



# DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

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# DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

*is an independent quarterly established to express Mormon culture and to examine the relevance of religion to secular life. It is edited by Latter-day Saints who wish to bring their faith into dialogue with the larger stream of world religious thought and with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage. The journal encourages a variety of viewpoints; although every effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and responsible judgment, the views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or of the editors.*

*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* is published quarterly by the Dialogue Foundation. *Dialogue* has no official connection with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Contents copyright by the Dialogue Foundation. ISSN 0012-2157. *Dialogue* is available in full text in electronic form at [www.dialoguejournal.com](http://www.dialoguejournal.com) and is archived by the University of Utah Marriott Library Special Collections, available online at: [www.lib.utah.edu/portal/site/marriottlibrary](http://www.lib.utah.edu/portal/site/marriottlibrary). *Dialogue* is also available on microforms through University Microfilms International, [www.umi.com](http://www.umi.com), and online at [dialoguejournal.com](http://dialoguejournal.com).

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# “And Now It Is the Mormons”: The Magazine Crusade against the Mormon Church, 1910–1911<sup>1</sup>

*Kenneth L. Cannon II*

*One of the problems with which the American people will soon have to deal is the revival of polygamy in Utah. . . . Mormonism without polygamy largely ceases to be Mormonism. Its whole theological system, from its conception of the Godhead down, is pervaded with sensualism. The Mormon god is not only a just and a vengeful god, but he is a lustful god. –Burton J. Hendrick, “The Mormon Revival of Polygamy”<sup>2</sup>*

*These 375,000 [Mormons] have more political power than any million in the United States because they are a unit. There is little secession among them from the will of their leader, whom they believe divinely appointed to rule them in temporal as well as spiritual affairs. This political force, compact, unreasoning, unpatriotic, un-American, has a curious character, at once sinister and serene. It is the backbone of the Mormon empire, which is an echo from a time that antedates the Christian era. –Richard Barry, “The Political Menace of the Mormon Church”<sup>3</sup>*

*The name of the viper—I take it from the mouth of the viper—is “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.” It lies coiled on the country’s hearthstone, and asks only time to grow and collect a poison and a strength to strike. . . . Mormonism . . . is the Old Serpent, and the heel of every clean American should bruise its head. Its purpose is inimical, and it must either destroy or be destroyed. It is a political menace, a commercial menace. Most of all, it is a moral menace. . . . The battle should*

*continue until all of Mormonism and what it stands for are destroyed. Then, and not before, will this republic be safe.—Alfred Henry Lewis, “The Viper on the Hearth” and “The Viper’s Trail of Gold”*<sup>4</sup>

*Of the men who could have written this narrative, some are dead, some are prudent; some are superstitious; and some are personally forsworn. . . . Since there was apparently no one else who felt the duty and also had the information or the wish to write, it seemed my place to undertake it. . . . I have written, in all candor, what no reasons of personal advantage or self-justification could have induced me to write. I shall be accused of rancor, of religious antagonism, of political ambition, of egotistical pride. But no man who knows the truth will say sincerely that I have lied. . . . The truth, in its own time, will prevail, in spite of cunning. I am willing to await that time—for myself—and for the Mormon people.—Frank J. Cannon, “Under the Prophet in Utah”*<sup>5</sup>

*It is hard to reduce this matter to words but I have a strong sub-consciousness that in all this anti-Mormon agitation here there is a Guiding Hand and that its purpose is to open the minds of the people to receive what will in a little while from now be an overwhelming message.—Isaac Russell to Joseph F. Smith*<sup>6</sup>

From September 1910 through August 1911, in an unusual confluence of focus, four popular national magazines critiqued the Mormon Church and its prophet in a series of articles that Mormon leader and historian B. H. Roberts characterized as the “magazine crusade” against the Church. All of the articles were written by prominent muckraking journalists who sought both to identify church practices that needed to be reformed and to sell magazines by presenting their critiques in a way that would appeal to Progressive America. The articles did, in fact, have at least two long-term effects on the Church: they accelerated the true demise of polygamy in the institutional Church by increasing the resolve of leaders to discipline prominent Church members who had insisted on continuing to encourage, perform, and enter into new plural unions, and they contributed to the Church’s development of effective strategies to defend itself against attack and its appreciation of the importance of competent public relations.



The articles also had the shorter-term effect of re-igniting substantial anti-Mormon activity in the United States and Western Europe.

By the time the first articles appeared in the fall of 1910, the LDS Church's leaders and members were well along in their transition into mainstream twentieth-century America. The Church had officially abandoned plural marriage in the fall of 1890 and had reaffirmed the cessation of the practice several times since. It had disbanded its People's Party and had publicly encouraged members to join either of the two national parties. The communitarian United Order, never fully instituted in the Church, was largely forgotten. Even Church businesses created during the United Order retrenchment of the 1860s and 1870s took on more of a twentieth-century corporate mien. The federal government, believing that the LDS Church was changing in good faith, returned property escheated to the government under the harsh Edmunds-Tucker Act, granted Utah statehood in 1896, and legitimized all children born to polygamous Mormon couples prior to statehood. The Church and its members had worked hard to take their place in mainstream American culture.

Old concerns about the Church returned and new concerns developed during the first decade of the twentieth century. The United States Senate's investigation of Reed Smoot from 1904 to 1907 created doubts about the Church's sincerity in its abandonment of plural marriage. Smoot was allowed to retain his seat in the Senate in early 1907, largely through a partisan vote by Republicans (who were then in the majority). The election of a sitting Mormon apostle as a senator and Mormon leaders' apparent ability to exercise sufficient influence in the Republican Party to save Senator Smoot's seat in the face of significant opposition from evangelicals, Progressives, and women created concerns about the Church's political ambitions. The Church's growing financial prosperity and alliances with the so-called Sugar Trust and other Wall Street-related interests opened it to criticism by Progressives leery of monopolies.

The Magazine Crusade articles, all written by prominent "muckrakers,"<sup>7</sup> fanned these concerns about an alleged new Mormon material kingdom that purportedly included the secret con-

tinuation of the old practice of polygamy, a revised political agenda whose aspirations went far beyond Utah's borders, and a new friendship with Wall Street. With a combined circulation of over 2,000,000, the monthly periodicals *Pearson's*, *Everybody's*, *McClure's*, and the *Cosmopolitan* reached into every part of the United States.<sup>8</sup> The reasons the four magazines would all publish articles on the Mormons are somewhat elusive but provide insight into both perceptions of Mormons in the second decade of the twentieth century and into the world of Progressive magazines.

In September 1910, *Pearson's Magazine* began publishing a three-part series by Richard Barry, a rising star in the muckraking journalism world.<sup>9</sup> It was followed in December by *Everybody's Magazine*, which in that month began publishing Frank J. Cannon's autobiographical, nine-installment "Under the Prophet in Utah" articles written in collaboration with Harvey J. O'Higgins.<sup>10</sup> Cannon was the second son of prominent Church leader George Q. Cannon, and had served as one of Utah's first U.S. senators from 1896 to 1899, and as a political and financial representative of the First Presidency from the late 1880s through the 1890s.<sup>11</sup> Cannon was a gifted writer and orator, and O'Higgins was an unusually talented writer, novelist, playwright, and muckraker.<sup>12</sup> In January 1911, the pre-eminent muckraking periodical, *McClure's Magazine*, published the first of two articles written by future three-time Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Burton J. Hendrick.<sup>13</sup> Finally, not wishing to be left out, William Randolph Hearst's flagship magazine, the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, embarked on an outrageous three-article series penned by Alfred Henry Lewis, likely the most prominent political journalist of his day, which appeared in March, April, and May 1911.<sup>14</sup> Lewis employed the metaphor of a "viper" throughout the articles, portraying an insidious, dangerous Mormon kingdom ready to control America and its resources, just the way it allegedly controlled Utah and much of the West at the time.<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, all of these series examined allegations of secret "new" polygamy encouraged and practiced in the Church, thereby focusing on what Americans and Europeans had always found both most distasteful and most absorbing about the Mormons. All of the magazines other than *McClure's* also re-cast historical concerns about Mormon ambitions to control politics in

Utah into supposed long-range political plans by Church leaders to control first the West then, ultimately, the entire country. These same three magazines finished by channeling Progressive America's mistrust of Wall Street and the combinations and monopolies it spawned into fear and mistrust of the LDS Church's apparent alliances with Wall Street. Although all of the articles were critical of the Church, there was a wide range of criticism, from the relatively careful and objective pair of articles in *McClure's Magazine* that focused primarily on polygamy at one end of the spectrum to the sensationalized series of articles published by the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* at the other end.

The Mormon community characteristically reacted negatively and perceived the articles to be the result of conspiracy and persecution against the Church and its leaders. Many of the faithful in Salt Lake City believed that the entire crusade against them had been fomented and perhaps even paid for by such Church enemies as Thomas Kearns and Frank J. Cannon. In fact, however, though Frank Cannon probably was the catalyst for the Magazine Crusade and Kearns accommodated the writers who came to Salt Lake City to research the Mormons, most or all of the magazines were not attempting to destroy Mormondom; they were simply publishing articles that purported to expose practices most Americans found distasteful, thereby prompting reform and, not incidentally, selling magazines.

The attacks on the Church followed a pattern often taken by the Progressive magazines in exposés of other institutions. The muckrakers had a native mistrust of centralized power and of the men (and, in some cases, women) who exercised that power. Most actively sought to expose nefarious acts of offending institutions and to demonize the individuals who controlled them.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, they were maintaining or increasing circulation and profits for their magazines by appealing to Progressive America's concerns about concentrated power and unchecked corporate greed. With the Mormons, the journalists and their magazines were also able to take advantage of continuing disgust with a marriage practice that seemed alien to most Americans.<sup>17</sup>

The Mormons mounted defenses to the allegations. Much of the response consisted of statements that the new attacks were

simply part of the long tradition of persecution against the Church. Some of it consisted of attacking the attackers with *ad hominem* charges addressing their peccadillos. A new, more sophisticated and positive approach to defending the faith emerged during the Magazine Crusade, led by Isaac Russell, a brilliant young journalist and muckraker living in New York who was also a member of the Church.<sup>18</sup> Russell marshaled a defense, enlisting former President Theodore Roosevelt to pen a spirited letter supporting the Mormons, which Russell arranged to have published in *Collier's Weekly*, one of the nation's most popular weekly magazines. As Russell helped guide Church leaders through the challenges of defending against overstated and sometimes biased attacks, the Church began to learn the art of public relations, sometimes responding openly and directly, other times more subtly and obliquely.

The adverse publicity also moved some Mormon apostles to argue more vigorously than before that men who married polygamously after Church president Wilford Woodruff's September 1890 Manifesto should be disciplined by being released from positions in the Church, and that those who persisted in "new" polygamy after Joseph F. Smith's 1904 "second manifesto" be subject to more punitive measures such as disfellowshipment or even excommunication.<sup>19</sup>

### **Allegations of the Church's Expanded Political Ambitions**

*Pearson's* started the Magazine Crusade in September 1910 when it published Richard Barry's "The Political Menace of the Mormon Church." Barry was in Denver researching another article when *Pearson's* received word that competitor *Everybody's Magazine* was planning to publish a major series of articles on the Mormons written by former Mormon and U.S. Senator Frank J. Cannon. The editor of *Pearson's*, sensing the opportunity to capitalize on a compelling storyline, immediately sent Barry to Utah to do "quick work on a similar story."<sup>20</sup> Barry later claimed in his *Pearson's* articles that he had spent considerable time in Utah doing research and getting to know the Mormons, but he did not disclose his sources.<sup>21</sup> Isaac Russell disdainfully claimed that Barry had simply "stopped over between trains on his way to Reno" and had gotten almost all his material "from the Kearns office," refer-

ring to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, which was owned by Thomas Kearns,<sup>22</sup> but B. H. Roberts acknowledged meeting with Barry several times before his articles appeared and hoping that what he had said to Barry "would have influenced him" to write positively about the Church and its leaders. Unfortunately, Roberts was "utterly disappointed" in his hope that Barry would present a favorable view of the Mormons.<sup>23</sup>

In "Political Menace," Barry touched on themes that were repeated in most of the articles that came after.<sup>24</sup> He focused first on Joseph F. Smith, "an old man with five wives and forty-three children," who was a powerful millionaire in the Mountain West, a political friend of William Howard Taft, and a power on Wall Street. Barry did not find President Smith very impressive—he criticized his intelligence, his oratorical skills, his political abilities, and his business acumen. Barry concluded that Smith was not self-made but was powerful because of his position and because his people believed him to be in direct communication with God. In light of this, believing Latter-day Saints were prepared to follow his counsel even in political matters. Barry argued that, with political control over a large group of people with common beliefs, President Smith and his fellow Church leaders controlled Senate elections in Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming, and likely would be able to do the same in Arizona and New Mexico soon, and contemplated exercising disproportionate influence and even control in Nevada, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. As Barry wrote, "When they want one of these states, they will get it. Because of the obedience of its members the power of the Mormon Church is entirely disproportionate to its numbers."<sup>25</sup>

*Everybody's* and the *Cosmopolitan* subsequently also addressed the alleged growing political ambitions of the Mormon Church.

The account by Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O'Higgins in *Everybody's* described the Church's political activities from Cannon's first-hand perspective. He took credit for (and was certainly instrumental in) the political compromises that led to the Woodruff Manifesto in 1890 and the decline of polygamy prosecutions, the restoration of Church assets confiscated by the federal government under the Edmunds-Tucker Act, the legitimization of children born to polygamous unions, and, finally, statehood for

Utah, which came in 1896. Cannon argued persuasively that the United States government and the Mormon Church had entered into a “compact” by which the Church would end polygamy (even polygamous cohabitation of spouses married earlier) and would also end political control over its members. Though Church leaders in 1911 vigorously denied any formal agreement with the federal government, Wilford Woodruff had, in fact, announced the formal end of plural marriage, and he and others testified publicly a year later that that included the end of cohabitation. Church leaders also disbanded the People’s Party, publicly encouraging Church members to join the national parties.<sup>26</sup>

“Under the Prophet in Utah” provides rich background for the political environment of Utah in 1910 and 1911. Frank Cannon recalled his participation in the organization of the Republican Party in Utah, his elections as territorial delegate and U.S. senator, his shifts from the Republican Party to the Silver Republican Party to the Democratic Party to the American Party. He described the difficult 1898 election, when he was seeking reelection to the Senate. His father, George Q. Cannon, decided to enter the race against him at Church leaders’ insistence, with the result that the Utah legislature became deadlocked and elected no senator that year, leaving only one senator from Utah in Washington for the next two years. He told of continuing Church influence exercised by Joseph F. Smith, of the rancorous elections in which Cannon’s American Party battled against Church influence, and of the Church’s abandonment of Thomas Kearns as senator and its replacement of him with George Sutherland in 1904. Cannon described the Smoot hearings and the lies (as he perceived them) spoken by Joseph F. Smith in testimony there.

Most of Cannon’s masterpiece is history and autobiography and is fundamentally different from the series of articles that appeared in the other magazines. Only in the final chapter of “Under the Prophet in Utah,” which appeared in the August 1911 issue of *Everybody’s*, did he address the current political climate of Utah, echoing allegations already made by Barry that one man dominated Utah politics and meant to dominate regional and even national politics:



The Prophet of the Church rules with an absolute political power in Utah, with almost as much authority in Idaho and Wyoming, and with only a little less autocracy in parts of Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Washington, California, Arizona, and New Mexico. He names the Representatives and Senators in Congress from his own state, and influences decisively the selection of such "deputies of the people" from many of the surrounding states. Through his ambassadors to the government of the United States, sitting in the House and Senate, he chooses the Federal officials of Utah and influences the appointment of those for the neighboring states and territories. He commands the making and unmaking of state law. He holds the courts and the prosecuting officers to a strict accountability. . . . He has enslaved the subjects of his kingdom absolutely, and he looks to it as the destiny of his Church to destroy all the governments of the World and to substitute for them the theocracy—the "government by God" and the administration by oracle—of his successors in office.<sup>27</sup>

Much of "Under the Prophet in Utah" is a call to action, and Cannon completed his political diatribe by calling for his readers to end Joseph F. Smith's influence in Washington. Break "his power as a political partner of the Republican party now—and of the Democratic party, should it succeed to office—and every ambitious politician in the West will rebel against his throne." By breaking Smith's power over politicians and commercial agencies, the "civilized world" would join in overthrowing the "tyrannies" of the Prophet.<sup>28</sup>

To Alfred Henry Lewis, addressing the same themes reviewed by Barry and Cannon, a political and evil "viper" was lurking in the United States, the material kingdom of the Mormon Church. "The name of the viper—I take it from the mouth of the viper—is 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.' It lies coiled on the country's hearthstone, and asks only time to grow and collect a poison and a strength to strike." Lewis's venomous "Viper" articles described the political designs of the Mormons in even darker language than his fellow muckrakers had done. He continued:

Mormonism is growing and spreading and creeping over the face of this people like ivy on a wall, and all upon Mormon assumption that a day is surely to dawn when it will poisonously cover the whole. . . . Politically, [the Mormon Church] holds Utah in the black hollow of its hand. As a balance of power it controls, for what purposes it has

in view, Nevada, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Arizona, and New Mexico. Aside from these, it is of convincing political weight in both Oregon and Washington. No party, whether Republican or Democratic, would defy the Mormon influence in any of these states.<sup>29</sup>

Lewis went so far as to say that “the Mormon Church might in any campaign be easily strong enough to make or mar a White House.”<sup>30</sup> Lewis’s articles were illustrated to make the same points visually. In one cartoon, Joseph F. Smith, from the Salt Lake Temple, is pulling the strings of Reed Smoot, controlling his every move. Senator Smoot, in turn, is holding and pulling the strings of his fellow senator from Utah, George Sutherland, all senators from California, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming, Senator Clark from Montana, Senator Nixon of Nevada, and Senator Heyburn of Idaho. The only Western senators not being controlled by Smith and Smoot in the cartoon are those who either voted against Senator Smoot’s seating in the Senate or somehow managed to avoid voting on the issue at all.<sup>31</sup> In another cartoon, the *Cosmopolitan* drew on other Progressive caricatures by depicting Joseph F. Smith as an octopus, with his snake-like tentacles wrapped around railroads, mining, farming, schools, “the home,” and even the U.S. Congress.<sup>32</sup>

B. H. Roberts later wrote that “so personal and bitter were the *Cosmopolitan* articles and so viciously illustrated, that the writer defeated his own ends, or they brought the author and the publishers more censure than praise.”<sup>33</sup> Even Frank J. Cannon found the “Viper on the Hearth” articles to be sensationalized and inaccurate.<sup>34</sup>

### Charges of “New Polygamy”

Not surprisingly, all of the magazines included articles about the “new polygamy.” Evangelical Protestants, journalists, politicians, and many Americans had been expressing outrage at the Mormon system of plural marriage since before its official announcement in 1852. Outcry had quieted down for a time after the Manifesto, but disclosures made in the Smoot hearings of secret new polygamous activity and new disclosures by the *Salt Lake Tribune* from November 1909 on gave ammunition to writers wanting to expose improper practices and to sell magazines. The

assertions were given credibility by the LDS Church's earlier failure to disclose the secret practice of polygamy under Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois, and under Brigham Young in Utah. The marriage system had been instituted among high-ranking Church authorities in the early 1840s, but the practice was denied until its public announcement by Orson Pratt in 1852. New stories of Mormon leaders continuing to secretly encourage, enter into, and perform such marriages after 1890, supposedly in large numbers, while the Church asserted the practice had ended, seemed to mirror these earlier denials. Ironically, sanction of the practice by the Church president, at least in the sense of authorizing new marriages, appears to have ended in April 1904, and by 1910, Mormon plural marriage was in serious decline. Only a small number of Church leaders was continuing to promote the practice.

The muckraking journalists simply assumed that a substantial number of Mormons had continued to marry in polygamy at the behest of Church leaders, and they either ignored or did not fully appreciate the distinction between marriages solemnized between September 1890 and April 1904 and those performed after April 1904. Having made this assumption, each of the magazines attempted to explain why Mormons would secretly continue their practice of plural marriage after it had caused so much controversy and difficulty in the past. Richard Barry argued that polygamy was the "keystone to [the Church's] gigantic arch," and that Mormons had little choice but to continue the practice.<sup>35</sup> Just as the Church had led a "double life" in the early days of polygamy, when the practice was publicly denied, during the new "recrudescence period" since 1896, it now engaged in similar duplicity. Once Utah obtained statehood, providing Mormons with a level of independence and autonomy from the federal government, "the lizard of polygamy now basks in the sun of statehood, not at all ashamed and very little afraid." Barry wrote that, while polygamy and unlawful cohabitation had been prosecuted aggressively in the 1880s and even into the 1890s, now the state courts and county officers in Utah and in counties in neighboring states near the Utah border were controlled by the Mormons and no one was being prosecuted for these offenses.<sup>36</sup>

Though the allegations of new polygamy were overstated, the

most significant insights into the reasons for the continued practice came from Burton Hendrick's pair of articles in *McClure's* in early 1911. The articles were both titled "The Revival of Mormon Polygamy." Hendrick included a discussion of Mormon political control in the Intermountain West but, in fact, devoted his articles largely to the "revival of polygamy."<sup>37</sup> Hendrick had already written critically acclaimed exposés of, among other subjects, the life insurance industry and those who made "great American fortunes" in financing street railways, and he found the Mormon marriage practice at least as disturbing.<sup>38</sup>

*McClure's* was the most respected muckraking Progressive magazine and was widely known for its quality of writing and research.<sup>39</sup> The story of continued Mormon polygamy and reasons for it fit the model of investigative stories the magazine was known for. Unlike the articles in the other magazines, Hendrick wrote relatively little about the Mormons' alleged political ambitions or their supposed commercial ties to Wall Street. Instead, his two articles focused on polygamy and delved deeply into Mormon theology in an attempt to understand why the Church's leaders seemed (from his perspective) so intent upon maintaining the practice, even on a limited, secretive basis, when public and governmental sentiment was so opposed to the practice and had brought so much difficulty to the Church and its members.<sup>40</sup> Hendrick had interviewed First Presidency counselors Anthon H. Lund and John Henry Smith in the fall of 1910, and Lund had been understandably worried about the questions Hendrick had asked. Hendrick's articles only increased Lund's worries.

In his articles, Hendrick took pains to describe the history of Mormon polygamy, the theological underpinnings of the practice, the federal government's attempts to eradicate it, and the eventual official abandonment of plural marriage, with the attendant admission of Utah as a state. Hendrick argued persuasively that polygamy was central to Mormon theology. As he wrote, "One of the problems with which the American people will soon have to deal is the revival of polygamy in Utah. . . . Mormonism without polygamy largely ceases to be Mormonism. Its whole theological system, from its conception of the Godhead down, is pervaded with sensualism. The Mormon god is not only a just and a vengeful god, but he is a lustful god."<sup>41</sup>

In Hendrick's view, Mormon leaders had become convinced that, to appease the government and pave the way for Utah statehood, they needed to appear to have abandoned polygamy. They accomplished this through the Manifesto in September 1890 and in later sworn testimony in 1891, in which the highest-ranking leaders stated that the Manifesto meant not only that new plural marriages could not be solemnized but also that cohabitation by polygamous couples married before September 1890 must cease. As Hendrick saw things, in actuality, the apparent end of plural marriage was simply a ruse to get government officials and Americans generally to believe that the Church had abandoned polygamy. With the good will that followed the apparent cessation of polygamy, Utah quickly attained statehood and substantial autonomy. With this local control, Church leaders had quietly but quickly begun approving new plural marriages and openly counseled polygamist husbands to continue to cohabit with their wives. By the early 1900s, the Church had sufficient political power and financial wherewithal that few government officials would dare attack the Church for fear of losing the Mormon vote and, thereby, office. According to Hendrick, with the comfort of statehood and the necessary obeisance to the Church by politicians in many Western states, it was small wonder that not only did Mormon polygamous couples continue to cohabit but that Church leaders also authorized and performed new marriages.<sup>42</sup>

Much of Hendrick's second article was devoted to identifying general and local Mormon leaders implicated in the practice, including seven apostles, photographs of whom appeared prominently on a single page in the article. He detailed the late marriages of the seven apostles. Hendrick also wrote that plural wives were hidden from public view in "polygamous cities of refuge," including the Forest Dale suburb of Salt Lake City and Mormon colonies in Mexico, Canada, and even Hawaii. Hendrick referred to the Church as a "great secret society" with members "oath-bound, under the most frightful penalties."<sup>43</sup>

Frank Cannon's contributions to the exposures of new Mormon polygamy came mostly from his personal experiences. Frank was the brother, cousin, and close friend of post-Manifesto polygamists, and he had reason to know about the practice. He did not,

however, expose all that he knew. He incorrectly attributed the pressure to maintain plural marriage to Joseph F. Smith, and described his father, George Q. Cannon, as the principal force behind the Manifesto and as the person attempting to hold Smith in check, when in fact it was his father who until his death in 1901 spearheaded new polygamy.<sup>44</sup> In an important contribution to muckrakers' allegation that Mormons violated both the law of the land and that of their Church by continuing to cohabit with their wives, Frank Cannon alleged that there was no "tacit understanding" between LDS leaders and government officials that cohabitation could continue if new marriages ceased. According to Cannon, the Church had, in fact, made clear to polygamists shortly after the Manifesto that they were to stop cohabiting with their plural wives after the Manifesto and used the example of his uncle, Salt Lake Stake president Angus M. Cannon, as one who in fact stopped cohabiting with all his wives for at least a time after the Manifesto.<sup>45</sup>

Frank had been editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune* from late 1904 through July 1907.<sup>46</sup> His wife, Mattie Brown Cannon, died unexpectedly on March 2, 1908, at the age of fifty.<sup>47</sup> Frank then moved to Denver, depressed over the untimely death of his wife and discouraged by Reed Smoot's retention of his Senate seat. Despite leaving the *Tribune*, he maintained a close relationship with Thomas Kearns and editors and reporters at the paper and was kept apprised of (and no doubt aided in) the *Tribune's* publication of lists of "new polygamists" beginning in November 1909.<sup>48</sup> Cannon referred in "Under the Prophet" to the lists of new polygamists published by the newspaper.<sup>49</sup> More importantly, Cannon drew a distinction between the "old" polygamy practiced before the Manifesto and the "new" polygamy since. To Cannon, the child of a plural union whose mother was very much alive in 1911, the "old" polygamy under which his parents had married, though misguided and extremely burdensome to women, was "exalted" and "sanctified." The Mormon community respected the practice as a "sacrament ordained by God." Men openly acknowledged their wives and children. The "new" polygamy, on the other hand, was carried on clandestinely and those practicing it were protected



by a conspiracy of falsehood that is almost as shameful as the shame it seeks to cover; and the infection of the duplicity spreads like a plague to corrupt the whole social life of the people. The wife of a new polygamist can not claim a husband; she has no social status; she can not, even to her parents, prove the religious sanction for her marital relations. Her children are taught that they must not use a father's name. They are hopelessly outside the law—without the possibility that any statutes of legitimization will be enacted for their relief. They are born in falsehood and bred to the living of a lie.<sup>50</sup>

To Alfred Henry Lewis, the Church continued to sponsor polygamy as a means not only of enslaving women, but also of enslaving men and keeping all members from escaping its viper-like constriction around them.

Let us take up polygamy, and the reason the Mormon Church so clings to it. Mormonism . . . is a religion of gloom, of bitterness, of fear, of iron hand to punish the recalcitrant. It demands slavish submission on the part of every man. It insists upon abjection, self effacement, a surrender of individuality on the part of every woman. The man is to work and obey, the woman is to submit and bear children. Each is to be for the church, hoping nothing, fearing nothing, knowing nothing beyond the will of the church. Also, the prophet is to be regarded as the soul and voice of the church. . . . [The doctrine of many wives] serves ignobly to mark the church's members, and separate and set them apart from hostile Gentile influences. . . . The Mormon women are beings disgraced among the Gentiles; they must defend polygamy to defend their good repute. The children of polygamous marriages—like Apostle Smoot—are beings disgraced among Gentiles; they must defend polygamy to defend their own legitimacy. Thus polygamy acts as a bar to the members' escape.<sup>51</sup>

### **Mormon Alliances with Big Business**

The third allegation most of the Magazine Crusade periodicals made was that the Mormons and "big business" had developed a close alliance. Under the leadership of Joseph F. Smith, the Church had moved from its communitarian roots. It now controlled banks as well as much of regional commerce in the Intermountain West, and actively participated in some of Wall Street's trusts and monopolies, which much of Progressive America mistrusted. President Smith was the president of tens of businesses and was sometimes seen in the company of Henry Havemeyer, who controlled the Sugar Trust, E. H. Harriman, who incorporated the Union Pacific Railroad in Utah largely to curry



"To-day the Mormon Church, through Prophet Smith as 'trustee in trust,' owns huge blocks of stock in those petted gold-vampires, the trusts. There is Mormon money, millions upon millions of it—a golden Pelion on a golden Ossa—in Sugar, Steel, Lead, Copper, Standard Oil, Tobacco. There are Mormon millions in railroads, other Mormon millions in the stocks of New York banks."

Left page: *This extraordinary (and ridiculous) political cartoon, published as part of the Cosmopolitan's infamous "Viper" series, portrays "Prophet Smith" against the backdrop of the Salt Lake Temple. He sits in his royal gown bearing the emblem "Church Above State." Behind him are his court senators, Reed Smoot and Nelson Aldrich (of Rhode Island), one to pass "special Mormon legislation," the other to further "Tariff Law for Mormon Interests." Smith's crown is topped with the almighty dollar sign and the Angel Moroni stands on the end of his scepter. The Prophet is holding various stock tickers on his lap—from New York banks, the copper trust, the lead trust, Standard Oil, the steel trust, the tobacco trust, and the sugar trust. The men kneeling at Smith's feet offering bags of money are American titans of industry and finance: John D. Rockefeller, founder of Standard Oil; J. P. Morgan, organizer of Wall Street's largest combinations; Simon Guggenheim, mining entrepreneur and U.S. Senator from Colorado; Elbert H. Gary, chairman of U.S. Steel after whom Gary, Indiana is named; and Thomas Fortune Ryan, the tobacco king. Arthur Henry Lewis, "The Viper's Trail of Gold," Cosmopolitan Magazine 50 (May 1911): 831.*

Mormon favor, and other corporate titans. This new story of the friendship between the Mormon Church and "big business" added to allegations of the extraordinary material kingdom being developed by the Mormons. It was also clearly intended to increase interest (and outrage) among Americans, many of whom had grown to view "the trusts" as bad for America.

Richard Barry discussed the business schemes in which Mormon leaders and their Church invested: banks, mines, salt companies, farm equipment manufacturers, railroads, electric utilities, and newspapers. Joseph F. Smith, as "trustee-in-trust" of the Church's finances, oversaw and directed without review or audit expenditure and investment of the millions collected in tithing revenue.<sup>52</sup> Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O'Higgins focused not only on Mormons' payment of tithes and offerings, estimated at \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000 annually, which Joseph F. Smith controlled without accounting, but also on the cost to the LDS community of all the Mormon businesses Church members were directed to use. Mormons (and local Gentiles) were forced to use

Smith-controlled railroad and streetcar companies for freight and travel at above-market costs, Mormon farmers were forced to sell their sugar beets at below-market rates to sugar factories controlled by Joseph F. Smith and his cronies, Mormons bought insurance from companies whose president was Joseph F. Smith, Mormons banked with financial institutions controlled by the prophet, they read the *Deseret News* (described by Cannon as “dishonest, unjust, and mendacious”), and they bought their farm implements and clothes and amusement all from businesses controlled by Joseph F. Smith because they understood that these were “the Church’s institutions.” To Cannon and O’Higgins, these were not businesses owned by the LDS Church; they were owned by the “Prophet of Mammon” and his “courtiers.” According to the authors, not only were Mormons gouged by these businesses, they also needed to purchase their “commercial passports to heaven” by paying tithing and a broad assortment of offerings. This was not all; Joseph F. Smith backed “his financial power with his control of legislation.” He even made sure that no “foreign” intervention could endanger Mormon businesses by his “alliance with the national rulers in finance and politics.”<sup>53</sup>

To Alfred Henry Lewis, the millions available to the Mormon prophet in tithing and other revenue made the Church attractive to Wall Street, and titans of American finance such as “Mr. Morgan, Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Ryan” dare not “shove from shore, for any money purpose, without consulting Mormon convenience and getting Mormon consent. Mormon gold is a Bourse power, and Wall and Broad streets can be brought to their golden knees at a word from Prophet Smith.”<sup>54</sup> Lewis alleged that the wealth of the Church consisted of real estate holdings larger than the whole of France, Spain, and Portugal combined, gold that “outpowers the Steel Trust or Standard Oil,” and annual tithing revenues of at least \$20 million. And the Mormon Church was growing “constantly stronger, not weaker.”<sup>55</sup> To Lewis, Senator Smoot and his political allies made sure that industries in which Mormon gold was invested were “protected.” Lewis challenged Americans to understand that “unless met and checked, the Church of Mormon will one day—and that no very distant day—have this nation conclusively by the throat.”<sup>56</sup> Lewis concluded his memorable series of articles with a final warning to America:

Mormonism . . . is the Old Serpent, and the heel of every clean American should bruise its head. Its purpose is inimical, and it must either destroy or be destroyed. It is a political menace, a commercial menace. Most of all, it is a moral menace. . . . The battle should continue until all of Mormonism and what it stands for are destroyed. Then, and not before, will this republic be safe.<sup>57</sup>

### The Church Takes Action

Two types of actions were taken in response to the magazine articles attacking the Church and its leaders: (1) written defenses were prepared and published by various Mormon leaders and writers, and (2) leaders worked harder to make clear that no one was authorized to perform or enter into plural marriages and also began disciplining offending leaders and members. Measures taken internally began shortly after Richard Barry's second article for *Pearson's*, "The Mormon Evasion of Anti-Polygamy Laws," appeared on newsstands in the latter part of September 1910.

The First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Apostles had already been questioning what to do with Church leaders and members who had been involved in new polygamous marriages, at least those arranged after 1904.<sup>58</sup> Some apostles, such as Francis M. Lyman and Reed Smoot, lobbied President Smith to discipline, or at least release from Church position, all offending leaders. Smith was slow to do so, however, likely because of his unshakable belief in plural marriage as a religious principle and his own involvement in new polygamy between 1896 and 1904.<sup>59</sup> Reed Smoot was particularly sensitive to allegations of post-Manifesto polygamous marriages because evidence of these marriages had nearly cost him his Senate seat.<sup>60</sup> Although the *Salt Lake Tribune* had for almost a year been publishing lists of men who had allegedly taken polygamous wives since 1890, the discussion of new polygamous marriages in a popular national magazine was more worrisome to Church leaders.

Burton Hendrick had interviewed First Presidency counselors John Henry Smith and Anthon H. Lund extensively in September 1910. Lund recorded in his diary that Hendrick "was posted upon every [polygamous] marriage reported in the Tribune" and expressed his fear "that with the poor showing which we are making on those cases we will be represented in a bad light."<sup>61</sup>

With the pressure of the magazines bearing down, some apos-

ties felt increasing urgency to address cases of new polygamous marriages. In October 1910, just weeks after the first national article on continuing polygamy appeared, the Council of the Twelve discussed the question regularly in their meetings. Anthon H. Lund noted that “the Twelve are in counsel about the new polygamy cases. It is quite a problem with which we have to grapple.”<sup>62</sup> Discussions among the Council of the Twelve about how to deal with polygamists continued for a time on an almost daily basis.<sup>63</sup> The First Presidency issued a letter dated October 5, 1910, to stake presidencies reiterating that there could be no new polygamous marriages. The letter bluntly instructed stake presidents “to make it known to all the Saints in your stake that no one has been authorized to solemnize plural marriages, and that he who advises, counsels or entices any person to contract a plural marriage renders himself liable to excommunication, as well as those who solemnize such marriages, or those who enter into such unlawful relations.”<sup>64</sup> On Saturday, October 8, sandwiched between two days of General Conference, the First Presidency called a “special priesthood session.” At the meeting, President Smith and his counselor, Anthon H. Lund, referred to the letter that had just been sent to stake presidencies and again stressed the point that “no one was authorized to celebrate plural marriages.”<sup>65</sup>

The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve discussed releasing “all known polygamists . . . marrying since 1890” from all Church positions, but Anthon H. Lund suggested instead that they not present auxiliary organization leaders to be sustained at the October General Conference, and this “was agreed to,” thereby avoiding the more difficult question of who were “known polygamists marrying since 1890.”<sup>66</sup>

As Church leaders took these actions, they also imposed the first serious discipline of prominent Church members for involvement in post-1904 plural marriages. Judson Tolman, a stake patriarch in Davis County who had performed a number of post-1904 marriages and entered into such a marriage himself, likely in 1908, was excommunicated on October 3, 1910.<sup>67</sup> Nine days later, pioneer and Deseret Sunday School Union board member Joseph W. Summerhays was summoned before the Council of the Twelve to defend allegations that he had married in polygamy in 1906. Summerhays asserted that Joseph F. Smith had encouraged him



to take a plural wife in 1898 and had authorized his 1906 marriage (an assertion Smith denied to Reed Smoot). Perhaps concerned about whether President Smith had in fact secretly authorized the 1906 marriage, all but two of the apostles decided only to release Summerhays from his positions in the Church. Only Reed Smoot and Francis M. Lyman voted to excommunicate Summerhays.<sup>68</sup> On October 13, 1910, the apostles also decided to "summons M. F. Cowley, John W. Taylor, and H. S. Tanner before us to show cause why they should not be excommunicated from the church for marrying plural wives and performing said marriages." Disciplinary proceedings were commenced on November 9, 1910, against attorney and city judge Henry S. Tanner, who had served on the general board of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association for a number of years and had married his fifth wife in 1909. He was eventually disfellowshipped in June 1911.<sup>69</sup>

In the December 1910 issue of *Pearson's Magazine*, publisher Arthur W. Little took more credit than the magazine deserved for the actions taken by the LDS Church to halt new plural marriages. Little congratulated his magazine for the "practical results of the Mormon articles"—reportedly, the unprecedented excommunication of two Church members who had been involved in new polygamy and Joseph F. Smith's "special sermon . . . urging his followers to cease the practice of polygamy."<sup>70</sup> Little's information was not entirely correct, but he was correct in stating that the magazines were having an effect on Church actions against plural marriage.

