early 2011, the number of full-time missionaries stationed in Japan was nearly half the number assigned in 2000.” It cites Don L. Searle, “Japan: Growing Light in the East,” *Ensign*, September 2000, 44 note 47.

4. Masao Watabe’s series begins with “Nihon no Kiso Minzoku wa Heburai Senmin no Seiei Nari (The Founding Peoples of Japan Were the True Descendants of the Chosen Hebrews),” *Seito no Michi*, August 1961, 460–64. See also Spencer J. Palmer, “Did Christ Visit Japan,” *BYU Studies* 10, no. 5 (Winter 1970): 150–58, for an English language summary of some of the theories.

## Elder Price Superstar

*The Book of Mormon* (current Broadway musical)

Reviewed by Michael Hicks

I’ll never forget the first time I heard my mother swear. I was in my thirties and had finally decided to talk to her about her second

husband, whom she'd married when I was eleven, divorced two years later, and about whom, as if by a silent contract, we never spoke. "So tell me what was going on in that marriage," I said to her. She bit her lip, paused, then said, "It was really shitty." And that was it. This woman from whose mouth I'd never heard a "hell" or a "damn," a woman who read her *Daily Light* devotional every morning, listened all day to Christian radio, and kept a pocket-size New Testament in her glove compartment, had now, deliberately and with great care, spoken a word I could never imagine escaping her lips. It was one of the great initiations in my life: With one word, I suddenly understood how deeply something must have hurt her. And the tumblers of her life turned for me. Why? Because what she said was exactly the right wrong word.

*The Book of Mormon*—the musical—is a very public, late-breaking initiation for the Church whose ranks I'd joined a dozen years before that experience. And, like that experience, the swearing in *The Book of Mormon* is what starts the illumination. Because if we know nothing else as Mormons, it's that we live and die by language—the right kind, the wrong kind, God's or the devil's, truth or falsehood, praise or sacrilege, the sacred and the profane. Saying the right thing at the right time is even the pinnacle event of our temple ceremony. Yet if we know nothing else as adult humans (thanks, Mom), it's that sometimes one can only truly understand our species—animal and divine—when one kind of language bleeds into another. We sing in church, "In the quiet heart is hidden / sorrow that the eye can't see."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the only route to invisible sorrow is to turn up the volume.

And so here is this noisy, heartfelt, touching, gaudy, and weirdly illuminating patchwork of tenderness and blasphemy that dares to go by the name of that most Mormon book: the Book of Mormon. In that regard, this musical is to Mormonism what Bernstein's *Mass* was to Catholicism, a wildly exploitative trope on the faith's core liturgy—though, in this case, without the brilliance of Bernstein. He, after all, knew not only the classical repertoire intimately (think of the Young People's Concerts or the *Omnibus* series on TV), but Broadway (think of *On the Town* and, of course, *West Side Story*). The makers of *The Book of Mormon* weren't raised on Broadway and don't even pretend to understand it. But they

understand perfectly the trans-generic pop into which Broadway has been mutating for decades. They were raised on the music of breakfast commercials, Nick at Nite theme songs, Top Forty radio, and, of course, the second wave of Disney animated movie musicals, from *The Little Mermaid* to *Beauty and the Beast* to *Aladdin* to (especially) *The Lion King*, which *The Book of Mormon* explicitly and implicitly cites and paraphrases. It's those Disney cartoon songfests that not only resurrected Disney's fortunes but helped keep Broadway in the black—the Broadway that keeps reverse-engineering Disney-esque formulas into ticket sales.

More to the point, the makers of *The Book of Mormon* understand Mormon pop culture. If their show's songs sound painfully piecemeal and derivative, that's what perfectly attunes them to Mormon commercial music—its indiscriminacy circumscribed into one great whole: road shows, pageants, Primary songs, *Saturday's Warrior*, Stadium of Fire, Young Ambassadors, Pearl Award-winning albums, etc. What *The Book of Mormon* may lack in Broadway tradition, it more than makes up for in Mormon resonance. Even without the words, the show would feel like a Mormon musical.

But there are words. That's what will vex Mormon viewers the most. If the music is leftover casserole, the lyrics range in flavor from cotton candy to excrement—a hyper-sweet-and-hyper-sour confection spooned up for almost two hours. Latter-day Saints will love the sweet and hate the sour, of course. But if they're anything like the Mormons checkerboarded on the new Times Square "I'm a Mormon" billboard, they will differ on which is which and why.

The show's plot forms a convenient scaffold for the songs. Two mismatched missionaries—one a lithe seminary honor student pre-anointed for success, the other a chunky sci-fi fan trying to please his father—are paired and sent to the blood fields of Uganda. These two, Elder Price and Elder Cunningham, face, on the one hand, a district full of hapless (and baptism-less) elders and, on the other, a village full of foul-mouthed myth-addicted natives, who are trapped in the cyclic fear of warlords and AIDS. In time, a daunted Elder Price leaves for a dream mission in Orlando (more Disney) and Elder Cunningham (a.k.a., Arnold) takes over, inventing doctrine to meet the villagers' needs but refute their



traditions. A penitent Elder Price eventually returns to help, a tide of baptisms ensues, and the villagers create their own Arnold-based Mormon history pageant to perform in front of the mission president. Mortified, he chastises the elders and releases them for disgracing the Church. But the elders refuse to go home. The Lord has called them to Africa, they say, they're helping people, and they've resolved that doing good—doctrine be damned—is the better part of Latter-day Sainthood. And, oh yes, Elder Price recognizes that Elder Cunningham is the real spiritual stud.

The opening songs are the easiest to swallow. "Hello!"—which reimagines *Bye Bye Birdie*'s "Telephone Hour" via the *Brady Bunch* theme—could reasonably be piped into Times Square as the soundtrack for the Mormon billboard. (Its young Mormon, EFY-style diction reaches its apex in the line, "Eternal life is super fun.") Next, "Two by Two" parades the (apparently all-male) Mormon missionary "army" through a seeming tribute to TV game show themes and the title song to *Car 54, Where Are You?* With well-conceived poetic license, the missionaries receive all their assignments (companionships and destinations) as a group at the Missionary Training Center—one of the breaches of fact that have been jeered by faith-defenders who attack the show's "inaccuracy," as if imagination were a sin in the art of fiction.

The third and sixth songs sketch the character of the main companions. "You and Me (But Mostly Me)," sung by Elder Price, satirizes his radical self-esteem and, by extension, Mormon narcissism en masse, that dark sidebar of quasi-Greatest Generation sermonizing in the 1970s-1980s ("God has held you youth in reserve till this time in history") as well as the standard Primary song, "I Am a Child of God" (whose verses and chorus use the words "I," "me," and "my" fifteen times—but never the words "you" or "your"). "I Am Here for You" is Elder Cunningham's response, a plea for emotional intimacy with the Quixote to whom he's been consigned to play Sancho Panza.

As Joseph Campbell was fond of reminding us, every initiation to a higher consciousness must include an ordeal that takes us through the underworld. For the elders in *The Book of Mormon*—and certainly for Mormon viewers—the show provides what I'd call "ordeal overkill": a trilogy of mini-descents strategically placed throughout the musical. The first comes soon after Elders

Price and Cunningham arrive, and the villagers dance and chant their infectious song “Hasa Diga Eebowai,” a phrase whose meaning—the ultimate epithet toward God—conveys their default response to current updates of biblical motifs: plagues (now summarized in AIDS), miraculous healing (with the rape of babies as some Ugandans’ imagined cure), and circumcision (now of females, not as covenant but as victimization). What jangles in listeners’ ears most, though, may not be the singers “cursing God” through profanity, but the musical setting: a mix of jubilant Disney-ethnic styles, equal parts “Under the Sea” (from *Little Mermaid*) and “I Just Can’t Wait to Be King” (from *Lion King*).

The elders meet their district of fellow missionaries, who launch into the show’s vaudevillian comic gem. “Turn It Off” typifies the comedic style that is one of the Judeo-Christian (but mostly Judeo) tradition’s great gifts to the world: It doesn’t mock, it just elbows. In this song Elder McKinley explains a “nifty little Mormon trick”: “When you start to get confused / because of thoughts in your head, / don’t feel those feelings! / Hold them in instead.” Some of the other elders give sad (though cheerily delivered) soliloquies about family abuse and personal neglect to which the rest give the antidote for feeling less than gleeful: “Turn it off!” (or as BYU professor Reed Benson used to put it, “Snuff it out!”). When Elder McKinley confesses to fleeting gay fantasies, misunderstandings start to fly as the music (and lighting and choreography) channel-surf their way into a mugging Bugs Bunny-ish promenade (as in “Overture, curtain, lights . . .”), which melts into a chorus line of elders in red-sequined vests. It’s the sort of scene that invites laughter, then compels it, as tear-jerking tragedy hardens into the steely resolve of nineteen-year-old missionaries—then cracks.

Soon the preaching begins. “All-American Prophet” fuses *Music-Man*-meets-*Elmer-Gantry* stump preaching and infomercial pitch-man shtick—a cheery confession that the American industries of proselytizing and advertising form a single conglomerate. As Elder Price spins his tale of Mormon origins, his cultural myopia constricts both to the recent past (“Let me take you back to biblical times: 1823”), Malibu looks (Joseph is “the blonde-haired, blue-eyed voice of God”) and homeland geography (“He didn’t come from the Middle East like those other holy men. No, God’s

favorite prophet was All-American!”). Meanwhile, in an upstage backlit tableau, Joseph Smith (who has, we’re told, “a little Donny Osmond flair”) receives the plates from Moroni on the condition he not show them to anyone, despite the doubt that will create. Moroni explains, “This is sort of what God is going for.” (Such was the explanation when I, as a non-Mormon in 1973, first asked friends about the plates’ whereabouts: If we had the plates, they said, you wouldn’t need faith.) When Joseph dies in another tableau near the song’s end, he laments he couldn’t show the plates to prove he was telling the truth—till the light dawns in him and he says to God, “I guess that’s kinda what You were going for.”