Discipline of more important Church leaders followed shortly thereafter. John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley were members of the Church's Council of Twelve Apostles in 1905 during the Smoot hearings. They had evaded subpoenas from the U.S. Senate's Committee on Privileges and Elections and did not testify before that committee. Though other apostles had been involved in post-Manifesto polygamy, most were older and many were in ill health. Taylor and Cowley, however, were young and healthy and were widely (and correctly) perceived as being actively supportive of and involved in new polygamy. They had been asked to provide resignations in October 1905, in case the Church needed to divert attention away from the Church president during the Smoot hear-

ings, and their resignations were accepted and announced in April Conference 1906. Subsequently, both had continued to encourage members of the Church to marry in polygamous unions and they had performed many of these late marriages.<sup>71</sup>

In January and February 1911, as pressure increased in response to disclosures and allegations made by Burton Hendrick in the two *McClure's* articles that appeared in those months, summonses were issued for John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley to appear in trials for their Church membership before their former Quorum associates.<sup>72</sup> John W. Taylor was relatively defiant and unapologetic in his trial, and he was excommunicated on March 28, 1911, just as Isaac Russell was obtaining authorization to publish Theodore Roosevelt's defense of the Mormons described below.<sup>73</sup> Cowley was living in Oregon and though the summons for his trial was first issued in January 1911, a month before Taylor was summoned to defend himself, it took some time for the stake president in Oregon to find and serve Cowley with the summons and Cowley's Church trial did not take place until May 1911.<sup>74</sup> Following that trial, Cowley was, in the words of Joseph F. Smith, "deprived of all authority in the Priesthood," with the different treatment from John W. Taylor attributable to Cowley's "frank and full acknowledgements and explanations and pleas for forgiveness."<sup>75</sup>

Reed Smoot spent most of his time in Washington, D.C., and did not attend either John W. Taylor's or Matthias F. Cowley's Church trials. But he did continue to present his views to the First Presidency:

Held a long meeting with the Presidency and presented my view on the present situation on the new polygamy cases and the sentiment of the leading men of the country. The immediate cause of the renewal of the discussion of this subject is the many magazine articles on the Mormon question charging a return to the practice of polygamy by the church members. I again insisted that the only way the church can clear its self [*sic*] is to handle every new case of polygamy and remove [polygamists] from any position in the church. The church [and] church authorities cannot or will not be believed as to their sincerity in abolishing polygamy if men violating the rule and promise that it should cease are sustained as officers of the church such as Bishops and Presidents of stakes, etc.<sup>76</sup>

Reed Smoot's view, supported by quorum president Francis M. Lyman, began to be implemented more widely. Tellingly, the charges against Taylor and Cowley were that they had encouraged some men to marry in polygamy, had performed some marriages, and had themselves been married to polygamous wives since 1904 or 1905.<sup>77</sup> Some of the questions put to Taylor in his trial had involved whom he had encouraged to marry in polygamy, though he refused to answer many of these questions.<sup>78</sup> Two lists of those thought to have been involved in late plural marriage with Cowley were prepared before his trial, and the apostles asked him about many of these people—whether he had encouraged these people to enter polygamy, whether he had solemnized their marriages, and whom he had married in polygamy after 1904.<sup>79</sup> The Magazine Crusade articles had made it clear to Church leaders that the time for action had arrived. They now sought from these two prominent members of the Church concrete evidence against others who were involved.

Clearly, Joseph F. Smith had become serious about addressing new polygamy by authorizing Francis M. Lyman, president of the Council of the Twelve, to take disciplinary action against those who had persisted in promoting new polygamy since April 1904. Though the magazine articles did not cause this change in policy, the pressure brought by the allegations in the magazines hastened the discipline that was meted out. This process took time, but the genuine and far-reaching abandonment of plural marriage was wrenching. Local leaders and prominent members who continued to treat plural marriage as a Church tenet that could not be altered and to perform or enter into polygamous marriages were eventually released from their callings and ultimately from the Church. The "Mormon Fundamentalist" movement emerged from this background. LDS Church leaders' secretive actions during the limited "new" plural marriage between 1890 and 1904 (and, to some extent, beyond) and their careful distinctions between views and actions of "the Church" on one hand, and actions by the highest-ranking priesthood leaders on the other, provided fodder to fundamentalists' claims of divine authority for their marriage practices.<sup>80</sup>

### The Church Defends Itself

The defenses the Church made to the attacks in the magazines evolved during the twelve months in which the articles were published. Responses from Church leaders and members initially evidenced the not-surprising perception that the Church was, once again (in the eyes of the faithful), the subject of conspiracy by evil and designing men. Mormon reaction to the first of the articles (Barry's "Political Menace" in September 1910) was immediate. In a signed *Deseret News* editorial article (unusual for the day) entitled "A Reply to Pearson's Slanders," veteran Mormon journalist and attorney S. A. (Scipio Africanus) Kenner bluntly found most of Barry's factual allegations at odds with reality and criticized them in language no less colorful than Barry's.<sup>81</sup> The president of the LDS Church's Eastern States Mission, Ben E. Rich, who incidentally (and ironically) had been a close friend and political advisor of Frank J. Cannon in the 1890s and beyond, wrote a long-winded response, which he submitted to *Pearson's* for publication, attacking the article's character assassination of the Mormons.<sup>82</sup> Rich wrote that Barry's article had accused Mormons "of being disloyal to their country and falsely charg[ing] them with having taken an oath of vengeance against their nation." In fact, according to President Rich, Mormons "had given proof by actions which cannot lie [U.S. military service, including being killed in combat], that they are as true and as loyal to the Government of the United States as are any of the class of citizens that have sworn a professed alliance thereto." The mission president's submission was rejected because, according to Rich, *Pearson's* did not want to hear "anything [from] the Mormon side of the question."<sup>83</sup> Joseph F. Smith liked Rich's defense "refuting the scandalous charges published against the Latter-day Saints, and the General Authorities in particular," and had a version that was "a little toned down" published as a pamphlet circulated by Mormon missionaries.<sup>84</sup>

At the same time that the national articles were beginning to appear in late 1910, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published its latest list of Mormon men it believed had entered into polygamous marriages since the issuance of the Manifesto in September 1890. The list included 202 men.<sup>85</sup> On October 18, 1910, the *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* (which had been acquired by Reed Smoot's "federal

bunch" in August 1909, making an immediate shift at the time from supporting the Democratic Party to the Republican Party) reported that "the Tribune is certainly getting results from its campaign of defamation of Utah" and referred to *Pearson's* "campaign of slander," *McClure's* representative having headquarters in the *Tribune* office, and *Everybody's* having "been persuaded by the Tribune to take a hand."<sup>86</sup> The *Herald-Republican* further fanned the conspiracy theories among Mormons when it published reports that Kearns and other anti-Mormon elements in Utah arranged for the articles.<sup>87</sup> The *Herald-Republican* reports were based on a meeting Senator Smoot had with William C. Beer, a nationally-prominent Republican operative and lobbyist, in early December 1910. Smoot met with Beer in New York City in Beers' home.<sup>88</sup> Beer told him that the *Pearson's* articles "were paid for and if the Mormon church wanted them stopped or other articles in their place they could secure same by paying \$1,000 per month more than the parties had been paying for the Anti Mormon articles."<sup>89</sup>

While it was clear that the *Tribune* was supplying information to the muckrakers, and it is likely that at least Burton Hendrick was lodged at a local club at the expense of *Tribune* owner Thomas Kearns, it is unlikely that anyone in Salt Lake was paying for the articles. William Beer, who made his living as a political lobbyist and go-between, likely was hoping to get the Church to pay for responsive, positive articles in "certain magazines in the east that are for sale" and to extract a commission from these magazines for placing friendly articles.<sup>90</sup>

A major course change in the defense of Mormonism came in early February 1911, when Isaac Russell, acting on his own, decided to pursue a different response to the articles.<sup>91</sup> Utah-born Russell, known to friends and family as Ike, who at the time was a reporter for the *New York Times* and a regular contributor to several Progressive magazines, had been sending letters to the editors of *Pearson's*, *Everybody's*, and *McClure's* magazines, pointing out what he believed were inaccuracies in the articles. None was published, even though Russell knew most of the editors personally and had written regularly for *Pearson's*. As he reviewed Russell's letters, John Thompson, editor of *Pearson's*, began express-

ing concerns to Russell that some of the allegations in Richard Barry's pieces may not have been entirely accurate and Burton Hendrick corresponded with Russell about his *McClure's* articles.<sup>92</sup>

In early February, Russell launched a new plan, the idea for which he attributed to a "Guiding Hand."<sup>93</sup> He was unusually enterprising and over the years sometimes covered presidential campaigns. He was particularly impressed by Theodore Roosevelt. Russell appreciated the enormous talents of Roosevelt, but more, he was in awe of both the former President's fairness and his ability to focus on an issue and develop a strategy to affect it. He also believed that Roosevelt's "love of fair play" would make him amenable to helping the Mormons.<sup>94</sup> The muckraker sent the former President a letter, indicating that national magazines were inaccurately portraying the Mormons and seeking Roosevelt's help in responding. More important, Russell pointed out how Richard Barry and others had accused Roosevelt of having made a "corrupt bargain" with the Mormon Church in 1904 pursuant to which the Church

agreed to deliver to Roosevelt the electoral votes of Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho in exchange for three things: (1) a cessation of the movement and agitation within the Republican party for an amendment to the Federal Constitution giving to Congress the power to legislate concerning plural marriage and polygamous living; (2) a defence of Reed Smoot, Apostle and representative of the Mormon hierarchy, as a Senator of the United States, and for his retention of his seat in the Senate; and (3) a disposition of Federal patronage in Utah and surrounding States in obedience to the wish of the Mormon hierarchy expressed to the Federal Administration through Apostle Reed Smoot.<sup>95</sup>

Russell hoped to enlist the former President's help by playing to questions regarding his character:

I am writing in the hope that you will be so good as to assist me in an effort I am making to have the record made more straight as to Mormon events, by characterizing for me the particular phase of the general situation in which bitter enemies of the Church have constantly used your name.<sup>96</sup>

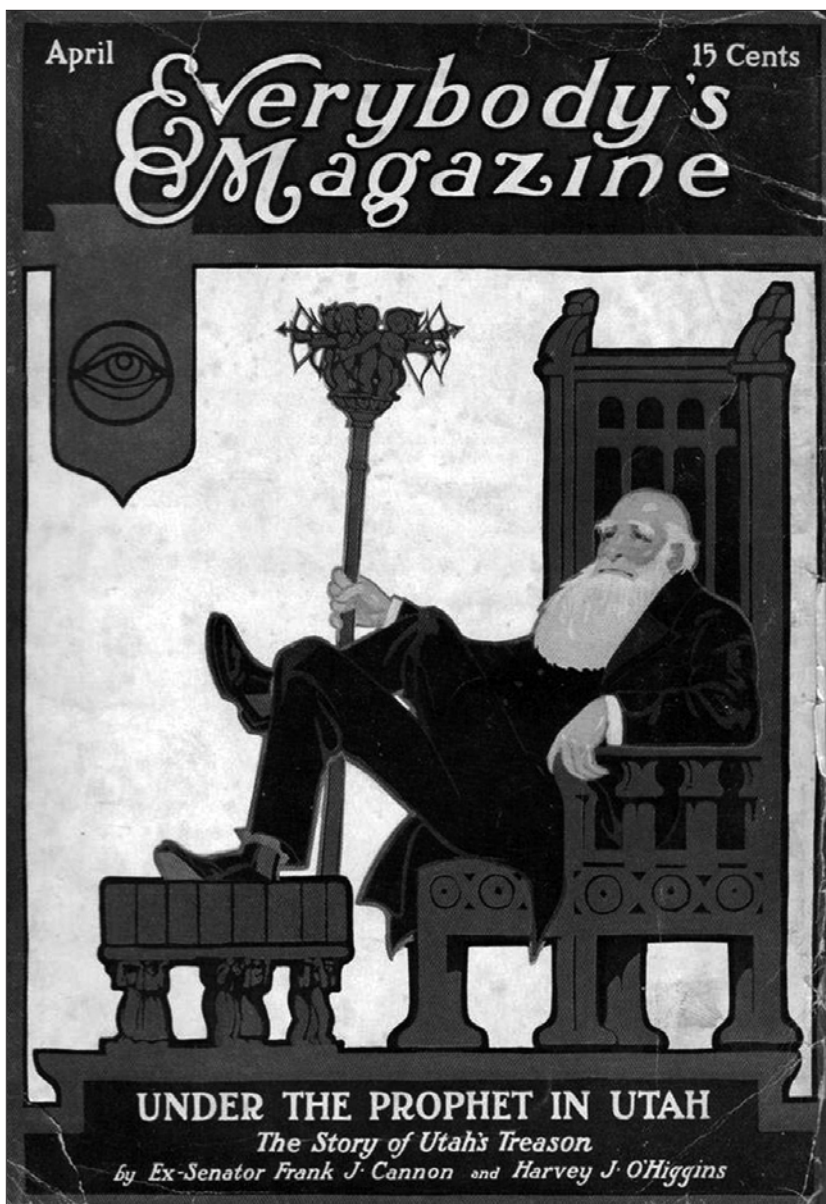
Roosevelt invited Russell to visit him in his office at *Outlook Magazine* for a brief interview. The brief interview became a



three-hour discussion in which the former President asked the *Times* reporter why this cause was so important to him. Russell explained that he had been raised as a Mormon in Utah and believed the articles to be largely false. "I know that these crazy magazine articles will only make a lot of good, intelligent Americans waste a lot of time worrying about conditions that do not exist and trying to correct evils that have long ago passed out of sight." Colonel Roosevelt, impressed with the reporter's resolve, directed Russell to tell him what he thought of the Mormons "and what the facts were as to polygamy." Russell explained his views, "giving him as true a size up of both problems as I knew how to." Roosevelt replied that Isaac Russell's report was entirely consistent with the Secret Service report he had obtained about the Mormons when he was President and "was just what [Reed] Smoot and [Ben E.] Rich told" him years earlier.<sup>97</sup> Senator Fred Dubois of Idaho, who had led the opposition to Smoot in the Senate, had accused the Mormons of secretly continuing to encourage polygamy. The things that Dubois had told him "were just like these things in the magazines. I found them false and fraudulent then and here they reappear."<sup>98</sup>

Roosevelt and Russell continued to correspond. After another in-person interview with Russell, Roosevelt was satisfied that the Mormons were being unjustly attacked and agreed to provide "a letter for public use, branding these things as infamies."<sup>99</sup> Russell gave a draft letter from Roosevelt to Ben E. Rich, by then president of the Eastern States Mission headquartered in New York City, along with a copy of his letter to Roosevelt. President Rich, who was incidentally the uncle of Ike's wife, Althea Farr Russell, sent the two letters to the First Presidency requesting their views on whether Russell should try to put the documents to use in a public relations campaign by the Church.<sup>100</sup>

Russell, again following a "Guiding Hand," then began persuading mentors Norman Hapgood and Mark Sullivan, editors of *Collier's Weekly*, the second-most popular American weekly at the time with a circulation of about 1,000,000,<sup>101</sup> to publish Theodore Roosevelt's letter and an accompanying article by Russell. Hapgood wanted to be sure that anything *Collier's* published would be entirely accurate and that *Collier's* "ought not to go into



*The cover of Everybody's for April 1911 featured an enthroned Mormon prophet. His feet rest on an ottoman held on the shoulders of carved women, no doubt depicting the downtrodden Mormon polygamous wives. In an embarrassing mistake, the seated "prophet" looks more like Joseph Smith III, at the time president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, than Joseph F. Smith, his cousin. Joseph Smith III was so incensed he wrote a letter to the editor.*

the Mormon game while all the other magazines are specializing on it, unless we contribute something of decided importance." Russell responded that "two apostles" had attempted to "evade the manifesto as to marriages of a polygamous sort" up to 1904. Russell also reported that, according to President Rich, since 1904, the Church "has a perfect score," that is, that no polygamous marriages had been performed with the approval of the highest-ranking Church officials since then.<sup>102</sup>

As the First Presidency was left to wonder whether Russell would be able to publish Roosevelt's letter, Alfred Henry Lewis's incendiary "Viper on the Hearth" articles began appearing in the *Cosmopolitan*.<sup>103</sup> The three articles in the *Cosmopolitan* maintained the powerful viper imagery throughout.<sup>104</sup> Each article was also written in prose that was not only inflammatory, but also colorful and engaging. Lewis's descriptions of the alleged temple "oath of vengeance," "destroying angels," blood atonement, polygamy, political ambitions, and unlimited financial resources<sup>105</sup> seemed outlandish to LDS Church members, but the large circulation of the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* must at the same time have worried the Church.

As Ike Russell sought to publish Theodore Roosevelt's letter defending the Mormons and as the Church's annual General Conference approached, the April installment of "Under the Prophet in Utah," which hit newsstands in late March, had included unusually controversial allegations about the Mormons and had sported a cover with a white-haired Mormon prophet sitting in a formal wooden chair over the headline "Utah's Treason." This issue also contained a two-page spread of photos of twenty-four members "of the Mormon hierarchy which enslaves men and women in polygamy, and holds the state of Utah under political domination."<sup>106</sup>

In Washington, D.C., Senator Reed Smoot watched closely the effects the articles were having on perceptions of the Mormons. He recorded in his diary that he continued to insist to members of the First Presidency that the magazines were having an effect and new polygamists needed to be disciplined. The Presidency responded (naively, in Smoot's view) that

They seem to think that the fact that the church has not approved or sanctioned the marriages [means] it cannot be held responsible for

them—many of them were authorized by President Cannon. The Presidency seem to be fearful of results on members of church if a wholesale action is taken. I am of the opinion non action will have a worse effect especially upon the young people.<sup>107</sup>

Smoot knew first-hand the devastating effects that national media reports could have and strongly urged the Presidency to prepare a forceful response to the articles that Smoot would “try and have the Associated Press carry in full.”<sup>108</sup>

About the same time, Smoot learned that Frank J. Cannon would soon begin lecturing nationally on the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits, and he urged the Church leaders to authorize him to have the non-Mormon editor of the *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, LeRoy Armstrong, prepare an article “for publication in some of the leading magazines on the life of F. J. Cannon” that would “discredit” Cannon by letting the American people “know about his true life and character.” Smoot planned to follow a time-honored tradition of *ad hominem* attacks on the attacker. On a more substantive level, Smoot continued to

call the question of new polygamy cases up for consideration. Began to tell them of the danger to the church of holding men entering into polygamy since the manifesto in office and stated it was my opinion that we should drop them from all positions where people are asked to vote for them. If we do not do so we cannot convince Pres. Roosevelt or the American people that we are honest or sincere.”<sup>109</sup>

At the same meeting in which Senator Smoot again voiced his view that the Church needed to respond aggressively, he spoke of Theodore Roosevelt’s letter to Isaac Russell and of Russell’s desire to publish the letter in *Collier’s Weekly*. Ironically, Smoot, who wanted in the worst way to “answer” the charges made by the national magazines, was concerned about Russell publishing Roosevelt’s letter in a popular periodical. The reason was simple. Smoot had read Roosevelt’s letter to Russell and knew that the colonel had included the following warning to the Mormons:

If the accusations made against the “Mormons” are as false as the accusations upon which I have touched above, there is no need of my saying anything. But let me most earnestly insist on the vital need, if there is the slightest truth in any of these accusations, of the “Mormon” people themselves acting with prompt thoroughness in the

matter. . . . The people of the United States will not tolerate polygamy; and if it were found that, with the sanction and approval or connivance of the "Mormon" Church people, polygamous marriages are now being entered into among "Mormons," or if entered into are treated on any other footing than bigamous marriages are treated everywhere in the country, then the United States Government would unquestionably itself in the end take control of the whole question of polygamy, and there could be but one outcome to the struggle. In such event, the "Mormon" Church would be doomed, and if there be any "Mormons" who advocate in any shape or way disobedience to, or canceling of, or the evading of, the manifesto forbidding all further polygamous marriages, that "Mormon" is doing his best to secure the destruction of the Church.<sup>110</sup>

Smoot worried about his friend Theodore Roosevelt's warning and was "in doubt of the wisdom of it [having Russell try to publish the letter] for we know there have been new cases."<sup>111</sup>

Smoot continued to stew over the matter, and continued to tell the First Presidency that something drastic needed to be done because the magazine articles were having an impact on national leaders and needed to be counteracted. The Presidency needed to "answer" the "Anti-Mormon articles" in the national magazines, but Russell's article was not the way. Smoot found President Smith's response disappointing, particularly in light of Theodore Roosevelt's warning. "[President Smith] does not understand the feeling of the people. The country will not accept excuses." Smoot concluded that "it is evident no action against the persons taking polygamist wives before 1904 will be taken." Smoot even worried that, if the Senate were to commence another investigation into him holding his seat, "I do not know how present position will be justified."<sup>112</sup>

The Church continued to feel it was under siege. Though Church leaders by then knew that *Collier's Weekly* intended to publish Theodore Roosevelt's letter, and they hoped that Ike Russell's ploy would be helpful, that had not yet occurred. Concern was sufficiently high that the First Presidency took the unusual step of issuing a powerful, direct statement denying many of the allegations contained in the muckraking articles.<sup>113</sup> Before the formal statement was made, Joseph F. Smith and apostle Heber J. Grant directed conference remarks to the magazine articles and those writing them, particularly Frank J. Cannon.<sup>114</sup> Smith asked

Smoot to line up media coverage for the formal statement. Smoot called Melville Stone, the manager of the Associated Press in New York, who told Smoot that, while he could not promise full coverage, he would try to print a synopsis of the First Presidency statement.<sup>115</sup>

On Sunday, April 9, 1911, in the closing afternoon session, the First Presidency issued its statement. Heber J. Grant read the statement in General Conference, likely because, though he was not a member of the First Presidency, he was both the best-known Democrat among the higher-ranking officials and now a monogamist, two of his three wives having previously passed away.<sup>116</sup> The First Presidency's statement, which drew the *Deseret News* headline "Slanders Are Refuted by the First Presidency, Misrepresented from the First," started with an attack on the attackers: the new articles simply repeated "old, stale and shattered fabrications" of earlier anti-Mormon writings. Though the Church was inclined to maintain its silence, "there are so many requests for replies, or at least explanations, for the benefit of inquiring minds" that "perhaps it is proper that something should be officially stated for the good of the reading public." The "mingled nonsense and venom" of the Smoot hearings was now being "poured forth from month and month . . . in present view and in popular form" in the magazine articles and the Church needed to set the record straight.<sup>117</sup> Turning to specific allegations made in the magazines, the statement flatly denied the substance of almost all of the charges leveled at the Church by the Magazine Crusade articles.

As to allegations regarding polygamy, there had been no formal pledge or agreement between the Church and the federal government; only states could make such an agreement. Tellingly, the statement acknowledged that Church leaders had agreed to end the practice in a petition for amnesty for polygamists delivered to the government in December 1891. The First Presidency's statement positively averred that "since [the Manifesto] the Church has not performed any polygamous marriage or authorized any violation of the law," although it recognized that "some persons" who incorrectly believed that marriages could be performed in Mexico had done so. They were stopped by Lorenzo Snow.<sup>118</sup> Lingering rumors of new polygamous marriages had prompted Joseph F. Smith to issue his second manifesto in April



1904. Since then, "such violations of these positive declarations as have been reported, wherever proven by sufficient evidence, have been dealt with by Church tribunals, and offenders have been disciplined or excommunicated."<sup>119</sup>

On the alleged political control exercised by the Church, the institution "never assumed to dictate to members politically, . . . never attempted to dominate the State, and has not done so since the [Utah State] Constitution was framed." In fact, Church members were encouraged to participate actively in the national parties. Mormons were patriotic Americans and had proven this, among other ways, in their service in many wars.<sup>120</sup> As to the Church president controlling tithing revenues and Church finances, the president did not "claim it or collect it." Rather, tithing was collected and decisions as to its distribution were made by local authorities whose actions are audited by committees "composed of men well known in the community for their independence and character, and business integrity." Little was said about the more damning accusations of close alliances between the Church and what Harvey O'Higgins referred to as "the great financial interests that have been called the 'the invisible government' in this country."<sup>121</sup>

Almost immediately after Conference, *Collier's Weekly* published Theodore Roosevelt's letter and Isaac Russell's accompanying "explanatory note." Church leaders (other than Reed Smoot) were ecstatic. Most of Roosevelt's letter was quite bland and was primarily concerned with setting the record straight on his alleged corrupt deal with the Mormons in exchange for their vote in his presidential election. The epistle did, however, represent genuine support for the Mormons from a prominent national figure—as Heber J. Grant commented in a celebratory meeting of senior Church leaders, "the effect of the Roosevelt article was as though one of the ancient Roman Emperors had written an epistle defending the early Christians, on the ground that Roosevelt is the most powerful figure in the whole world."<sup>122</sup> Far more interesting from a substantive standpoint was Russell's accompanying article, which was the only full-fledged national article published in response to the Magazine Crusade articles.<sup>123</sup>

In his "explanatory note," Russell invoked a new approach to

defense by admitting that the Mormons had not “made a perfect score in cleaning up their polygamy problem,” but he explained that “complete obedience to the edict abolishing it was not to be expected without the invoking of police powers and the administration of punishments.” He stated that, as he wrote in 1911, no apostle advocated plural marriage—of the seven *McClure*’s identified as continuing to encourage “new polygamy,” “five of them have been long dead” and the other two, John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley, had been disfellowshipped in 1904. Russell was right that no sitting apostle encouraged new marriages, but he was, of course, wrong about when Taylor and Cowley were formally disciplined by the Church.<sup>124</sup> On politics, Mormons historically rarely had much of a choice between candidates because at least one espoused views that all Mormons should be disfranchised. Overall, Mormons and gentiles alike in Salt Lake City had “perspective” on the allegations made by the magazines and all but a “small envenomed circle” knew that the charges were both inaccurate and unfair.<sup>125</sup>

B. H. Roberts had earlier referred to Russell inducing Roosevelt to write a letter as a “master stroke” and he was even more pleased with the published letter and explanatory note. Joseph F. Smith wrote Russell of his satisfaction at the publication, and noted that “we scarcely need say that the publication has without done, and will do, much by way of correcting the evil effect of the other malicious misrepresentations and falsehoods” against the Church and its leaders. More to the point, he asked Russell how many copies of *Collier*’s the Church could buy to send to “leading people at home and abroad” and whether the magazine would permit the Church to republish the letter and article in pamphlet form, naturally giving *Collier*’s credit.<sup>126</sup>

Reed Smoot was disappointed that, unlike Isaac Russell, he had failed to attract national publication of articles responsive to the Progressive magazine attacks. He had to settle for scathing articles published in the *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*. As the “Under the Prophet in Utah” articles continued (through August 1911), Frank J. Cannon became the principal target of Church counter-attacks and Smoot’s newspaper because Church leaders correctly worried that Americans might find Cannon’s personal narrative more compelling than the other articles and because they be-

lieved that Cannon, with the aid of Thomas Kearns, had orchestrated the entire Magazine Crusade. The most notable *Herald-Republican* article was "The Unspeakable Frank J. Cannon," which appeared a week after the *Collier's* article. The paper stated that "The rules of the postal service forbid giving an accurate description of Frank J. Cannon's character," but noted that Cannon had changed political parties a number of times, was a "despoiler of homes" who had "illegitimate children in the streets of Salt Lake at the present time," had "lived in the lowest resorts in Salt Lake and associated with those whom decent people are loth [*sic*] to mention," and had "betrayed every trust that was ever reposed in him, religious, political or commercial, and nothing has been too low for him to stoop to if it gave him funds with which to seek the sort or perversion that most appeals to his debased and corrupt nature. . . . He has been a libertine of the worst character, a drug fiend, and a drunkard."<sup>127</sup> The *Herald-Republican's* character assassination of Frank J. Cannon did little to respond to allegations he and others were making about actions of the Church.

*Collier's Weekly* received both praise and significant criticism for publishing the Roosevelt/Russell piece in April 1911. Russell later reported that the editor of *Life Magazine* wrote that "it was a sorry day for muckrakers' when [Roosevelt's] letter came out."<sup>128</sup> Mark Sullivan, an editor at *Collier's*, told Isaac Russell that "'Harvey O'Higgins was in here, and he was so mad he couldn't talk, he could only stutter. . . . The folks at McClure's had called up and had talked so intemperately that it had been necessary to hang up the phone.'"<sup>129</sup>

Perhaps responding to the anger expressed by O'Higgins but also trying to plot a neutral course, *Collier's* then published a series of letters. The first was from O'Higgins, who wrote in response to Theodore Roosevelt's letter, asserting that Joseph F. Smith was, in fact, fully aware of new polygamous marriages and that Roosevelt's letter did not add much to the dialogue about "new Mormon polygamy."<sup>130</sup> Both of these statements were true, but not particularly relevant. O'Higgins carefully avoided criticizing the hugely popular Roosevelt and he also did not address Isaac Russell's explanatory note in which Russell drew important distinctions ignored by the Progressive articles.

In an almost unprecedented rejoinder, *Collier's* then published a personal response from Joseph F. Smith to O'Higgins's short piece. This reply was also orchestrated by the erstwhile Isaac Russell, who had begun, with President Smith's blessing (and modest compensation from the Church) to work secretly against anti-Mormon activities.<sup>131</sup> Smith offered a simple explanation about continued marital relations between polygamous couples married before 1890: "No matter what vindictive individuals may assert, there was a general understanding when Utah was admitted as a State of the Union that if polygamous marriages were stopped the old relations would not be interfered with."<sup>132</sup> The "general understanding" may not have been quite as general as President Smith assumed, and the final cessation of new polygamous marriages was not quite as final as he implied, but his personal defense was now presented in the country's second-most popular weekly magazine and in a way that did not seem overly confrontational or defensive.

The Magazine Crusade made serious enough charges against Mormonism and was so widely presented that it required a powerful response from the Mormon community. At least three separate approaches were utilized in defending the LDS Church from perceived attack: (1) Isaac Russell's approach of enlisting an extremely popular political figure to publish a letter describing positive characteristics of the Mormons in an extremely popular weekly periodical with an accompanying article that expressed a mild *mea culpa* but generally defended the Church with what Russell believed were helpful facts; (2) the First Presidency's direct and official denial of most of the charges leveled against the Church, which Church leaders hoped would be covered by the national press; and (3) the *ad hominem* attacks made by the *Deseret News* and *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* against the writer perceived by the Mormon community as the principal culprit in fomenting the Magazine Crusade against the Church, which Smoot also hoped would be covered nationally.

Not surprisingly, Russell's level-headed, positive approach was the most successful in counterbalancing the critical articles. His willingness to acknowledge modest wrongdoing on the part of the Mormons with a believable and sympathetic explanation worked well. Also not surprisingly, Joseph F. Smith recognized

that adding Russell to an emerging public relations program would be beneficial to the Church and Smith soon employed Russell to secretly oversee defense of the Church from his station in New York City. For the following seven or eight years, Russell used his press connections to stop publication of critical pieces, arranged for Mormons to attend and positively disrupt anti-Mormon lectures and gatherings, wrote many letters to newspapers and magazines responding to articles critical of the Mormons, ghost-wrote articles and letters for Church leaders which appeared in leading newspapers and magazines, and disseminated positive stories about the Mormons, their history, and conditions in Utah.<sup>133</sup> Russell sometimes worked closely with James E. Talmage, who embarked on a positive publicity campaign of his own. Russell would suggest responses the Church should make to written criticisms and would react to ideas Talmage had for publication of books describing positive aspects of Mormon theology and practice. Both had a significant effect on the public image of the Church, though Russell's influence has been largely unknown.<sup>134</sup>

### **Why Did the Magazine Crusade Articles Appear at the Same Time and What Impact Did They Have on Public Views of Mormons?**

Questions persist about the Magazine Crusade. Why were so many articles about the Mormons published in different national magazines at the same time? In October 1910, before anyone knew the *Cosmopolitan* would publish similar articles, the *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* attributed the *Pearson's* series and the forthcoming *Everybody's* and *McClure's* articles directly to the *Salt Lake Tribune* and its owner, Thomas Kearns. According to the *Herald-Republican*, "*Tribune* management" and former Idaho Senator Fred T. Dubois, "disappointed, malicious, and vengeful, keeping in mind all the time their policy of 'getting even,'" had visited New York and "arranged with the editors of *McClure's*, *Pearson's*, and *Everybody's* for the campaign of defamation of Utah which is now in full swing."<sup>135</sup>

In fact, the different motivations for publication of the critical articles by the magazines were complicated. The muckrakers were simply doing what they liked to do: exposing improprieties (as

they viewed them) of institutions controlled by a small cadre of powerful individuals, creating public outcry for reform of those institutions, and selling magazines. *McClure's* and Burton Hendrick probably sincerely hoped to provoke changes in the LDS Church and its leadership, but the era of the great Progressive magazines was ebbing and *McClure's* was also focused on its circulation numbers. Frank Cannon was genuinely interested in telling his intriguing story, but Harry P. Harrison, his subsequent employer at the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, wondered if Cannon was not in it just for the money: "Frank Cannon, Utah's first senator. . . . Was he politician, reformer, agitator, or just a man out to earn a good living?"<sup>136</sup> Thomas Kearns and the *Salt Lake Tribune* clearly provided much of the information that went into the magazines other than the *Cosmopolitan's* "Viper" articles, but Mormon leaders were extensively interviewed by Richard Barry and Burton Hendrick and most of Cannon's information was first-hand or from friends and family who had reason to know about the matters on which he wrote. Cannon had also been the editor of the *Tribune* for several years before moving to Denver and much of the *Tribune's* information no doubt came from the former senator and from his contacts within the Church. Only Alfred Henry Lewis's *Cosmopolitan* articles appear not to have used much information from the *Salt Lake Tribune* or its staff.

What is relatively clear is that the decision of Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O'Higgins to write Cannon's story probably started the forces that resulted in all the magazines publishing articles at the same time. Harvey O'Higgins claimed that he and Cannon had spent a year in Colorado and Utah researching and writing "Under the Prophet in Utah."<sup>137</sup> In the meantime, Cannon shared with Thomas Kearns and others his plan to write an autobiographical series of articles. *Pearson's* learned of the anticipated series planned in *Everybody's*, thought the subject would appeal to its readers, and sent Richard Barry, in Denver on another story, to Salt Lake City to research and prepare a series of articles of its own. The magazine preempted the first *Everybody's* article by several months. *McClure's* was also alerted to the forthcoming "Under the Prophet in Utah" and, intrigued, sent Thomas Kearns a letter for assistance in preparing its own series of articles. Kearns offered assistance and *McClure's* sent its acclaimed Burton Hen-



drick to Salt Lake City to research his own articles.<sup>138</sup> Hendrick likely found some of the political and financial allegations against the Mormons hard to believe but he firmly concluded that the Mormons had no choice, based on their theology and beliefs, other than to continue to practice polygamy. William Randolph Hearst saw the commercial attention and success garnered by the *Cosmopolitan's* competitors for their Mormon articles and decided to have his magazine weigh in with Alfred Henry Lewis's Viper articles. True to its reputation, the *Cosmopolitan's* articles were outlandish, overstated, and yellow to the core.

LDS Church leaders were correct in assigning most of the blame of the Magazine Crusade to Frank J. Cannon with likely assistance from Thomas Kearns. Neither Kearns nor anyone else needed to bribe the magazines to publish articles about the Mormons—they recognized the continuing commercial attraction of the quirky Mormons and their quirkier practices, alleged ambitions, and commercial alliances as perfect fodder for Progressive analysis and criticism. The talented muckrakers' incendiary allegations of new, even darker depths of alien Mormon marriage practices, of unbridled political ambitions, and of financial greed made good copy and sold millions of magazines.

The articles were intended to provoke Progressive outrage at the supposedly un-American activities of the Mormons, and they succeeded in substantial measure. The editors had their writers subject the LDS Church to the same muckraking techniques and analysis that they had employed against New York trusts, the life insurance industry, the meat packing industry, Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science religion, and any number of other institutions and their leaders.

The Magazine Crusade re-ignited a period of substantial anti-Mormon activity in the United States and Western Europe. Much of American society had been willing to welcome Mormons to the country's mainstream when the Church officially abandoned polygamy and ended Church members' political unity. Utah was admitted as a state in 1896 and reports circulated of how industrious and good Mormons were. Mostly-favorable reports such as Ray Stannard Baker's 1904 article in *Century Magazine* contributed to this. Americans found much to be admired in Mor-

mon culture and even Richard Barry, Frank Cannon, and Burton Hendrick sometimes expressed positive views of the Mormon people in their articles at the same time they criticized and demonized Church leaders. Only Alfred Henry Lewis was consistently critical of everything Mormon.

The criticisms leveled by the Magazine Crusade articles against the Mormon Church contributed substantially to negative perceptions in Progressive America. Reed Smoot even worried at one point in 1911 that a new investigation of him and the Church might be commenced in the Senate and that he might not survive a second investigation.<sup>139</sup> The *Deseret News* reported in 1913 that “women’s organizations formally affiliated with prominent churches had hundreds of thousands of copies of the Lewis [Viper] articles reprinted and distributed.”<sup>140</sup> Frank J. Cannon and several others he recruited gave hundreds of speeches around the country from Chautauqua and Lyceum platforms and at National Reform Association rallies from 1911 through 1918 to hundreds of thousands of interested listeners.<sup>141</sup> The Church had to respond to the charges raised in the magazines and from the lecture platform and was fortunate that through the efforts of such men as Isaac Russell and James E. Talmage, it was able to counterbalance much of that negative publicity.

Though the Magazine Crusade slowed the assimilation of Mormonism into mainstream American culture and fomented continued mistrust and misunderstanding of the Mormon Church, which remains in small ways even today, its effects largely wore off over time. It hastened the demise of plural marriage, and defenders of the Church learned lessons in how to respond to attacks on the Church and began to develop the machinery of an effective public relations program, which helped to counteract attacks against the Church.

### Notes

1. In November 1910, when only two major magazines (and one minor one, *The Missionary Review of the World*) were publishing articles about the Mormons, what was then called *The New York Times Review of Books* noted the attention being focused on the LDS Church. “And Now It Is the Mormons,” *New York Times Review of Books*, November 19, 1910, BR 1. B. H. Roberts, in looking back over this period, referred to the arti-

cles eventually published in four national magazines in 1910–1911 as the "magazine crusade" against the Church. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 6:413–17.

2. Burton J. Hendrick, "The Mormon Revival of Polygamy," *McClure's Magazine* 36 (January 1911): 245.

3. Richard Barry, "The Political Menace of the Mormon Church," *Pearson's Magazine* 24 (September 1910): 330.

4. Alfred Henry Lewis, "The Viper on the Hearth," *Cosmopolitan Magazine* 50 (March 1911): 439; "The Viper's Trail of Gold," *Cosmopolitan* 50 (May 1911): 833.

5. Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah: The Prophet and Big Business," *Everybody's Magazine* 25 (August 1911): 222.

6. Isaac Russell, Letter to Joseph F. Smith, February 11, 1913, Scott G. Kenney Collection, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter Kenney Collection).