As in the Garden of Eden, it is not until a female voice enters the world of testosterone that something truly interesting happens. Here it arrives in the first (and only) solo sung by a woman, the young villager named Nabulungi (the role for which Nikki James rightly won a Tony Award). In “Sal Tlay Ka Siti” (i.e., “Salt Lake City”) she fantasizes about how life would be in the promised land of “Ooh-tah,” a place where “the warlords are friendly” and “flies don’t bite your eyeballs,” a heaven she can have “if I only follow that white boy.” The most relentlessly serious song in the entire show, “Sal Tlay Ka Siti” draws the audience into a vision of plenty that most theater-goers long since have taken for granted: “a Red Cross on every corner with all the flour you can eat,” “vitamin injections by the case,” and “people [who] are open-minded and don’t care who you’ve been.” Still, she sings, “All I hope is that when I find it, I’m able to fit in.” It’s a stock pop ballad, yes. But if there were a machine that manufactured compassion, this is what it would sound like. And you’ll understand why I choke up every time I hear the final lines: “I’m on way—soon life won’t be so shitty. / Now salvation has a name: Sal Tlay Ka Siti.”

When it comes time for Elder Arnold Cunningham to take up the mantle of the runaway Elder Price, he updates the catchphrase “What would Jesus do?” into “What *did* Jesus do?” then answers with a cliché from the 2010 campaign: Jesus “manned up.” Arnold’s solo “Man Up” offers a hard rock soliloquy (with hints of the *Greatest American Hero* TV theme) in which he gins up his courage with muttering that ranges from gender stereotypes (Jesus didn’t “scream like a girl”) to bodily fluid jokes (“I’m gonna man up all over myself”). Along the way, he metamorphoses from

a kind of dancing teddy bear to a Motown exec wearing shades—but one who can improvise bizarre doctrine to solve tribal problems (leading to the stuttering chorus “You’re making things up again, Arnold!”)

And then, the second descent into the underworld. It happens when the now-confessional Elder Price goes through a “Spooky Mormon Hell Dream,” whose minor-key distorted guitar lines and growling background chorus present a Black Sabbath-style parody of the (creepy) doctrine of James the Apostle: “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). A quasi-Homeric catalogue of wicked characters appears, announcing themselves and reviewing their crimes to the next condemned man, Elder Price. Hitler: “I started a war, and killed millions of Jews!” Genghis Khan: “I slaughtered the Chinese!” Jeffrey Dahmer: “I stabbed a guy and [bleeped] his corpse!” In his self-flagellatory state, Elder Price answers: “You think that’s bad? I broke rule 72!” The grandly produced spectacle ends with one more nod to *A Chorus Line*, the perfect Broadway source for a parade in the Plutonian realm.

“Spooky Mormon Hell Dream” provides the underworld from which a transformed Elder Price climbs back, resurrected into heroic stature (and voice). His solo “I Believe” is the unquestioned showstopper, a pseudo-Articles of Faith in which “line upon line” Elder Price lays out a credo of blasé truisms (“I believe that God has a plan for all of us”) answered by jarring untenabilities, which culminate in “I believe that the Garden of Eden was in Jackson County, Missouri,” the ultimate “all-American” revisionism that Joseph Smith espoused. Price’s personal branding of the Mormon message is now clear: Sense be damned, belief has power. He moves from the scrap yard of his theology to pillar-esque affirmation, telling a gun-belted warlord (before he dances with him): “I believe that Satan has a hold on you. I believe that the Lord God has sent me here. And I believe that in 1978 God changed his mind about black people.” This is one of the more glorious moments in recent theater: howling at absurdity as the light-bulb of epiphany flicks on. Elder Price’s mantra becomes: “a Mormon just believes” (“dang it!”). And our Thirteenth Article of Faith confirms it: “We believe all things,” it says, with no exclusions offered.

Still, it's not so much the content as the assertion. One thinks of Norfolk's question to Thomas More in *A Man for All Seasons*: "You'll forfeit all you've got . . . for a theory?" To which More replies: "Why, it's a theory, yes. . . . But what matters to me is not whether it's true or not but that I believe it to be true, or rather, not that I *believe* it, but that *I* believe it."<sup>2</sup> For More, as for Elder Price, narcissism matures into faith. As if to validate that transformation in "I Believe," each chorus begins by setting the words "I am a Mormon" to the five notes of the opening fanfare for the Hill Cumorah Pageant, the annual commemoration of Joseph's excavating the plates.

Price's "new song" works. Villagers want to be baptized, including Nabulungi, with whom Elder Cunningham performs an innuendo-filled soul duet ("Baptize Me") in the tradition of Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell, Peaches and Herb, and the Lionel Richie and Diana Ross of "Endless Love." If the music is unmemorable, the concept works, nicely showing off the patina of eros that sometimes sticks to ordinances that chaste men perform on chaste women. The song, which trumps the "boys' club" feel of the mission home, may seem crude in its pseudo-sexual teasing. But it reminds us that spiritual transactions carried out bodily between genders often feel like flirtation. (One may discern the physical-spiritual nexus in the phrase "the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost." And, let's face it, the term "missionary position" had to come from somewhere.)

A flood of baptisms leads to the pseudo-national anthem "I Am Africa"—the "We Are the World" of the show. The elders surrender to their success and, one by one, declare—not that "I am a Mormon" (as earlier) or "I am a Latter-day Saint" (which comes later)—but simply "I am Africa," each missionary self-identifying with that continent's weather, landscape, people, and animals (including "the noble Lion King"). Though one of the most heartfelt songs in the show, it gets plenty of laughs. The scene suggests that atonement for decades of Mormon race discrimination might be recompensed by adolescent bravado. The missionaries' spiritual imperialism jars with Nabulungi's yearning; she wonders how she'll fit in, while they simply gobble up the terrain ("Africans are African, but we are Africa"—with the latter two syllables separated from the "A" to make it sound like a cognate of "frickin"). The Book of

Mormon (the book) contains a subplot (or “contained”—it’s been scrubbed out of recent editions) in which white people turn dark and vice versa; *The Book of Mormon* has the same subplot, now transposed to East Africa. It’s even more awkward now than in 1830.