7. "Muckraker" is an ill-defined term used to describe certain reform-minded investigative journalists who wrote for Progressive magazines in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. The word was coined as a derisive term by Theodore Roosevelt, borrowing a metaphor from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. On muckraking and muckrakers, see Louis Filler, *The Muckrakers: Crusaders for American Liberalism*, rev. ed. (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976); Louis Filler, *Appointment at Armageddon: Muckraking and Progressivism in the American Tradition* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976); Harold S. Wilson, *McClure's Magazine and the Muckrakers* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1970); Robert Miraldi, *Muckraking and Objectivity, Journalism's Colliding Traditions* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1990); John M. Harrison and Harry H. Stein, eds., *Muckraking, Past, Present, and Future* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University, 1973); Cecelia Tichi, *Exposés and Excess: Muckraking in America, 1900/2000* (Philadelphia, Penn.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

8. *Pearson's Magazine* had a circulation in 1910 of 300,000–400,000; *Everybody's Magazine's* circulation in late 1910 was 500,000, but increased to 600,000 during the nine-month run of Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O'Higgins's "Under the Prophet in Utah" articles; *McClure's*, the pre-eminent muckraking periodical, had a circulation of over 400,000; and "the" *Cosmopolitan Magazine* (as noted below, it was always referred to this way) had a circulation of almost 1,000,000. Theodore Pe-

terson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 56; Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1885–1905*, vol. 4 of *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 492, 599, 602; Frank Luther Mott, *Sketches of 21 Magazines, 1905–1930*, vol. 5 of *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 81–83.

9. Barry, “The Political Menace of the Mormon Church,” *Pearson’s* 24 (September 1910): 319–30; “The Mormon Evasion of Anti-Polygamy Laws,” 24 (October 1910): 449; “The *Mormon* Method in Business,” 24 (November 1910): 571–78, 576–78. Barry had six years earlier burst onto the American journalistic scene with his reports and later a book as an embedded journalist with General Nogi’s forces during the critical battle of Port Arthur, Manchuria, in the Russo-Japanese War. “Seeing War on \$9 and His Nerve, Unique and Picturesque Experience of Young Richard Barry, Late of San Francisco, at the Siege of Port Arthur,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1905, 2:7; Richard Barry, *Port Arthur: A Monster Heroism* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1905). Barry went on to write scores of articles for many periodicals, stories for pulp magazines in the 1920s, and more serious volumes of history and biography such as *Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1942). He also wrote Broadway plays and cinematic screenplays over the years.

10. Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O’Higgins, “Under the Prophet in Utah: The National Menace of a Political Priestcraft,” *Everybody’s* 23 (December 1910): 99–104 (advertising section), 722–37; 24 (January 1911): 29–35; 24 (February 1911): 189–205; 24 (March 1911): 383–99; 24 (April 1911): 513–28; 24 (May 1911): 652–64; 24 (June 1911): 825–35; “Under the Prophet in Utah—The New Polygamy,” 25 (July 1911): 94–107; “Under the Prophet in Utah—The Prophet and Big Business,” 25 (August 1911): 209–22; 4.

11. Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1892–1904), 4:682–86; Kenneth L. Cannon II, “Wives and Other Women: Love, Sex and Marriage in the Lives of John Q. Cannon, Frank J. Cannon, and Abraham H. Cannon,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43 (Winter 2010): 71–74, 83–84, 91–95. Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon, A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999), is the standard biography of the senior Cannon.

12. One of Cannon’s trades was that of talented journalist and newspaper editor. He worked for a number of newspapers in the West, founded and edited the *Ogden Standard* in the 1880s, was editor-in-chief of the *Salt Lake Tribune* from late 1904 through mid-1907, and worked as an editor at two of Senator Thomas Patterson’s Denver newspapers,

ending as managing editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*. Cannon, "Wives and Other Women," 83–84; Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4:682–86. In addition to co-writing "Under the Prophet in Utah," Cannon also co-authored with George Knapp *Brigham Young and His Mormon Empire* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1913) and numerous articles and speeches. O'Higgins excelled at writing investigative muckraking reports, novels, short stories, Broadway plays (his play "Polygamy" was produced on Broadway in 1914–15), screenplays, and even American propaganda (he served as the associate chairman of the U.S. Government's Committee on Public Information and was the author of the "daily German lie" during the latter stages of World War I). Kenneth L. Cannon II, "'The Modern Mormon Kingdom': Frank J. Cannon's National Campaign Against Mormonism, 1910–1918," *Journal of Mormon History* 44 (Fall 2011): 62–63; "Harvey J. O'Higgins, Author, Is Dead," *New York Times*, March 1, 1929, 18. Michael S. Sweeney, "Harvey J. O'Higgins and the 'Daily German Lie,'" *American Journalism* 23 (Summer 2006): 9–28; Harvey J. O'Higgins, *The German Whisper* (Washington, D.C.: Committee on Public Information, 1918).

13. Hendrick, "The Mormon Revival of Polygamy," *McClure's* 36 (January 1911): 245–61, 449–64. Hendrick was widely regarded as one of the best Progressive magazine writers of his time. After a stellar time at *McClure's*, when he was widely lauded for his lucid writing and scholarship, Hendrick became editor-in-chief of Walter H. Page's *World's Work*. In the 1920s, Hendrick won three Pulitzer Prizes for history and biography. Filler, *The Muckrakers*, 197–99; Ronald S. Marmarelli, "Burton Jesse Hendrick," in John D. Buenker and Joseph Buenker, *Encyclopedia of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 3 vols. (Armonk, New York: Sharpe Reference, 2005), 2:517; "Burton J. Hendrick, Historian, 78, Dies," *New York Times*, March 25, 1949, 23; David M. Chalmers, "Burton Jesse Hendrick," in John D. Buenker and Edward R. Kantowicz, *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era, 1890–1920* (New York, N.Y.: Greenwood Press, 1988), 195.

14. Lewis, "Viper on the Hearth," *Cosmopolitan* 50 (March 1911): 439–50; "The Trail of the Viper," 50 (April 1911): 693–703; "Viper's Trail of Gold," 50 (May 1911): 823–31. The magazine was always referred to as "the" *Cosmopolitan*, even by B. H. Roberts and Reed Smoot. See Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 6:414; Reed Smoot, Diary, February 17, 1911, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo (hereafter Smoot Diary). Lewis was enormously gifted—not only was he probably the most powerful political journalist of his day, he was author of the extremely popular Wolfville series of cowboy stories for which he was widely known for cap-

turing Western vernacular; he was likely the highest-paid writer in the country; he was William Randolph Hearst's go-to writer for all of Hearst's publications; and he was not only a close friend of Theodore Roosevelt, but was also personally chosen by Roosevelt to edit the president's first set of presidential papers in 1906. Arthur W. Little, "Alfred Henry Lewis, Journalist, Raconteur, Humanitarian, Philosopher," *Pearson's* 33 (April 1915): 493–509; "Alfred H. Lewis, Author Is Dead," *New York Times*, December 24, 1914, 9; *A History of Cleveland and Its Environs, The Heart of New Connecticut*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1918), 2:133–34; Dumas Malone, *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928–58), 11:205–06; Alfred Henry Lewis, ed., *Compilation of the Messages and Speeches of Theodore Roosevelt, 1901–1905* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1906); Flournoy D. Manzo, "Alfred Henry Lewis, Western Story Teller," *Arizona and the West* 10 (Spring 1968): 12–13, 16–24.

15. This was not the first time Lewis used the "viper on the hearth" metaphor with respect to the Mormon Church. In his introduction to a 1905 edition of John D. Lee's writings, Lewis wrote that "the purpose of the present publication of Lee's story is to warn American men, and more particularly American women, of the Mormon viper still coiled upon the national hearth." John D. Lee, *The Mormon Menace, Being the Confession of John D. Lee, Danite, An Official Assassin of the Mormon Church Under the Late Brigham Young*, introduction by Alfred Henry Lewis (New York: Home Protection Publishing Co., 1905), v. Lewis appears to have had a personal animus toward the Mormons and to have believed that he did not need to spend any time, in Utah or elsewhere, doing research for his articles. He relied on a brief visit to Utah when he covered President Taft's visit there in October 1909. Isaac Russell stated that, of the writers covering the Mormons, "least prepared was Alfred Henry Lewis of the *Cosmopolitan* for he perforce had to mingle with the people long enough to cover the story of Taft." Isaac Russell, unpublished letter to *Life*, February 14, 1911, Isaac Russell Papers, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California (hereafter Russell Papers).

16. The magazines differed in style, substance, and intent. *McClure's* appears to have had a genuine aim of bringing about reform in its investigative reporting, while the *Cosmopolitan*, though publishing articles in the muckraking tradition, was clearly interested primarily in raising controversy and boosting circulation. The LDS Church was not the only religious institution attacked by muckrakers. These magazines and others had attacked other American churches. *McClure's* ran a long series of articles exposing the controversial background of Mary Baker Eddy and



Christian Science and her struggle to control the institution. Noted muckraker David Graham Phillips was equally harsh in his indictment of Christian Science. See Georgine Milmine, "Mary B. Baker Eddy, The Story of Her Life and the History of Christian Science," *McClure's* 28 (January: 1907): 227-42, 28 (February 1907): 339-54; 28 (March 1907): 506-24; 28 (April 1907): 608-27; 29 (May 1907): 97-116; 29 (July 1907): 333-48; 29 (August 1907): 447-62; 29 (September 1907): 567-81; 29 (October 1907): 688-99; 30 (February 1908): 387-401; 30 (March 1908): 577-90; 30 (April 1908): 699-712; [David Graham Phillips], *The Mother-Light* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1905). Ms. Milmine was a New York housewife whose articles were edited by Willa Cather and Mark Sullivan for *McClure's*. Wilson, *McClure's Magazine and the Muckrakers*, 303. Phillips's book was fiction, but no less hard-hitting as a result and was published anonymously because of anticipated criticism. See Filler, *The Muckrakers*, 299-300. Two preeminent muckrakers, Charles Edward Russell and Ray Stannard Baker, denounced New York City's Trinity Church for its ownership of, and failure to improve or manage charitably, a large number of squalid tenements in lower Manhattan. See Charles Edward Russell, "The Tenements of Trinity Church," *Everybody's* 19 (July 1908): 47-57; Ray Stannard Baker, *The Spiritual Unrest* (New York: F. A. Stokes, 1910). Interestingly, Baker had written a relatively (though not entirely) positive article about the Mormons in 1904 in *Century Magazine*. See Ray Stannard Baker, "The Vitality of Mormonism," *Century Magazine* 68 (June 1904): 165-177.

17. The advent of inexpensive magazines in the late nineteenth century brought these muckraking reports to the masses of the American middle class. Cheap paper and inexpensive half-tone illustration contributed to the significant growth in these magazines. Monthly Progressive magazines, which sold for fifteen cents in 1910 and 1911, found a ready audience for sensational stories about all kinds of institutions, including religious ones. Popular weekly periodicals such *Collier's Weekly*, which eventually published Theodore Roosevelt's defense of the Mormons, sold for ten cents, and this was dropped to five cents during this period to raise circulation. On the rise of the high-quality, inexpensive magazines that led to the extraordinary expansion of muckraking journalism, see Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1885-1905*, 3-14.

18. Russell, a Stanford-educated Utah native and grandson of Mormon icon Parley P. Pratt, had two years earlier left the employ of the *Deseret News* and moved to New York to seek his journalistic fortune. By the time the Magazine Crusade articles began appearing, Russell was developing a reputation as a first-rate reporter for the *New York Times* and

was regularly writing articles for such Progressive magazines as *Pearson's* and *Harper's Weekly*. Over the prior year, he had published numerous articles in *Pearson's*, including one that was mildly critical of Mormon involvement with "big business." See Ike [Isaac] Russell, "The West Vs. Harriman," *Pearson's* 22 (September 1909): 335–44. John Thompson, Letter to Isaac Russell, May 1, 1909, Isaac Russell Papers, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. (hereafter Russell Papers). The teaser title on the cover of *Pearson's* for this article was "What Harriman and the Mormon Church are Doing to the West." On Russell's unique career, see Kenneth L. Cannon II, "Isaac Russell, Mormon Muckraker and Secret Defender of the Church," *Journal of Mormon History* 39 (forthcoming Fall 2013).

19. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 66–68; D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890–1904," *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (Spring 1985): 82–103; Smoot Diary, September 8, 27, October 5, 13, November 15, 1910; March 14, 16, 31, 1911.

20. Isaac Russell understood from his contacts at several Progressive magazines (for several of which he wrote editorials and articles) that *Pearson's* had learned that Frank J. Cannon and muckraker Harvey J. O'Higgins were preparing a series of articles for publication in *Everybody's* and decided to "scoop" *Everybody's* with its own series. Isaac Russell, Letter to National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures, January 21, 1912, Kenney Collection. Russell's tale of Barry's being assigned to write about the Mormons was told second hand, but Russell's account is consistent with other accounts of Barry's preparation of the *Pearson's* articles.

21. Barry, "The Political Menace of the Mormon Church," *Pearson's* 24 (September 1910): 319, 323, 325, 329; Barry, "The Mormon Evasion of Anti-Polygamy Law," *Pearson's* 24 (October 1910): 449, 450–51; Barry, "The Mormon Method in Business," *Pearson's* 24 (November 1910): 576–78.

22. Isaac Russell, Unpublished Letter to Editor of *Life Magazine*, February 14, 1911, Russell Papers; Isaac Russell, Letter to National Board of Censorship, January 21, 1912, copy in Kenney Collection. Russell was engaging in some hyperbole in his letter to *Life*, and Barry did, in fact, spend a fair amount of time in Salt Lake City researching his articles.

23. B.H. Roberts, Letter to Isaac Russell, September 9, 1910, copy in Kenney Collection.

24. The term "menace" was a favorite of those writing articles criti-

cal of the Mormons and appears to have been useful in creating a negative image of the Church and its members. The subtitle of Cannon and O'Higgins' "Under the Prophet in Utah" was the "National Menace of a Political Priestcraft." Others included Lee, *The Mormon Menace, Being the Confession of John D. Lee*; Samuel Fallows and Helen May Fallows Williams, *The Mormon Menace* (Chicago: Women's Temperance Publishing Association, 1903); Bruce Kinney, D.D., *Mormonism: The Islam of America* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1912), 83 (stating that Mormons "constitute the greatest menace to our American and Christian institutions"); see also Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormon Violence in the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

25. Barry, "Political Menace," 324, 330.

26. Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah," *Everybody's* 23 (December 1910): 724; 24 (February 1911): 189–201; 24 (March 1911): 389–90; 24 (June 1911): 662–63.

27. Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah—The Prophet and Big Business," *Everybody's* 55 (August 1911), 221.

28. *Ibid.*, 221–222.

29. Lewis, "Viper on the Hearth," 444.

30. *Ibid.*, 450.

31. Lewis, "Trail of the Viper," 701. Only Idaho's Fred T. Dubois, who was a lame duck, having been defeated in early 1907 by an Idaho legislature that was dominated by Republicans elected largely by the Mormon vote, and Nevada's Francis Newlands voted not to seat Smoot. The remaining Western senators, Colorado's Senators Patterson and Teller, and Senator Thomas Carter of Montana, conveniently found a way to avoid voting. *Congressional Record*, 59th Cong., 2d Sess., February 20, 1907, pt. 4: 3,429–3,430.

32. Lewis, "Viper on the Hearth," 445. The octopus was used by political cartoonists of the day to depict "evil" combinations and political and corporate power such as the Rockefellers' Standard Oil Company and other trusts. Such illustrations included "The Menace of the Hour," *The Verdict*, January 30, 1899 (subway franchise, electric trust, Standard Oil); "Next," *Puck*, September 7, 1904 (Standard Oil and its quarries, which included the U.S. Capitol, the White House, shipping industries, and various state capitols); and "Before the Trojan Horse is Admitted," *Chicago Daily News*, February 3, 1909, all available at [www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/power/text1/octopusimages.pdf](http://www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/power/text1/octopusimages.pdf) (accessed January 2013).

33. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 6:414. Reed

Smoot took immediate notice of the *Cosmopolitan* articles when they first appeared. On February 17, 1911, Smoot noted in his diary that “the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in its March issue has the first of a series of Anti-Mormon articles by Lewis.” Smoot Diary, February 17, 1911.

34. Frank J. Cannon, Letter to Harry P. Harrison, February 10, 1911, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.

35. Barry, “The Mormon Evasion of the Anti-Polygamy Laws,” *Pearson’s* 24 (October 1910): 445, 446. In spite of his criticisms of Mormons and their leaders, Barry was quite taken with the Mormons. He wrote, “were it not for polygamy, and the political despotism which the church maintains to protect that polygamy, no true American could have reasons to criticize the Mormon people, most of whom are hard-working, thrifty and God-fearing.” *Ibid.*, 446. He repeated this view in his third and last article. To Barry, it was because they were so good, and so simple, that they made such a “wonderful rich field for the grafter, the schemer, the hypocrite.” Barry, “The Mormon Method in Business,” *Pearson’s* 24 (November 1910): 576. Though Barry was probably sincere in his admiration for the common Mormon, he also used this as a literary device often used by muckrakers in elevating the common man over his bad acting leaders.

36. Barry, “The Mormon Evasion of the Anti-Polygamy Laws,” 446, 447–50.

37. Hendrick, “The Revival of Mormon Polygamy,” *McClure’s* 36 (January 1911): 245–62; 36 (February 1911): 449–464.

38. Hendrick, “The Story of Life Insurance,” *McClure’s* 27 (May 1906): 36–49; 27 (June 1906): 157–70; 27 (July 1906): 237–52; 27 (August 1907): 400–12; 27 (September 1907): 539–50; 27 (October 1907): 659–71; 28 (November 1907): 61–73; Hendrick, “Great American Fortunes and Their Making, Street-Railway Financiers,” *McClure’s* 30 (November 1907): 33–48; 30 (December 1907): 236–50, 30 (January 1907): 323–38.

39. *McClure’s* became almost synonymous with high quality muckraking journalism. Wilson, *McClure’s Magazine and the Muckrakers*; Filler, *Appointment at Armageddon*, 248, 251.

40. Hendrick, “The Mormon Revival of Polygamy,” *McClure’s* 36 (January 1911): 245. In the January issue, Hendrick included a sidebar article discussing controversial Mormon doctrinal tenets such as plurality of gods, God having a body of flesh and bones, Adam being the god of this world, God as a polygamist, Christ as a polygamist, and polygamy being essential to salvation, all quoting from nineteenth-century Mormon sources such as the *Journal of Discourses*, *Mormon Doctrine of Deity*,

and Orson Spencer's *Letters*. Hendrick, "Mormon Theological Doctrine," *McClure's* 36 (January 1911): 360-62.

41. Hendrick, "The Mormon Revival of Polygamy," 245.

42. *Ibid.*, 252-261.

43. *Ibid.*, 451-58, 461.

44. Though George Q. Cannon appears to have taken the lead in promoting new polygamy, Joseph F. Smith was fully supportive of these efforts, at least until 1904. See Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages," 82-103. Frank Cannon accused Joseph F. Smith of encouraging the plural marriage of Frank's brother, Abram, in 1896. See Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah," *Everybody's* 24 (March 1911): 390. In fact, as Frank knew well, it was his father who asked Abram to marry Lillian Hamlin, who had been waiting for David H. Cannon, a younger brother of Frank and Abram, to return from his mission. David died in Silesia while on his mission and George Q. Cannon wanted another of his sons to marry Lillian to "raise seed" to David. Ultimately, George Q. requested Abram to marry Lillian and Abram obediently complied. See Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages," 78; B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 237-38 n67.

45. Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah," *Everybody's* 24 (February 1911): 194-195. Even Heber J. Grant wondered whether he was supposed to continue living with his plural wives. Abraham H. Cannon Diary, Perry Special Collections, November 11, 1891; Edward Leo Lyman, ed., *Candid Insights of a Mormon Apostle: The Diaries of Abraham H. Cannon, 1889-1895* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2010), 269.

46. "Cannon Quits the Tribune," *Deseret Evening News*, July 30, 1907, 2.

47. "Death Claims Mrs. F. J. Cannon," *Deseret Evening News*, March 2, 1908, 6.

48. In the Chautauqua and Lyceum lectures Cannon gave later in the 1910s, he disclosed that the *Tribune* had spent \$60,000 in obtaining evidence of cases of new polygamous marriages. Address given by Frank J. Cannon at the Baptist Church in Independence, Missouri, February 25, 1915, typescript, 19, Archives of the Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

49. Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah-The New Polygamy," *Everybody's* 25 (July 1911): 105.

50. *Ibid.*, 102.

51. Alfred Henry Lewis, "Trail of the Viper," *Cosmopolitan* 50 (April 1911): 700.

52. Barry, "The Mormon Method of Doing Business," *Pearson's* 24 (November 1910): 572–577.

53. Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah—The Prophet and Big Business," *Everybody's* 25 (August 1911): 209–215. The cover page of this article shows Joseph F. Smith as the cashier and lists a sugar company, a salt company, banks, a department store, a farm-implements business, insurance companies, and a newspaper, all of which had Joseph F. Smith as president.

54. "Viper's Trail of Gold," 832.

55. "Viper on the Hearth," 446, 447; "Viper's Trail of Gold," 825.

56. "Viper's Trail of Gold," 832.

57. *Ibid.*, 831, 833. Lewis's allegations are so sensationalized that it is almost impossible to take them seriously. Unfortunately, many Americans reading them in the country's most popular Progressive magazine had little reason to doubt them.

58. In July 1909, Francis M. Lyman had been appointed as chair of a committee charged with investigating and dealing with instances of new polygamous marriages. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 66–68. The so-called "Lyman Committee" originally consisted of Francis M. Lyman, Heber J. Grant, and John Henry Smith.

59. Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages," 82–103.

60. Smoot Diary, September 8, 27, October 5, 13, November 15, 1910, March 16, 31, 1911.

61. John P. Hatch, ed., *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890–1921* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), 440, entry of September 27, 1910. Reed Smoot recorded in his diary that Hendrick had "interviewed a great many of the leading men of the church and he is getting his inspiration from the Salt Lake Tribune." Smoot Diary, October 6, 1910.

62. *Ibid.*, entry of October 1, 1910.

63. Jean Bickmore White, ed., *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1990), 657, entry of October 5, 12, November 8, 16, 1910; *Danish Apostle*, entries of October 1, 8, 10, 12; Smoot Diary, November 15, 16, 1910.

64. Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and John Henry Smith, Letter to Stake Presidents and Counselors, October 5, 1910, copy in Russell Papers. A more accessible version is included in James R. Clark, comp.,



*Messages of the First Presidency*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–1975), 4:218.

65. Ibid.; *Danish Apostle*, 440–41, entry of October 8, 1910; Reed Smoot Diary, October 8, 1910. It is telling that it was the Twelve Apostles who held the membership trials against these men.

66. Smoot Diary, October 5, 1910. Smoot made the motion to release known post-Manifesto polygamists. In fact, general officers of Church auxiliaries were presented for a sustaining vote, but boards of the auxiliaries were not presented in October 1910 Conference. *Conference Report*, October 9, 1910, 114–16.

67. Smoot Diary, October 1, 3, 5, 1910; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 291, 422.

68. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Encyclopedia, A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Co., 1901–36), 4:64–65; Smoot Diary, October 8, 12, 1910; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 314.

69. Smoot Diary, October 3, 13, November 9, 1910; *Church, State, and Politics* [John Henry Smith], entry of November 8, 1910; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 291; *Report of the Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, October 6, 1902 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1902), 84 (hereafter *Conference Report*); *Conference Report*, October 6, 1908, 125. An earlier incident involving Henry S. Tanner and polygamy was described in "Under the Prophet in Utah." Samuel Russell, incidentally the older brother of journalist Isaac Russell, returned from a mission in early 1902. He eventually learned that the young woman he intended to marry upon his return, deposed apostle Moses Thatcher's intelligent, lovely, and well-educated daughter, Clarice Thatcher, had in his absence married Tanner in December 1901 as a plural wife. Sam Russell was furious, and when Tanner's name was submitted at a stake conference to be sustained as a home missionary, Russell voted against sustaining Tanner on the basis that he had violated the Manifesto's prohibition on new marriages. "Missionaries Return Home," *Ogden Standard*, January 1, 1902, 8; "Judge Is Charged with Polygamy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 10, 1903, 1. Frank Cannon asserted that Russell was ostracized for his action, a charge with which Isaac Russell took umbrage in disputing the accuracy of the allegation in "Under the Prophet in Utah." Ike Russell claimed that, after his vote not to sustain Tanner, Sam Russell was taken aside by Salt Lake Stake President Angus M. Cannon and chastised for such a brazen public act of criticizing a Church official, but that Sam Russell had gone on to become a

prominent attorney in Salt Lake while Henry S. Tanner had come under public criticism. Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah—The New Polygamy," 95–96; Isaac Russell, Letter to "Uncle" Ben E. Rich, November 21, 1911, Kenney Collection.

70. "Reflections of the Editor," *Pearson's* 24 (December 1910): 834.

71. Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 108–109, 144; Drew Briney, *Apostles on Trial* (N.p.: Hindsight Publications, 2012), 81–85, 92–142, 151–52, 174–97.

72. Summons to Elder Matthias Cowley, January 14, 1911; Summons to Elder Matthias F. Cowley, February 24, 1911; Summons to Elder John W. Taylor, February 15, 1911; copies in Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 89, 167, 173. The summonses indicated that the trials would be held in the Salt Lake Temple. Each was on First Presidency letterhead, though each was signed by Francis M. Lyman, president of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

73. Transcript of John W. Taylor's membership trial, February 22, March 11, 1911, Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 92–138. The decision of the council is on First Presidency letterhead and signed by Francis M. Lyman. Francis M. Lyman, Letter, March 20, 1911, copy in Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 141. It is not clear from the face of the letter whether it was sent to Taylor.

74. Francis M. Lyman, Letter to President F. S. Bramwell, January 14, 1911; Franklin S. Bramwell, Letter to President Francis M. Lyman, January 22, 1911; Francis M. Lyman, Letter to President Franklin S. Bramwell, January 25, 1911; copies in Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 165, 169; Transcript of Matthias F. Cowley's membership trial, May 10, 1911, Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 178–95.

75. Joseph F. Smith, Letter to Isaac Russell, June 15, 1911, Joseph F. Smith Letterpress Copybooks, Richard E. Turley, ed., *Selected Collections of the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2 vols., DVD (Provo: BYU Press, 2002), 1:30. The official record documenting the action taken against Cowley stated that the former apostle had been disciplined for "insubordination to the government and discipline of the Church." Francis M. Lyman, undated letter, copy in Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 196.

76. Smoot Diary, March 14, 1911, Perry Special Collections.

77. In Taylor's trial, the charges were that he had engaged in the relevant actions "within the last six years." Transcript of John W. Taylor's Trial, February 22, 1911, Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 93. In Cowley's trial,

Francis Lyman read a letter dated May 5, 1904 that he wrote to John W. Taylor, which he believed also had been delivered to Matthias F. Cowley, "calling [their] attention to the [second manifesto] adopted by the later General Conference of the Church; . . . that all may be given to distinctly understand that infractions of the law in regard to plural marriage are transgressions against the Church, punishable by excommunication." Transcript of Matthias F. Cowley's trial, May 10, 1911, Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 181.

78. Transcript of John W. Taylor's trial, February 22, March 11, 1911, Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 94-108, 112-38.

79. Two lists of men and women alleged to have been involved in post-1904 polygamous marriages were prepared to ask Cowley about them. Both lists are on First Presidency letterhead. List, n.d., titled "Ask Brother Cowley about," with 62 names; List, February 24, 1911, titled "Roll of those assisted by M. F. Cowley into plural marriage," with 28 names, copies in Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 174, 176. Transcript of Matthias F. Cowley's trial, May 10, 1911, Briney, *Apostles on Trial*, 178-95.

80. D. Michael Quinn, "Plural Marriage and Mormon Fundamentalism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31 (Summer 1998): 9-11; Ken Driggs, "Twentieth-Century Polygamy and Fundamentalist Mormons in Southern Utah," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31 (Winter 1991): 44-48.

81. S. A. Kenner, "A Reply to Pearson's Slanders," *Deseret News*, August 31, 1910, 4. Kenner edited a number of Utah newspapers, wrote an important early book on Utah, and was also an attorney who had served as both a city and a federal prosecutor. Jensen, "Scipio Africanus Kenner," 2:278.

82. Ben E. Rich, "Are the Mormons Loyal to the Government? A Rejected Manuscript, An Answer to a Charge that Appeared in Pearson's Magazine" (New York: Eastern States Mission, 1910), 3, 26-29. Cannon wrote a good deal about his "intimate friend" Ben E. Rich in the magazine and book versions of "Under the Prophet in Utah." Rich had been Cannon's campaign manager in his unsuccessful campaign for Utah Territorial Delegate to Congress in 1892, may have run his successful 1894 campaign for the same office, likely managed his successful run for the U.S. Senate in 1896, and was intended to be Cannon's campaign manager in his re-election bid in 1898, when Rich was called as president of the Southern States Mission (Cannon characteristically accused Church leaders of calling Rich specifically to avoid having him manage Cannon's re-election campaign, a charge which may well have been true). Rich and Cannon were close enough that Rich named his son born in

1896 Frank Cannon Rich. Family group records of Benjamin Erastus Rich and Diana Farr, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) (accessed January 2012); Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O'Higgins, *Under the Prophet in Utah: The National Menace of a Political Priestcraft* (Boston, C. M. Clark Publishing Co., 1911), 117, 120 (these particular passages were not published in the magazine version to save space); "Under the Prophet in Utah," *Everybody's* 24 (March 1911): 385; 24 (April 1911): 522; 24 (June 1911): 829–30; 25 (July 1911): 98.

83. Rich, "Are the Mormons Loyal to the Government?" 2.

84. Ibid.; Joseph F. Smith, Letter to Ben E. Rich, September 21, 1910, Joseph F. Smith Letterpress Copybooks, Turley, ed., *Selected Collections*, 1:30. Isaac Russell also sent *Pearson's* a letter critical of Barry's article, but, like Rich's manuscript, it was not published. B. H. Roberts noted in a letter to Russell that "I was perfectly delighted with what you had to say on the Barry article and would be more than pleased if it were possible to have a copy of your letter to the Editor of *Pearson's*." B. H. Roberts, Letter to Isaac Russell, September 9, 1910, Kenney Collection.

85. "The List and the Manifesto," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 8, 1910, 6.

86. *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 18, 1910, 4.

87. "Thomas Kearns and Frank J. Cannon," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 23, 1911, 4; "Mr. Miller's Letter," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 30, 1911, 4.

88. Smoot Diary, December 8, 1910.

89. Ibid. There is no evidence that Kearns made any payments to the Progressive magazines, but it appears that Kearns talked to at least one or two of the magazines and certainly made the *Tribune* offices home for most of the national journalists who came to Salt Lake to do research for their articles. Smoot's visit with Beer was also important because of what Beer told him about Heber J. Grant. If Beer's account of this visit is accurate (which it may not be), important insights into the political views of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles are gleaned. As Beer related the story to Smoot, Grant had visited him "to see what was the best policy for the Mormon people to follow regarding their support for Taft or Roosevelt." Grant also asked Beer "what standing [Smoot] had in Washington and [what] people thought of [Smoot]." According to Smoot's diary entry, Beer informed Grant that he, Beer, thought better of Smoot than anyone else in the Senate and "recited to [Grant] the wonderful way [Smoot] carried [himself] during the fight that was made against [him]. . . ." Beer told Smoot that he was "dumbfounded" to learn that Grant's reaction was "very distasteful" because Grant believed that Smoot "did not repre-

sent the will or ideas of the Utah people and it would not be long until there would be a sickening thud heard that would end [Smoot's] career in Washington." Grant also told Beer that Smoot "had Lorded it over the people long enough and they were getting about ready to have a Democratic legislature." Finally, Beer divulged that he was telling Smoot about his conversations with Grant because "Beer thought I ought to know the bitter feeling against me by Heber J. Grant. This he gave to me in confidence." Smoot Diary, December 8, 1910. This remarkable conversation between Beer and Smoot and Beer's report of an equally remarkable conversation between Beer and Grant provide unsurprising evidence that the LDS Church was not as politically unified as Richard Barry and other writers asserted.

90. The referenced language is from a letter from Isaac Russell to B. H. Roberts, May 13, 1911, Kenney Collection. Russell told Roberts that such magazines were interested in publishing favorable stories for a price and that he had learned from Eastern States Mission President Ben E. Rich that the *National Magazine* had already made such an offer which the Church had seriously considered. Russell also told Roberts that "the Church will make an awful sad mistake if it tries to pay any magazine to publish 'its side'" because "we can get all the publicity in the world for all that's fair and square about us." Russell concluded by telling Roberts that he sincerely hoped the Church would not bow to such a measure "for it will surely get us into trouble, and end disastrously for us, and make one more sad chapter of things we have to be sorry for." Isaac Russell, Letter to B. H. Roberts, May 13, 1911, Kenney Collection. The Church did not end up paying for any favorable articles.

91. On Russell's unusual career, see Cannon, "Isaac Russell, Mormon Muckraker" *Journal of Mormon History* 39 (forthcoming Fall 2013).

92. Isaac Russell, Letter to B. H. Roberts, January 16, 1910 [*sic*—1911], Isaac Russell, Letter to B. H. Roberts, February 8, 1911, Kenney Collection. Russell also later remembered that he spoke with Arthur Little, publisher of *Pearson's*, who told him that Theodore Roosevelt had indicated to him that Little and the other publishers of the magazines publishing anti-Mormon articles were "throwing 'broken javelins that would never stick to anything,'" and that Roosevelt had "reviled the publisher for the things said about him [Roosevelt] and told him that Pearson's would soon have to stand and defend itself or confess itself a public liar." Isaac Russell, "Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah," *Deseret News*, December 20, 1919, Christmas News section, 12. The *McClure's* editor gave Russell's letters to that magazine to Burton Hendrick, who did write to Russell, characterizing the tone of Isaac's letters as "scurri-

lous.” Burton J. Hendrick, Letter to Isaac Russell, February 1, 1911, Russell Papers.

93. Isaac Russell, Letter to Joseph F. Smith, February 11, 1913, Kenney Collection.

94. Russell later remembered being among those who greeted Roosevelt home from his year-long safari in Africa. The former president accepted a medal from Cornelius Vanderbilt and shook his hand, then shook the hand of every member of the band that played as he walked down the gangplank from the ship on which he had arrived. More to the point, Roosevelt had read a book that he did not like about the Camp Fire Club, of which Roosevelt was a member. Among those greeting Roosevelt was William T. Hornaday, founder of the Camp Fire Club, and in the time it took to shake hands, he scheduled a meeting with Hornaday and other senior officers of the club and told him what he wanted done. Russell then remembered that, in all the “stormy meetings” in which he had been in attendance with Roosevelt, the Colonel had never “ducked a challenge,” “Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah,” 12.

95. Isaac Russell, Letter to Theodore Roosevelt, February 2, 1911, Kenney Collection; Isaac Russell, Letter to Theodore Roosevelt, February 8, 1911, Russell Papers; “Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah.”

96. Isaac Russell, Letter to Theodore Roosevelt, February 2, 1911, Kenney Collection. Russell also prepared and sent Roosevelt a similar, more polished, though less detailed, letter dated February 8, 1911. Isaac Russell, Letter to Theodore Roosevelt, February 8, 1911, Russell Papers. Apparently, this later version was prepared as the formal letter to which Roosevelt would make his reply that was later published by *Collier's Weekly*. Russell also sent Roosevelt copies of parts of the magazine articles and R. M. Stevenson's letter to the *New York Times* with his letters.

97. “Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah”; Ben E. Rich, Letter to First Presidency, February 20, 1911. Frank Cannon explained in “Under the Prophet in Utah” how Theodore Roosevelt had met Ben E. Rich. Rich was then serving as president of the Church's Southern States Mission and was “deputed to ‘reach’ Roosevelt” and convince him to support Smoot's retention of his seat in the Senate. Rich, described by Cannon as his “old friend,” so “delighted the President by the spirit and candor of his good fellowship” that Roosevelt asked Rich to run for Congress or to accept an appointment in his administration. The mission president replied, “Mr. President, I'd count it the greatest honor of my life to have a commission from you to any office. I'd hand that commis-



sion down to my children as the most precious heritage. But—I love you too much, Mr. President, to put you in any such hole. I'm a polygamist. It would injure you before the whole country." Surprised and fascinated that such a man was a polygamist, Roosevelt reportedly questioned Rich at length about the practice and about other points of Mormon theology. Cannon stated that many Mormon leaders believed Roosevelt's subsequent support of Smoot and Mormons generally was due to the favorable impression with which Ben E. Rich had left Roosevelt. Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah," *Everybody's* 24 (June 1911): 829–30.

98. "Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah."

99. Roosevelt provided several drafts of a private letter to Russell and agreed to consider giving him one that could be published in defense of the Mormons. Theodore Roosevelt, Letter to Isaac Russell, February 4, 1911, Theodore Roosevelt, Letter to Isaac Russell, February 13, 1911, Russell Papers. Roosevelt wrote on the front of the February 13 letter "Not to be referred to in print." Russell, "Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah." Colonel Roosevelt's formal letter intended for publication was dated February 17, 1911. Theodore Roosevelt, Letter to Isaac Russell, February 17, 1911, Russell Papers.

100. Ben E Rich, Letter to First Presidency, February 20, 1911, Kenney Collection. Althea Farr Russell was the niece of Diana Farr Rich, Ben E. Rich's first wife. Family Group Records of Isaac Russell and Eleanor Althea Farr, and of Benjamin Erastus Rich and Diana Farr, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) (accessed June 2011). On February 28, 1911, John Henry Smith noted in his diary that he, Joseph F. Smith, and Anthon H. Lund (who constituted the First Presidency at the time) "read to the Twelve some letters from Isaac Russell and Ex President Theodore Roosevelt" (*Church, State, and Politics* [John Henry Smith], entry of February 28, 1911).

101. Isaac Russell, Letter to Joseph F. Smith, February 11, 1913, Kenney Collection; Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 56. The only more popular magazine of the time was *Saturday Evening Post*. Russell had been writing articles for *Collier's* even before he moved to New York in early 1909 and had developed a close relationship with the legendary editors. Cannon, "Isaac Russell, Mormon Muckraker."

102. Letter, Norman Hapgood to Isaac Russell, March 1, 1911, Russell Papers; Letter, Isaac Russell to Norman Hapgood, March 2, 1911, Russell Papers; Letter, Norman Hapgood to Isaac Russell, March 3, 1911, Russell Papers. Ironically, Ben E. Rich was married in polygamy at least twice between 1890 and 1904, serving at the times of his marriages

as mission president of the Southern States Mission in Atlanta. Family Group Records of Benjamin Erastus Rich and Alice Caroline McLachlan, Benjamin Erastus Rich and Laura Bowring, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) (accessed November 2011).