The skyrocketing baptismal stats lead to the final ordeal—for the audience more than any of the characters: “Joseph Smith, American Moses,” a Mormon history pageant that torques itself into a quasi-reprise of “Hasa Diga Eebowai” tangled with “Making Things Up Again.” Performed for the mission president by the villagers, the cute tribal beatitude in music, dance, and costume almost instantly twists into a messy disgorgement of the villagers’ magic worldview, now boxed and tied up with Arnold’s well-meant lies. We (and the president) are forced to undergo surreal clashes of imagery, most of them gynecological or gastrointestinal (though all in one-syllable words). God stops Joseph Smith from raping a baby and gives him a frog as a substitute; God curses Brigham Young by turning his nose into a clitoris; a plague of dysentery fells Joseph (as if the chanted scatology of its description would not have done it more quickly), etc. The viewer can’t “turn it off,” must endure it to the (literally) bitter end. It is a catharsis that is to *The Book of Mormon* what the meltdown of the celebrant is to Bernstein’s *Mass*—a soliloquy whose refrain is: “How easily things get broken.” Here, though, the language continually dances with obscenity. The effect on the audience is almost chiropractic.

So what, in the end, amid their seeming contempt, do the villagers prize in the hopelessly vulgarized Book of Mormon? Hope. The book is a doorstep against warlords and a doorway to a promised land where all their day-to-day pain will be soothed. Isn’t that enough?

And that becomes the real Mormon message in the show. All creeds collapse into personal feelings. But Jesus was a behaviorist. I like to think of Jimmy in David Mamet’s production of *The Untouchables*. Whenever a need arises, top G-man Elliott Ness quotes the law-enforcement handbook, to which Jimmy always asks, “But what are you prepared to do?” That’s what lovers (and haters) of religiosity have to keep asking themselves, not just “What would Jesus do?” but “What are you prepared to do?” And not even “What did Jesus do?” as Elder Cunningham asked, but “What have you done?” I

think of another cinematic scene, this one from *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. In this scene, Randall McMurphy bets his fellow psych-ward patients/inmates that he can pull the marble bathroom fixture off the floor, throw it through the window, and free them all. They laugh and jeer him on. He grabs the fixture's sides, pulls and pulls until, out of breath, his face flushed like a beet, he gives up. As they mock him, he glares at them and says, "But I tried, didn't I? . . . At least I did that."<sup>3</sup>

The makers of this musical celebrate Mormons because, dang it, at least they try—and indeed, try to do something that, as Elder Price says at the outset, will “blow God’s freakin’ mind.” To do that, one has to move—as the musical’s finale does—from “I am a Mormon” or “I am Africa” to “I am a Latter-day Saint,” with “latter-day” not meaning “pre-apocalyptic” but “the day after this one.” “The only latter-day that matters is tomorrow,” the finale exhorts. Pray and work for that day, it says, that “full of joy and all-the-things-that-matter day.” It’s the gospel (“good news”) restored indeed. The implicit message is: (1) the Old Testament is now, (2) the New Testament is tomorrow, and (3) The Book of Mormon—the show or, especially, its namesake—should be a hinge from one to the other. “We are still Latter-day Saints, all of us,” Elder Price explains (after the elders have refused to go home in disgrace), “even if we change some things, or we break the rules, or we have complete doubt that God exists. We can still all work together and make this our paradise planet.” Or, to put it as Joseph Smith so memorably did: “If we go to hell, we will turn the devils out of doors and make a heaven of it.”<sup>4</sup>

As on most construction sites, language can be initiatory. But as I learned from my mom, profanity sometimes cuts a path to a truth you couldn’t arrive at without it. She taught me—involuntarily, I’m sure—that sometimes cursing is the most honest speech, even though the ordeal of it can be severe. Questions arise, like a stinking Lazarus from the tomb. Can one be that honest? Can profanity be sanctified by the imagination if it’s to help people to a higher consciousness? Is there an audible line between the primal and the celestial? And there are the more practical questions: What is the relevance of fastidious truth-telling that doesn’t save good people? (Think of Oskar Schindler.) And what is the value of propriety if it is its own reward? (Think of Jesus.)

I think that most Latter-day Saints, especially the ones on the billboard, are learning that truth (big “T” or little “t”) is more than accuracy and niceness. It is, rather, what this musical so ferociously asserts about its alleged targets: “They tried, didn’t they? At least they did that.” Some Mormons feel stung by the show. But *The Book of Mormon* scolds no one so much as those who dismiss Mormon zeal. So I savor this public ordeal-fest, however gritty it feels on the tongue. Because, I believe, this is sort of what God is going for.

### Notes

1. Susan Evans McCloud, “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), No. 220, quotation from verse 2.

2. Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons: A Play in Two Acts* (New York: Random House, 1962), 91.

3. *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (Fantasy Films, 1975), 37:30–39:10. Copy in my possession.

4. In Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964 printing), 5:517.



# “Wholesome, Hallowed, and Gracious”: Confronting the Winter’s Night

*Richard Haglund*

Note: *Richard Haglund delivered this talk at the Green Hills Ward (Nashville, Tennessee) sacrament meeting, December 27, 2009. The inspiration for his theme came from a BYU Devotional by Elder Marion D. Hanks, then an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve. See <http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=6049&x=66&y=5>. MP3 version: [http://speeches.byu.edu/download.php/Hanks\\_Marion\\_1973.mp3?item=6217&download=true](http://speeches.byu.edu/download.php/Hanks_Marion_1973.mp3?item=6217&download=true) (accessed December 2009).*

In northern Europe, where our celebration of the Christmas season has its roots, the winter nights are long, dark, and foreboding and, at least in myth, teeming with unwelcome mysteries. It was against this backdrop that the early Christian monks and missionaries transformed the pagan Yuletide festivals into our modern Christmas celebration. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that the physical and spiritual darkness of winter seemed, for many, to be lifted at the Christmas season.

For example, as Shakespeare’s tragedy *Hamlet* opens, a trio of soldiers—Marcellus, Horatio, and Bernardo—are keeping watch on the battlements of the royal castle at Elsinore when suddenly the ghost of Hamlet’s father, the late king, appears. As the three battle-hardened sentries debate whether or not they have in fact seen something real, Marcellus observes that “it [the apparition] faded on the crowing of the cock,” and anyway, ghosts are probably not in season, for

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
 Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated,  
 This bird of dawning singeth all night long,  
 And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,  
 The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike<sup>1</sup>,  
 No fairy takes<sup>2</sup>, nor witch hath power to charm.  
 So hallowed and so gracious is that time. (*Hamlet* I.i.181–88)

Consider with me, if you will, those three words that are said to characterize not just Christmas day, but the entire “season . . . wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated”: wholesome, hallowed, and gracious. Few would quarrel with those descriptors. The literature of Christmas is filled with stories of the best of human nature, called forth by the spirit and spirits of the season; the carols say that not only mortals, but “heaven and nature sing” the praises of the newborn King. The blind poet John Milton, a generation after Shakespeare, imagined that

It was the winter wild  
 while the Heaven-born child;  
 all meanly wrapt, in the rude manger lies  
 Nature in awe to him had doff'd her gaudy trim  
 With her great Master so to sympathize . . .  
 No war or battle's sound  
 was heard the world around;  
 The idle spear and shield were high uphung;  
 the hookèd chariot stood  
 Unstained with hostile blood  
 The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng  
 And kings sate still with awful eye  
 As if they surely knew their Sovran Lord was by  
 But peaceful was the night  
 Wherein the Prince of light  
 His reign of peace upon the earth began  
 The winds, with wonder whist,  
 Smoothly the waters kiss'd  
 Whispering new joys to the mild ocean  
 Who now hath quite forgot to rave  
 While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.<sup>3</sup>

In more modern stories of Christmas, Scrooge's miser's heart is turned inside out, and Tiny Tim Cratchit lives to make that most beautiful of all holiday toasts, "God bless us, every one!" George Bailey's friends, made during a lifetime of thoughtful good deeds and kindness, come back to rescue his bank and his family, and the angel Charlie gets his wings. The lame shepherd boy Amahl picks up his crutch and departs with the wise men to worship the King who does not in fact need their gold and who, the wise men sing, will build His kingdom on love alone, the King for whom Amahl's poor widowed mother has waited all her life.

Yet, as we all know too well, this charmed and charming view of Christmas coexists in us with more complicated realities: The bleak midwinter brings depression, sickness, and the reality of daily life once the parties are over and the Christmas lights have come down. The impulse to generosity toward the poor warms our hearts, but also makes us aware in our heads of otherwise unmet needs that will not disappear when the calendar changes. Doctors warn of enhanced risk of heart attack, the post-Christmas depression is only too well known to its victims as well as to the therapists, and the wellness enthusiasts admonish us of the dangers of that in which we have already indulged!

Yet over against both the bleak midwinter and the simple hope for a rescue from all sorrow and wickedness is the sober assessment of the soldier Marcellus: that this season of the year in which we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior is indeed wholesome, hallowed, and gracious. What might these words teach us as we reflect on Christmas past and look forward to a new year and its promise of fresh beginnings?

*Wholesome.* The word itself means "salubrious, tending to promote health and virtue," and is related to the German word *heilsam*, which means "healing." The German word for "Savior" is *Heiland*, the One who heals. Indeed, in our Christmas carol, the herald angels sing of Christ as "risen with healing in His wings."<sup>4</sup> According to *Strong's Concordance*, the word "wholesome" itself appears only twice in scripture. The quality of wholesomeness is intimately linked on the one hand to the acceptance of Christ's teachings: Paul equates "wholesome words" to "even the words of our Lord Jesus" (1 Tim. 6:3). It is also linked to speech that brings light and life: "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverse-

ness therein is a breach in the spirit” (Prov. 15:4). But it underlies much more.

Not surprisingly, then, an abiding theme of the Christmas season is the curing of breaches in human relationships, the healing of estrangement, loneliness, and alienation. The wholesome, healing quality of the Christmas nights derives from the bridging of those gulfs between both those we know and strangers. Sometimes the healing of those rifts begins with an acceptance of Christ’s teaching about “the others,” their relationship to us as spirit children of our Heavenly Parents. In other cases, the healing takes place when remembered words of judgment and condemnation are blotted out by a heartfelt expression of love and concern.