103. While Burton Hendrick's articles in *McClure's* were the most objective and carefully researched of the magazine articles, Lewis's three-part series, which appeared from March through May 1911, were poorly researched, ill-informed, and the least objective of the four magazine series, although they were colorfully written and outrageously illustrated. William Randolph Hearst's publications were well known for engaging in "irresponsible sensationalism" and emphasized "the lurid aspects of the facts" (Filler, *Appointment at Armageddon*, 248). As such, they represented the uglier side of muckraking, compared to a periodical such as *McClure's*, which sought to present "accurate and penetrating reportage," and "leaned backward to appear disinterested" in its articles (Ibid.). The contrasting styles of the articles in the two periodicals provide ample support for Filler's conclusions about the magazines—even though both exhibited a critical tone, Lewis's "Viper on the Hearth" articles were openly antagonistic, clearly making the most scandalous and unsupported allegations in the most outrageous prose while the *McClure's* articles were understated, factual, and matter-of-fact in their presentation. Having seen the success of the other anti-Mormon articles, the late-coming *Cosmopolitan* articles simply sought to cash in on the popularity of the subject.

104. The articles contained illustrations showing snakes poised on a hearth, superimposing snakes on Mormon documents, surrounding photographs of Mormon leaders with snakes; illustrating Reed Smoot holding one end of a viper with the other end coiled around the neck of Fred T. Dubois; and similar images. Joseph F. Smith was depicted as an octopus in front of the Salt Lake Temple with snake-like tentacles controlling "the home," "school," "U.S. Congress," "railroads," "mining," and "bankers." Lewis, "Viper on the Hearth," 439, 441, 443, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449; "Trail of the Viper," 693, 695, 701.

105. Lewis, "Viper on the Hearth," 444–50.

106. Cannon and O'Higgins, "Under the Prophet in Utah," *Everybody's* 24 (April 1911): 518–19, 522, 523–26. Ironically, in a remarkable gaffe, the white-haired patriarch illustrated on the cover of the April issue of *Everybody's* and one of the Mormon hierarchs pictured in the two-page montage in the same issue was none other than Joseph Smith III, the leader of what was then known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *This* President Smith complained bitterly

(and appropriately) about being identified as a polygamous Utah Mormon in a published letter to the editor of *Everybody's* that appeared in the May issue. Ibid., May 1911, 713.

107. Smoot Diary, March 14, 1911.

108. Ibid., March 16, 1911.

109. Ibid. The *Herald-Republican* later noted that Cannon's articles in *Everybody's* "are the worst of the lot, and are especially damaging," ("Thomas Kearns and Frank J. Cannon," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 23, 1911, 4). They were not the worst of the lot; Lewis's "Viper" articles were, but the Cannon articles were probably the most damaging.

110. Theodore Roosevelt and Isaac Russell, "Mr. Roosevelt to the Mormons, A Letter with an Explanatory Note by Isaac Russell," *Collier's Weekly* 47 (April 15, 1911): 28.

111. Smoot Diary, March 16, 1911. Isaac Russell later told B. H. Roberts that he understood that "Smoot I believe didn't like the idea of publishing the T. R. letter—feared he'd turn on us: he won't if we're square. I want him to if we're not," (Isaac Russell, Letter to B. H. Roberts, May 6, 1911, Kenney Collection).

112. Reed Smoot Diary, March 31, April 2, 1911.

113. Joseph F. Smith promised Reed Smoot that a strongly worded statement would be issued, but not before the last day of April Conference. Ibid., April 2, 7, and 8, 1911.

114. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1911, 8–9, 16, 22. President Smith noted in his remarks that he was not opposed to a Constitutional amendment prohibiting polygamy and even noted that he believed the federal government should regulate marriage generally. Ibid., 9. Grant's Conference remarks criticized attacks on the Church by "a son of one of the late presidency of the Church," a clear reference to Frank Cannon. Ibid., 22. Sanie Lund, First Presidency counselor Anthon H. Lund's wife, "did not like to hear the personal attack of Bro. [Heber J.] Grant on F[rank]. J. Cannon, not for the sake of the latter, as she detests his character, but on account of his mother, and brothers." *Danish Apostle*, entry of April 6, 1911. Sarah Jenne Cannon, George Q. Cannon's second wife and Frank's mother, lived until 1928, so had the experience of watching most of her oldest son's anti-Mormon campaign. Bitton, *George Q. Cannon*, 463.

115. Smoot Diary, April 7 and 8, 1911.

116. Long recognized as a Democrat, then-President Grant publicly acknowledged his party affiliation in a discourse he gave on the League of Nations question in October 1919 General Conference. *Conference Report*, October 3, 1919, 15–17, 19. Sadly, two of Grant's three wives had

passed away before 1911, leaving him as a monogamist. His first wife, Lucy Stringham, died in 1893, and his third wife, Emily Wells, died in 1908. Grant's second wife, Hulda Winters, outlived him, dying in 1952. Family Group Records of Heber J. Grant and Lucy Stringham, of Heber J. Grant and Hulda Augusta Winters, and of Heber J. Grant and Emily Harris Wells, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) (accessed March 2011).

117. *Conference Report*, April 11, 1911, 126–31; “Slanders are Refuted by the First Presidency, Misrepresented from the First,” *Deseret News*, April 10, 1911, 3. The statement was reprinted in the June issue of the *Improvement Era* with the memorable title of “Magazine Slanders Confuted by the First Presidency of the Church,” *Improvement Era* 14 (June 1911), 717–24.

118. *Conference Report*, April 11, 1911, 126–131; “Slanders are Refuted,” *Deseret News*, April 10, 1911, 3. When the Church discovered that marriages were being solemnized in Mexico, then-President Lorenzo Snow made clear that “the Church has positively abandoned the practice of polygamy, or the solemnization of plural marriages in this and every other state, and . . . no member or officer thereof has any authority whatever to perform a plural marriage or enter into such a relation.”

119. “Slanders are Refuted,” *Deseret News*, April 10, 1911, 3. The grilling examination President Smith received at the hands of the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections in January 1904 probably had more to do with the issuance of his Second Manifesto. As noted above, the only serious discipline of Church leaders for plural marriage had begun in 1910, partly in response to the Magazine Crusade. It was, however, important for the Church to make these unqualified pronouncements, even if they were somewhat misleading or inaccurate.

120. *Ibid.*

121. *Ibid.*; Harvey J. O'Higgins, “Address to the Drama Society of New York on ‘Polygamy’ (Inside Story of the Play),” [1915], Perry Special Collections.

122. Charles S. Burton, Letter to Isaac Russell, April 29, 1911, Russell Papers.

123. Roosevelt and Russell, “Mr. Roosevelt to the Mormons,” *Collier's Weekly* 47 (April 15, 1911): 28, 36. Russell published Roosevelt's letter and his own explanatory note in *Collier's* because of its “enlightened, hopeful, and fair . . . editorial attitude,” (*Ibid.*).

124. *Ibid.* More important, though Isaac Russell did not acknowledge it (because he did not know), there was *one* senior LDS Church leader living who had participated in post-Manifesto polygamy. That was the enigmatic Joseph F. Smith, the president of the Church. Taylor and

Cowley had signed resignations from the Council of Twelve in 1905, which were announced in April 1906, but they were not further disciplined until the same time that Russell was writing in the midst of the Magazine Crusade.

125. Ibid.

126. B. H. Roberts, Letter to Isaac Russell, March 3, 1911, Russell Papers; B. H. Roberts, Letter to Isaac Russell, April 20, 1911, Russell Papers; Joseph F. Smith, Letter to Isaac Russell, April 25, 1911, Russell Papers. The letter and article were in fact republished in pamphlet form, which went through at least two printings, and in the June issue of the *Improvement Era*. Joseph F. Smith, Letter to Isaac Russell, May 15, 1911, Russell Papers; "Mr. Roosevelt to the 'Mormons,'" *Improvement Era* 14 (June 1911), 713–18. B. H. Roberts hoped to send copies to all members of British Parliament because of his sense of rising anti-Mormon sentiment in Great Britain. B. H. Roberts, Letter to Isaac Russell, April 20, 1911.

127. "The Unspeakable Frank J. Cannon," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 21, 1911, 4. Most or all of the allegations against Cannon were true, at least during certain periods of his life.

128. "Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah." Russell went on to write that the editor of *Life* believed "that a death-thrust had been done to the muck-rake industry, and so it turned out. It has never been revived and the hectic review of Utah life saw its expiring gasps with the most extravagant of the muckrakers—Alfred Henry Lewis and Harvey J. O'Higgins on the job," (Ibid.). The muckraking Progressive magazines did, in fact, begin to decline in important ways about the same time that Theodore Roosevelt's letter on the Mormons appeared in *Collier's*. *Life Magazine* of 1911 was an opinion magazine with a middle-of-the-road, moderate political position. The later incarnation of *Life Magazine* began in the 1930s, when its owners purchased the name from the earlier magazine's bankruptcy. Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1885–1905*, 556–68.

129. "Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah."

130. Harvey J. O'Higgins, "A Reply to Colonel Roosevelt," *Collier's Weekly* 47 (June 10, 1911): 35–37. In later correspondence, O'Higgins also accused Russell of having manipulated matters so that Roosevelt's letter, which was really a reply to Richard Barry's allegations in *Pearson's*, was used "trickily" as if it were a reply to the articles in *Everybody's*. Harvey J. O'Higgins, Letter to Isaac Russell, October 9, 1918, Russell Papers. O'Higgins was right about this, but it did not matter. Roosevelt had written a letter supportive of the Mormons in the anti-Mormon Maga-

zine Crusade, and the Church, with Isaac Russell's help, capitalized on that fact.

131. "Isaac Russell, Mormon Muckraker."

132. Joseph F. Smith, "The Mormons To-Day," *Collier's Weekly* 47 (August 12, 1911): 26–29. Isaac Russell reported that Theodore Roosevelt agreed with this—that Roosevelt had told him in their discussions in early 1911, "As to the old 'Mormon' families—the families established before the manifesto, I would never raise my hand to interfere with one of them. It would be outrageous to do so. And I have no sympathy with any person who would try that" ("Theodore Roosevelt—Staunch Friend of Utah").

133. "Isaac Russell, Mormon Muckraker."

134. Sadly, Isaac Russell felt that Elder Talmage turned on him after Joseph F. Smith's death in November 1918, partly (from Russell's perspective) from jealousy and partly because Talmage found Russell's ghost-writing for Mormon leaders inappropriate. "Isaac Russell, Mormon Muckraker"; Isaac Russell, Letters to James E. Talmage, February 15, February 18, 1924, Russell Papers; Isaac Russell, Letter to Heber J. Grant, November 26, 1923, Russell Papers. Eventually, Heber J. Grant re-enlisted Russell in public relations efforts of the Church, deliberately consulting with John A. Widtsoe about Russell rather than James E. Talmage. "Isaac Russell, Mormon Muckraker"; John A. Widtsoe, Letter to Isaac Russell, July 18, 1924, Russell Papers.

135. "Democratic-Tribune Deal, by Fred T. Dubois," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 27, 1910, 1. The attribution of this article to Dubois was, of course, ironic, and the former senator had not written the article. According to the paper, Dubois had masterminded publication of the articles by the national Progressive magazines and thus had "earned" the byline. The editorial noted that "it is useless for [Kearns and Dubois] to deny [that they had made arrangements with the national magazines to publish articles on the Mormons], because they were seen in the office of the editor of McClure's by a former Salt Lake man, who was told the story of their mission by the editor of McClure's himself." Fred Dubois, formerly a Democratic senator from Idaho, had helped lead the fight against Smoot in the U.S. Senate. By the time he had made final arguments against Smoot being permitted to hold his seat in the Senate at the plenary debate on February 20, 1907, Dubois had failed in his reelection bid in the Idaho state legislature in no small part because of Mormon influence (and outrage) in Idaho. Leo W. Graff, Jr., *The Senatorial Career of Fred T. Dubois of Idaho, 1890–1907* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), 456–92.



136. Harry P. Harrison and Karl Detzer, *Culture under Canvas: The Story of Tent Chautauqua* (New York: Hastings House, 1958), 132.

137. O'Higgins, "Address to the Drama Society of New York," [1915], Perry Special Collections.

138. Isaac Russell saw Kearns in *McClure's* offices in late summer of 1910. Isaac Russell, Letter to B. H. Roberts, January 16, 1911; Isaac Russell, Letter to Theodore Roosevelt, February 2, 1911, Kenney Collection. Burton Hendrick took exception to Russell's allegation that Kearns had approached *McClure's* and showed Russell the letter that he had sent to Kearns indicating that the magazine was going to do articles on the Mormons. Burton J. Hendrick, Letter to Isaac Russell, May 23, 1911. Russell later indicated that Hendrick had "became a guest of Kearns at a principal club" in Salt Lake when he went there to do research. Russell Papers; Isaac Russell, Letter to the National Board of Censorship, January 21, 1912, Kenney Collection. Russell also accused Hendrick of getting most of his information from "Colonel Nelson," a long-time managing editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Isaac Russell, Letter to Theodore Roosevelt, February 2, 1911, Kenney Collection.

139. Smoot Diary, April 2, 1911. Smoot noted: "It is evident no action against the persons taking polygamist wives before 1904 will be taken. If there is another investigation I do not know how present position will be justified in face of the testimony given in my case before Senate committee. We are in a bad position for our examination and investigation."

140. "Lewis and the Magazines," *Deseret News*, March 15, 1913, 4.

141. Cannon, "The Modern Mormon Kingdom," *Journal of Mormon History* 44 (Fall 2011): 89–113.

# Bones Heal Faster: Spousal Abuse in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

*Terence L. Day*

While I was serving as a stake high councillor, a Latter-day Saint woman confided in me, “Bones heal faster.” She spoke with the authority of a victim of both physical and emotional abuse. When I confidentially shared her comment with the director of a mental health clinic, he affirmed that many abused women would validate the woman’s statement.<sup>1</sup> Popular opinion notwithstanding, verbal abuse is harder to live with than physical abuse, can be more oppressive than being beaten, and leaves deeper scars.<sup>2</sup>

## **History and Prevalence**

Family violence always has been of some societal concern, but public acknowledgment in the United States was rare until about 1960.<sup>3</sup> Feminist geographer Joni Seager calls domestic violence “the most ubiquitous constant in women’s lives around the world. There is virtually no place where it is not a significant problem, and women of no race, class, or age are exempt from its reach.”<sup>4</sup> As public discourse about domestic violence rose with the feminist movement, it also became a matter of increasing concern to religious leaders, as well as to social organizations and civil governments. Now, spousal abuse is recognized as a major public health issue in the United States, Britain, Canada, and France, as well as in most other nations.<sup>5</sup> Domestic violence perpetrated on women has become an issue in all major religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism.<sup>6</sup> LDS general authorities have expressed rising concern about abuse in LDS families,

with public pronouncements reaching a crescendo during President Gordon B. Hinckley's administration.

### **Nature**

Abuse is an ugly word for ugly acts of violence, especially when directed against family members. It is uglier still when perpetrated by Christians who espouse the Savior's gospel of love. LDS general authorities have given most prominent attention to the evils of child abuse, but in the 1970s they became increasingly vocal about spousal abuse—both physical and emotional. I have chosen to focus on emotional abuse of wives for several reasons: to narrow the focus of this paper; because it is a major concern voiced by general authorities; because the topic concerned me throughout more than three decades of local priesthood leadership; because I have witnessed the devastating emotional, physical, and spiritual effects upon victims; and finally because, in my view, emotional abuse is greatly under-recognized in the LDS culture.

### **Definitions**

Discussions of abuse quickly encounter the difficulty of definitions and it is important to understand the vocabulary. Emotional abuse, sometimes called emotional violence, includes verbal barrage, withholding love and support, and sending a clear message that belittles and destroys a spouse's self-esteem.<sup>7</sup> Emotional abuse is insidious in nature because it involves incremental repetition of threats and verbal attacks that build up over time and can leave lasting scars.<sup>8</sup> Like drops of water employed in Chinese water torture, experiences of seemingly insignificant consequence can be magnified by repetition into a matter of far greater, more damaging consequence.

Some authorities classify intimate partner violence in two categories: "intimate terrorism" and "situational couple violence."<sup>9</sup> Intimate terrorism is defined as systematic acts through which one partner attempts to control the relationship. Situational couple violence covers abuse arising from day-to-day conflict without a pattern of attempting to control the other partner. Both physical and emotional abuse may be involved in both types of abuse.

### **Incidence**

Latter-day Saints would like to believe that because they have the gospel, they are culturally different from the broader societies in which they live. Unfortunately, where domestic violence is concerned, Latter-day Saints are very likely to adhere to the norms of their macro society.<sup>10</sup> At some time in their lives, twenty-five percent of American women are physically abused by their domestic partners;<sup>11</sup> law enforcement officers and family scientists assert that emotional abuse is even more prevalent. Therefore we might safely conclude that more than a quarter of the women in LDS congregations have been, are being, or will be emotionally abused.<sup>12</sup> We also may take general authorities' public admonitions regarding abuse as tacit acknowledgment that it is a serious problem.

### **Causes**

A basic understanding of the causes of spousal abuse is helpful, perhaps even essential, to preventing abuse and dealing effectively with its consequences. Theologians, anthropologists, biologists, sociologists, psychologists, criminologists, feminists, and others view causation from different perspectives. Perhaps the theological perspective can be summed up in the humor of the late comedian Flip Wilson, who popularized the line, "The devil made me do it." Anthropologists and biologists explain spousal abuse in terms of genetics and other biological phenomena. Sociologists tend to focus on environmental aspects of the problem, with emphasis on learned behavior. Psychologists tend to define the problem in terms of pathologies in the brain, which have both biological and environmental components. Understandably, professionals tend to concentrate on their discipline's perspective, so it is critical to examine the phenomenon of abuse in as many of its myriad facets as possible. In the case of Mormon leaders, this requires understanding abuse from more than a purely theological standpoint, which can lead to naïve expectations such as that a victim's psychological trauma will simply evaporate if she forgives her abuser or that abusers can readily repent. Readers who would like to expand their understanding of these complex contributors to spousal abuse will find suggestions for additional reading at the end of this paper. Because of the constraints of space, this pa-

per focuses primarily on two major contributors, social environment and controlling personalities.

### Culture

We all are products of our social environment, and male-dominant spousal abuse is deeply rooted in the cultures and subcultures of Western civilization, perhaps especially in conservative religious communities. Although biological factors in the pathologies underlying abusive behaviors must not be ignored, the primary hope for dealing with abuse lies in the socio-environmental realm, especially where the roots of patriarchy are manifest and when controlling personalities are in play.

Gender-violence expert Jackson Katz<sup>13</sup> reports that in the United States peer pressure socializes men to dominate and control women.<sup>14</sup> The association of patriarchy with male-dominant abuse is noted by both LDS<sup>15</sup> and other Christian scholars and observers. Of course it is hardly a new phenomenon: we find crisp insight into the influence of patriarchy on society in Victorian novelist Charles Dickens's characterization of Mr. Bumble in "Oliver Twist," which was published in 1838. As Mr. Bumble and his wife have a disagreement, he asserts that it is the prerogative of men to command and of women to obey.<sup>16</sup> In Dickens's artful narrative of marital relations in the Bumble family, we see a type that exists yet today, especially in religiously conservative subcultures in which men perceive it as their prerogative to boss women around. Members of conservative religions may be particularly susceptible to male-dominant influences. Jocelyn Andersen, author of *Woman Submit! Christians and Domestic Violence*, says that spousal abuse cuts across denominational lines.<sup>17</sup> Significant long-standing and continuing efforts of LDS general authorities to combat the male-dominant mindset of boys and men in the Church notwithstanding, many LDS males still grow up with expectations of Victorian prerogatives. It is extremely difficult to combat ideas of male superiority in an institution governed by patriarchy. Moreover, LDS discourse tends to reinforce many aspects of antiquated gender stereotypes, encouraging women to emulate the endlessly patient and self-sacrificing Victorian "angel of the house" and inculcating a sense of chivalric duty in boys. These earnest, well-intentioned efforts to honor womanhood un-

fortunately construct women as objects for the exercise of male virtue. These roles, and women's learned passivity, become dangerous to women when men fail to behave virtuously.

Another poignant example of unrecognized abuse comes from "The Honeymooners," a popular television situation comedy in the 1950s that was rebroadcast in syndication for four decades and which still influences situation comedy today.<sup>18</sup> Ralph Kramden (Jackie Gleason) is a blustering, short-tempered, frequently insulting and threatening bus driver. Both Ralph and wife Alice (Audrey Meadows) yell and use abusive language. Ralph frequently "brings down the house" by shaking his fist in Alice's face, exclaiming: "One of these days. One of these days, POW! Right in the kisser." When Alice tries to end the argument by going to bed, Ralph shouts: "You're not going to sleep, Alice! You're never going to get any sleep until we agree." The audience (or the laugh track) rewards every verbal barrage with uproarious laughter. Verbal abuse, threatening gestures, and controlling behavior simply weren't commonly recognized as abuse in the 1950s. Unfortunately, many people still don't recognize them as abusive, especially not as carrying the potential for devastating psychological harm.

### **Controlling Behaviors**

Controlling behavior is strongly correlated with both physical and emotional spousal abuse. Power issues are natural and unavoidable in marriage and sometimes are the source of abuse, but intimate terrorism, which is more sinister, is the main concern in this article. Some authorities describe it as a two-person civil war that often results when wounding quarrels become a way of life in formerly happy marriages.<sup>19</sup> Intimate terrorism often involves a pathology arising from childhood trauma, resulting in arrested emotional development. It is manifest in a powerful need to dominate and control one's partner. It always is abusive and contravenes the Gospel of Jesus Christ. President Thomas S. Monson and the late President Gordon B. Hinckley have spoken strongly on the subject. President Monson told men, "Your wife is your equal. In marriage neither partner is superior nor inferior to the other. You walk side by side as a son and a daughter of God. She is not to be demeaned or insulted but should be respected and



loved.”<sup>20</sup> President Hinckley said, “Any man in this Church who . . . exercises unrighteous dominion over [his wife] is unworthy to hold the priesthood.”<sup>21</sup>

Communications expert Patricia Evans defines intimate terrorism in terms of running another person’s life in a way that rejects equality. This type of control isn’t about conflict over decisions; rather, it is about the inability to accept one’s partner as an equal and the need to protect an insecure psyche by abusive behaviors. Controlling men are threatened by the very personhood of their victims. They control through intimidation and fear, if not actual physical violence. Tools include belittling, constant criticism, regulating access to family and friends, restricting access to money, and other devices to denigrate and control.

### Consequences

The first and most pervasive result of spousal abuse is, of course, unhappiness and sorrow; but often consequences go far beyond this. Emotional abuse harms mind, body, and spirit. Repeated ridicule and belittling eventually cause the victim to feel unloved, unlovable, and worthless.<sup>22</sup> I have grouped the consequences of emotional abuse into three categories; emotional, physical, and social/spiritual. These categories have some overlapping characteristics.

#### *Emotional*

Emotional abuse can cause confusion, doubt, mistrust, fear, and feelings of hopelessness, leading to a variety of mood or anxiety disorders. In the interest of brevity, this paper deals with only two major disorders, symptoms of which often go unrecognized in LDS wards. Even when symptoms are recognized, both members and local leaders can sometimes be very naïve and unsympathetic about them and may not recognize they may be caused by abuse. They are major depressive disorder (MDD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

During episodes of MDD people may experience diminished interest in daily activities, sleep disruption, intense restlessness, or sluggishness, fatigue, loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, guilt, self-blame, diminished ability to think or con-

centrate, indecisiveness, and other symptoms, including thoughts of suicide.<sup>23</sup>

PTSD, frequently in the news these days, is not a fad or “pop” psychological diagnosis. It is a very real, even life-threatening, disorder. Victims live in fear and repeatedly alter their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, denying their own needs to avoid further abuse.<sup>24</sup> It illustrates the extremity of abuse and is manifest in the LDS culture; yet often is unrecognized by Latter-day Saints as a serious consequence of emotional abuse. Symptoms include hyperarousal, hypervigilance, difficulty sleeping, irritability, difficulty concentrating, feelings of detachment or estrangement, and diminished ability to experience loving feelings. PTSD was first recognized among World War I soldiers. It was then called “shell shock.” In World War II it was called “combat fatigue.” Both physical and emotional abuse can lead to PTSD.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps if we employed this military rhetoric formerly used to describe PTSD we would be better able and more likely to recognize the reality and enormity of its connection to spousal abuse. The marriages of abused women who develop PTSD are both figurative and literal combat zones. Studies show that people with PTSD have elevated rates of alcohol abuse, drug dependency, depression, hospitalizations, and suicide.<sup>26</sup>

### *Physical*

In recent years research has developed a growing body of evidence that stress affects brain development and function. Perinatal psychobiologist Vivette Glover and her colleagues at Imperial College London are studying the damaging effects of maternal stress on brain development in fetuses, and researchers in Spain and Italy have found that traumatic stress can modify the structural and functional aspects of the brain in adults, leading to the development of a range of psychiatric disorders.<sup>27</sup> Emotional abuse is also associated with physical ailments such as breast cancer, chronic pelvic pain, and irritable bowel syndrome, along with other ailments and conditions.<sup>28</sup>

### *Spiritual/Social*

The faith of victims may be seriously damaged, regardless of

their religion, but the testimonies of LDS women who are raised to revere priesthood authority are especially vulnerable to abuse by priesthood-bearing husbands. When bishops or stake presidents fail to respond sympathetically and appropriately, victims may lose trust in them, in the Church, and sometimes even in God. Abuse also damages social relationships, especially within families and within congregations, particularly when it leads to divorce.<sup>29</sup>

All respondents to a study of divorced women who re-entered Brigham Young University as undergraduates said their divorces resulted in negative social reactions. Insensitive treatment by leaders during divorce precipitated spiritual crises; some women ended Church membership. Some women reported they were chastised and shunned by ward members and leaders. Divorced LDS women may also suffer long-lasting physical and mental health problems exacerbated by stress and guilt related to the centrality of marriage and family in LDS theology and discourse.<sup>30</sup> This theological focus makes being divorced in the LDS Church particularly painful. The loss of social and sometimes ecclesiastical status often leaves divorced women with feelings of unworthiness and of being second-class citizens.<sup>31</sup> Respondents who reported shunning, chastisement, and rejection by members of their wards seriously questioned their Church membership.<sup>32</sup> Even where abuse contributed to divorce, divorcées reported that ward members seemed to blame them. Some women who felt their bishops were dismissive of their complaints and took no action against their abusers subsequently requested that their names be removed from Church records.

Carol L. Schnabl Schweitzer, a Lutheran minister who writes about violence against women, says that leaders' and friends' unwillingness to believe victims can be the product of cognitive dissonance, especially when the perpetrator is a known and respected man. Nonetheless, Schweitzer says when clergy and church members respond with disbelief they are in essence siding with the abuser. Abusers often present in public as nice guys, but in reality may have a narcissistic personality or other antisocial personality disorder. If people express their disbelief when a woman reports behavior that is incompatible with her abuser's

public persona, she may be viewed as destroying “the perfect family,” even though that perfection was illusory.<sup>33</sup> In the LDS context, if the victim divorces her abuser she may be wrongly viewed as breaking her temple covenants.

LDS physician John C. Nelson, who served as spokesperson of the American Medical Association’s Stop America’s Violence Everywhere program, says listening to a victim’s story is important:

When we listen, the very fact that someone is acknowledging that what is going on is wrong may be the first step in the victim’s realizing that the abuse must be stopped. We need to listen carefully, we need to listen non-judgmentally.<sup>34</sup>

### Church Response

As spousal abuse became increasingly known and understood in the American culture, LDS general authorities responded with sharp condemnation. Equality between marriage partners is the paradigm in LDS doctrine and spousal abuse is clearly viewed as sin. The abuse entry in Gospel Topics on the Church’s Web pages states that “Abuse . . . is in total opposition to the teachings of the Savior. *The Lord condemns abusive behavior in any form—physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional.* Abusive behavior may lead to Church discipline.”<sup>35</sup> (Italics added by author.) Injunctions to equality in marriage are ubiquitous. In 1995 the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles jointly issued *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*. That document avers that “men are to preside over their families in love and righteousness,” but also that “in these sacred family responsibilities fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”<sup>36</sup> The LDS Church’s official policy on spousal abuse, including emotional abuse, is one of unequivocal condemnation. The *Church Handbook of Instructions* categorizes spousal abuse as serious sin, saying that “abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Those who abuse or are cruel to their spouses . . . violate the laws of God and man. Such members are subject to Church discipline. They should not be given Church callings and may not have a temple recommend.”<sup>37</sup> President Monson strongly reiterated the principle of equal partnership during the priesthood session of the April 2011 General Conference.<sup>38</sup> Words literally can hurt worse than broken bones, causing

injuries far more difficult to heal, and the Church makes no distinction between emotional and physical abuse. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles devoted an address to emotional abuse during a general conference in 2007. In “The Tongue of Angels,” he cited Ecclesiasticus 28:17<sup>39</sup> (a book of the Apocrypha): “The stroke of the whip maketh marks in the flesh: but the stroke of the tongue breaketh bones.” Elder Holland went on to warn, “A husband who would never dream of striking his wife physically can break, if not her bones, then certainly her heart by the brutality of thoughtless or unkind speech. Physical abuse is uniformly and unequivocally condemned in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . Today, I speak against verbal and emotional abuse.”<sup>40</sup>

### Local Priesthood Response

How bishops and stake presidents respond to reports of abuse is critically important. General Church leaders have made abundantly clear what that response should be. It should be swift and sure, both to protect victims and also to protect others who may be vulnerable to future abuse.<sup>41</sup> Both of those objectives demand that abuse be investigated and that abusers be held responsible for their actions. President Hinckley said that when a Melchizedek Priesthood holder is “out of line,” his stake president is obligated to summon him to a disciplinary council if he persists, “where action may be taken to assign a probationary period or to disfellowship or excommunicate him.”<sup>42</sup>

It is very important for Church leaders to diligently deal with reports of spousal abuse because children who see parents abusing each other—either emotionally or physically—are at high risk of becoming abusers themselves.<sup>43</sup>

### *Ways Local Leaders May Fail*

One hopes that most bishops and stake presidents deal compassionately and effectively with victims of spousal abuse, but the problem of inappropriate ecclesiastical response is significant enough that it has been publicly addressed by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve, who said:

As a bishop, when you counsel with a husband and wife who are in marital difficulty, do you give the same credence to the statements of

the woman that you do to the man? As I travel throughout the world, I find that some women are short-changed in that a priesthood leader is more persuaded by a son rather than a daughter of Father in Heaven. That imbalance simply must never occur.<sup>44</sup>

There are many ways in which bishops may fail. Among them are: dismissing allegations; suggesting to victims that they may be responsible for the abuse; failing to appropriately investigate charges of abuse; permitting perpetrators to continue in Church callings and to hold temple recommends before they have owned their sin and demonstrated repentance; permitting priesthood bearers who are guilty of abuse to continue to exercise their priesthood; failure to support victims by referral for professional counseling (either to LDS Social Services or to private counselors, with financial support from the Church if necessary); asking victims not to report the abuse to legal authorities; counseling victims that divorce violates temple covenants; and failing to provide victims with support from the Bishop's Storehouse in the event of separation or divorce.

### *Forgiveness*

Forgiveness is a fundamental gospel principle<sup>45</sup> as well as an important component in emotional healing, but when bishops focus too quickly on forgiving the sinner they get the cart before the horse. A rush to counsel forgiveness can be very damaging to victims, who may get the impression that their bishop is more concerned for the welfare of the perpetrator than in protecting a victim or helping her heal. LDS psychologist Wendy I. Ulrich believes forgiveness is the last step in healing from abuse. She counsels:

Forgiving will take time for such serious offenses. When the offender is not remorseful or denies the abuse, the victim needs justice from other sources. The victim may wish to pursue legal action or restitution to pay for therapy and should not be shamed for doing so. . . . Victims must not be rushed in the healing process.<sup>46</sup>

### *Divorce*

The doctrinal importance that Latter-day Saint theology places on marriage makes divorce a very difficult topic for leaders and members alike. Church members are taught from childhood that divorce should be avoided at almost all cost.



Some leaders and members view divorce as breaking the marriage covenant, although in reality when divorce is the product of abuse it is the abuse—not the divorce—that violates the marriage covenant.<sup>47</sup> Divorce and cancellation of temple sealing are but the legal mechanism whereby the Church recognizes that the union has failed. The emotional and spiritual burden attending divorce is accentuated by the extreme caution in affirming the appropriateness of divorce. Bishops and stake presidents are forbidden to counsel members to divorce. However, they are not required to counsel against divorce.<sup>48</sup>

Overemphasis on cautioning against divorce or slighting LDS leaders' affirmation that divorce sometimes is justified can cause victims to remain longer than they should in abusive relationships and contribute to unrighteous judgment by members. This is especially true depending on the context in which counsel is rendered. For instance, in 1991, Gordon B. Hinckley said:

There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us, which seems to be growing everywhere, is not of God, but rather is of the work of the adversary of righteousness and peace and truth.<sup>49</sup>

In and of itself, this is a very reserved recognition of the appropriateness of divorce. But it takes on an even more restrictive tone at the hands of the editors of the *Eternal Marriage Student Manual* used in Institute of Religion courses Religion 234 and Religion 235. There, editors have added topical headings and President Hinckley's statement appears directly under a bold, black heading: "Resist Satan's Entreaties."<sup>50</sup> This treatment introduces a hurdle for readers to surmount in receiving the message that divorce is sometimes appropriate, a message already couched in a negative framework. Members may also draw mistaken or over-generalized conclusions when general authorities speak of examples in which couples overcame serious marital problems to become happy in their later relationship.<sup>51</sup> The statements of general authorities need to be considered in context, and in the whole, rather than focusing on only one side of an issue.

President David O. McKay (1951–1970) counseled that there

are “circumstances which make the continuance of the marriage state *a greater evil than divorce* [italics added by author].” He offered examples such as physical violence, habitual drunkenness, long imprisonment, unfaithfulness, and other “calamities in the realm of marriage.”<sup>52</sup> Larry James Hansen, a former bishop and former chair of the Department of Family Studies at the University of New Hampshire, has defined “other calamities” to include emotional abuse. Similarly, in counseling that “the remedy for most marriage problems is not divorce, but repentance,” Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve acknowledged that “members who have experienced . . . abuse have firsthand knowledge of circumstances worse than divorce. When a marriage is dead and beyond hope of resuscitation, it is needful to have a means to end it.”<sup>53</sup>

Hansen rejects the notion that abuse victims should remain in a harmful marriage out of loyalty to temple covenants. He said, “To suggest . . . that Church policy requires people in abusive relationships to stay together to preserve the sanctity of marriage would be accusing the Church and its members of institutionalizing abuse in the name of God . . . [M]any faithful members of the Church are often reluctant to leave dangerous and abusive relationships even when conditions become physically, emotionally, and spiritually destructive. Some have even concluded that their covenants compel them to endure abuse as if it were just one more hardship designed to test their faith or pioneer-like endurance.”<sup>54</sup> Hansen says that well-meaning but often uninformed people tell victims that if they will just live the gospel better, forgive, and love unconditionally, the abuse will stop. This naïve denial of reality and judgmental attitude toward women who pursue divorce to terminate abusive relationships compounds the pain of abuse and demonstrates the LDS community’s inadequate or inappropriate responses to victims.

### *Church Discipline*

The purpose of disciplinary councils is, first, to protect victims, including those who might be victimized in the future; second, to protect the Church; and third, to help sinners repent.<sup>55</sup> When local leaders fail to hold disciplinary councils for unrepent-

tant abusers, they forego an opportunity to help them recognize and forsake their sin,<sup>56</sup> and allow them to compound sin upon sin. Disciplinary councils also clearly establish in the minds of victims, family, and others who know of the abuse that the perpetrator and not the victim is responsible for the abuse.<sup>57</sup>

### **Toward a Better Future**

The Church's challenge in creating a safer, happier, more spiritual atmosphere for family life does not seem complex or particularly difficult. It doesn't require fundamental changes in doctrine, policy, or practice. It does require concerted effort. It involves measures that general authorities can institute, things that bishops and stake presidents can do, and things that members can do.

#### *Church-wide measures*

General authorities could back initiatives in awareness, policy, training, accountability, and premarital education and counseling. Both socially and theologically, healthy marriages require equality. This is emphasized by LDS prophets, who speak of marriage as a partnership of equals.<sup>58</sup> Richard B. Miller, director of the Brigham Young University School of Family Life, says healthy marriages consist of an equal partnership between husband and wife, and that unequal power relationships are associated with marital problems.<sup>59</sup> In unhealthy marriages, one partner unrighteously dominates the other. Whether a companion is dominated by situational couple violence or through intimate terrorism, the principle of unrighteous dominion—forcefully condemned in scripture<sup>60</sup> and by modern-day prophets<sup>61</sup>—is involved.

Clear definitions and specific examples of both negative and positive spousal interactions coupled with better education and more clearly enunciated and more uniformly applied policies could go a long way in fostering healthier, happier marriages with greater celestial prospects.

Psychologists who counsel abuse victims generally believe that holding perpetrators accountable is important both to the recovery of victims and to prevention of future abuse. Katz writes that just as abusers must be held accountable for their conduct, social institutions must be held accountable for the way they respond, or fail to

respond.<sup>62</sup> If we accept Katz's analysis of the role of accountability in reducing patriarchy's contribution to gender violence in our society, it is vital that Church leaders not only condemn abuse, but also hold men accountable for abusive conduct. Failure to do so is a common problem in the Church. Some leaders apparently even send abusers to the temple, hoping that they will feel God's spirit there and repent. This practice has been reinforced in at least one *Ensign* article that reported a couple was sent to the temple a week after the husband confessed to his bishop that he had both emotionally and physically abused his wife.<sup>63</sup> One wonders; would a member who is still contemplating whether to give up coffee, tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs be sent to the temple in the hope that he will feel the spirit there and decide to make the effort? It is understandable that, in light of the Church's increasing emphasis on frequent temple attendance as a source of spiritual sustenance,<sup>64</sup> some ecclesiastical leaders may be tempted to send unrepentant abusers to the temple in hopes that they will be touched there by the spirit. But allowing abusers to continue to hold Church callings and go to the temple after their behavior has been revealed but before repentance is demonstrated sends a very spiritually and emotionally damaging message to victims.

### *Accountability*

Abuse is learned behavior. Home is the classroom and parents are the teachers. Katz writes that efforts to protect women from abuse must focus not on the victims but on the perpetrators. Most men are profoundly influenced by both the example and the expectations of people around them, especially by male peers. Katz therefore urges use of male peer pressure to help combat male-based gender violence.<sup>65</sup>

Chronic negative interaction in relationships damages both adults and the children who live with them. Negative interaction includes patterns of frequent escalation of conflict, criticism, invalidation, contempt, and other behaviors. Elder F. Melvin Hammond, emeritus seventy, poignantly addressed the damaging effect of witnessing abuse:

The way we treat our wives could well have the greatest impact on the character of our sons. If a father is guilty of inflicting verbal or

physical abuse in any degree on his companion, his sons . . . are likely to follow the same pattern of abuse with their wives.<sup>66</sup>

Barbara Thompson<sup>67</sup> calls spousal abuse a form of child abuse.<sup>68</sup> Holding spouse abusers accountable for their actions is essential not only to the rescue of women from abusive relationships, but also for the protection of any children in the home and future generations. Forty percent to sixty percent of men who abuse women also abuse children, and more than three million children in the United States witness domestic violence every year.<sup>69</sup> Women who experience verbal abuse from an intimate partner also are at risk of abusing children. They are only slightly less likely than physically abused women to physically abuse children.<sup>70</sup>

### *Awareness*

In a culture that defines the gospel in terms of “the great plan of happiness,” many abused women wear false faces to church to hide their unhappy marriages. There is a great need for members and local leaders to be more aware of the existence and consequences of spousal abuse in the Church. Although LDS leaders have mentioned spousal abuse with increasing frequency in general conference over the past three decades, most references have been brief mentions in talks, rather than the main subject of addresses. Awareness could be elevated by more frequent and more prominent treatment in general conference addresses, in satellite broadcasts of regional stake conferences, and in worldwide leadership training broadcasts; encouraging stake presidents and bishops to assign talks on the subject in stake conferences and sacrament meetings; and posting telephone numbers for local women’s shelters and the National Domestic Hotline, or local hotlines, on meetinghouse bulletin boards. Such posting would deliver a subtle message both to abusers and to their victims that the problem is recognized and condemned, and thus may give victims courage to seek help. Longer-term efforts could include revision of publications, especially those used as curriculum, or creation of new manuals.

### *Policy*

Important policy considerations include (1) developing a

clear, workable definition of emotional abuse that rises to a level that warrants—if not demands—ecclesiastical intervention; (2) mandatory, loving, but rigorous enforcement of Church policy as set forth in the *Church Handbook of Instructions*; and (3) encouraging local leaders to treat the subject in stake conferences and sacrament meetings and to be quick to publicly censure abusive behavior. Part of the objective is to increase social pressure against spousal abuse.

### *Training*

Local leaders' understanding of the nature of emotional abuse is vital to any prospect for progress toward a more spiritually healthy family environment, yet the Church provides essentially no training in this area. When bishops are set apart, they are blessed with the spiritual gift of discernment.<sup>71</sup> As with all gifts, some people seem to enjoy greater powers than do others. Surely there are occasions on which we may perceive knowledge by sudden inspiration, which we attribute to the gift of discernment; but often, exercising this gift requires recipients to do their homework: e.g., pray and study.<sup>72</sup> Leaders who are unaware of the symptoms of abuse are less likely to discern it, and leaders untrained in appropriate response are at risk of making damaging mistakes.

Family scientists believe that most clergy lack knowledge and training for dealing with abuse and therefore sometimes compound emotional trauma of abuse victims by sending them back to their abusers.<sup>73</sup> Inclusion of basic information about the causes, nature, dynamics, and consequences of emotional abuse also would be helpful.<sup>74</sup> This likely should be a component in a larger training effort on all types of abuse. Currently, the Church provides a 12-minute DVD, "Responding to Child Abuse,"<sup>75</sup> designed to be played at ward and branch councils, and a pamphlet, *Responding to Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders*.<sup>76</sup> While helpful, these materials lack the depth needed for improved awareness, understanding, and handling of abuse issues. Development of improved training might include information on the consequences of abuse, learning how to spot signs of unreported abuse, counsel on how to deal with suspicions or allegations of abuse,



and specific training in the very delicate matter of when and how to interview and counsel abuse victims. This would include whether to undertake counseling themselves, or to refer members to LDS Social Services or private marriage or psychological counselors in the community.

Even many marriage counselors and other social workers are inadequately trained to recognize verbal abuse, or physical abuse when physical evidence is not apparent. Social workers' responses to victims of domestic violence may hold biases and stereotypes about abuse that interfere with their response.<sup>77</sup> Surely this also is true of bishops and stake presidents. Although enjoined to seek out abuse victims,<sup>78</sup> they don't receive training in how to recognize evidence of ongoing abuse in their congregations.

### **Member Education**

LDS doctrine declares that marriage is essential to God's eternal plan, the First Presidency has warned that disintegration of families will bring dire consequences,<sup>79</sup> and presidents Spencer W. Kimball (1973–1985) and Gordon B. Hinckley (1995–2008) have counseled that selection of an eternal companion is the most important decision members will make during their mortal life.<sup>80</sup> Given the importance of mate selection, the absence of concrete premarital education and counseling in the Church is perplexing. Surely large dividends would accrue from better training of our youth in healthy human relationships, mate selection, and rational expectations of married life.

The closest that general authorities come to specific advice is President McKay's counsel that, "In choosing a companion, it is necessary to study the disposition, the inheritance, and training of the one with whom you are contemplating making life's journey."<sup>81</sup> Elder Scott has enjoined members to "look for someone who is . . . kindly understanding, forgiving of others, and willing to give of self."<sup>82</sup> While this counsel is good, it remains both sparse and general in light of the importance that prophets place on families. The Church's youth are essentially left to cope as best they can, which is to say with romance and naiveté in a social environment that encourages poor choices in marriage partners. Macro environmental influences presumably are well understood, except by those smitten by the "love bug." Micro influences

are much less well recognized. The LDS culture exerts both official and unofficial pressure for early marriage with ubiquitous counsel from parents and sometimes even from local Church leaders to marry in a temple, and to “marry a returned missionary.” Although temple marriage assures reasonable prospects for church activity, which does portend well for LDS marriages, it isn’t a reliable measure of conduct in the marriage relationship. As a measure of faith and commitment to the Church, missionary service is relevant in mate selection, but it is not the only measure of religiosity. The unfortunate truth is that some returned missionaries make poor mates, while members who haven’t served missions may make wonderful husbands.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, as heretical as the idea may appear to the faithful, some not of our faith make better husbands or wives than do some members of the Church. Ideally, sons and daughters will marry mates who exemplify both faith and commitment to the Church and who love their spouses as they love themselves,<sup>84</sup> treating them with gentle respect, honor, and love; but it is important to acknowledge incongruence between that ideal and reality. Although preparing children for marriage is and should be the primary responsibility of parents, the Church could share in teaching vital skills that will increase the prospects for happiness in marriages that will truly be eternal. Formalized programs in premarital education for all youth and single adults, and in premarital counseling for all couples who will be married under priesthood authority, could be very helpful.

Premarital education and premarital counseling are separate concepts, but are sometimes used interchangeably.<sup>85</sup> In this article, the two are treated as distinctly different.

### *Premarital Education*

Premarital education is associated with higher levels of satisfaction and commitment in marriage, lower levels of conflict, and reduced risk of divorce.<sup>86</sup> Premarital education generally is a formal curriculum taught in group settings to help individuals develop skills that increase their prospects for successful marriage. Usually this effort is aimed at youth before they become engaged, but is available to engaged couples who haven’t had the training. One study found that marital satisfaction increases significantly

with the number of hours in premarital education, up to ten hours.<sup>87</sup> Couples who received premarital education also had a thirty-one percent lower risk of divorce than couples who didn't receive such education. The Church provides analogous training via its website on employment, family finances, food storage, disability resources, and other topics, but not for what President Hinckley described as the most important decision of members' lives.

Premarital education can foster careful deliberation and lower the risk of marital distress and divorce.<sup>88</sup> This comports well with Elder Oaks' injunction that, "The best way to avoid divorce from an unfaithful, abusive, or unsupportive spouse is to avoid marriage to such a person."<sup>89</sup> This implies taking time to get to know a prospective mate and, where possible, taking time to observe and to get to know his or her family.

### *Premarital Counseling*

Premarital counseling usually consists of meetings of an engaged couple or a couple contemplating engagement with either trained clergy or a professional counselor. The Catholic Church and some other denominations require premarital counseling if the wedding ceremony will be conducted by clergy.<sup>90</sup> Counseling usually consists of more than a single session and is much more detailed than temple marriage interviews customarily conducted by LDS bishops.

Effective premarital counseling explores the personality traits and expectations of couples as they contemplate marriage. It gets specific, helping each member of the couple evaluate their prospects for successful marriage to the other. It explores their individual backgrounds and expectations with respect to such things as balancing job and family, any debt being brought into marriage, managing family finances, communication, handling anger, sexual relations, expectations of each other about household tasks, and other mundane but important matters. The process of spiritual development and religious expectations of each other also would be important subjects for LDS counseling.<sup>91</sup>

### *What Members Can Do*

It is primarily a parental responsibility to prepare children to

go into society as functional adults, and preparation for marriage is one of many areas that demand far greater attention than youth now receive either through the Church or through public schools. The most important thing we can do to help our children avoid the tragedy of abusive marriages is to set the example for them by ensuring that our marital relationships are abuse-free.<sup>92</sup> Members, and especially parents, should inform themselves about premarital education, mate selection, and spousal abuse. Taking literally the injunction to “seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study,”<sup>93</sup> they should avail themselves of reliable sources on the internet, in local libraries, and through reading newspapers, magazines, and books on relevant topics.

If parents suspect abuse they should observe carefully and inquire gently, remembering that victims may deny their abuse. Parents should not hesitate to report it confidentially to the bishop if their concerns persist.<sup>94</sup> If someone—whether a married child, a ward member, or another associate—asserts she is being abused, she should be encouraged to report it, and confidants should especially avoid any reaction that may make her feel that she is not believed. If parents witness emotional abuse, they should challenge the abuser. If a daughter discusses an abusive relationship with her parents or a sibling, they should consider the possibility that she may be making only a partial disclosure of the seriousness of the abuse and therefore should not counsel her against divorce or encourage her to continue living in an abusive relationship. Parents, siblings, or friends may appropriately encourage a victim to discuss the matter with her bishop and to seek professional counseling. If there is any indication of physical violence or even threats of physical harm, the victim should be encouraged to report it to police and, if necessary, go to a women’s shelter. Most of all, members should ensure the victim that they will fully support her in decisions aimed at ending the abuse, even if that means divorce. Finally, we all should be nonjudgmental about couples that separate or divorce. We don’t know what goes on behind closed doors.

### Conclusions

The Church condemns abuse, including emotional abuse, in strong, unequivocal rhetoric; but as demonstrated here, it does

not meet the full measure of the need to protect present and future generations of women, the sanctity of temples, or the reputation of the Church. Examined in the whole, the policy for responding to abuse is sometimes ambiguous. More could be done to educate members to avoid abusive relationships, to train local leaders for response to abusive relationships, and to hold abusers accountable. Regardless of what the Church provides, it is primarily the responsibility and province of parents to set the example of righteous, healthy relationships and to educate themselves about emotional abuse and then teach their children how to objectively evaluate prospective mates and choose wisely. Through the Book of Mormon prophet, Jacob, the Savior excoriated husbands for sinning against their wives, saying, "I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people . . . because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. . . . Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you."<sup>95</sup> While these verses specifically address unauthorized polygamy, there is an analogy with the sorrow and mourning of victims of spousal abuse in today's church who cry out in agony to the Lord, and to his servants in priesthood office, as victims of wicked and abominable behavior. Many victims so read these verses, and President Gordon B. Hinckley cited this scripture in the context of spousal abuse.<sup>96</sup> Surely the Lord is no less empathetic with the plight of his daughters today than He was with the Nephite wives and daughters. The Lord has commanded His church to purify itself, warning that if it fails to do so he will seek another people, "So long as unrighteous acts are suffered in the Church, it cannot be sanctified, neither can Zion be redeemed."<sup>97</sup>

### Additional Reading

Molly J. Walker, "An Evolutionary Perspective on Male Domestic Violence: Practical and Policy Implications," *American Journal of Criminal Law* (Summer 2005): 2-3.

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# Why the True Church Cannot Be Perfect

*Roger Terry*

In an August 2008 letter to Brigham Young University's student newspaper, a disgruntled student (who believed campus Republicans were deflating his car tires because of his Obama bumper sticker) made this inadvertently revealing statement: "I do realize that although the church itself is perfect, the people in it are definitely not."<sup>1</sup> He was right about the members, of course, but his naïve assumption that the Church is perfect is as illuminating as it is pervasive among Latter-day Saints. It is also fundamentally inaccurate. Indeed, I suspect that this misconception lies at the heart of many of the struggles the Church and its members find themselves facing in our increasingly complex and information-saturated world.

Some members, when confronted with incontrovertible evidence that the Church, its history, and its leaders are not perfect, arrive at an unexpected crisis of faith, and some of them conclude that because the Church is obviously not as perfect as they have perhaps been led to believe, it cannot be true either. On the other side of the ledger, because of the wealth of information available on the internet (some of it accurate and some not), the institutional Church faces increasing challenges in its effort to credibly portray itself and its history in the radiant light it has attempted to establish over the years. Indeed, the institution finds itself having to deal with certain topics and events that it would probably prefer to just sidestep. But, since we are now living in an extended "Mormon moment," this is hardly possible.

The threefold purpose of this essay, then, is to examine the fallacious belief that the true Church must also be perfect, to show that this belief is damaging to Church members and to the



organization itself, and to suggest a more realistic and less stressful understanding of the Lord's work in our day.

### **The Church as a Living Organism**

At the heart of this fallacy may lie nothing more than a superficial understanding of the organization. Now and then, for instance, I hear people make the claim that the Church is perfect because it was revealed by the Lord. What these individuals undoubtedly mean is that the Church is perfect because its basic organizational structure is dictated by revelation, either in canonized scripture or, more recently, through inspiration to the president of the Church.

In one sense, their assertion may be true—the Church is indeed “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20)—but, in a more practical sense, when we speak of the Church we are not really referring to an organizational chart. The Church is not just a sterile, conceptual structure. Any organization—the Church included—is a living, changing entity, an *organism*, as it were, composed not just of a hierarchical structure, but also of imperfect people, of an evolving culture, and of certain foundational ideas. In the Church, these foundational ideas include doctrines and principles that are constantly being examined, interpreted, and applied by Church leaders and members to ever-changing circumstances. So, if the lifeless institutional structure is the skeleton of the Church, then the living flesh of the organization is its members, with all their warts and blemishes.

### **Mitch and President Benson**

Let me give an example of how human imperfections can produce organizational dysfunction and thus create moral dilemmas for individual members. Many years ago I had a neighbor—let's call him Mitch—who worked as a trauma nurse at LDS Hospital. He was a returned missionary, a husband and father, and an active member of our ward. One of his patients at the time was President Ezra Taft Benson, who had suffered a severe stroke. My memory of the specifics is somewhat cloudy after so many years, but a Church spokesperson had released a statement about President Benson's condition that upset Mitch. The state-

ment must have at least assured the public that President Benson was responding well to treatment and conversing with his wife, because Mitch's response was: "When you've had two massive brain hemorrhages, you're pretty much a vegetable. President Benson doesn't recognize his wife. And he's not talking with anybody." Why, he then asked me, was the Church telling lies? I didn't really have a good answer for him at that time, but I think I could offer one today.

This episode was probably not the only reason for Mitch's eventual decisions—he left both the Church and his family—but it certainly didn't help him any. He apparently never came to understand what I first began to comprehend only after seven years of Church employment. Still, Mitch's question is worth considering. Why *did* the Church release a statement that was not truthful? Somebody, I would guess, failed to grasp the concept introduced above, that the Church doesn't have to be perfect to be true. I can imagine someone reasoning, with that common combination of good intentions and faulty logic, that if the Church is true, then it *has to* be perfect, and in a perfect Church the prophet can't be mentally incapacitated. Not only that, but this person (or perhaps committee) probably assumed that if the truth about President Benson's condition were made public, the public would get the wrong impression. Members who were weak in their faith would certainly lose their testimonies if they found out the prophet was in a vegetative state, because that would mean "continuous revelation through a living prophet" wasn't really continuous.<sup>2</sup> This concern was actually defused more than a century ago by Elder B. H. Roberts, who explained that revelation is probably more sporadic than continuous.<sup>3</sup> The important point, of course, is that it is ongoing.

Unfortunately, this persistent misconception about what it means to have a true church sometimes causes people within the organization to overreact, to feel a great urgency to portray the Church as it is not. This is probably just an overzealous manifestation of seeking to put the Church's best foot forward, but too often it turns into excessive agonizing over the Church's public image and, ironically, acting in ways that inevitably damage that public image.

### Two Kinds of People

The Church may be true (meaning that it is legitimate or authorized),<sup>4</sup> but it is certainly not perfect. Perhaps I'm a little slow. It wasn't until I had worked in the Church Office Building for seven years that I finally began to understand this basic truth and its implications. Then again, maybe I'm not so slow. As I listen to frustrated Church members recount their less-than-satisfactory encounters with Church bureaucracy, and as I read letters, essays, posts, comments, and articles by disaffected Saints in newspapers, magazines, books, blogs, and other forums, I realize that many people struggle with this basic principle—some even to the point of forsaking their affiliation with the Church.

The gap between a true church and a perfect one may fall along any of several fault lines, but regardless of the particular issue that disconnects the ideal from the real, the fact remains that the Church is not perfect. And this bothers two different kinds of people. It bothers the first sort so much that they seek to erase the disconnect by either hiding the truth or hiding from it. As is only fair, however, the true-but-not-perfect sword cuts both ways. People on the other side of the misperception, like Mitch, also fall for this fallacy. A friend who read an earlier version of this essay observed that most of the Latter-day Saints he knows who are “fragile” in their faith are “walking on the thin ice of their overexpectations.” They assume that since the Church claims to be true, it is somehow also claiming to be perfect. And when they learn an uncomfortable truth about Mormon history or when somebody in a position of responsibility makes a particularly egregious mistake, these members of the second group find the resulting cognitive dissonance difficult to deal with. They see the imperfections and the attempts by members of the first group to either whitewash or ignore those flaws, and they see hypocrisy. This bothers them so much that their testimonies suffer and sometimes even die, especially if those testimonies are founded upon a warm, fuzzy feeling or a logical assemblage of intellectual notions rather than a genuine witness from the Spirit. These are the type of people who say, “The Lord would never permit his church to produce a fruit so rotten as the Mountain Meadows Massacre.” Either way you approach it, however, the belief that the true Church also has to be

perfect creates difficulties and inflicts damage on individuals and the organization.

### A More Useful Metaphor

A basic principle that, if understood, would help both of the above-mentioned groups is the notion that the Church not only *is* not perfect, but *cannot* be, at least not here, not now in this fallen world. If the Church were perfect, it would fail miserably in its mission, which is, in part, to perfect *us*. In essence, if God were to spell out specifically for his apostles and prophets and stake presidents and bishops and auxiliary leaders every step in the Church's onward march of establishing his kingdom on earth, if he were to dictate every decision and inspire every policy, he would defeat his own purpose. What purpose? To help us become as he is.

As disconcerting as this idea might appear on the surface, both reason and experience suggest that God treats the Church in much the same way he treats each of us. As we strive to learn and grow and follow the Savior, our Heavenly Father intervenes periodically in our lives in ways that maximize our opportunities for growth and service. Sometimes when we pray for guidance, the Spirit gives us quiet promptings and confirmations. At other times, perhaps to steer us away from danger or to change our direction in a dramatic way, he may prompt us (or even set the celestial equivalent of neon signs in our path) without our even asking. But often when we pray for guidance or for knowledge in making decisions, the heavens are perfectly silent. In these perplexing instances, God expects us to use our own intelligence; his revealed word; the counsel of family members, trusted friends, and ordained leaders; the gospel values we've accepted; and our best understanding of the circumstances we're facing to make decisions on our own, and to trust that he will warn us if we go too far astray. And more often than many of us wish, he even allows us to experience the negative consequences of our unwise decisions—so that we will learn wisdom.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught:

What about those times when we seek revelation and do not receive it? We do not always receive inspiration or revelation when we request it. Sometimes we are delayed in the receipt of revelation, and sometimes we are left to our own judgment. We cannot force

spiritual things. It must be so. Our life's purpose to obtain experience and to develop faith would be frustrated if our Heavenly Father directed us in every act, even in every important act. We must make decisions and experience the consequences in order to develop self-reliance and faith.

Even in decisions we think very important, we sometimes receive no answers to our prayers. This does not mean that our prayers have not been heard. It only means that we have prayed about a decision which, for one reason or another, we should make without guidance by revelation.<sup>5</sup>

Someone once quipped, "Good judgment comes from experience; experience comes from bad judgment." Often this is how we learn, as difficult as it seems. God wants us to learn not just to be obedient to specific commands but to "be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will. . . . For the power is in [us], wherein [we] are agents unto [ourselves]" (D&C 58:27–28). He doesn't want us to become robots or computers, automatically following every command in minute detail. He wants us to become gods.

If Heavenly Father wanted to impede us in our progression, he would answer every prayer immediately and specifically, spelling out exactly what we should do in any situation. Likewise, if he wanted to cripple his chosen servants—prophets, apostles, stake presidents, bishops, quorum and auxiliary presidents, home and visiting teachers, and parents—he would tell them exactly what to do every step of the way. If he led them by the hand and never let go, they would remain infants. They would never grow in their ability to make decisions, use good judgment, or exercise initiative. Latter-day Saints love to sing "I Am a Child of God," but many seem to forget that children are supposed to grow into something other than children—adults—and God is unwavering in allowing us the freedom to explore exactly what that means. Indeed, he is so hands-off at times in this process that life's experiences can often become rather perplexing.

It becomes quickly apparent after even a cursory reading of Church history that the Lord wasn't spelling out specifically how the Restoration should unfold. His hand was in the broad strokes, but the finer detail was and is tainted by human inadequacy and error.<sup>6</sup> Even the Lord's revelations to Joseph Smith were not perfect; they were couched in the prophet's imprecise human lan-

guage: "Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding" (D&C 1:24). The reason Church history is so messy (and sometimes so uncomfortable for those who desperately want a perfect organization and therefore feel compelled to sanitize its past) is that the Lord was more interested in the growth of individual leaders and quorums than He was in having a perfectly logical and orderly unfolding of His kingdom in the latter days. And if some of those leaders and quorums made mistakes and perhaps never learned from them, it is a testimony to the fact that God is serious about our development and our free will.

In a nutshell, then, if the Church were perfect, none of us ever would be. But the Church is not perfect. On the local level, this imperfection is taken for granted. Few people, inside or outside the Church, have any illusions about the fallibility of their fellow ward members or their LDS friends. But on the impersonal, general level—where the Church is presented through carefully screened, scrutinized, and simplified publications or distant, carefully choreographed encounters with revered leaders who are deemed to be perpetually inspired from on high—we sometimes find ourselves believing the unbelievable. We also find ourselves struggling to navigate the complex and idealistic terrain of corporate mission statements and public-image production. If we carefully consider the purpose of the Church, however, we will not be so squeamish about its imperfections.

Maybe we just need to embrace a new metaphor. Perhaps it would be more useful to portray the Church not as a perfectly designed and smoothly functioning machine that sweeps up multitudes of converts and churns out prodigious quantities of laudable good works, but as a laboratory—God's grand laboratory—where we are allowed to experiment with dangerous substances such as free will, authority, differing perspectives, disagreement, incomplete intelligence, and unrefined personalities. In this new metaphor, the Church is a somewhat-controlled environment where we don our lab coats, roll up our sleeves, and get down to the business of finding solutions to real problems. In our experiments, we are able to apply our minds, hearts, ingenuity, initia-

tive, and faith in creating crude approximations of something truly wonderful. And if we sometimes mix the chemicals wrong and blow up part of the lab, so what? In this metaphor, there is also room, refreshingly, for such realities as humor and irony.

### **Failure as Part of God's Plan**

If the Church were perfect, we would have little opportunity for growth. And, more importantly, we would not have the opportunity to *fail* in any way. In fact, a perfect Church in mortality would be a devilish institution, exactly what many of us assume Lucifer promised in the premortal existence to deliver in this one.<sup>7</sup> This thought should give us pause, for whenever we feel the urge to portray the Church as perfect, we may end up inadvertently advertising for the adversary.

A unique element in the Mormon view of theology is that failure is an integral part of God's plan—and this theological notion applies to organizations as well as individuals. This insight might allow us, for instance, to give a more comprehensive interpretation to the episode of Church history known as Zion's Camp. (Our current reading of this affair glorifies the silver lining while almost totally dismissing the dark cloud.)<sup>8</sup> It might also induce us to stop idolizing the handcart migration—a flawed program from poverty-inspired start to abrupt end—with our own romanticized mock treks. Most importantly, acknowledging the honored place of failure in God's plan might allow us to gain a new appreciation for our own personal and inevitable Zion's Camp debacles and handcart disasters.

Just as God does not condemn us individually as long as we are repenting and moving generally in the right direction—even if it seems at times that we are stumbling and bumbling and meandering toward our eventual goal—so he also does not seem to mind if the Church takes a few missteps, adopts ineffective programs and wrongheaded policies, or even tramples a few toes, as long as it is moving overall in the right direction and accomplishing its purpose. Indeed, all evidence suggests that God is a whole lot more liberal with us and with the Church than we are. We tend to be rather judgmental of each other, and some of us are very hard on the Church, even though we expect God to grant us a rather generous allowance for error as we follow the gospel path



ourselves. According to Mormon legend, J. Golden Kimball was once asked whether he stayed on the straight and narrow. “No,” he replied, “but I’ve crossed it many times.” We may laugh at such a candid confession and hope God will permit us the same allowance, but for some reason we don’t imagine he would grant the Church or especially its current leaders such liberty.

### Free Will and Progress

As I grow older, I become increasingly convinced that nothing is more sacred to our Heavenly Father than our free will (which Mormons refer to as agency).<sup>9</sup> In fact, our free will is so sacred to him that only very rarely will he violate it, *even if that means allowing us to violate each other’s free will*. And we do. Regularly. Church leaders, for example, are learning to use authority appropriately in the only way they can—by experience—which explains why Joseph Smith’s observation holds just as true for Mormons as for those who don’t share our convictions: “We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, [that] they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion” (D&C 121:39). Even Joseph struggled at times with the competing demands of exercising authority. Indeed, the only way God could possibly prevent us from abusing authority would be to deny us any latitude by prescribing exactly how we are to promote his work. But that would prevent us from learning how to righteously exercise authority. Trial and error is a cluttered and chaotic way to learn things, but sometimes it is the only way.

We understand well enough the difference between the plan God presented to us in the premortal world and Lucifer’s proposed alternative. Even so, many of us seem to wish God would use some of Satan’s methods as he administers the Church in mortality—to make sure it is effective and efficient and, well, perfect. But he will neither coerce nor control us; nor will he prevent most of our mistakes or simply pretend they didn’t happen. He will guide and command and warn and even chastise and forgive, but he is serious about allowing us both the freedom to choose and the opportunity to experience real consequences. The reason for this is that in God’s mind perfection is the end result, *not the process*. It is the destination, not the path leading there.

Still, it is good to note that even with all its imperfections, the Church is nevertheless able to accomplish a great deal of good in the world and fulfill the basic function the Lord requires of it, which includes providing the ordinances of salvation, teaching fundamental gospel truths, offering a sanctuary from the wickedness of the world, and creating local communities within which we can support and love each other along the pathway to individual and collective perfection.

### **“To Whom Shall We Go?”**

After the bread of life sermon, many of Jesus’s disciples were offended and “walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? . . . Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:66–68). Apparently, even Jesus, who was sinless, was not perfect enough for many of those who had followed him. He taught difficult doctrines and didn’t meet their expectations. Do we then have any right to expect more from his sin-stained servants?

Now and then, when I come face-to-face with imperfections in the Church, inconsistencies in its doctrines, perplexing incidents in its history, or deficiencies in its leaders, I look in vain for a viable alternative and find myself crying out with Peter, “To whom shall [I] go?” As aggravating as I find Church bureaucracy, and as much as I wish our theology were more complete and our history less troubling, I can’t deny that I know things I can’t deny. I have received a witness from the Holy Ghost about Joseph Smith that I simply can’t dodge, discount, or explain away. Without going into detail,<sup>10</sup> I’ll just say that this was much more than a warm feeling in my heart.

And what about all the doctrines that I cherish and believe and sincerely hope are true? How could I forsake these? Yes, polygamy bothers me—not the fact that it *was* practiced, but the *way* it was practiced—and yet if I toss polygamy out, I must also discard the nature of man, the nature of God, and their relationship to each other.<sup>11</sup> A theology without the premortal existence, the physical resurrection, the three degrees of glory, and eternal marriage would feel empty and unenticing.

Frankly, there is not another Christian denomination or non-

Christian religion whose God I am even remotely attracted to. Oh, to whom shall I go? I have no choice but to stay with the only Church that has the authority Joseph received from heaven and passed on to others. What this means is that I have to learn to live with imperfections and inconsistencies, and this leaves the door wide open for a handful of paradoxes and ironies.

### A Final Word

The foregoing discussion is in no way intended to justify either category of troubled Latter-day Saints in their sometimes extreme reactions to the Church's imperfections. People who see the Church's flaws should neither try to whitewash them nor become so offended that they abandon their covenants. A reasonable middle path is simply to acknowledge the Church's imperfections (and even their necessity) while working constructively to eliminate the most obvious and troublesome ones. Of course, determining just where to draw the line between those imperfections that are unacceptable or harmful and those that are innocuous or even helpful is a difficult question that we will undoubtedly face again and again. But if we face it openly and with faith, we can certainly benefit from the process, both individually and collectively.

### Notes

1. "Tire Prank," *Daily Universe*, August 5, 2008, <http://newnewsnet.byu.edu/story.cfm/69136>.

2. It may be argued that revelation is *continuing* and not *continuous*, but the term *continuous revelation* has been used by Church leaders for decades—indeed as recently as President Monson's use of the term in the October 2008 general conference—to describe the Church's relationship with the Lord. Other examples include a 1989 talk by Elder James E. Faust titled "Continuous Revelation," in which he said: "I wish to speak today of a special dimension of the gospel: the necessity for constant communication with God through the process known as divine revelation. . . . This process of continuous revelation comes to the Church very frequently. . . . This continuous revelation will not and cannot be forced by outside pressure from people and events." James E. Faust, "Continuous Revelation," *Ensign* 19, no. 11 (November 1989): 8, 10. President Hinckley also made the following statement: "In other words, we believe in continuous revelation." Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Quorum of the

First Presidency,” *Ensign* 35, no. 12 (December 2005): 48. Although these leaders used the term *continuous revelation*, the context of their usage indicates that they probably meant *continuing*. Elder Faust refers to “constant communication,” but he also states that “continuous revelation comes to the Church very frequently.” If something is continuous, it cannot happen “frequently.” To be continuous, it would need to happen nonstop, day and night, 24/7, 365 days a year. The dictionary definition of *continuous* is “marked by uninterrupted extension in space, time, or sequence.” “Ongoing” is probably a more accurate description of the Lord’s communication to his agents on earth.

3. Elder Roberts very candidly discussed the limited nature of God’s direct involvement in day-to-day Church governance in an *Improvement Era* article at the time of the Reed Smoot Senate hearings—when questions were being raised about the autonomy of Church leaders. Wrote Roberts:

“There is nothing in the doctrines of the Church which makes it necessary to believe that [men are constantly under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit], even . . . men who are high officials of the Church. When we consider the imperfections of men, their passions and prejudices, that mar the Spirit of God in them, happy is the man who can *occasionally* ascend to the spiritual heights of inspiration and commune with God! . . .

“We should recognize the fact that we do many things by our own uninspired intelligence for the issues of which we are ourselves responsible. . . . He will help men at need, but I think it improper to assign every word and every act of a man to an inspiration from the Lord. Were that the case, we would have to acknowledge ourselves as being wholly taken possession of by the Lord, being neither permitted to go to the right nor the left only as he guided us. There could then be no error made, nor blunder in judgment; free agency would be taken away, and the development of human intelligence prevented. Hence, I think it a reasonable conclusion to say that *constant, never-varying inspiration is not a factor in the administration of the affairs of the Church*; not even good men, though they be prophets or other high officials of the Church, are at all times and in all things inspired of God. It is only occasionally, and at need, that God comes to their aid.” B. H. Roberts, “Relation of Inspiration and Revelation to Church Government,” *Improvement Era* 8 (March 1905): 362, emphasis added.

4. An organization cannot be “true” in the same sense that a principle, a doctrine, or a fact can be true, meaning “conformable to an essential reality.” Thus, when we speak of the restored gospel being true, we mean something very different from what we mean when we say the Church is true. If we use the scriptural definition of truth—“knowledge

of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24)—then every church is "true," in other words, it is as it is. So when we speak of the organization being true, we mean that it is legitimate, that it is authorized by the Lord. This is a different but equally acceptable meaning of the word *true*.

5. Dallin H. Oaks, "Revelation," devotional address given at Brigham Young University on September 29, 1981, <http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=6846&x=65&y=7>.

6. I suspect the finer details are also quite often enhanced and blessed by the ingenuity and genuine goodness of human agency also, but that is a topic for another day.

7. Personally, I don't agree with the belief that Lucifer's plan was to coerce us to do good and to keep the commandments. I prefer the idea that has been addressed thoroughly of late that the devil was really proposing to simply save us in our sins. Either way, though, Lucifer's church would have been perfect—either by force or by twisted definition, sort of like the former Soviet Union, where there was no pollution because the government declared that there was no pollution.

8. At present, we tend to emphasize that the purpose of Zion's Camp was to train up the future leaders of the Church. But this was not at all the purpose of that long march. The Lord's purpose is stated very clearly in the D&C. "I will give unto you a revelation and commandment, that you may know how to act in the discharge of your duties concerning the salvation and redemption of your brethren, who have been scattered on the land of Zion. . . . Behold they [my people] shall . . . begin to prevail against mine enemies from this very hour. . . . Behold, . . . the redemption of Zion must needs come by power. . . . And my presence shall be with you even in avenging me of mine enemies, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (D&C 103:1, 6, 15, 26). They went to Missouri to restore the Saints to their lands. But in terms of fulfilling the Lord's initial purpose, Zion's Camp was a total failure. In D&C 105, the Lord rescinded the commandment to "fight the battles of Zion" (v. 14). Because of "the transgressions of my people," he explained, "it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait a little season for the redemption of Zion" (v. 9). In other words, the elders of the Church failed in this venture because of personal disobedience.

9. See Robert D. Hales, "Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life," *Ensign* 40, no. 11 (November 2010): 24–27; <http://lds.org/ensign/2010/11/agency-essential-to-the-plan-of-life?lang=eng>. To most English speakers, *agency* means simply the capacity or obligation to represent another person, to act on another's behalf. This common meaning of the term appears in D&C 58:27–28: "For the power is in them, wherein they are

agents unto themselves.” When we have freedom to choose, we are not agents unto someone else, obligated to carry out that person’s will, but are agents unto ourselves, free to carry out our own wishes. *Free agency*, a term that has fallen out of favor in the Church, probably brings to most people’s minds the idea that a professional athlete can jump from one team to another when his contract expires. To avoid the confusion these terms can cause, I have used the term *free will* in this essay.

10. For that detail, see Roger Terry, “Frau Rüster and the Cure for Cognitive Dissonance,” *Dialogue* 40, no. 3 (2007): 201, <http://dialoguejournal.metapress.com/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,13,13;journal,15,33;linkingpublicationresults,1:113395,1>, or (perhaps unauthorized) at <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Frau-Ruster.html?b=1&showAll=1>.

11. I have a complicated relationship with polygamy. While I find it unappealing personally, I realize I would not be here without it, being the descendant of a second wife on each side of my family history.

# “Shake Off the Dust of Thy Feet”: The Rise and Fall of Mormon Ritual Cursing

*Samuel R. Weber*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In July 1830, just three months after the formal organization of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith dictated a revelation that promised, “in whatsoever place ye shall enter in & they receive you not in my name ye shall leave a cursing instead of a blessing by casting off the dust of your feet against them as a testimony & cleansing your feet by the wayside.”<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the historical record is replete with examples of ritual cursing being performed up through the 1890s. While many of Smith’s revelations and doctrinal innovations continue to be practiced by the LDS Church today, cursing has fallen into disuse. Despite this ritual’s unique status as an act of formally calling down God’s wrath upon others, it has received surprisingly little attention in scholarly studies.<sup>3</sup>

The first objective of this paper is to examine ritual cursing within Mormonism: how ritual cursing began, who performed curses, who was cursed, and how the ritual was performed. Factors that contributed to an environment conducive to ritual cursing will also be explored. Cursing arose during a period of bold innovation within Mormonism, as founding prophet Joseph Smith unveiled a seemingly endless stream of new doctrines and practices. Although ritual cursing may be appropriately described as new to the religious world in which Mormonism was born, it had ancient roots. Ritual cursing was an expression of Christian primitivism among Mormons, an attempt to recapture an ancient biblical rite that had been lost over time. The most common practitioners of



ritual cursing were Mormon missionaries who faced rejection in their efforts to proselytize. Mormonism began as a small sect with many religious and political enemies, and Mormons used ritual cursing as a means of holy retaliation against their enemies. The manner in which the ritual was performed varied, typically including the dusting or washing of feet, but at times involving the shaking of one's garment. Cursing was considered part of a missionary's duty to prepare the world for the imminent millennium. The ritual designated unbelievers as such, marking them as separate from believers for the day of judgment. The ritual was fluid and developed over time, cross-pollinating with other rituals from the School of the Prophets, the Kirtland Endowment, and the prayer circle. The combination of doctrinal innovation, Christian primitivism, and millenarianism, set against a backdrop of proselytizing efforts, disbelieving masses, and persecuting mobs, provided fertile ground for ritual cursing to flourish in the early days of the Church.

The second objective of this paper is to examine the decline and discontinuation of the cursing ritual. This discontinuation resulted from a reduction in prominence of several aforementioned influences present during the formative years of the Church. Over time, Mormonism transitioned from a small, young, persecuted minority to a stable, sizeable, economic power in the western U.S.<sup>4</sup> With the transition to stability, pressures and priorities within Mormonism changed. As Mormons removed themselves geographically from their tormentors, violence and persecution lessened. Generations passed without Jesus's return, and Mormonism's millenarian impulse began to fade. Missionaries no longer sealed unbelievers up to the day of judgment, but returned to homes again and again and gave multiple chances to hear the gospel message. Cursing was advised against and eventually dropped from Church discourse and publications. Doctrinal innovation gave way to the routinization necessary for Mormonism to endure as an institution, and practices viewed as nonessential to the Church's mission were eliminated. Without persecutors tormenting them, the millennium around the corner, and an environment favoring innovative ritual practices, the impetus to curse

was lost for most Mormons. With the Church stable and persecution minimized, the practice was discontinued.

### **Biblical Precedents and Joseph Smith's Revelations**

The Bible was a fertile source of inspiration for Joseph Smith's revelations. Doctrinal innovations such as baptism for the dead, the post-mortal degrees of glory, and polygamy resulted from Smith's poring over the pages of the Old and New Testaments. Similarly, Smith's pronouncements on curses had biblical precedents. Jesus himself told his disciples: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Mark 6:11; see also Matt. 10:14, Luke 9:5). Similar instruction is repeated in his commission to seventy others (Luke 10:10–12). This act of retribution was performed by Jesus' followers elsewhere in the New Testament, as when Paul and Barnabas "shook off the dust of their feet against [the Jews] . . . [and] were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 13:51–52).