The parable of the prodigal son embodies the quintessential Christmas message of this reconciliation: “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). We have no record of the sleepless nights when this son’s parents undoubtedly had wept over him, prayed for him, and hoped against hope for such a reconciliation. But in the moment of the son’s return, all those nights are swept away by the flood of a parent’s love, a prototype of the infinite love of God for even the wayward.

There are also healings of physical ailments that are associated with Christ’s ministry, and Christmas stories are full of such healings. However, the Savior’s healing touch for specific ailments was almost always combined with a deeper healing of the person, not merely the curing of the disease.

Behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him and touched the hem of his garment:

For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. (Matt. 9:20–22)

Jesus does not say: “I have healed you” but credits the healing to the woman’s simple faith, encouraging the growth of that mustard seed of belief. If we accept the concept of faith taught by Alma in the Book of Mormon (Alma 32:21–43), such an experience is the basis on which the desire to believe is transmuted into

saving, certain knowledge. Of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:2–11), Jesus asked “Woman, where are thine accusers?” To her response, the Savior gave the simple, reassuring admonition, “Go thy way and sin no more.” The reproof implicit in these words remained unspoken. The lesson he taught both to her and to her accusers became indelible. But more importantly, the words He chose conveyed a respect for even this fallen daughter of God and a confidence that the spark of divinity within her could once again become a glowing flame.

*Hallowed.* To hallow (German, *heiligen*) means “to make holy, to sanctify or to set apart.” It is closely related to the word “consecrate” (German, *weihen*) and in fact, in its noun form in German, is the word that translates “Saint,” as in “Latter-day Saint.” The Christmas season is hallowed partly because many of us, however partially or imperfectly, commit ourselves to that which is holy, whether it is in the impulse to worship or the equally important impulse to serve others. The Christmas spirit makes it easier for us to imagine ourselves as partaking of a life consecrated to the Christ and His teachings. We temper our image of the great Jehovah, the eternal judge of the quick and the dead, with the softer picture of the Child at whose feet we lay down our burdens as well as our gifts, and who is strong enough to bear all our infirmities, our failures, our sorrows, and our forlorn hopes. And we seem to find it easier to see the son or daughter of God in those around us—even those we find unlovely or unlovable at other seasons of the year.

In its most practical sense, that hallowing occurs through covenants and promises made in sacred ordinances, some formal, others informal. “Salvation comes by the grace of God, through ordinances.”<sup>5</sup> The elders of the Church were, in its earliest days, enjoined to “bind yourselves to act in holiness before me” (D&C 43:16).

That covenant commitment to holiness finds its highest expression in the law of consecration, the commitment to consecrate our selves, our time and energy, our talents, and all that with which the Lord has blessed us to the building of His kingdom and the establishment of Zion. It is also linked throughout the Doctrine and Covenants to another of those characteristic Christmas virtues—concern for the temporal welfare of others:

Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld. (D&C 70:13)

For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things; for if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.

Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, to prepare and organize yourselves by a bond or everlasting covenant that cannot be broken. (D&C 78:6–7, 11).

For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.

Therefore, I give unto you this commandment, that ye bind yourselves by this covenant. . . . and all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talents, . . . every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all this with an eye single to the glory of God. (D&C 82:14–15, 18–19)

This idea that Zion must be enlarged in beauty as it increases in holiness is what we celebrate with the incomparable music, art, and literature of the Christmas season. In a way, it is the embodiment of the famous aphorism based on Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19: “A man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge”<sup>6</sup>—and the less well-known “Bushman inversion,” namely, that “a man gains knowledge no faster than he is saved.”

But let us remember that what makes Christmas is consecration to its ideals even if imperfectly and fleetingly; the beauty of the fine arts and of religious ceremony awakens in us the memories of our desire to be committed to the Savior.

*Gracious.* The word “gracious” comes from the same Latin root as “grace,” and means “enjoying favor,” especially divine favor, and “being motivated or characterized by kindness and courtesy.” Its most evident characteristic in the Christmas season is its abundance. John Donne captured this sense of God’s overwhelmingly gracious response to our human needs in a Christmas sermon, “preached at St. Paul’s in the evening.”

God made Sun and Moon to distinguish seasons, and day, and night, and we cannot have the fruits of the earth but in their seasons: But God hath made no decree to distinguish the seasons of his mer-

cies; In paradise, the fruits were ripe the first minute, and in heaven it is alwaies Autumne, his mercies are ever in their maturity. We ask *panem quotidianum*, our daily bread, and God never sayes you should have come yesterday, he never sayes you must come again to morrow, but to day if you will heare his voice, to day he will heare you.

If some King of the earth have so large an extent of Dominion, in North, and South, as that he hath Winter and Summer together in his dominions, much more hath God mercy and judgment together: He brought light out of darknesse, not out of a lesser light; he can bring thy Summer out of Winter, though thou have no Spring; though in the wayes of fortune, or understanding, or conscience, thou have been benighted till now, wintred and frozen, clouded and eclipsed, damped and benumbed, smothered and stupified, now God comes to thee, not as in the dawning of the day, not as in the bud of the spring, but as the Sun at noon to illustrate all shadowes, as the sheaves in harvest, to fill all penuries. All occasions invite his mercies, and all times are his seasons.<sup>7</sup>

It is the same sense of the gracious presence of God and of his abounding goodness—and of the obligations that we have as the recipients of that bounty—that is so beautifully captured in the great valedictory sermon of King Benjamin:

Ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. . . .