Bible scholars have offered various interpretations of the New Testament dust-shaking gesture. Some have drawn parallels to rabbinic literature in which Jews traveling in Gentile lands are expected to remove the dust of an impure foreign nation from their bodies before returning to the holy land. Others have suggested that the act was intentionally humorous. Still others have ignored the subject entirely. T. J. Rogers argues convincingly that these biblical passages should be read in the context of ancient hospitality customs. Guests in the ancient world could expect their hosts to provide water to wash their feet, symbolizing a transition from stranger to guest in the home of their host. To shake the dust from one's feet would therefore serve as evidence that this custom had not been observed, and hospitality had been refused to the apostles. It is implied that God would notice this testimony and execute punishment on those who had refused hospitality to his servants.<sup>5</sup>

The founding prophet of Mormonism offered his own take on the biblical dust-shaking gesture by advocating its renewed practice by Mormon proselytizers as a cursing ritual. With ample bibli-

cal examples (another doctrinal innovation, baptism for the dead, had only a single New Testament verse as precedent), Smith's scribes recorded a revelation in July 1830 instructing missionaries for his new church to "[cast] off the dust of your feet" as a testimony against the disbelieving.<sup>6</sup> One year later, on August 8, 1831, the doctrine reappeared in a new revelation: "And shake off the dust of thy feet against those who receive thee not, not in their presence, lest thou provoke them, but in secret; and wash thy feet, as a testimony against them in the day of judgment."<sup>7</sup> Smith produced three revelations on curses in 1832. In the first of these, he stated that those who performed curses would "be filled with joy and gladness," likely alluding to Paul and Barnabas' dusting of feet in Acts 13:51–52. Smith's revelation also declared that "in the day of judgment you shall be judges of that house, and condemn them."<sup>8</sup> In his second 1832 revelation on cursing, it was implied that water could be used to "cleanse your feet in the secret places by the way for a testimony against them."<sup>9</sup> The final 1832 cursing revelation specified that this ritual should be performed "alone" and that "pure water" should be used to cleanse the feet.<sup>10</sup> As with other Mormon ordinances, the actions of biblical figures became imbued with special status and ritualized.

After the initial revelations on ritual cursing were received by Joseph Smith, discourse on the subject continued in official Church publications. In November 1835, Smith wrote on the subject in the Latter-day Saint *Messenger and Advocate*. In cases where a man forbade his wife and children from joining the church, the responsibility for their sins would be answered upon him as head of the house. "[T]he guilt of that house is no longer upon thy skirts: Thou art free; therefore, shake off the dust of thy feet, and go thy way."<sup>11</sup> The January 1, 1842, edition of the *Times and Seasons* included a letter from Orson Hyde discussing his travels in the Holy Land. He noted that by journeying during the dry season, his feet and legs were completely coated with dust. "I then thought how very convenient it must have been for the ancient disciples to fulfill one injunction of the Saviour, 'shake off the dust of your feet.'"<sup>12</sup> An 1842 epistle from the Nauvoo High Council to be read in "all the branches of the church" admonished members to bear their afflictions "as becometh saints," and that when they

were unable to obtain justice they should “shake off the dust off your feet.”<sup>13</sup> Joseph Smith’s authority to curse was reemphasized in an 1843 revelation with the following language: “whomsoever you curse I will curse, saith the Lord” (D&C 132:47). Continual discourse on cursing published through official church channels created an environment in which Mormon proselytizers were prepared to curse those who rejected their message.

### Who Pronounced Curses

Smith’s revelations on ritual cursing were given primarily to Mormon missionaries. Those who rejected the message of the Mormon preachers were to be cursed. The earliest recorded performance of cursing by a Mormon elder preceded Smith’s aforementioned revelations. According to his mother’s reminiscence, Samuel Smith, brother of the prophet and the fledgling church’s first missionary, reported that on June 30, 1830, he “washed his feet in a small brook” as testimony against an innkeeper in Livonia, New York, who rejected the Book of Mormon and denied the missionary room and board.<sup>14</sup> Use of this ritual quickly caught on among Mormon proselytizers.

It was not always easy for missionaries to follow the command to curse. When Orson Hyde failed to convert his sister to Mormonism, he felt compelled to shake the dust off his feet. “[T]ears from all eyes freely ran, and we shook the dust of our feet against them but it was like piercing my heart.”<sup>15</sup> When Wilford Woodruff was followed by Mr. Pitt, a man “filled with the Devil” who was “shouting, hooting, & yelling as though a part of hell at least had broke loose,” he demonstrated humility in the pronouncement of his curse. “May the will of God be done consarning that man, I pray that we may ever be reconciled to his will in all things.”<sup>16</sup> Woodruff consigned Mr. Pitt’s fate to God.

Mormons rarely knew of any consequences of their curses. Generally, the elders had faith that if their curse had no direct effects during mortality, it would take effect in the afterlife. One exception occurred in the West Indies in 1853: “The Elders cursed the Mayor, Hector Michell, whose duty it was to have protected them in their person and position as ministers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Subsequently they learned that the mayor’s

toes and fingers rotted off and that he soon died with the rot and scabs.”<sup>17</sup>

### Who Received Curses

Early Mormon missionaries frequently encountered religionists who were equally enthusiastic about their own denominations. When Samuel Smith and William McLellin spoke to an assembly of Campbellites in 1831, the group “spoke out and said that they did not want to hear any more—They called a vote and I [McLellin] was requested to say no more. . . . the[y] rejected all with disdain and desired us to depart out of their coasts. Which we did and wiped the dust of our feet against them.”<sup>18</sup> It was not the last time religious disagreement resulted in ritual cursing.

At times curses were administered against individuals or groups who failed to support missionaries financially. Following the apostolic example of traveling without “purse, or scrip” (Luke 10:4; see also Mark 6:8), Mormon elders often had to rely on the generosity of others for food and lodging. Orson Pratt cursed those who would not render assistance “for the relief of our suffering brethren in zion,” and washed his feet against a family that refused him lodging for the night.<sup>19</sup> William McLellin and David W. Patten cursed a schoolhouse full of congregants who refused their request for a donation at the conclusion of a meeting.<sup>20</sup> William McLellin, Brigham Young, and Thomas B. Marsh washed their feet against a man who refused to provide them “bread and milk for breakfast . . . without money.”<sup>21</sup>

Mormon missionaries sometimes faced overwhelming rejection from the communities they visited. In such instances, they followed Jesus’s injunction to leave curses on entire cities where his followers were scorned (Luke 10:10–12). Detroit, Michigan, was cursed in 1831;<sup>22</sup> Chicago, Illinois, was cursed in 1831;<sup>23</sup> Sinclairville, New York, was cursed in 1835;<sup>24</sup> Paris, Arkansas, was cursed in 1836;<sup>25</sup> Beach Hill, Connecticut, was cursed in 1837;<sup>26</sup> Collinsville, Connecticut, was cursed in 1837;<sup>27</sup> eight households in Belfast, Maine, were cursed in 1838;<sup>28</sup> and the Fox Islands, Maine, were cursed in 1838.<sup>29</sup> Sensing an urgency to their work, Mormons dusted their feet in these areas and moved on to other communities in the hope of finding more fruitful ground for proselytizing.

Mormons occasionally pronounced curses upon each other.

In an 1840 meeting of the Kirtland Elders Quorum, Henry Moore was charged with false prophecy, deception, laziness, and “trying to persuade a woman to promise to have him while his own wife is still living.” Additionally, Moore was accused of “pronouncing curses upon Elder Charles Thompson because he would not uphold him in the above abominations and washing his feet against me [Thompson] for the same reason.”<sup>30</sup> Seven years later, cursing was invoked in sentencing an unknown (possibly Mormon) perpetrator. When someone killed Albert Carrington’s cow in 1847, the Salt Lake Stake presidency and high council met to discuss punishment of the unidentified wrongdoer. As traditional means of litigation were impossible against an anonymous criminal, a novel solution was settled upon. “After several remarks of <by> the counselors, Pres. John Smith sealed a curse upon the person or persons who killed Carrington’s cow until they came forward and made restitution. The curse was sanctioned unanimously by the council.”<sup>31</sup> These examples demonstrate that Mormons did not exclusively curse non-Mormons; at times they cursed their own, or in the case of Carrington’s cow, those who were unknown.

Cursing was used as a means of coping with the mob violence and forced migration perpetually endured by the Mormons. Prior to their departure from Nauvoo in 1845, the Saints spent a night dancing in the temple. This was not only for recreation: “while we danced before the Lord, we shook the dust from off our feet as a testimony against this nation.”<sup>32</sup> When they encountered forces they could not overcome, Mormons turned their enemies over to God and his judgments.

### How Curses Were Performed

In describing the cursing ritual, Mormons frequently wrote that they “bore testimony” against the disbelieving, echoing language from Smith’s revelations. Joseph Coe, a missionary in New York in 1831, “washed his feet as a testimony” against those who “would not receive my doctrine” five times during a three-week period.<sup>33</sup> John Murdock encountered Dr. Matthews, “a very wicked man,” in September 1832, who “reviled against us, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine we taught. We bore testimony according to the Commandment and the Lord helped us in tending to

the ordinance.”<sup>34</sup> Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde washed their feet and bore testimony against a Baptist priest who denounced them as false prophets.<sup>35</sup> Wilford Woodruff and Jonathan Hale “clensed our feet in the pure water of the Sea as a testimony against Gideon J. Newton for rejecting our testimony of the Lord & of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>36</sup> William McLellin,<sup>37</sup> Samuel Smith,<sup>38</sup> and Orson Pratt<sup>39</sup> all used similar language in their journals. In effect, testimony was borne twice: first, testimony of the restored gospel was borne for the benefit of those listening; second, testimony was borne to God (as feet were dusted or washed) that the missionaries’ duty had been fulfilled.

In a particularly interesting case, a man was cursed more than once. A Methodist priest by the name of Mr. Douglass was cursed multiple times by Wilford Woodruff, first in September 1837 “for rejecting the Book of Mormon & our testimony,”<sup>40</sup> and later in February 1838 for “rejecting our testimony & offending our little ones.” Following the latter curse, Woodruff recorded in his journal that it was “the third witness borne to heaven against that man.”<sup>41</sup> This is the only known example of an individual being cursed repeatedly.

The New Testament apostle Paul described a variant of shaking the dust off one’s feet that involved the shaking of a garment. In Acts 18:6, Paul “testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.” Similar instances of garment shaking exist in the Old Testament (Neh. 5:13) and Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 9:44). As enthusiastic participants in a primitive church restoration movement, it is not surprising that early Mormons imitated biblical exemplars by occasionally shaking their garments instead of their feet as a variant of the cursing ritual.

In December 1837, Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde were encountering difficulties in the mission field. Mormon meetings were being disrupted by priests from other Christian denominations, which resulted in Kimball shaking his garments at them.

After Brother Hide speking [spoke] to the people about one [h]our; I got up and bore testamony to the congration and shock [shook] my



garments before them and told them that my garments ware clean of blo[o]d. Thare was menney preas [priests] that ware thare at that time but had Rejected our testamony and cold [called] us evy thing but good and shoock thare fist at us and sisced [hissed] at us and gnashed thare theth [teeth] at us and thretned us evry way that they could. The nex[t] day we felt by the Spirrite of the Lord that we would gow and wash our feet against them and that we would not have now [any] more to dow with [them] for we was clean of thare blo[o]d and that we would have now [no] more to dow [do] with them hare after; then we went and washed our feet and hands and shuck our garments against them and bore testamony to our Father who art in heaven.<sup>42</sup>

Another interesting example of garment-shaking was related by Ashbel Kitchell, the intended recipient of a curse. After a failed endeavor to preach to a group of Shakers (of which Kitchell was a part), Parley P. Pratt “arose and commenced shakeing his coattail; he said he shook the dust from his garments as a testimony against us, that we had rejected the word of the Lord Jesus.” As this ritual was performed in front of an audience, it received an understandably negative response: “Before the words were out of his mouth, I was to him, and said;—You filthy Beast, dare you presume to come in here, and try to imitate a man of God by shaking your filthy tail; confess your sins and purge your soul from your lusts, and your other abominations before you ever presume to do the like again &c. While I was ministering this reproof, he settled trembling into his seat, and covered his face.”<sup>43</sup> Such conflict may shed light on the necessity of following the scriptural injunction to curse “in secret,” as Kitchell was not unique in taking offense at this Mormon practice.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Millenarian Mindset of Early Mormonism**

Most early Mormons shared the belief that Christ’s second coming was nigh, and that the millennium would likely commence during their lifetimes.<sup>45</sup> One step in the process of cleansing the earth preparatory to its millennial state was the separation of the righteous from the wicked. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus said, “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matt. 13:30). This parable was referenced in two of Smith’s

revelations. The first indicates the tares must be “bound in bundle[l]es” before the field can be burned.<sup>46</sup> The other states:

therefore I must gather to gether my people according to the parable of the wheat and the tares that the wheat may be secured in the garner to possess eternal life and be crowned with celestial glory when I come in the Kingdom of my fathe[r] to reward evry man according as his work shall be whilst the tares shall be bound in bundles and their bands made strong that they may be burned with unquenchable fire.<sup>47</sup>

Early Mormon missionaries were participating in this separation of good from evil. Performance of a ritual curse was, in effect, binding its recipients like tares preparatory to their burning. Orson Hyde performed at least six curses during his missionary travels during the spring of 1832.<sup>48</sup> His journal entry of March 19 echoes the language of Jesus’s parable, “went on 3 or 4 Miles Sealed up many to the day of wrath, bound the tares in bundles.”<sup>49</sup>

Another millenarian image from the scriptures that took hold in the minds of early Mormons was that of sealing.<sup>50</sup> Separate but related to the current LDS practice of temple sealings, high priests were authorized in 1831 to seal church members “up unto Eternal life,” preparatory to “the coming of the Son of man.”<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere, Joseph Smith wrote that priesthood holders have “power given to seal both on Earth & in Heaven the unbelieving & rebelious yea verily to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure”<sup>52</sup> Mormons took part in the divine pre-millennial separation of righteous from wicked through ritual performance: one ritual sealed worthy individuals up to salvation, whereas the cursing ritual sealed others to destruction. Having shaken the dust from his feet, Orson Hyde wrote in his journal in 1832: “sealed many over to the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out.”<sup>53</sup> Wilford Woodruff’s journal entry for May 22, 1836, relates that by cursing those who rejected the Mormon gospel, “We delivered them unto the hands of God <and the destroyer.>”<sup>54</sup>

In August 1840, the role of cursing was questioned by Joseph Fielding in the *Millennial Star* periodical. He described a prevalent belief that curses sealed their recipients to damnation, and

then questioned that assumption. Parley P. Pratt provided an ambiguous response.

Question 6th. —Ought the Elders and Priests, when their testimony is rejected, to wash their feet, &c., and is there no hope of those against whom they wash their feet? An idea has gone out that we consider such sealed up for destruction. Is the washing of feet, in this way, anything more than a testimony that we are clear of their blood, when we bear testimony of it before God?

Answer. —Certainly . . . when the Elders and Priests have borne a faithful testimony to any city, town, village or person, and that testimony is rejected, and they have fulfilled the revelation, that city, town, village or person is in the hands of a righteous God, who will do with them according to his own pleasure; we are clear from their blood.<sup>55</sup>

Whether priesthood was required to perform curses was never specified. It seems likely that when Joseph Fielding listed “Elders and Priests” in his question above, he did so not because of prerequisite priesthood office, but because they were the ones proselytizing. Joseph Smith’s revelations on cursing were directed chiefly to Mormon missionaries, and it was they who most often put the ritual into practice.

### **Influence of the School of the Prophets and the Kirtland Endowment**

In December 1832, Joseph Smith received revelation to organize a school for the instruction of church leaders. As part of the initiation into this “School of the Prophets,” Smith dictated that “ye shall not receive any among you into this school save he is clean from the blood of this generation; And he shall be received by the ordinance of the washing of feet” (D&C 88:138–39). Elsewhere in the same revelation, a command is given to “clean your hands, and your feet . . . that you, are clean, from the blood of this, wicked generation.”<sup>56</sup> Orson Pratt indicated that his initiation ceremony in 1833 involved the washing of both hands and feet, and that “my garments were clean from [the] blood [of this wicked generation].”<sup>57</sup> By 1836, Smith was preparing to reveal special temple blessings to worthy participants in Kirtland. In an exclusive meeting of priesthood holders on January 21, Smith and others “attended to the ordinance of washing our bodies in pure water. We also perfumed our bodies and our heads.” Once

the temple was dedicated in March of that same year, Smith emphasized the ordinance of washing of feet.<sup>58</sup>

Rituals and ordinances in these formative years were fluid, often inconsistent in their performance. Cross-pollination between simultaneously developing ordinances took place, as when the initiation ceremony for the School of the Prophets was adapted to fit the Kirtland temple endowment, which was later reframed in Nauvoo as a temple initiatory ordinance. Shaking the dust off one's feet was likewise influenced by these other washing ordinances.<sup>59</sup>

In 1836, after having received the washing rituals in the School of the Prophets, Wilford Woodruff recorded three separate occasions on which he cursed unbelievers by washing his hands and feet.<sup>60</sup> His journal entry for the last of these, dated October 12, describes the cleansing of his entire body with water and alcohol.

12th Retired in company with Elder A. O. Smoot unto the banks of Blood River aside from the abodes of men to spend some time in Prayer & Praise to God & to Perform a solemn duty that is required of all the Elders of Israel whose testimony is rejected by this generation while they are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ & bearing testimony of his NAME. after we had Cleansed our Bodies with Pure water & also with strong drink or spirits this not by Commandment but from Choice we then according to Commandment cleansed our hands and feet and bore testimony unto God against the Benton County mob & also against Paris & many others who had rejected our testimony. We enjoyed a solemn, spiritual, & interesting Season.<sup>61</sup>

Woodruff's journal entries for 1837 (by which time he would have received the Kirtland endowment washings) include two more instances of washing hands and feet in conjunction with the performance of a curse.<sup>62</sup>

Often the injunction that invitees to the School of the Prophets be "clean from the blood of this generation" (a phrase that was later included in temple rites) was echoed in descriptions of the cursing ordinance. Missionary companions Wilford Woodruff and David Patten cursed a Mr. Jackson, "that our garments might be clear of his blood."<sup>63</sup> Joseph Fielding's question about curses to Parley P. Pratt, when Pratt was editor of the *Millennial Star*,

asked, "Is the washing of feet, in this way, anything more than a testimony that we are clear of their blood, when we bear testimony of it before God?"<sup>64</sup> In August 1841, Woodruff related his missionary endeavors with Dr. Noah Porter:

I bore testimony unto him of the work of God Book of mormon &c but he rejected my testimony in the Strongest term & evry thing in the form of Prophets Apostles, revelation, Inspiration or the gift of the Holy Ghost, Healings Miracles tongues &c. Seemed to be much stired up because the work had come to Farmington. But I done my duty answered my mind, bore testimony of the truth.

After he left the house I prayed with the family & those present could see the spirit manifest in Dr Noah Porter was dictated by the powers of Darkness. I was glad to have this opportunity of bearing testimony to Dr Porter of the work of God that he might be left without excuse. I returned to my Fathers house but before retiring to rest I repaired to the river & cleansed my feet with water in testimony against Dr Noah Porter In obedience to the commandment of God that my garments might be clear of his blood & I say in the name of Jesus Christ that if he does not repent of the course he has persued in this thing, he will no longer Prosper but the judgments of God will be upon him.<sup>65</sup>

What it meant to these early Mormons to be clean from the blood of others is explained in the same revelation outlining the commencement of a School of the Prophets: "it becometh evry man, who hath been warned, to warn his neighbour, therefore they are left with<out> excuse, and there sins are upon your own heads."<sup>66</sup> A similar theology of divine responsibility is present in the Old Testament:

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the

righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezekiel 3:17–21).

Here Ezekiel expounded the duty of the Israelites to warn others to repent. Should a member of the faith fail in this duty, God would hold him responsible for the evildoings of those he might otherwise have saved. A doctrinally analogous passage is present in the Book of Mormon: “answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence . . . otherwise their blood would come upon our garments” (Jacob 1:19). Thus, when Mormon elders cursed, they did so not only to call down wrath upon their opponents, but also to free themselves from the burden of the sins of those around them. Only then could they “be filled with joy and gladness.”

### **The Practice Wanes**

Despite repeated enjoinders to shake the dust from one’s feet and the enthusiasm with which some followers embraced the cursing ritual, there emerged from early on a counter rhetoric warning against the flippant condemnation of others. Warnings were given to avoid “over-zealousness in declaring judgments against the wicked,”<sup>67</sup> and Mormons were cautioned to “talk not of judgments.”<sup>68</sup> W. W. Phelps instructed church elders in 1832 to “warn in compassion without threatening the wicked with judgments.”<sup>69</sup> In 1835, church leaders explicitly stated, “Pray for your enemies in the Church and curse not your foes without; for vengeance belongs to God.”<sup>70</sup>

Although cursing was initially embraced as a vital and necessary ritual of Mormonism, over time the recorded instances of cursing became fewer and farther between. Part of this was due to the Mormons having removed themselves to a remote area of the continent. In the process, they left many of their enemies behind, and shifted their focus from proselytizing to community building. Orson Pratt mentioned cursing in passing in an address given in 1876,<sup>71</sup> but it appears that the Saints were not very concerned with cursing during the years 1850–1880. The work of settling a new land, organizing a territorial government, and confirming church organization under the leadership of Brigham Young took

precedence over the responsibility of cursing the occasional outsider.

Eventually, missionaries were sent out to preach the gospel and an increasing number of outsiders entered the Utah territory. With renewed exposure to the rejection of non-Mormons, the practice of shaking the dust off one's feet resurfaced, but never again with the same widespread performance as was seen during the early years of the church. B. H. Roberts recorded only a single instance from his 1880–1882 mission to Iowa when he “felt at liberty” to curse someone. After receiving “rather rough treatment” in the home of a man he thought might help him obtain permission to preach at a nearby schoolhouse, Roberts departed and journeyed a mile eastward. Climbing over a fence for privacy,

I stripped my feet and washed them in witness against this man and house for the rejection of me. This I recount as the only instance when I felt at liberty to attend to this ordinance of the washing of feet against one who had rejected me. I never returned to the house and never knew what became of it, but I left my testimony thus registered according to the commandments of the Lord.<sup>72</sup>

By this time, mentions of cursing in discourses from church leadership were rare and generally made in passing. In an 1883 session of the reformed Salt Lake City School of the Prophets, Wilford Woodruff “gave instructions and stated the effects that have followed this ordinance. Spoke upon the shaking off the dust of the feet and washing the feet in pure water in summer or in winter and the judgements of God have followed.”<sup>73</sup> President George Q. Cannon cautioned that “[in] our prayers we should not condemn our enemies but leave them in the hands of God.”<sup>74</sup>

### **Use of the Prayer Circle**

Joseph Smith introduced a heavily modified version of the temple endowment to church leaders in Nauvoo in 1842, and by 1843 the endowment included ritual prayer circles.<sup>75</sup> After the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in 1844, a prayer or oath was added to the endowment. Known as the “oath of vengeance” or “law of retribution,” the recipient of the endowment prayed that God would avenge the blood of his slain prophets.<sup>76</sup> By the 1880s, Mormons were accustomed to including a call to God's wrath upon their foes in their temple ceremonies. Although curses over-



all were becoming fewer in number, the 1880s saw a brief flourish in cursing and a new variant in its ritual performance. Cursing practice had been influenced in the past by the washing rituals of the School of the Prophets. In the 1880s, cursing would cross-pollinate with temple ordinances, influenced by the oath of vengeance and incorporating the prayer circle.

In 1880, Wilford Woodruff was president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Church was under immense pressure from the federal government to end the practice of plural marriage. Woodruff recorded that God spoke to him, promising plagues, wrath, and judgment against the Church's accusers. God's anger was kindled against those in positions of governmental authority, such as:

the president of the United States, members of the Supreme Court, Cabinet, Senate, and House of Representatives; governors of various states and territories; judges and officials; Missouri and Illinois mobbers; and others who have taken part in persecuting you or Bringing distress upon you or your families or have sought your lives or sought to hinder you from keeping my Commandments or from enjoying the rights which the Constitutional Laws of the Land guarantee unto you.<sup>77</sup>

In an effort that bears striking resemblance to the oath of vengeance, a list was compiled of over 400 "Names of Persons, to be held in Remembrance before the Lord, For their Evil Deeds, and who have raised their hands against the Lord's anointed." The list included four U.S. presidents: Martin Van Buren, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, and James Buchanan.<sup>78</sup> To secure God's judgments against those on the list, Woodruff was instructed to gather the Twelve and wash their feet as a testimony against their enemies.<sup>79</sup> The apostles were then to clothe themselves in temple robes and form a prayer circle.

Woodruff describes the eventual performance of this ordinance in solemn terms:

O Pratt was vary feeble yet we all performed the ordinance of washing our feet against Our Enemies And the Enemies of the Kingdom of God according to the Commandmet of God unto us.

W. Woodruff opened By Prayer And John Taylor was Mouth in the washing of feet. At the Prayer Circle Lorenzo Snow was Mouth at the opening And Presidet JOHN TAYLOR was mouth at the Altar, and

Presented the Prayer written By W. Woodruff (By request of President Taylor) And the names were presented before the Lord according to the Commandment.

It was truly a solemn scene and I presume to say it was the first thing of the Kind since the Creation of the world. . . . We were 3 hours in the Meeting & ordinances.<sup>80</sup>

The actual prayer, written by Woodruff and read by President John Taylor, reads in part:

Now O Lord our God we bear our testimony against these men, befor Thee and the heavenly hosts and we bear testimony unto thee Our heavenly Father that we according to thy Commandments unto us we have gone alone by ourselves and Clensed our feet in pure water and born testimony unto Thee and thy Son Jesus Christ and to the heavenly hosts against these wicked men by name as far as the spirit has manifested them unto us. We have borne our testimony against those who have shed the blood of thy Prophets and Apostles and anointed Ones, or have given Consent to their death and against those who have driven thy saints and imprisoned them and those who are still ready to deprive us of Life, Liberty and the privilege of keeping the Commandments of God.

And now O Lord our God Thou hast Commanded us that when we have done this we should gather ourselves together in our holy Places and Clothed in the robes of the Holy Priesthood should unite ourselves together in Prayer and supplication and that we should bear our testimony against these men by name as far as wisdom should dictate.

. . . O Lord hear us from heaven thy Holy dwelling place and answer our Peti[tions] Sustain thine anointed ones and deliver us from the hands of Our Enemies. Overthrow the Evil designs of the wicked and ungodly against thy Saints and break Evry weapon formed against us.<sup>81</sup>

This episode is notable for a shift in the provocation to curse. In the past, curses had been performed primarily against those who rejected a proselytizer's message. Here the curse was called down upon the church's political enemies.

On one other known occasion, a prayer circle was formed with intent to curse. In 1889, a prayer circle was convened to curse R. N. Baskin, a lawyer who was actively engaged in the anti-polygamy crusades of the time.<sup>82</sup> According to the journal of newly-ordained apostle Abraham H. Cannon, a group of nine church lead-

ers convened on December 23, 1889. All but two of them were dressed in their temple robes. Each member took a turn acting as mouth for the prayer circle. Joseph F. Smith "was strongest in his prayer and urged that Baskin should be made blind, deaf and dumb unless he would repent of his wickedness."<sup>83</sup> It is unclear whether feet were dusted or washed in connection with this prayer circle. The Church was struggling to beat Baskin in the courtroom, and church leaders expressed their frustration by requesting that God stop the trouble at its source.

### **Decline and Disappearance**

With the renunciation of polygamy in 1890, Mormonism continued its evolution from a small, persecuted sect toward a stable, respectable institution. As persecution declined, so too did the discourse and practice of ritual cursing. The last publicized endorsement of cursing by a general authority came from John W. Taylor in the April 1899 General Conference. "[This] is the way Christ is going to Judge the world, for He gave a special commandment that . . . if they reject you shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them, for it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the city of Sodom or Gomorrha than for that city or household that rejecteth you."<sup>84</sup>

Around the time of Taylor's address, church discourse shifted toward ignoring cursing or mentioning it only with some degree of antipathy. In response to inquiries regarding shaking the dust off one's feet from President B. E. Rich of the Southern States Mission, George Reynolds of the Seventy was authorized by the First Presidency to write the following letter (dated March 11, 1899):

I am directed by the First Presidency to say in reply to your favor that the business of the wholesale washing of feet, &c should not be indulged in by the elders. If an elder feels that he has just cause and is moved upon by the spirit of God to wash his feet against a person or persons who have violently or wickedly rejected the truth, let him do so quietly and beyond noting it in his journal let him not make it public.

Nothing should be published in the "Southern Star" or elsewhere on this subject. Elders should be privately instructed and should let the matter rest between them, the Lord and the persons concerned. George Reynolds<sup>85</sup>

Such a direct statement against the wholesale practice of cursing cast a shadow across the potential future of this ritual. Another mission president, Nephi Pratt, was recorded in the Conference Report for April 1906 as doubting the propriety of cursing. There had been “indifference manifested in the larger cities of [the Northwestern States mission], and we have some times thought that all had been done there that ought to be done there. . . . Always we had a doubt whether we ought to shake off the dust from our feet against some of the cities in the northwest.”<sup>86</sup>

Ritual cursing was not mentioned in general conference for the next sixty years. In April 1968, S. Dilworth Young spoke of the cursing ritual in a distinctly past tense.

There have been times when we thought that if we approached a man and he, hostile because of stories he had heard about us, or suspicious because we were strangers, rebuffed us, then we had done our duty by shaking off the dust of our feet against him. We have not done that duty until we have given him a fair chance to learn that his prejudices are unfounded.<sup>87</sup>

In the sixty years of silence over the general conference pulpit, cursing was transitioning from a practiced ritual to a historical relic. Mormons had less cause to be interested in ritual cursing as they became more mainstream and less persecuted. The millenarian impulse that motivated early missionaries to shake the dust from their feet had waned. The 1946 edition of *The Missionary's Hand Book* included as one of forty-two rules, “Bless, but do not curse.”<sup>88</sup> Any mention of the ritual in church publications referred to cursing as something done in the past, not as a practice to be engaged in the present.<sup>89</sup> An excerpt from the *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium* (published in 1960) is illuminating:

Today it is not the general custom in the Church for our Elders on missions to shake off the dust of their feet against the people who do not receive them. In our time the Lord is giving men everywhere ample opportunity to receive the Gospel. Consequently, Elders may return to the same people time and time again, thus giving them every opportunity to receive the word of God before His judgments come unto them.<sup>90</sup>

President J. Reuben Clark mentioned the biblical dusting of one's feet twice in his *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life* without ever discussing its parallel practice in the modern Church.<sup>91</sup>

Modern commentators have followed suit, mentioning cursing only as an interesting footnote in the church's history.<sup>92</sup>

The disappearance of this ritual from Mormon liturgy may be due to a number of factors. The tone of church discourse on cursing evolved from commandment and instruction to caution and discouragement. With passing generations, the sense of Christ's impending return lessened. When a missionary was rejected, it was no longer believed that the disbelieving parties had lost their one chance for salvation. The missionary mindset shifted from one of binding wheat and tares up to the day of destruction to one of returning to homes again and again to give people multiple chances to accept the gospel. With the move to Utah and subsequent renouncement of polygamy, Mormonism's enemies became fewer and the accompanying physical violence was reduced. As Mormons gained control of their lives and their surroundings, the apparent need to shake the dust off their feet lessened. The spirit of doctrinal and liturgical innovation that permeated early Mormonism waned over time, particularly with the rise of Correlation in the 1960s. Together with the loss of other non-salvific Mormon ordinances (e.g., female healing blessings, baptism for health), there may have simply been no place in modern Mormonism for cursing. The modern Church's heightened awareness of national attention and public relations would likely make the continued practice of cursing an embarrassment.

Although anecdotes describing present-day episodes of shaking the dust off one's feet persist,<sup>93</sup> mission presidents do not receive instruction from general authorities regarding the performance of this ritual. According to one former mission president, it is generally understood that to curse someone in the mission field today would be wholly inappropriate.<sup>94</sup> No current Church handbook or manual lists cursing as an official ordinance.<sup>95</sup> Although no longer formally practiced, curses live on in the form of missionary folklore<sup>96</sup> and Mormon fiction.<sup>97</sup>

### Conclusion

Mormon cursing flourished for a time, but by the 1900s it was extinct for all practical purposes. As the factors that had precipitated ritual cursing during the early days of Mormonism dissipated over time, performance of the ritual ceased. Modern Mor-

monism no longer consists of a small group of violently mistreated social outcasts as it once did. As the Church has become more stable and prosperous, its goals appear to be more geared toward integration and contribution to the surrounding community rather than separation from, and condemnation of, unbelieving Gentiles. While not denying cursing as part of its history, the Church has experienced a paradigm shift to a more blessing-focused theology. President Joseph F. Smith's words from a 1904 general conference reflect on the practice of cursing while simultaneously looking forward to a future of love and redemption:

[I]f they cursed, in the spirit of righteousness and meekness before God, God would confirm that curse; but men are not called upon to curse mankind; that is not our mission; it is our mission to preach righteousness unto them. It is our business to love and to bless them, and to redeem them from the fall and from the wickedness of the world. . . . We are perfectly willing to leave vengeance in the hands of God and let him judge between us and our enemies, and let him reward them according to his own wisdom and mercy.<sup>98</sup>

Without a powerful modern resurgence of liturgical innovation, Christian primitivism, millenarianism, or violent persecution, cursing is unlikely to reemerge as a practice within Mormonism. However, an appreciation of its role in the early restoration provides a fascinating window into the mindset of Mormonism's founding generations.

### Notes

1. The author would like to thank the following individuals for their feedback on various drafts of this manuscript: Jonathan Stapley, Amberly Dattilo, and Christopher Blythe.

2. Revelation, July 1830, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:6476 (D&C 24:15).

3. See Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), Chapter 3: Ordinances, 1829–1830, and Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1999), Chapter 4: The Bible, the Mormons, and Millenariansim. See also David Golding, "The Foundations and Early Development of Mormon Mission Theory" (M.A. thesis, Claremont Graduate University, 2010). For an excellent collection of primary sources on Mormon curses, see "Feet Dust-

ing and Washing,” <http://saintswithouthalos.com/n/feet.phtml> (accessed August 9, 2012).

4. For an analysis of an important period of transition within Mormonism, see Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana and Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

5. T. J. Rogers, “Shaking the Dust off the Markan Mission Discourse,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 2 (2004): 169–192. Thanks to Jared Anderson for directing me to this article.

6. Revelation, July 1830.

7. Revelation, August 8, 1831, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:6520 (D&C 60:15).

8. Revelation, January 25, 1832, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:1471 (D&C 75:20–22).

9. Revelation, August 29, 1832, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:5039 (D&C 99:4).

10. Revelation, September 22–23, 1832, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:1542 (D&C 84:92–95).

11. Joseph Smith, Letter to the Elders of the Church, Kirtland, Ohio, *The Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 2 (November 1835): 211.

12. Orson Hyde, Letter to the Editor, St. Louis, *Times and Seasons* 3 (January 1, 1842): 848, 852; on Smith Research Associates, *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998 edition).

13. Nauvoo High Council, “Communications. An Epistle,” St. Louis, *Times and Seasons* 3 (June 1, 1842): 809–10; on Smith Research Associates, *New Mormon Studies* CD-ROM.

14. Lucy Smith, *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Smith’s Family Memoir*, edited by Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 478–79.

15. Orson Hyde, Journal, September 16, 1832, quoted in Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992 printing), 193. Hyde counterbalanced the pain of cursing by blessing when he could. “[Traveled] on from House to H[ouse] shook off the dust against some and blest others.” Orson Hyde, Journal, October 23, 1832, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City. Quoted on <http://www.saintswithouthalos.com/n/feet.phtml> (accessed August 9, 2012).

16. Wilford Woodruff, June 19, 1840, *Waiting for World’s End: The Di-*



*aries of Wilford Woodruff*, edited by Susan Staker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 30.

17. Report of Aaron F. Farr, *Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), February 11, 1853, quoted in Prince, *Power from on High*, 111.

18. Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, editors, *The Journals of William E. McLellin: 1831–1836*, (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press; Provo: *BYU Studies*, 1994), 47.

19. “Feb. 27th. We left Painesville and came to Thompson. On the way we endeavored to obtain some assistance from the world for the relief of our suffering brethren in zion, but they refused to render any assistance. We therefore washed our feet against them. . . . Mar. 20th. Brother John Murdock and I left Geneseo and came to the village of Dansville. About dark we called upon the family of a man by the name of Parkman for lodging during the night, but they refused to keep us. Therefore we washed our feet as a testimony against them.” *The Orson Pratt Journals*, compiled and arranged by Elden J. Watson (Salt Lake City: Elden Jay Watson, 1975), February 27 and March 20, 1834, unpaginated transcript online at <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/OPratt.html> (accessed August 9, 2012); compare Orson Pratt, “History of Orson Pratt,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 28 (April 1937): 92–93.

20. “[A] Methodist priest arose and said that he had an app. here at five o clock and he wished to fill it and he wanted to know if I would get through so as to give place. I told him that I did not know how long I should speak but I desired to speak until I should get through—However I told him that we would leave it to the people. A vote was called. Three or four voted for me to close and for him to speak but a majority Voted for me to continue—consequently I continued until I had spoken about two hours on the plain simplicity of the Gospel and its spiritual gifts and powers. After which Elder Patten called for a donation but not a man moved his tongue or his finger to help us consequently we left them believing that we had done our duty as to delivering our message and we wiped the dust off our feet and we also clensed our feet in pure water as a testimony against them and we passed on toward old Oswego about 4 miles.” Shipps and Welch, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, 182–83.

21. “. . . we call at a Mr M. Hawley who kept tavern and told him that we were preachers of the Gospel and we wanted some bread and milk for breakfast and we asked for it without money but he abused us and after we had born testimony to him we came to a little brook and clensed our

feet as a testimony against him—" Shipps and Welch, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, 189–90.

22. "We left the boat immediately and took lodging in a tavern; we breakfasted and dined freely with a merchant's wife, a sister to Almira Mack. We four brethren labored from morning till noon endeavoring to get a chance to preach, but we were not successful. I was turned out of doors for calling on the woolcarder to repent. After dinner we took leave of the two ladies and the family with which we had dined and wiped our feet as a testimony against that city." John Murdock journal, *Journal History*, June 14, 1831, quoted in Prince, *Power from on High*, 109.

23. John Murdock journal, late 1831, cited in Prince, *Power from on High*, 109.

24. "At 4 Oclock we attended in the village in order to fill our app. [in Sinclairville, New York] but the schoolhouse was locked and only One person who was an old lady attended—consequently we left them shaking the dust from our feet as a testimony against them. . . ." Shipps and Welch, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, 174.

25. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1981–1984), 1:100–101; on Smith Research Associates, *New Mormon Studies* CD-ROM.

26. "We left Mr Bidwell and beach hill and repaired to a stream of pure water aside from the abodes of men and in company with my brethren Elders Stillman & Hale and myself we clenched our hands and feet in testimony against the inhabitants of beach hill who had rejected us and our testimony." Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:159.

27. "Brother [Jonathan] Hale & myself repaired to a stream of pure water & we there cleansed our hands and feet and bore testimony before God against Mr Vanarsdalen a Prysbyterian priest who rejected our testimony & against the whole villedge who rejected our testimony." Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:163.

28. "During the day we repaired to the sea shore & clenched our feet with pure water & bore testimony against eight houtholds before God who had rejected us or turned us from their Doors the evening before." Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:228–29.

29. ". . . while the Sun was sitting in the western horizon, I retired aside from the abodes of men by the sea shore alone by myself and clenched my feet with pure water and bore testimony before GOD against the inhabitants of those Islands of the Sea for rejecting my testimony while in their midst and were excedingly mad against me. . . . This is the last night I ever spent or shall spend upon those Islands of the Sea." Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:278–79.

30. Lyndon W. Cook and Milton V. Backman, Jr., eds., *Kirtland Elders' Quorum Record, 1836–1841* (Provo: Grandin Book Co., 1985), 50–51.

31. Journal History, December 18, 1847, quoted in Prince, *Power from on High*, 111. < and > characters enclose shorthand text.

32. Lee Nelson, ed., *The Journal of Brigham: Brigham Young's Own Story in His Own Words* (Provo: Council Press, 1980), December 30, 1845, 119; compare Joseph Smith, et al., *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, 1948 printing), 7:557–58.

33. “On the 16th (Lord’s day) Brother Thayer, by mutual consent, left me. I went to Foresville, (in the same county) and attended a meeting of Baptists and Presbyterians. In the evening I requested and obtained liberty to speak, but was stopped in a very few minutes; went to the tavern again and washed my feet as a testimony against the people in the schoolhouse. . . . On the 19th I preached in Perrysburg, (Cattaraugus Co., N. Y.); the congregation was ignorant and unbelieving. On the 24th I preached in Lockport (lower town), but to no effect; I bore testimony against the people. On the 28th I settled some temporal concerns with J[.] W. Colliers, and on the 29th went to the town of Royalton to see J. Turner, an old friend, but he would not receive my doctrine; therefore I bore testimony against him. On the 30th I left Lockport (Niagara Co., N. Y.) for Middleberry Newcombes, attended a Baptist meeting in the evening, spoke a few words and requested to make an appointment, which I did and preached in the evening of Nov. 1st. Some reviled; others were fearful and unbelieving, and I bore testimony against them. . . . From [Warsaw] I went to the town of Portage (Wyoming Co.), where I tarried for some time, and preached there in several places. Some believed, but were not baptized; others were unbelievers, but their prejudices were fast giving way; thence I went by way of Yates county (N. Y.) to Springport and Scipio, in Cayuga Co., N. Y., preached in a number of places in Cayuga county. I found the people there unbelieving, but willing to relinquish a part of their prejudice, but as they did not receive my doctrine, I bore testimony against them.” Joseph Coe journal, Journal History, October 12, 1831, microfilm of holograph, Special Collections and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

34. John Murdock, Journal, September 1832, quoted in Craig J. Ostler, *The Doctrine and Covenants: A Book of Answers* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 132.

35. “At Mendon, his former home, Heber and his companion, Elder Orson Hyde, were confronted by a Baptist priest named Fulton, who

withstood them harshly. Says Heber: 'He called us false prophets, and, rejecting our testimony, advised us to go home. We declared unto him that we should go forth preaching the Gospel, and no power should stay us. I told him if he did not repent of his sins and be baptized for the remission of them, he would be damned, which made him angry. We then passed on until we came to a pure stream of water, and there cleansed our feet, bearing testimony against him, as the Lord commanded.'" Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, an Apostle* (Salt Lake City: The Kimball Family, 1888), 80.

36. Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:180. "[W]e went by ourselves by a pure stream of water and clenched our hands and feet and bore testamony before God against . . . all that rejected our testamony." Undated journal entry from the missionary travels of Wilford Woodruff and Jonathan Hale, quoted in Arrington and Bitton, *Saints without Halos: The Human Side of Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1981), 14.

37. "This morning we took breakfast with a Christian preacher (as he called himself). He charged us with being false prophets. Reason or Testimony had no influence on his mind . . . and his heart seemed so hard and wicked that he would have struck us dumb if he had had it in his power, but we left him raging and when we came to a brook Bro. H[yrum] washed his feet for a testimony against him." Shipps and Welch, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, 36–44. ". . . we had an appointment at a schoolhouse. an assembly of Campbellites, Methodists Presbyterians and deists attended. I spoke 1 hour &  $\frac{3}{4}$  but was called a liar while speaking and interrupted two or three times more by the wicked wretches. we dismissed and I shook the dust off my feet as a testimony against the rebellious." Shipps and Welch, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, 72.

38. "Shook dust from our feet as a testimony against them." Samuel H. Smith, Diary, March 1, 16, 18, and June 1, 1832, microfilm of holograph, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Quoted on <http://www.saintswithouthalos.com/n/feet.phtml> (accessed August 9, 2012).

39. "We called at a house in Arkport village for the purpose of obtaining a meeting in that place, but the woman of the house rejected our testimony, and said that if the Book of Mormon was good she could not receive it. Therefore we washed our feet as a testimony against her." Orson Pratt, "History of Orson Pratt," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 28 (April 1937): 92–93.

40. Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:80.

41. Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:224–25.

42. Stanley B. Kimball, ed., *On the Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber*

C. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1987), 21.

43. Lawrence R. Flake, "A Shaker View of a Mormon Mission," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 98.

44. "Sunderland found especially offensive the practice that Woodruff and other missionaries had of washing the dust from their feet as a ritual condemnation of those who rejected their message." Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth*, 64.

45. Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*.

46. Revelation, December 6, 1832, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:2959 (D&C 86:7).

47. Revelation, December 16, 1833, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:2977 (101:65–66).

48. "We journeyed early in the spring of 1832, eastward together, without 'purse or scrip,' going from house to house, teaching and preaching in families, and also in the public congregations of the people. Wherever we were received and entertained, we left our blessing; and wherever we were rejected, we washed our feet in private against those who rejected us, and bore testimony of it unto our Father in Heaven, and went on our way rejoicing, according to the commandment. . . . went on from fairview 6 or 7 miles Shook off the dust of my feet against almost all [March] 2 went on to Mill Creek & found . . . the people verry hard, seemingly no Salvation for them ... [March] 3rd left Mr. Longs & went on 2 miles Blest Some & Shook off the dust of our feet against others. . . . [March] 15th . . . sealed many over to the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out. . . . [March] 18th. went on through a Presbyterian neighbourhood on Sunday shook off the dust of our feet against almost every house. . . . [March] 19th. went on 3 or 4 Miles Sealed up many to the day of wrath, bound the tares in bundles, blessed some." Orson Hyde, Journal, February 1 to December 22, 1832, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City. Quoted on <http://www.saintswithouthalos.com/n/feet.phtml> (accessed August 9, 2012).

49. Orson Hyde, Journal, February 1 to March 19, 1832.

50. David John Buerger, "'The Fulness of the Priesthood': The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no.1 (Spring 1983): 10–44.

51. Revelation, November 1, 1831, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:6527 (D&C 68:11–12).

52. Revelation, November 1, 1831, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:6529 (D&C 1:8–9).

53. Orson Hyde, Journal, March 15, 1832.

54. Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:70.

55. Joseph Fielding, Letter to the Editor, August 6, 1840, *Millennial Star* 1 (August 1840): 95.

56. Revelation, December 27–28, 1832, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:2960 (D&C 88:74–75).

57. “Washed my hands and feet as a testimony unto the Lord that I had warned this wicked generation and that my garments were clean from their blood, and on the same day I admitted into the School of the Prophets.” *The Orson Pratt Journals*, February 18, 1833, 16. “We now feel that our garments are clean from you, and all men, when we have washed our feet and hands, according to the commandment.” History, January 14, 1833, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Histories, id:7268.

58. History, March 27–29, 1836, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Histories, id:7404.

59. Thanks to Jonathan A. Stapley for insights which contributed to this section.

60. “Elder [David W.] Patten Preached three discourses. . . . After the close of the last discours Mr Rose rejected the testimony given & called on Br Patten to rase the dead that he might believe. Br Patten rebuked him sharply for his infidelity & unbelief. We then communed with the Saints. I then retired from the scene with Elders Patten & Boydston to a stream of pure water & cleansed our hands & feet & testified against that people who had threatened us & rejected our testimony. We delivered them unto the hands of God <and the destroyer. O God, thy will be done.>” Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:70. “We then returned to Mr Jacksons. Had an interview with him. He denied all his former faith & pretentions. He raged much. Was filled with the spirit of anger wrath /and the destroyer/. He rejected our testimony /and denied the revelations of Christ/. We left his house at 10 oclock at night & went to a stream of Pure water & clensed our hands & feet & testified against him that our garments might be clear of his blood.” Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:71. See also Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:100–101.

61. Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:100–101.

62. “We left Mr Bidwell and beach hill and repaired to a stream of pure water aside from the abodes of men and in company with my brethren Elders Stillman & Hale and myself we clensed our hands and feet in testimony against the inhabitants of beach hill who had rejected us and our testimony.” Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:159. “Brother [Jonathan] Hale & myself repaired to a stream of pure water & we there cleansed our hands and feet and bore testimony before God against Mr Vanarsdalen a Prysbyterian priest who rejected our testimony & against the whole villedge who rejected our testimony.” Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:163.

63. Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:71.

64. Joseph Fielding, Letter to the Editor, August 6, 1840, *Millennial Star* 1 (August 1840): 95.

65. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:115.

66. Revelation, December 27-28, 1832, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:2960 (D&C 88:81-82).

67. Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, 51.

68. Revelation, June 22, 1834, The Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id:3006 (D&C 105:24).

69. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 2 (July 1832): 6.

70. Letter of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer (Kirtland, Ohio) to John M. Burk (Liberty, Clay County, Missouri), *Journal History*, June 1, 1835, quoted in Prince, *Power from on High*, 110.

71. *Journal of Discourses* 18:265.

72. Gary James Bergera, ed., *Autobiography of B. H. Roberts* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 90-91; on Smith Research Associates, *New Mormon Studies* CD-ROM.

73. Salt Lake City School of the Prophets Minute Book, December 24, 1883, internally paginated; on Smith Research Associates, *New Mormon Studies* CD-ROM.

74. Dennis B. Horne, ed., *An Apostle's Record: The Journals of Abraham H. Cannon, Member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, 1889-1896* (Clearfield, Utah: Gnolaum Books, 2004), 118-19.

75. D. Michael Quinn, "Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles," *BYU Studies* 19, no. 1 (Fall 1978), 79-105. The year 1843 also saw the introduction of the second anointing, a ritual that bestowed upon recipients the power to bind, loose, curse, and bless. See David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco, Calif.: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 87-90. Samuel Hollister Rogers, a recipient of the second anointing, "told the Lord that his anointed one had been violated," and invoked a curse upon his neighbor. See Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 104. Thanks to Amberly Dattilo for bringing this to my attention.

76. Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 133-36.

77. Woodruff, *Journal*, 7:615-25.

78. Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, unpaginated image and text.

79. Woodruff, *Journal*, 7:615-16. This revelation was given a second time to Woodruff only days later, again emphasizing "the duty of the Apostles and Elders to go into our Holy places & Temples and wash our feet and bear testimony to God & the Heavenly hosts against the wickedness of this Nation. My pillow was wet with the fountain of tears that



flowed as I Beheld the Judgments of God upon the wicked." See Woodruff, *Journal*, 7:546–47.

80. Woodruff, *Journal*, 8:6–7.

81. Woodruff, *Journal*, 7:621–25.

82. "‘Mormons’ and Citizenship," *The Deseret Weekly* 59 (November 23, 1889): 684–93.

83. Horne, *The Journals of Abraham H. Cannon*, 119.

84. *Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, April 1899 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, semi-annual), 23 (hereafter cited as *Conference Report*); on Smith Research Associates, *New Mormon Studies* CD-ROM.

85. George Reynolds, letter to Ben E. Rich, March 11, 1899; type-script in Scott G. Kenney Collection, "People" series, box 2, folder 11, J. Willard Marriott Library Special Collections, University of Utah. Quoted in Golding, "The Foundations and Early Development of Mormon Mission Theory."

86. *Conference Report*, April 1906, 33.

87. *Conference Report*, April 1968, 65.

88. *The Missionary's Hand Book* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Revised 1946).

89. "The cleansing of their feet, either by washing or wiping off the dust, would be recorded in heaven as a testimony against the wicked. This act, however, was not to be performed in the presence of the offenders, 'lest thou provoke them, but in secret, and wash thy feet, as a testimony against them in the day of judgment.' The missionaries of the Church who faithfully perform their duty are under the obligation of leaving their testimony with all with whom they come in contact in their work. This testimony will stand as a witness against those who reject the message, at the judgment." Joseph Fielding Smith, quoted in *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual: Religion 324 and 325* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 130.

90. Sidney B. Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 254.

91. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), 357, 372.

92. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 162–64; Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium*, 332; Melvin R. Brooks, *LDS Reference Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960–1965), 111–112; Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 5: The Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 234; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 165; Sherwin W. Howard,

“Cursings,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 1:352; Todd Compton, “The Spiritual Roots of the Democratic Party: Why I Am a Mormon Democrat,” Sunstone Symposium speech, Summer 2001.

93. After being rudely rebuffed by an investigator of European descent for bringing a native Guatemalan companion to a missionary discussion, John Dehlin recorded the following conversation with his mission president in his journal: “During my interview with President Romney, he told me that Barrios and Aston told him what had happened w/ the Colonel’s wife. He said to me, ‘Elder Dehlin, how important is that family to you?’ I said that they were ok, and that mostly I was thinking of the future possibility of the kids becoming members, and not so much the mother. Then he sat silent for a second, looked down, and then looked up to me and said, ‘I feel inspired to ask you to go to that lady’s house and perform the ordinance,’” John Dehlin, Journal, 26 March 1990, quoted in John Dehlin, email to Samuel R. Weber, April 10, 2007, printout in my possession. Dehlin later recounted from memory how the ordinance was performed. “A few days later, Elder Pivaral and I walked up to the Colonel’s wife’s house. We stood, quietly in front of the house. We looked at each other with a bit of bewilderment, and then we bowed our heads and gave the cursing, ‘Heavenly Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the holy Melchizedek priesthood which we bear, we leave a curse upon this house, for the wicked, racist acts of the Colonel’s wife. And we do so in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.’ Then we looked back up at the house, stomped our feet on the pavement several times (to dust off the feet), looked at each other again with some bewilderment, and then walked back home.” John Dehlin, email to Samuel R. Weber, April 10, 2007, printout in my possession.

94. Thomas Cherrington, interviewed by Samuel R. Weber, November 16, 2006.

95. Greg Prince has noted that “cursing is not considered an ordinance in the Latter-day Saint church today,” and that “no church handbook or manual lists [cursing] among official ordinances.” Prince, *Power from on High*, 108.

96. “In [some missionary] stories, when the opposition is keener, [the missionaries] are not equal to the task and are forced to bring the Lord in to fight the battle for them. In these accounts, following biblical example, the elders shake dust from their feet and thereby curse the people who have treated them ill. The Lord responds to the missionaries’ actions in a dreadful manner. In Norway a city treats missionaries harshly; they shake dust from their feet, and the city is destroyed by German shelling during the war. Throughout the world, other cities that have

mistreated missionaries suffer similar fates. Towns are destroyed in South America by wind, in Chile by floods, in Costa Rica by a volcano, in Mexico by an earthquake, in Japan by a tidal wave, in Taiwan and Sweden by fire. In South Africa a town's mining industry fails, in Colorado a town's land becomes infertile, and in Germany a town's fishing industry folds. Individuals who have persecuted missionaries may also feel God's wrath. An anti-Mormon minister, for instance, loses his job, or breaks his arm, or dies of throat cancer. A woman refuses to give missionaries water and her well goes dry. A man angrily throws the Book of Mormon into the fire only to have his own house burn down. In one story, widely known, two elders leave their garments at a laundry, and when the proprietor holds them up for ridicule, both he and the laundry burn, the fire so hot in some instances that it melts the bricks." William A. Wilson, *On Being Human: The Folklore of Mormon Missionaries* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1981), 19. The last story quoted above was still circulating in the Germany Hamburg Mission where I served from 2002–2004.

97. "I better warn you, I'm getting mad. I'm getting ready to dust off my feet on you. . . . God's going to wipe his hindparts with you and flush you down a toilet, and I say good riddance to bad rubbish." Levi S. Peterson, "The Third Nephite," *Dialogue: a Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 170.

98. Joseph F. Smith, quoted in McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 163.

## Home Again

### Part Three of Immortal for Quite Some Time

*Scott Abbott*

I know the standard plot lines, the ones that move from desire to fulfillment, or from desire to fulfillment to tragedy. As this story follows its meanders I don't find myself to be a satisfied, fulfilled member of my church, but neither is mine the story of a brave individual triumphantly separating himself from an abusive religion. I live chapters of each of these stories. But always intermediary chapters, it seems, never the climactic ones. Absent is the single seductive strand that engages and satisfies—and falsifies. What will it mean to finish this manuscript? To finish writing about my brother? To finish thinking about him? To abandon him again? To jettison this means of access to our past and present experience?

*11 November 2012*

I went into the LDS Third Ward in Farmington, New Mexico. I could not tuck “my long hair up under a cap” as did poet and environmental activist Gary Snyder when he ventured into Farmington’s Maverick Bar. I had no earring to leave in the car. I didn’t drink “double shots of bourbon backed with beer” (although my traveling bag held a flask of lowland single-malt in case of emergency). Unlike Snyder, I had an escort, an old friend who explained where I was from. Instead of “We don’t smoke Marijuana in Mus-kokie,” the organist played “For the Beauty of the Earth.” There was no dancing. Otherwise my experience was exactly like Snyder’s.

Snyder was in the Four Corners area to protest the rape of Black Mesa, holy to Hopis and Navajos, black with coal. The corporations prevailed and the coal was strip-mined and slurried away with precious desert water and the air of these high, wild, open spaces was so thoroughly fouled that on Thursday, driving

from Cortez to Shiprock, the dramatic volcanic core that lent the town its name stood veiled, smudged, moodily distant.

I was in the Four Corners area to revisit my past, John's past.

Nearly four decades since I last attended church in my hometown, more than a decade since I left the Mormon Church, twenty years since I began my fraternal meditations after John's death, a week after Barack Obama was elected to a second term, I went into the LDS Third Ward in Farmington, New Mexico.

A billboard in southwestern Colorado had shouted at me as I drove past: SAVE GOD AND AMERICA. It proclaimed that OBAMA HATES BOTH. And it concluded that I should VOTE ROMNEY.

Utah County, where I live, had just given Mitt Romney 90% of its votes. San Juan County, New Mexico, where Farmington is located, awarded 63% of its votes to Romney (contrasting with Albuquerque's Bernalillo and Santa Fe Counties, which went 56% and 73% for Obama respectively). With the exception of a few years in New Jersey's Mercer County (Obama 68%), I've spent my life among conservatives.

Farmington's citizens are conservatives of an isolated sort. It is 182 miles to Albuquerque. 208 to Santa Fe. 419 to Phoenix. 377 to Denver (the route my family took that fateful December). 425 to Salt Lake City (from where Brigham Young sent his son Brigham Young Jr. to colonize Kirtland, New Mexico, a little farming town just west of Farmington). West Texas, origin of many of the town's oil-field specialists and workers, is about 500 miles distant. At the confluence of the La Plata, the Animas, and the San Juan rivers, Farmington's Anglo culture is shoehorned between Latino New Mexico and the Navajo Reservation.

I haven't been politically conservative since I left Farmington. Or did the shift occur when I came home from my German mission? Or perhaps as I changed my major at BYU from pre-med to German literature and philosophy? Or when I headed east for graduate work at Princeton?

In any case, I went into the LDS Third Ward in Farmington, New Mexico, with my long, grey hair pulled back into a ponytail just days after every voting member of this congregation (was there, perhaps, a single dissenter? two of them?) had voted for

their fellow Mormon conservative, and had done so after fasting and praying for him, sure, or at least hopeful, that he would save the Constitution and the country from socialism or worse. I live with a partner to whom I'm not married. There's that problematic flask of whiskey. I had coffee Saturday at Andrea Kristina's Bookstore and Kafé in downtown Farmington. I swear like the rough-neck I once was. I'm allergic to authority. I would gladly be gay if I had those inclinations.

Today I wish I could tuck my hair under a cap.

I pull open the door and gesture to a grey-haired couple to enter.

Thank you, they both say.

When I did this in the old days, people said, thank you, young man, I reply.

You're not young any longer, the man says.

My friend Doug introduces me to them as the son of my father.

Your dad was our bishop, the man says. A fine man.

I remember John and Dad moving belligerently through the kitchen. There were shouts and shoves. John reappeared with a bag and left the house. As it got dark Dad sat in the kitchen with Mom. I overheard scraps of that conversation and still remember Dad's heated assertions that he should step down as bishop of our ward, citing Paul's counsel to Titus: ". . . ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God." Mom assured him that he was a fine bishop.

Conditioned by Paul's biases and by the prejudices of a 1950s and '60s "Christian nation," our parents helped pass along, or allowed to be passed along, part and parcel with their conservative stability, a subtle racism. I had to confront this again a few weeks ago, waiting at a streetlight. Around the corner came a car with a black male driver and a white female passenger sitting intimately close to him.

My stomach turned.

A bowl of nuts for the holiday season: hazelnuts, peanuts, wal-

nuts, pistachios, pecans, and nigger toes. That's what we called them at home.

Standing next to the east goalpost of the football field at Hermosa Jr. High, a fellow seventh-grader gleefully and perhaps maliciously informed me there were creatures in the world called "homaphrodites." Incredulous, yet believing, I instinctively acted to brace up my crumbling world, erecting the first, but not last, phobic pillars to protect me from those hitherto unknown, still faceless, but now named "homos."

Dad taught science and math at the junior-high school before he became principal. As a science teacher he had access to mercury and to our delight he brought home plastic vials of it. We split it into quivering masses with our fingers and raced heavy blobs down inclines. Dimes, when rubbed with mercury, glistened like new silver.

Doug and I are greeted by the current bishop's two counselors, men in dark suits and white shirts and ties and with firm handshakes and sincere smiles that make me think they will not throw me out if they discover I'm an environmentalist. Two young, male missionaries shake my hand, assess me avidly. My hair suggests I might be ripe for conversion. I almost stop to lay out my part in the history of this place, to tell them I helped build this building, home that summer from college, a laborer for the construction company hired by the Church. But in deference to the gathering crowd behind us, and with uncharacteristic good sense, I move on and enter the chapel.

We find seats in the back row next to our old friend Craig. He's the only man in the building not wearing a tie. I get too hot, he says.

Doug's wife Tyra plays opening chords on the organ and I join the congregation, maybe 150 white people, in singing a hymn about the earth's beauty. Although I no longer believe there's a God to thank for that, I am thankful for the earth and smile when I realize I still remember many of the words. It feels good to sing again, to "join the congregation." And they are not all white, as I supposed—a young Native American, 12 or 13, sits with the deacons in front of the sacrament table.

A vigorous young woman rises to give the invocation (women



were not allowed to pray in sacrament meeting when I was young). Heads bow all around me and I find my own head slightly bowed as well. I watch the woman as she invokes “Our Dear Heavenly Father,” her eyes screwed shut, focused intently on what she is saying. She thanks the Lord for the veterans “who we honor on this Veterans’ Day.” She slips into a well-worn groove to ask that God “bless the leaders of our Church and the . . . and the leaders . . . and the leaders of our nation.”

Although the election is still very much with her, in the end, bless her heart, she fights through the disappointment (and anger?) and completes the blessing.

While a master sergeant in splendid uniform speaks extemporaneously and emotionally about how his duty in Vietnam stripped him of religious beliefs, faith he regained slowly when he found and joined the Mormons, I remember the mimeographed pamphlet students received during my first year at Brigham Young University: “A Guide to Opportunities Open to the Young Men Faced with the Obligation (Opportunity) to Serve in One of the Armed Services: Prepared by Detachment 855 Air Force ROTC BYU for Bishops’ and Stake Presidents’ Day.”

We gathered, several thousand strong, in the de Jong Concert Hall, where an elder of the Church, Hartman Rector, Jr., spoke to us about duty, obedience, and patriotism, reminding us that “the members of the Church have always felt under obligation to come to the defense of their country when a call to arms was made.” He described the war that liberated Japan as a war used by God to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Japanese. Ditto the Korean War. And “exactly the same thing will happen in Vietnam. When we pull out the U.S. troops . . . we will move the mission president and the missionaries right in behind them. We will build up the kingdom of God there. Yes, it took some of the best of this nation to do it, but these nations must be redeemed by blood. It’s in the economy of God. . . . Yes, this is God’s nation, and the stars and stripes is God’s flag.”<sup>1</sup> Several years later, in mid-December, when it looked like my lottery number for the draft might in fact be called, I dutifully took a bus to Salt Lake City for a pre-induction physical. I passed, and, well schooled by

church and state, I would have gone if the draft for the year had not ended a number or two before mine.

What was John's experience with the draft? We never talked about the war.

The master sergeant continues his testimony and I picture the flat plaque on my father's grave halfway out the Aztec Highway. Paid for by the Veterans Administration, placed in a noisy corner below a busy highway in a sterile cemetery designed without gravestones to make grass cutting easier, it says BOB WALTER ABBOTT/1ST LT US ARMY/WORLD WAR II/1925-1977. That's it. No mention of loving father and husband. Of fine teacher and good principal and compassionate bishop. His epitaph is elsewhere, I tell myself, in our "Books of Remembrance," in our collections of photographs, in these pages.

John's gravestone stands in a more inviting spot, atop a hill in American Fork, Utah. Fraternal hands are carved into bright grey granite—and into these meditations.

A woman sitting in front of us rubs her teenaged son's back, a gesture repeated in other pews. A husband stretches an arm around his wife's back. Families snuggle together while a speaker drones comfortably on about a new, inspired curriculum for youth classes ("There will be no more 'stand and deliver' but interaction and shared responsibility"). I try to imagine John in this warm setting, a 61-year-old arm around his husband's shoulder, happy to have rejoined the congregation that sent him on his mission to Italy.

I can't picture it. Not in my lifetime.

We sing "Count Your Blessings," one of Dad's favorites, and I cheerfully join in the bass line that marches straightforward eighth notes ("count your many blessings") across the syncopated soprano line ("count — your blessings"). It's a song of trial and triumph: tempest tossed, all is lost, load of care, cross to bear, count your many blessings and angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey's end. Although no one but Tyra at the organ is watching her, the chorister signals for a slowing cadence at the end of each verse, adding the slightest of personal touches to the song.

Sacrament meeting over, I follow Doug across the gym into a large classroom. People still greet him as "Bishop," formal in their

hierarchy, grateful for his service. The room fills with men and women, maybe 60 of us, almost everyone holding a set of scriptures. Christ's visit to the Americas after his resurrection as told in the Book of Mormon will be the text for today's class. Doug is a born teacher, as erudite as he is sensitive to the problem of too much erudition in this diverse and provincial group.

Provincial. That's the word that best describes my sense for the town I drove into on Thursday. I was without sophistication when I left for college in 1967 and thus, logically, must have come from an unsophisticated town. Farmington is nearly twice the size it was then, approaching 50,000 inhabitants, and it now has a two-year college. Still, over the years, thinking about Doug as a hometown lawyer, I have always thought that he was stuck in a backwater.

Cosmopolitan. That's the word that best describes the new sense I have for Doug after the mental explosion provoked by poking around in his downtown law office. It's an insight I might well have expected had my thoughts not coalesced around an inevitably false and self-serving image. In high school we frequented the school library in tandem and as college roommates I was jealous of Doug's passion for Shelley and Keats. I knew he had spent two years speaking Quechua and Spanish in Bolivia. He had been a U.S. Marine for four years and had won two blackbelts in karate. But until the explosion occasioned by seeing Doug's books, I had him pegged as a small-town lawyer who had reverted to the provinces. While I, in contrast. . . .

The rooms of Doug's law office contain, of course, those leather-bound books in glass-fronted cases meant to lend a sense of prosperity and sagacity to their owners. There are shelves and shelves of law books, various tools of the trade. The rest of the books, however, testify to intellectual curiosity of the best sort. Most of them have obviously been read (excluding a pristine copy of Heidegger's *Being and Time*). There is a long shelf of books about Navajo language and culture. Several shelves of military history. Books about knots. Dozens of books about knots! Innumerable field guides to birds and animals. Entire bookcases devoted to philosophy and theology. A dozen translations of the Bible. Mormon books sprinkle the shelves, including 22 volumes of the *Journal of Discourses*, balanced by Meister Eckhart and St. John of the

Cross and Thomas Merton and Martin Buber and Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian*. There is lots of poetry. Shakespeare in abundance. Dictionaries galore: Spanish, Spanish/English, Spanish/English Legal Dictionary, Spoken Spanish, Navajo/English, French/English, Latin Verbs, a reverse dictionary, a poet's dictionary, a usage dictionary, Bible dictionaries, a bibliophile's dictionary, literary terms, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, law dictionaries, dictionaries of quotations, crossword-puzzle dictionaries, dictionaries of etymology, and a whole raft of thesauruses. Armed with such books, Doug has written three dissertations: one for a doctorate of juridical science in taxation at the Washington School of Law, and two for doctorates in theology and ministry at the Faith Christian University.

"Tyra says I'll do anything for a certificate," Doug told me. "Look at my card."

**F. D. Moeller**

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"Holy shit!" I said.

And it's not all academic. Tyra dug out dozens of film reviews in the local paper, a set of poems published in a weekly column, and numerous "Guest Commentaries" by "F. Douglas Moeller, a Farmington attorney and poet" or, alternately, "a Farmington attorney and writer."

This man in front of the adult Sunday School class in the Farmington Third Ward, this man with the gentle mien and soft, precise voice, this father of four and advocate in various tribal and state and regional courts, this collector of knives and guns and canes and masks and books, this provincial friend of mine is no provincial.

The part of the Book of Mormon Doug is teaching today raises interesting questions related to the text—why, for instance, does Jesus quote the King James translation of Isaiah, or what about the multiple Isaiahs Biblical scholars can identify?—but for the most part, members of this class want direction for their lives, succor for their wounded souls, reassurance that they are God’s children. That’s exactly what they get. Doug asks for any last questions or comments, then bears his testimony as to the truthfulness of the gospel.

While someone prays I remember Snyder’s reference to “short-haired joy” and think, of the members of this American church, that “I could almost love you again.”

*12 November 2012*

It’s ten degrees Fahrenheit when I begin my drive up the canyon, one degree as I drive through the snow-bound little mining town of Rico, ten degrees again when I drive into Telluride, busy with preparations for the ski season.

I spent the afternoon and night with my sister Carol at her home in Dolores, Colorado. When I arrived she was not long home from church, a place and a people that sustain her in this isolated little town. She greeted me warmly with chocolate-chip cookies right out of the oven. She’s as beautiful as she was before her accident. She described the veterans’ appreciation assembly her fifth-grade students will help with today. They have each interviewed a different veteran and have written three drafts of a short essay about the experience. They are lucky, I think, to have this intelligent and vital woman as their teacher. Carol gets two beers out of the refrigerator for Luther and me. She serves us a tasty plate of spaghetti with sausage and a side dish of salad.

When I called her to arrange the visit, Carol asked me “What’s up?”

“I’m calling to urge you to vote for President Obama,” I joked.

“I already sent in my early ballot,” she answered.

Driving northeast from Telluride, the snow rapidly disappearing, I listen to Mose Allison sing a Duke Ellington/Bob Russell song whose refrain has always puzzled me: “Do nothing ’till you hear from me / And you never will.” I listen closely to Allison’s

brilliantly lax, behind-the-beat, swung performance of the story of separated lovers and the rumors that threaten to end the relationship permanently (“If you should take the words of others you’ve heard, / I haven’t a chance”). He sings of new experiences (“Other arms may hold a thrill”) and yet, paradoxically, professes enduring faithfulness: “Do nothing ’till you hear *it* from me / And you never will.” “It”—missing in the lines that perplex but present in an emphatic final line—would be the admission that he is untrue in his heart and that he no longer loves her. She will never hear that, he sings, because he will never speak it. (She, by the way, may decide she has had enough of this perhaps true and certainly troubled relationship, but that’s another story.) Love is complex. And perplexing. And swung.

I think this conflicted and heartfelt song might be a good number for my funeral. We sang “Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?” for my father’s.

In Paonia I find the little house we lived in until I was five and then eat lunch in a downtown diner. I tell the waitress I lived in the log house, the one just up the street, when I was four years old. That was a long time ago, she says. It seems like yesterday to me—the memories are not timebound—but I agree with her on principle. Sweet potato fries and a Reuben sandwich flavor another reading of Snyder’s poem. He leaves Farmington “under the tough old stars,” girding himself for “What is to be done.”

I barrel along the still ecstatic highway to Green River, come back to myself on the northbound highway between the San Rafael Swell and the Bookcliffs, and finally, after descending the dangerous highway snaking down Spanish Fork Canyon, with real work still to be done, ease down the dark driveway from which Lyn has shoveled a foot of heavy snow.

Home again.

### Note

1. Mimeographed pamphlet in author’s possession. See also: Hartman Rector, Jr., *The Land Choice Above All*, <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1028>, accessed 3/7/13. See also Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 183. “An unexpected voice in support of student pacificism came in late 1969 from visiting apostle Gordon B.

Hinckley, whose church assignments included writing a letter to parents who had lost sons during the war. "I have felt very keenly the feelings of many of our young men concerning this terrible conflict," he reported at a BYU devotional service. In defense of conscientious objectors, Hinckley confided, "A man has to live with his conscience, his principles, his convictions and testimony, and without that he is as miserable as hell. Excuse me, but I believe it." Utah senator Frank Moss (D) echoed Hinckley's sentiment six days later. But at a special Veteran's Day devotional service the following week, Hartman J. Rector, Jr., a navy veteran of World War II and member of the First Council of the Seventy, appeared on campus in full-dress uniform to highlight his support of U.S. policy. "This nation represents the last great bastion of freedom and liberty," he asserted. "We have an obligation to the world as well as to ourselves." Not unexpectedly, some students disagreed, maintaining that Rector had simplified "a very complex question" in a way that was not "completely responsible." The next year, again only a few days apart, Hinckley reaffirmed his hatred "of war with all its mocking panoply," while Rector speculated, much as Reed Smoot had done more than fifty years earlier, that war "was an instrument in the hands of the Lord" to further the church's missionary interests, this time in Vietnam."



## POETRY

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### Offerings

*Dayna Patterson*

The way he leaves a banana-mayo sandwich  
on the counter. His special blend  
of applesauce with too much cinnamon  
brims over a white glass bowl.  
The scratchy blue-and-green-car sheets  
left folded on the hide-a-bed.

During your visit,  
he'll take you to the buffet,  
but only between two and four.  
He'll stand in line  
for a cup of water,  
but only if it's free.  
He won't ride the glass-bottom boat,  
but he'll lead you to the spring,  
make odd remarks  
while you gawk at alligators,  
scan seaweed for manatees.

There will be no hugs, no  
*I love you's* when you leave.  
You'll have to scavenge for clues:

The way he rises early to make you  
tofu waffles.  
The way he hoses pollen from your car  
before your 12-hour trip.  
The way he proffers a firm handshake,  
a packet of sandwiches,  
a sack of bruised Red Delicious.

## Glazier

*Dayna Patterson*

You can't be afraid of cuts, she says,  
showing her hands  
beautiful with scars.

She works with gloves on,  
protected from glass slivers hidden  
in the wood table's grain.

But on occasion, she sweeps her hand  
over the table's surface  
and snags the fabric of her skin.

A hazard of the profession,  
a few cells in exchange  
for the privilege of dying light

different colors—the blue folds  
of Mary's robe, the red of Jesus' blood,  
the milk of his skin

when he's pulled  
from the brown cross, the green  
stems of lilies announcing: Life.

All these hues paint your face  
the colors of reverence,  
whether you believe or no,

as you sit or kneel in church, any  
church. Perhaps an old abbey with tall  
columns, hunky punks, a rose window,

and sunlight  
genuflecting through clouds  
to worship at the altar of her art.

## The Feather Pen

*James Goldberg*

The angels' wings are molting, so I'll make my pen.  
Sound me down to earth or hell, but let me take my pen.

While I was sleeping all the stars burned to ash—  
perhaps this emptiness of night is what will wake my pen.

My mind? A Zen garden. My memories? Stones.  
And where in all the chaos is a rake? My pen.

Break my bones, break my heart, break my spirit for his sake:

He speaks like rushing waters; I write his words to ice.  
Imprisoned where clear walls have turned opaque. My pen.

It wasn't till I saw his finger writing on the wall—  
I knew what I could be if I'd forsake my pen.

## Ghazal

*James Goldberg*

You said to wait but how I wanted to be free again  
Find a way to get a taste of the fruit from off that tree again

The Day of Judgment hangs above my neck just like a flaming sword  
Each night the angels say it's time to enter my plea again

I'm a sinner since the prophet wandered off to talk with God  
Once Moses broke two tablets, but for me he'd break three again

Your hand is stretched out still, but it's no use  
I've fallen asleep. Left you alone to Gethsemane again.

When God is calling on all peoples to repent  
Is it time to follow Jonah out to sea again?

Don't think your eye can't pierce me still  
and with that piercing witness you've found me again

Faith was the beam I removed—and went blind  
You had to wash the clearness out with mud so I could see again

I left you once—because you told me that I should  
When I come back, what will I be again?

The altar has room, James, for both of your legs  
So don't ask for that promise on just one knee again

## Fractals

*Calvin Olsen*

Dwarfed by other forms of life, the leaves fall  
into this world without cadence that changes colors  
each time it kisses something goodbye.

Adieu—to God—that is the type of farewell  
we all seek in our own way.  
You are new in my life, measure how you will.

One day you will be older than everyone,  
assuming nothing invisible calls your name early.  
Until then, I will teach you my language.

The trick is not guessing where the leaves will land;  
the trick is deciding where they started  
before the drying spot they left has time to forget.

Apologies: this poem only illuminates  
the paradox of poems: write them down  
and the feeling is gone, wait

and the feeling is gone. I stopped  
to eat, it crept down the stairs  
to blow away in the wind. I hope

the holes will slow it down.  
In the fuss of these half-colored fragments of trees  
your eyes are the only blue.