For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?

And behold, even at this time ye have been calling on his name and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain?

Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy.

And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another. (Mosiah 4:16–21)

Indeed, when He appeared to the Nephites after the resurrection, the Savior's gracious and grace-filled love for us is remem-

bered by those who heard Him as overflowing and ineffable: “No tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father,” while at the same time, He declares: “Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, *my* joy is full” (3 Ne. 17:17, 20; emphasis mine).

Now about those resolutions for the new year . . . The last ritual of the Christmas season for many of us occurs at the mid-point of the Twelve Days between Christmas and January 6, the traditional Three Kings Day, when we make resolutions to conquer faults and improve during the coming year. Without wishing to undervalue the need to get organized, to lay in a year’s supply of essentials, to lose weight, and to be more prudent with our credit cards during the coming year, I would like to suggest that these three qualities of the Christmas season—wholesome, hallowed, and gracious—might serve us better as guides to the real work, the much harder work, of home- and self-improvement that we can and should undertake in the coming year.

Let us resolve that our words and actions will be wholesome: tending to promote health and well-being in ourselves, our families, and in our relationships with our neighbors. Let us stand against the rising tide of poisonous words and venomous rhetoric that pollute the airwaves and the print media. Let us learn to pray for those whom we perceive to be on the opposite side of the political aisle, and even for our enemies, and in doing so, make them our friends and fellow beneficiaries of Christ’s healing spirit. (You might even consider taking a Democrat to lunch!). Above all, let us be sure that the language of love is cultivated intensively at home so that it becomes a perennial feature of all our private, familial, personal, and community relationships.

Let us resolve that we will do our part to hallow the year ahead, by building a Zion that will increase in beauty and in holiness. To that end, let us in our minds and in our ministries enlarge the borders of Zion to include our sisters and brothers who do not worship with us, but who are our friends and fellow pilgrims and who also serve the Master by feeding the sheep of His pasture. Let us “stand in holy places and be not moved,” and build our founda-



tions on the “rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, . . . that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo” (Hel. 5:12).

And let us above all resolve that we will share the abundance of God’s gracious presence in our lives, out of love for Him and gratitude for His myriad tender mercies that are the visible signs of that grace. Lynn Ellsworth once taught a memorable priesthood lesson on what he called “the grace principle”: leaving room in our time, our energies, and our budgets for unplanned opportunities to do the Lord’s work and thus to share the abundance of the Lord’s tender mercies. The ancient commandment still stands:

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, either shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger; I am the Lord your God. (Lev. 19:9–10)

Let us not glean the edges of our fields of labor, to harvest the last bit of time, hoard the spiritual wealth of our testimonies, or take out of circulation those last few dollars, but instead leave some room for giving of ourselves, our interest, our listening ears, our time, and our means to those with whom—and among whom—we live, work, and worship.

I testify that the living Christ, whose birth we choose to celebrate at this astronomically darkest time of the year (at least in the northern hemisphere), brings His wholesome, hallowed, and gracious touch to our lives even at those moments when we feel unworthy of it. I bear witness that the Child, who in His mature ministry would later urge us to take His yoke upon us, is strong enough to heal us of all that burdens us and make us whole again—if we have faith enough to really drop those burdens at His feet. I have felt His hallowed influence through the glorious music of the Christmas season, composed through the centuries by those who loved and worshipped Him in the best light they knew. And I know that when we share His grace with others, the circle of our love and influence will grow to banish the darkness, literal

or figurative, in our own lives and in the lives of those who feel that divine influence.

### Notes

1. "work evil by influence"
2. "bewitch"
3. John Milton, "Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," <http://www.bartleby.com/101/307.html> (accessed July 15, 2011); spelling modernized.
4. Charles Wesley, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 209.
5. Truman Madsen, "The Sacramental Life," in *The Highest in Us*, reprinted in *Five Classics by Truman G. Madsen* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 226.
6. Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980 printing): 5:588.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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LES BLAKE {lesmblake@gmail.com} was raised in southeast Idaho and is a graduate of Brigham Young University. He now lives in Salt Lake City with his wife Christy and their two sons. More of his poetry will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Sunstone Magazine*.

MATTHEW BOWMAN {matthewbbowman@gmail.com} is visiting assistant professor of American religious history at Hampden-Sydney College and associate editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. His dissertation, awarded by Georgetown University, is titled “The Urban Pulpit: Evangelicals and the City in New York, 1880–1930.”

CARYS BRAY {annieirwinbray@gmail.com} is an associate tutor and creative writing Ph.D. student at Edge Hill University. Her prize-winning short fiction has appeared in a variety of print and online journals. She and her husband, Neil, have four children and live in England.

MARK BROWN {bmarkb@gmail.com} pursues research in Mormon history as an avocation, with a special interest in Mormons in the southern United States.

SAMUEL M. BROWN {smb@samuelbrown.net}, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Utah, is a medical researcher, ICU physician, and cultural historian. He is the author of *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) and is currently at work (with Jared Hickman) on a study of sacred translation in early Mormonism, provisionally titled *Human Cosmos: Joseph Smith and the Art of Translation*, early drafts of which were posted on *By Common Consent*.

FREDERICK MARK GEDICKS {gedicksf@law.byu.edu} holds the Guy Anderson Chair and is professor of law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, where he teaches constitutional law, and law and religion. This article was first presented as a Forum Address on April 8, 2011, at Southern Virginia University, in Buena Vista, Virginia. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: I am grateful to my friend and frequent co-author Roger Hendrix, who contributed substantially to the development of the ideas presented in this address, and to SVU President Rodney K. Smith, who extended the invitation to address the student body. Stirling Adams, Andi Pitcher Davis, Marc Davis, James Faulconer, Nicea Gedicks,

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RICHARD HAGLUND {richard.haglund@vanderbilt.edu} married Carol Ann Bagnell forty-three years ago; they are the parents of Kristine, Rich, Evan, JB, and Erika. He is a member of the physics faculty at Vanderbilt University and currently serves as patriarch in the Nashville Tennessee Stake.

ANDREW R. HALL {andrewrhall@gmail.com} lives with his wife and four children in Fukuoka, Japan, where he is an associate professor in the School of Comparative Cultures and Societies, Kyushu University. His area of specialty is Japanese colonial policy in North-east Asia in the early twentieth century.

B. CARMON HARDY {chardy@fullerton.edu} is emeritus professor of history at California State University, Fullerton. He has a long-time interest in Utah and Mormon history and has published extensively on these subjects. His best-known works are: *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); and *Doing the Works of Abraham: Its Origin, Practice, and Demise*, Vol. 9, in *THE MORMONS AND THE AMERICAN FRONTIER*, general editor Will Bagley (Norman, Okla.: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 2007).

MICHAEL HICKS {michael\_hicks@byu.edu} is a composer, performer, scholar, and poet who has been teaching in the BYU School of Music since 1985. He is the author of three books: *Mormonism and Music: A History* (1989), *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelic, and Other Satisfactions* (1999), and *Henry Cowell, Bohemian* (2002), all published by University of Illinois Press. His historical and analytical articles have appeared in dozens of books and journals, including *Musical Quarterly*, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Perspectives of New Music*, and *Journal of Aesthetic Education*. He has twice won the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award (1994 and 2003) for his writing about music, and a third time as editor of the journal *American Music*, a post he held from 2007 to 2010.

JASON LANEGAN {<http://jasonlanegan.blogspot.com/>} joined the LDS Church on July 25, 1990, the summer between his junior and senior years in high school, served a mission in North Carolina, attended BYU-Idaho, and received degrees from Northern Arizona University (sculpture) and Eastern Washington University (art education), followed by a graduate degree in sculpture with a minor in art history from Brigham Young University where he began his current explorations into reliquaries. He has been head sculptor for *Paleoforms*, director of the Morris Fine Art Gallery, sculpture professor, and museum director at Northern Arizona University, and is currently gallery director for the Department of Visual Arts at BYU. He believes that our identity, which he sees as reliquaries, is indeed constructed but not pure invention: "It is the objects and events that we each find meaningful that are incorporated into our self-image." Reinforced by "continual self-evaluation," he finds irony and humor in the ongoing quest to "leave our worldly desires behind piece by piece." Jason, his wife, Kimberly, and their five children live in Spanish Fork, Utah.

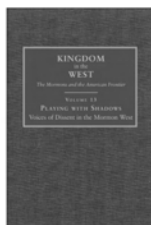
LANCE LARSEN's {[lance\\_larsen@byu.edu](mailto:lance_larsen@byu.edu)} most recent poetry collection is *Backyard Alchemy* (Tampa, Fla.: University of Tampa 2009). He has received a number of awards for both his poetry and nonfiction, including fellowships from Sewanee, Ragdale, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He and his artist wife, Jacqui Biggs Larsen, will direct a BYU Study Abroad program in Madrid in 2012.

ARMAND L. MAUSS {[maussal@cox.net](mailto:maussal@cox.net)} is professor emeritus of sociology and religious studies, Washington State University, now living in Irvine, California. Recently he has also taught courses in Mormon studies at Claremont Graduate University. A frequent contributor to *Dialogue*, he is author of three books on Mormons. His next book, *Shifting Borders and a Tattered Passport* (a memoir) is forthcoming in 2012. "Rethinking Retrenchment" is a much fuller version of a paper he delivered on June 18, 2001, at the Springville (Utah) Art Museum at an all-day symposium in honor of Richard Bushman on his eightieth birthday. The program for that symposium can be found at <http://mormon-chronicles.blogspot.com/2011/06/mormonism-in-cultural-context-symposium.html>; and <http://bycommonconsent.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/bushmansymposiumprogramflyer.pdf>.

STEPHEN MCINTYRE {[smcintyre1983@gmail.com](mailto:smcintyre1983@gmail.com)} holds a J.D. and M.A. from Duke University. He practices law in Los Angeles.

DIXIE PARTRIDGE {pearantree@gmail.com} is a frequent contributor of poetry in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, and other periodicals. She lives in the Columbia Basin in the state of Washington and writes frequently about it and the landscape of her childhood in Idaho.

TAYLOR G. PETREY {tpetrey@gmail.com} is assistant professor of religion at Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He holds a doctorate of theology and a master's of theological studies from Harvard Divinity School in New Testament and early Christianity.



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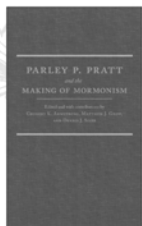
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