## **This Dock My Home**

*Calvin Olsen*

Otis Redding and Ulysses knew something about sitting  
at the edge of the world, trying to remember  
the changing shades of the sea at home,

being in love with the ocean. I know the feeling  
of water; it's not hard to imagine  
giving in to whatever it is that makes us want

to jump. It looks clean from here. It is blue.  
You can feel the loneliness of it all, as if God was Picasso  
painting everything the same color so someone notices

his shape. Does he miss things? Just below the surface  
small fish have come to eat whatever the wind blows  
into their world. My legs have fallen asleep.

## Blessed Virgin

*Diana Dean*

Leda, when Helen leapt  
in your womb was it  
like this? Ankles swollen  
under the weight  
of a dove? The gift of  
God nauseates,  
spasms my body with tears  
and pain. I bear the cross  
looks of judgment  
from my husband.

You felt a Swan  
quake. Why couldn't I  
have felt that  
touch: fingers tangled  
in hair, as rocking  
crescendos to chaos  
of nerves, ripping  
a prayer from my lips?

That prayer presses down  
on my hips; my husband  
stares at my swollen  
body beneath unstained sheets.



## Same-Sex Attraction

*Clifton Jolley*

There are many myths mistaking the domestication of Hydrangeas,  
not least: the degree to which color can be manipulated or controlled.

White Hydrangeas never can be pink, red can't bloom in southern soils.

Violet may be forced by adding aluminum to the toil,  
potted blossoms a bit more certain than the accidental.

But leaf meal mold in the suffocating ivy or transplanting  
are as likely to accomplish several shades on a single Royal.

Neither husbandman nor husbandry unerringly anticipate God's  
will,

but as the Preacher long ago foretold: Time and chance,  
and Hydrangeas constantly surprising us by their roil.

## In Those Days of My Spirit: A Found Poem<sup>\*</sup>

*Sarah E. Page*

To the young ravens which cry  
Songs in the night,  
Stormy wind fulfilling,  
Saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed  
A far journey in a moment of time,  
Fair colors,  
Feathers with yellow gold,  
All the kingdoms of the world,  
Wandering stars, sanctified, immortal,  
Solemnities of eternity,  
Beauty for ashes—  
I will not be afraid.  
Loose the bands of Orion!  
Under the shadow of your wings,  
I shall be whole.

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<sup>\*</sup>*Author's note:* Each line of this poem is borrowed from a verse of scripture. Following is a list of the references ordered as they appear in the poem: Acts 2:17–18; Psalms 147:9; Job 35:10; Psalms 148:8; Jeremiah 23:25; Mark 13:34/Luke 4:5; Isaiah 54:11; Psalms 68:13; Luke 4:5; Jude 1:13/D&C 77:1; D&C 43:34; Isaiah 61:3; Psalms 56:11; Job 38:31; Psalms 17:8; and Mark 5:28.

# “An Exquisite and Profound Love”: An Interview with Andrew Solomon

*Note: Andrew Solomon has written about mental health, politics, and culture for the New York Times and the New Yorker and is the author of four books. The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression won the 2001 National Book Award for Nonfiction and was a finalist for the 2002 Pulitzer Prize. In his most recent book, Far from the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity, Solomon explores what it means to be a parent in the context of adversity. Dialogue board member Gregory A. Prince interviewed Solomon on March 28, 2011, in New York City.*

*Solomon:* Where to begin? I'll begin with a little bit about my own experience, before I try to address anything that is highly specific to Mormonism itself.

I grew up feeling that to be gay was a tragedy. I didn't grow up thinking that it was morally wrong, but I grew up thinking that it would make me marginal, prevent me from having children, and quite possibly prevent me from having a meaningful long relationship. It seemed that this condition would leave me with a vastly reduced life.

What has become clear to me is that it is not the inherent nature of being gay that causes such a reduced life; it is, rather, the social circumstances around being gay: the perceptions of it and the cultural norms that it is said to violate. As some of those norms have changed, I have been able to be gay, to have a marriage, to have a family, and to have—if there is wood to knock on—a fortunate and happy life.

*Prince:* And even an extraordinary life, from where I see it.

*Solomon:* Thank you. It feels extraordinary to me, certainly, as I live it. Emerging from a sense of my life as tragic to a sense of my life as joyful has been a transformation so profound that it is almost impossible to come up with language fully to describe it.

I happen to have come of age in a place and at a time that facilitated that transformation. There are many people for whom it hasn't taken place. So I would start by saying that the reason that I am talking to you is not because I am outraged myself by the Mormon Church's positions on gay issues, though I am. It is rather because I think those positions deprive an enormous number of people of the kinds of joy that I have experienced. I feel, as a matter nearly of faith, that if you have known a certain amount of suffering and have emerged out of it into the light, you are obliged to share that light with as many of the still-beleaguered as possible.

My purpose in this conversation is not to get a lot of rage off my chest, but to help some Mormons to achieve more openness, tolerance, and acceptance. Their doing so would allow gay Mormons some of these experiences that have been so meaningful to me. In my view, there is a moral obligation to be an evangelist for such fulfillment.

As I said when we were at lunch, I also feel that many benighted views on this and other subjects come from a relative lack of exposure. The more gay people can tell our stories, the more other people will accept gay people. Any community that remains an abstraction is an easy target for prejudice and cruelty, but any community that becomes fully humanized is much harder to treat in that way.

When I was younger, I certainly didn't plan to be a big activist. A lot of people are very political when they are young, and then they outgrow it. I was very timid on these subjects when I was young, and have grown into activism. Initially, a lot of the activism was about getting to the point where I am now—and even now, I encounter a lot of prejudice and a lot of darkness. I have to negotiate constantly through situations that are uncomfortable or difficult or strange. When I remember how unhappy I was in adolescence—about the fact that, though I wasn't really using the term to or for myself, I knew that I was *gay*—I think, “Oh, if someone then

could have shown me just an hour in the life that I have now, I would have made it through all of that misery and despair just fine.” The pain lay in thinking that I had a desolate future. It remains, still, shocking and surprising that the future turned out so differently. It seems so incalculably precious and rapturous to me, the experience of love and marriage and family.

Religion is so focused on family. These days, for many people, being gay is also focused on family. The Mormon Church is especially focused on family, and I’d have hoped, therefore, that the Mormon Church would especially have celebrated how all of these people who might have been lonely and suicidal and childless are now able to lead this other life. I would have thought it would be a cause for immense celebration. Instead it has been, obviously, a cause of great concern to the Church and its leadership.

*Prince:* And not just to sit in the back pew, but to become pillars of the community.

*Solomon:* Yes, and also people of faith and love and kindness. I look at the life that I have with my husband, John, and our son George, and with the more complicated family that I will explain, for interview purposes, in a second. I have spent a lot of my life trying to do good and be a humanitarian, to write about difficult places, and to tell the story of oppressed peoples. But no experience has felt to me like as unqualified a good as this experience. The idea of anyone contemplating our family and witnessing the affection that we all have for one another and seeing evil in it is deeply hurtful and sad; and also deeply bewildering. This is not to say that I haven’t read all of the texts and that I don’t understand some of the theological arguments; but the ultimate tenets of religion are mercy and love and faith, and those are the things that we represent in abundance. It is unsettling to run up so often against the opposite view.

I’ll explain the family, just so that it is there for the record.

I got into my first serious relationship with a man when I was twenty-three. I had, before that, sort of a typical, sad history of relatively promiscuous sexual encounters with men I didn’t know, because I felt that if I were involved with people I did know, other people would know that I was gay, and it was something that I needed to keep so secret.

I do some lecturing at Yale University, where I studied, and I support fellowships in the Department of Lesbian and Gay Studies. I became involved in the department at the behest of the gay activist Larry Kramer, who was funding the first days of the department. Larry described what it had been like to be gay at Yale in the late 1940s and early 1950s. I listened to his description of it and I thought, "How could you even stay alive, surrounded by so much fear and so much hatred and so much rage?" Larry, in fact, made a suicide attempt while he was an undergraduate. I listened to what he had to say and I thought, "I don't think that I would have survived it." I felt so lucky that I went to college in the mid-'80s. I had a lot of issues and concerns, but there were openly gay people, there were openly gay faculty, there was a wholly different atmosphere.

Now, once a year, I have the students who have won these fellowships in Lesbian and Gay Studies that I sponsor come to dinner at my house in New York, with their professors. They are planning families, planning marriage, out and open and just fine about it, with parents who are just fine about it. I think, "Oh, how wonderful it would have been to grow up in that atmosphere." I usually tell them how different Larry's experience was from mine, and how different my experience was from theirs. I always end by saying, "My most fervent hope is that when you are my age and you come back to talk to the students, you will feel the same jealousy of their lives that I feel of yours."

Anyway, back to me. I was an undergraduate. In retrospect, I don't know why I was so fiercely closeted. I don't know what I thought was going to happen if anyone found out.

*Prince:* Did your parents know?

*Solomon:* No. Did they have some suspicions? Perhaps. But I was determined that nobody could ever know. It was this terrible, terrible thing. I thought that if anyone found out, I would die.

In the meanwhile, I was awakening as a sexual being. But there was no connection between sexuality and affection for me at that stage. It was a desperate physical need, and it had no bearing at all on what I thought of as my emotional life. It had absolutely no connection to intimacy of any authentic kind.

Finally, when I was twenty-three I finished my graduate degree at Cambridge, and I decided to stay in London and work there. In retrospect, I can see that I had gone to England because I had to go away to a place of my own where I could invent myself. I got involved with my first serious partner, Michael, who remains a close friend and who is the nicest person in the world. We were involved for a couple of years.

*Prince:* Aside from being geographically removed, did you perceive that British society was more inviting?

*Solomon:* No, I didn't. British society is more inviting in some ways, and less inviting in other ways; but that wasn't really the issue for me. The issue for me was going away. And going away was both liberating and quite sad. I loved and in many ways was very close to my parents. I was only away in London; I wasn't on the moon. But still, in retrospect, I wouldn't have felt the need to run away from my family in the same way if it weren't for this issue.

My mother refused to meet Michael. She knew he existed; she knew I was living with him. She didn't say "I don't love you" or "I disown you." She just said, "I don't want to deal with this, and I don't want to meet him." I was terribly upset by it.

Then, we were on a family trip in Paris: my brother and his girlfriend, my parents, me, and a friend of mine. I couldn't bring Michael, so I brought a female friend, Talcott, who had known my parents for years. I was getting ready to explain, however, that this would not happen again, and that in the future if we were going on a family trip and I couldn't come with Michael, I wasn't going to come at all.

My mother wasn't feeling well. She went to a doctor in Paris, and he ordered a scan, and said that she had a mass that suggested ovarian cancer. He thought that she should have exploratory surgery immediately. My parents said, "You kids should stay and have a nice time on this trip, and we'll go back. As long as it is not cancer, we'll be fine." So we went through this very weird, dumb show: David and his girlfriend, and Talcott and me. We were all so immensely worried about my mother.

Four days later they did the procedure, and she did have cancer. We got on a plane and went straight home. She was very depressed and overwhelmed, and it was a very difficult time. My



mother eventually said to me, “Well, you know that cancer is brought on by extreme stress.” I said, “Ah yes, so it is.” She said, “Certainly the most extreme stress in my life has been this thing of your being gay and living with Michael.” The implication that the life that I was leading had actually precipitated her illness—it was probably the worst conversation of my life. I thought, “Oh, that’s why I felt, for all those years, that I couldn’t be myself and admit to who I was, why I felt that this thing I carried within me was toxic and poisonous. Here it is, all borne out.”

She apologized, afterward. She apologized any number of times. A couple of months after that, she and my father came to London and they had dinner with Michael, whom they both liked. In the comparative scheme of things, it wasn’t so bad; but the pain of that conversation has stayed with me all these years. And the atmosphere from which that conversation rose had this terrible, devastating effect on me through my adolescence and early adulthood. She was also embarrassed by the idea of having a gay child. There was still the idea in circulation that gay children were caused by overbearing mothers. There were all of those things going around. It was very difficult to separate out the fact that I was gay, which was one narrative, from the fact that my mother had a gay child, which was another narrative.

Now, my mother had a genuine belief, which she articulated frequently long before she knew that I was gay, that the most valuable and important things in life are love and a family. She said, “You don’t know, until you have children, what the love you feel for them is like. People who never have children never get to know that. It is the most beautiful emotion that there is, and there is nothing else in my life that has given me a joy comparable to the joy that having children has brought me.” That enormous love was palpable throughout my life, despite the episode that I have just described.

My father was kind of neutral on the whole thing. He vaguely said, “Having a family is wondrous, and it would be a shame if you didn’t get to have that experience.” But he was more remote about it all. His feeling about it essentially was, “We can’t get your mother too upset. Your mother is having a very hard time with this.”

So the prohibition, for me, didn't really come out of religion. I'd had a vaguely Jewish upbringing, but no deep connection to faith. But I did grow up in a household in which I felt that to be myself was to damage the people I loved. So I am very well acquainted with that burden.

*Prince:* How early did you come to that realization?

*Solomon:* I think I came to it, at a subtle level, very early. I didn't come to an explicit understanding of it until well after my mother had died.

I went through elementary school being bullied and teased. I remember someone—I can't recall his name, but I can see his face—who decided on the school bus, when I was ten or eleven, to call me "Percy." That was somehow supposed to connect to the fact that I wasn't very athletic. I was, in fact, also not very coordinated. I was not very masculine, by the standards of ten-year-olds. I remember being on the school bus and everyone chanting, "Percy! Percy! Percy!" at me. I've just been thinking about this because I have a close relative, a child in my family, who has been going through something a little bit similar.

It had been going on for a year, probably, and somebody told his mother, who told my mother. My mother said, "Has this been happening? What is all this?" I said, "Yes, it has been happening." She said, "Well, why on earth didn't you tell us?" She arranged for a chaperone on the bus, and that whole business came to an end.

When I stop to think about why I hadn't said anything about the Percy business, I think it was because I knew I was being attacked for being something that wasn't good, and I believed that my parents would discover it, and that they, too, would think that it wasn't good.

My mother died less than two years after she got sick. Michael and I had broken up by then. I remember when I told her, and she said, "Oh, just when I was getting fond of him." One of the things she said to me the night that she died was, "What happened to me has nothing to do with who you are. The only thing I have ever really wanted for you is love, and I hope you find it in whatever form it takes."

There followed a decade in which I was involved with a man for a couple of years, and then I was involved with a woman for a

couple of years. Then, I was with another man for a couple of years, and then I was involved with another woman for a couple of years. I was really trying to make the straight thing work because I really wanted to have kids; and also, I think, because I felt as though I could fall emotionally in love with women. There was a piece of myself that I held back in the relationships with men.

Finally, when I was 37, I met John. We have now been together for nearly 12 years. It wasn't until I met John—even though I had written about being gay, even though everyone knew—that I finally felt that I was able to transcend the idea that who I was was a grave misfortune.

In the meanwhile, shortly before I met John, I had a speaking engagement in Texas. One of my closest, closest friends from Yale was Blaine. She was the most beautiful woman at Yale when I was there. She was kind and charming and incredibly bright, and always beloved of everyone. She married her college boyfriend, and then divorced; I was out of touch with her for some years.

But I was down to do this speaking engagement, so I called her and said, "I am going to be in town, and I have some friends who are organizing a little dinner, and we'd just love it if you would join us."

So Blaine came along. I was so overjoyed to see her. I said, "Do you feel very sad about your marriage ending?" She said, "No. My one great sadness is that I really would have loved to have kids." I said, offhand while we were sitting there at dinner, "Gee, the thing I most want is to have kids, too. If you ever decide that you want to have them, I'd be glad to be the dad." Blaine was so beautiful, popular, and beloved of everyone, and she would have many opportunities to marry anyone she wanted to, and have children in a much more conventional way. So I didn't take the conversation too seriously.

But when I got home I wrote her a letter that said, "I would, actually, really love to have children, and I would be delighted, more than I can say, to have children with you. But if you decide not to have children with me, I hope you will have children with someone, because you are such a good and loving person, and you would be a wonderful mother."

Then I met John, and although that was very happy it took, as

any relationship does in its early stages, some adjustment. Bit by bit I began to think, "Oh, this is really the one."

Then, my father and stepmother threw a beautiful surprise party for me for my fortieth birthday. When I walked in, of all the people who were there from various different parts of my life, the person I was most surprised to see was Blaine, because she had lived in New York at the beginning of her marriage and she had never come back.

John and I had been together for two and a half years by that point, and he knew that I loved Blaine and didn't get to see her very often. He had made up an appointment for the following evening, so that I thought we were doing something, in order that I would have the evening free. That evening Blaine and I went out to dinner. She said, "I just wanted to say that I really would like to do this. Would you really like to do this, have a kid?" I said, "I really would like to do this. Are you sure you really would like to do this?" And she said, "I think I really would like to do this."

John has some close friends who are a lesbian couple, Tammy and Laura. They wanted to have kids, and they had asked John to be the sperm donor. So he had two biological children in Minneapolis with whom he didn't have a close relationship, but with whom he had a kind of fond relationship. Their parents were definitely their two moms; John and I were more like uncles.

I'm not going to go through all the permutations, which would take hours, but John and I went through a very, very difficult time of working through the idea that I was going to have this child with Blaine. I thought it was like his situation with Tammy and Laura, but he thought it was not; he had a distant relationship to those children, and I would have an explicitly paternal relationship to this one. He was jealous, he was anxious, he felt that he was going to be usurped; but eventually he came around to the idea, partly because you can't not love Blaine. And frankly, you really can't not love John, either. The two of them ended up being enormously close, and they adore each other. It all began to work.

In the meanwhile, John had said that he wanted me to marry him. Some of that old homophobia and shame was still quite strong in me. I said, "I'm happy to be with you forever, but I don't see that we should make a big, public fuss about it." But I finally

decided that he was being nice about my having children with Blaine, and I needed to be nice about this marriage thing if it meant so much to him. I'm a dual-national, U.S. and U.K., and Britain had just passed its civil partnership law, which grants civil partners all of the rights of marriage except that it's not called marriage; and at that time it was not possible to have the ceremony performed in a consecrated religious space.

We started putting together our wedding. I was amazed by how powerful the experience was and how much it meant to me. I had started off thinking, "OK, if you really want to." Then I thought, "Well, it will be great party, and I love putting together great parties. That will be a lot of fun." So I was ambushed by its profundity. There was real intimacy in the process of planning it with John. But I think the real revelation was having this community of people all bearing witness to our love for each other. It strengthened that love. It's not that the love wasn't there before the wedding, but it just felt, somehow, as though something that was private and therefore vulnerable acquired an additional layer that was public, which strengthened it. It was as though it got an exoskeleton. The presence of all of our friends and, more than acceptance, the love and exuberance of all of our friends on that occasion was stirring and revelatory. I felt as though it eliminated, in some profound way, any feeling that the kind of love that I enjoyed was a compromise, or was secondary, or was different, or wasn't as good as the love that my brother and my sister-in-law had, or that my parents had had, or that so many of my friends had. I had felt compromised all my life, without even realizing how much that feeling depleted me. On my wedding day, I felt, "This is love and this is celebration."

John and I both felt quite strongly that we wanted to have a religious element in the wedding. Even though neither of us is profoundly involved in day-to-day organized religious life, each of us has a deep sense of the mysterious and unknowable in human relations. John was raised as a Catholic, though his father was Lutheran. I grew up as a Jew. We spent a lot of time thinking through what we wanted the service to be, and eventually asked Peter Gomes, who was for a long time the minister at Harvard, to perform a Christian ceremony. At the end of the wedding we re-

ceived a blessing from a British rabbi, Julia Neuberger, whom I knew and admired.

We spent such a long time writing the ceremony. We didn't want it to be hypocritical, and we didn't want it to assume an apparent engagement with dogma that was not real to us. But the presence of our friends and that feeling of the presence of God in the experience came together in a way that I had no ability to conceptualize until it happened. It made our love seem to be part of a much bigger and greater idea of love—a more exquisite and profound love that buoyed and buoys us enormously.

My brother was my best man, and I had asked my father to give a speech at the wedding. Various friends gave speeches at the rehearsal dinner. John had asked a couple of his closest friends to speak. His parents were both deceased, and he did not invite his sister, Mary—who is a devout Catholic and lives in the conservative context in Wisconsin where John grew up—to speak; he felt she was still somewhat uncomfortable with the fact that he was gay. She was coming to the wedding, about which we were delighted, but we didn't want to push it.

The day of the wedding she said to John that she wished to make a toast. John said to me, "We have everything so scheduled, but is it OK if my sister says a few words?" I said, "John, she is your sister. Of course she should say something if she wants."

She delivered an incredibly beautiful, deeply moving speech. She invoked the memory of their parents, and said how happy she felt they would have been to be there that day and to see how happy John was. It meant so much to John that she was able to make that leap.

My brother and my father both made beautiful speeches. My father said, "There are some people to whom love comes easily, and that has a little bit to do with the world around them. The love that Andrew and John have took a lot of work. Social prejudice prevented its being easy, but it is a beautiful and true love. I would only wish for my son," he went on, addressing us, "that your marriage be like my marriage to your mother, only longer."

There were articles in various places, both in England and the U.S., in the *Times* and various British papers and magazines. Then the paper from John's hometown got in touch with John and

asked how he felt about their running an article. John said, "Well, I think it would be kind of fun, but I don't live in Grafton. My sister lives in Grafton, and I don't know how she would feel about it. We really would have to talk to Mary." When he mentioned it to Mary, she said, "Everyone I care about in this town knows that I went and knows that I had a wonderful time. The people who don't know it are people I don't care about anyway. I'm delighted for them to do this piece." So the story ran in the Grafton paper.

John had Tammy and Laura, his lesbian friends, come with their two children. Oliver was John's page, and mine was my eldest nephew. Lucy was a flower girl. Blaine came to the wedding, pregnant with the child we would soon have, little Blaine.

People say, "Well, you could have just had the celebration, and not called it marriage." But it wouldn't have been the same. John and I had registered as domestic partners in New York, in case either of us needed to have hospital access or secure certain other legal rights. We had a couple of friends join us for lunch afterwards. It was very pleasant. But it wasn't the same. It didn't have that feeling of exaltation. It had a feeling of pragmatism. There are purposes that are served by having legal recognition for your coupledness. But that is such a small part of what marriage is about, or at least what I understand marriage to be about.

We went down to Fort Worth for the birth of little Blaine. There was still some tension between John and Blaine, and then the fact of this baby seemed so much more monumental than any jealous tensions. There was this child in the world who hadn't been there before, and who was going to have me as her father, and John—"Papa John," as she calls him—as a significant figure in the whole of her life. It was so shocking, so thrilling, so daunting.

*Prince:* Shocking for both of you?

*Solomon:* I think so. It was shocking for me to look at her and think, "All those years, I thought I would never have a child. And look, I have a child! I am a father!" I remember trying on the word and thinking, "I am a *father*. I am a father?" It seemed so inconceivable. It had been such an elusive goal for so long. And also, of course, I suddenly thought, "Do I know how to do this? Will I be any good at it? Will her growing up in this unusual family be hard for her? What if she turns into someone I don't feel any connec-



tion to?" All of the worries and anxieties. For John, too, it had all felt abstract, and suddenly we were actually holding this little girl. And Blaine was glowing.

People talk a lot about "downward spirals." But I feel like it was like this was an upward spiral: John's moving to New York. Our getting married. Blainey being born. It somehow kept getting better. John and Blaine have had hardly a minute of tension between them since little Blaine was born.

John had said at various stages, "What you are doing is not really like my arrangement with Tammy and Laura. I like those kids and I said I would be there for them if they wanted, but I'm not so deeply involved." I said, "Why aren't you more involved?" John really wanted to engage with them, and just about then, Laura said that we were really important to the kids, and that she wanted to invite us to be more involved in their lives. That was really good.

The arrangement with Blaine was that I would go to Texas, or she would come here every month for a few days; but that is not the same as living with a child. I said to John, "OK, we've now got all of these kids who matter to us, but there is a part of parenting that occurs only when you are actually bringing a child up, hands-on, all of the time. We should have a child together, with the two of us."

*Prince:* Let me interrupt at this point.

*Solomon:* Please.

*Prince:* You're going through all of this. When, for you, did relationship become family?

*Solomon:* Relationship with John?

*Prince:* Yes.

*Solomon:* In many ways it had become family when he moved in with me in New York, but I feel it really changed when we got married. It wasn't as though on June 27th I didn't care what happened, and on July 1st I felt that this was my whole life, but the process of committing to marriage was transformative for us.

*Prince:* I am assuming that love is part of relationship, but there is some type of transformation—whether it is a process or an event, I don't know—whereby it becomes family. At its base, that is what I see as so crucial in this whole discussion—not just of homosexual-

ity, but also of society. We are all recognizing the crucial importance of family, and it goes way beyond relationship.

*Solomon:* We met in 2001 and we got married in 2007. John moved to New York at the very end of 2003. The first year that he was in New York was a big adjustment for both of us, for many, many reasons. At the end of that year, we went on a trip to China, where I had a journalistic assignment. We both always say that somehow, the day we left for that trip—we left the day after Christmas, and we celebrated ringing in 2005 there—it suddenly became clear that we were in this together. I had had a tendency in prior relationships to be wondering if there was a better relationship out there. I think it was about when we went to China, four years after we met, that I realized that I had absolutely no interest in being in another relationship. I wanted to be in *this* relationship, permanently. That's not to say that we never argued. But I felt, "Whatever our flaws are, they are the ones that we are going to be dealing with." I didn't want to be at the beginning of intimacy ever again. I wanted to be *in* this thing.

So that was the beginning of 2005. Between then and the time we got married in 2007, I think that grew and strengthened and became more profound. My father had been very warm and welcoming to John, as had my brother and stepmother; but now John became much closer to and much more involved with the family.

We loved our wedding, and we had a great, great time at it. It was a wonderful occasion. I think that one of my ways of being in the world had always been to blend ambivalence, nostalgia, and uncertainty. I think I had never really expected that I would outgrow having profound ambivalence at the center of my relationship. I thought that I would find someone and I would try to make it work, and I would settle for imperfection. But I really don't have reservations about John, and I would say that it was in that 2005–2007 period that my regretfulness was pushed into abeyance.

And then, as I say, getting married really did it, in a way that I had never expected. I felt, "OK, we have implicated a lot of other people and God in this. We must be pretty serious about it." I thought it would be a way to mark the reality that already existed, but in fact, it created a reality that had not existed and that would

not have existed had we not been able to marry. We could have lived together for the rest of our lives very happily. It's not that without marriage it would all have fallen apart. But marriage reified the love. It made it seem that it wasn't only something inside us. It was something that existed unto itself in the world, this love. I wanted to emphasize, in the religious text of the ceremony, all the language about forever. I know that marriages disintegrate and people get divorced, but I don't think that that will happen to us. We forged an unshakeable commitment, and we did so very publicly.

To go back to your idea of family, I think that my greatest strength, and my greatest weakness in some ways, is that I came from a very strong family. My parents deeply and truly loved each other, and if my mother hadn't died they would have been together forever. They were together for as much of forever as was given to them. They really loved my brother and me and were very good to us. It gave the model of how to have a happy marriage and family, but it also set the bar very high. I was so attached to my family of origin, and it took time for him to matter as much to me as any of them. I hate the comparative idea that you have to love your spouse more than you love your parents. But there was a moment when I realized that I no longer felt that the emotion of later life was smaller and less significant than that profound emotion and love in my childhood. I felt that the relationship with John had risen to that occasion.

*Prince:* Somehow, from what I am hearing, that interaction with God was a transformational experience. Is that fair to say? Not that it was the whole process, but that it was a part of the process.

*Solomon:* It was a part of the process. I had written my book on depression,<sup>1</sup> and I had studied a lot about the biochemistry of the brain. I am not a scientist, but I have some understanding of brain science. The conclusion that I came to, which I articulate at the end of my book on depression, is that even when we understand a thousand times more than we can currently understand, science still won't explain the mysterious nature of love and despair. And despair is part of love. I won't go too far down that tangent, but if your love didn't always contain the possibility of loss, it would be very different from human love as we know it. The experience of

being depressed and emerging from depression made me understand the idea of a soul. I felt that the language in which one could best acknowledge that drew from faith. I believe very deeply that this beauty I call the soul is not a random occurrence. I don't know what its meaning is at some larger level, but I know that it has meaning. I very much want to acknowledge that understanding of God. I have always believed in trying to be a good person and giving to the world, and treating others in a just, kind, merciful way.

It wasn't just that my neurotransmitters were surging at the moment when John and I met. That's another language to describe what happened. I'm sure that if we had enough sophistication, someone could look at what my changes in brain structure were as I came to feel more deeply in love.

I have a very difficult time believing that there is some being who is going to invite me into heaven or not on the basis of whether I wear a yarmulke or whether I have been sprinkled with water while someone said something. Some of the ritual is very beautiful, but I find it difficult to believe that it really has to do with God. I believe that dogma comes from man.

I grew up in a very rationalist household. My father, in particular, came from that mid-century tradition of thinking science will ultimately explain everything. I'm a huge believer in science. But I don't think it explains everything. I first really felt that when my mother died. I thought, "What happened to her? She was here a second ago, and now she is gone." Obviously, I had known that people died. I had known a couple of people who had died, but the loss of my mother contained something of the profoundly unknowable. In the beautiful relationships that have blossomed since then, there seems to be the same. Does that make sense?

*Prince:* Yes, it does. It's a long response to a short question, but the short question demands the long response. Anything less would trivialize it.

*Solomon:* It's interesting—I joined the First Presbyterian Church largely because I hoped to send George to their very good preschool, which for various reasons he is not going to attend; and partly because they have a large social justice program, in which I believe very strongly. They feed the homeless, and I wanted to at-

tach myself to an institution that was doing that. I love going to church on Sundays. It's slightly ridiculous, because the church is around the corner from my house in New York, but we spend weekends at my dad's house in the country, so it's an hour commute to get down to go to church, and then an hour to get back to my father's home. I love the punctuation at having time consecrated, as it were, to thinking about these issues. I don't believe that raising my voice in song is going to be pleasing to a God who is sitting upstairs somewhere, waiting to be pleased. But I love the regular acknowledgement of how little we know and understand, and the repeated appreciation of how much there is to be grateful for in life altogether. I like the church; the music is beautiful; I have become quite close to and really love the pastor, who is very wise and who speaks beautifully in his sermons. But it has also been a journey for me into gratitude and contemplation. Those are the things that I consecrate to God. Within my narrow understanding, those are the things that I would wish to be able to give.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James talks about the idea that if you have a pet dog, you will do things for the dog's good that he hates. I take my own dog to the vet and he looks at me as though to say that he hates going to the vet, and why am I doing this? I can never explain to the dog, "You would be very sick if I didn't do this." He goes on, it being the 19th century, to say that sometimes, in fact, you kill the dog because the dog is actually part of a scientific experiment and by his death will save innumerable human lives. You can never explain that to the dog. The dog only knows that he was alive, and that now you are killing him. James describes us as all "dogs at the feet of God." I don't understand what the nature of God is. But I do have the feeling that I'm at some feet, and lucky to be there. I think that would be the essence of it.

Is this all making sense?

*Prince:* Yes.

*Solomon:* We're just talking and talking and talking.

*Prince:* Isn't it making sense to you?

*Solomon:* It is, actually.

*Prince:* It may not be what you talk about every day, but it makes a

lot of sense to me. I think that is the essence of any religion: does it put you, even temporarily, not only in a better place, but in a place that is so different that it causes you to reflect in a way that you couldn't otherwise.

*Solomon:* Right.

*Prince:* It's not just more of the same of every day; it is qualitatively different.

*Solomon:* Yes.

*Prince:* But not all religion does that to people, and in fact some of it is ugly and brings out the worst in human nature instead.

*Solomon:* Working on the penultimate chapter of my current book, which is about people who are transgender, I have found that the greatest stories of acceptance and love and the ugliest stories of hideous cruelty and abuse have equally been perpetrated in the name of Christian faith. I've chronicled the experience of the mother of a transgender child who got attacked by the Ku Klux Klan in Tennessee, and that of a transgender woman who was asked to deliver a sermon at her Montana church and got a standing ovation from her congregation. The idea that Christianity is a blanket term that encompasses both of those attitudes seems ludicrous to me.

I'm sort of free-associating here. Many years ago I was in Zagorsk, which is the center of the Russian Orthodox Church, the equivalent of the Vatican—or perhaps of Salt Lake City. I was at a service that two American women, whom I didn't know, were also attending. The way that Russian Orthodox services work generally, and certainly the way that this worked, is that it goes on for hours and hours, and people wander in and wander out, and people talk the whole way through. One of the American women said to the other, "This is *so* beautiful. I can actually imagine maybe even becoming Orthodox." She went on and on, and finally a Russian seated just in front of her turned and said, "You are not member of church because it is beautiful; you are member of church because it is the single truth of God!" I don't believe that. I believe that organized religion is an ornament to the truth, and that aesthetics are part of its power.

I feel that my most profound experiences are the death of my

mother, the birth of my children, and the arrival at my relationship with John. The idea of a religion that opposes some of those experiences is utterly bewildering to me. But the idea that those are the windows through which I can see the extraordinary gift that is human experience—that makes perfect sense to me. I really feel as though those are the three experiences about which I felt, “Oh, now I see. It’s much bigger than we are.”

You know the rest of the actual narrative, but just so that you’ll have it on your tape: I then wanted to have a child with John, a child who would be with us all the time. John thought that it sounded like an awful lot of work. We were really happy, and why did I have to always make things more complicated? We had that conversation for quite a while. Then, it was my birthday and he gave me a cradle tied up with a bow. He said, “If it’s a boy, can we call him George, after my grandfather?”

I am the biological father; we had an egg donor, and Laura offered to be our surrogate. George is a source of such delight. I didn’t have, as some people do, instant bonding. He was my child and I would have done anything for him, but he didn’t stir such gigantic emotions the minute he was born. They have just grown and grown, and every time I think that really that’s all, they seem to grow more. I really feel—and I said this to John even before George was born—“You think our being married meant that we would be together forever. Certainly, our getting married meant that I intend for us to be together forever. But if we have a child together, I just want you to know that from my side, at least, I’m really in this for the long haul.”

John is besotted with our child and spends so hugely many hours with him. I always wonder, if he were a less lovable child would I have loved him as much? I don’t know. He seems to me to be a very, very lovable child. He is charming. People like him. He is bright. He is interested in things.

Last night, George got overtired and was having a meltdown. I tried to put him to bed and he wouldn’t stop screaming, and it was exhausting. But this morning we were driving in from the country, and he was in a chatty and cheerful mood. It’s so hard not to lapse into banal cliché, talking about the fact that you love your own children. It’s so par for the course, but it’s also been a revela-



tion to me, as it is to parent after parent. As I mentioned, my mother said that the love one has for one's own children is like no other feeling. In some ways, that frightened me, and in other ways it has made parenthood much easier for me. I thought that the love for my children should feel ecstatic, and I didn't know whether it would, and I felt enormously relieved when I realized that it was escalating toward rhapsody.

Without these children, my life would have been only a shadow of what it is and will be. I am sure I am making a thousand horrible mistakes, because I think that's the nature of parenting; but I like to think that George has given me this great joy, and that he enables me to give some of what I have to give, some of what otherwise might just have rotted away, unused.

Now, I am going to add another piece of my history, which is that before John and I met, I had a romance for a little under two years with an ethnic Hungarian from Romania. He seemed incredibly sweet and very intelligent. I loved him, though I always felt that there was a little bit of our conversation that was getting lost in translation—and not because of his language skills, since his English was impeccable. We had met in Budapest, where he was a student, and he had wanted to move on and be in a bigger world, but he was somewhat uneasy in our American life. He had not come out of the closet to his family because his family were religious and he felt that they would take it badly. I thought that was up to him. He was working here at the Met Museum in their internship program, however, and a bunch of other interns all said to him, "You have to tell your family. That's crazy that you haven't told your family."

So Ernő decided to tell his family. His brother's immediate response was, "That is evil and wrong, and you will burn for eternity in Hell." His mother's response was a more moderate version of the same thing. He didn't tell his father. But his brother was so vehement, and Ernő was completely traumatized by it. He was not surprised, but I think it was more judgmental than he had expected. He and I talked about it, and I found it difficult to respond fully because I didn't understand fully what was going on. Now I can say that I also didn't understand how much it mattered to him.

One night, a few months later, he and I had a big argument. He tended, as many Eastern Europeans do, to drink too much. I was having dinner at home with a family friend, and we came downstairs and he was quite drunk. He said a couple of vaguely inappropriate things to this person. I said, "I can't stand this drinking. You have to get it under control." I was very, very annoyed. I had to go out to interview somebody. When I came home from the interview, he was gone. I never saw him again. I was completely devastated. I couldn't figure out where he was. I thought, "It's New York and he could have been hurt," but I saw that he had taken his passport, even though he had left most of his things behind. Eventually, a friend of mine who spoke Hungarian called his brother's house and he was there.

I wrote a long, long, long letter that a friend who was going to Budapest took and delivered by hand. Ernő finally sent a letter back and said, "I realized that our life was against the will of God, and I can't live with myself in such a life." He went home to Romania, and he married a woman and had two children. Five years later, at the Christological age of 33, he died. I was very briefly in contact with his wife, and wondered to her whether it had been a suicide. She said, "No, no. Certainly not. He was incredibly happy with me and with the family." Of course, I had thought he was incredibly happy in his life with *me*, and that's why I was so utterly unprepared for what happened. Ernő and I never argued. We got along beautifully; we had a lovely time. And then suddenly, he was gone.

I'll never know why he died, but my own strong feeling is that if it wasn't, in fact, suicide, it came from the incredible stress of trying to turn yourself into someone who you aren't, and live a life to meet alien expectations of other people. The letters he had sent to me contained a great deal of anxiety and anguish. I don't have any ache for Ernő in the sense of wishing that he and I were together, instead of John and me; but I have a little shard of despair about the fact that he is dead. I had, of course, hoped that he would find real and true happiness. The destruction of the relationship that he and I had, the falseness of the life into which he tried to place himself—all of it is the product of his brother's

“Christian” intolerance, and while his brother thought our life was evil, I think that intolerance is evil.

I’ve written a whole book on depression. I look at the rates of suicide among gay teens. They are so, so high for suicide attempts and for completed suicides. Being gay is immutable. Maybe someday we’ll figure out more of the science and it will be changeable, but we have no leads so far. We see people of kindness, compassion, and possibly even faith being told, “Because of a characteristic with which you were born, you are evil and bad.” Anything that even implies such a stance is profoundly toxic.

The Mormon Church has become so aggressively involved in this area. If you don’t want to have gay weddings in Mormon churches, that’s fine. That’s absolutely up to the members of the faith or the leadership of the faith. I would never suggest that the Mormon Church has to consecrate gay unions. But homosexuality runs at a fairly constant rate through all populations. There are many gay Mormons. I have a friend, whom I mentioned to you when we first had lunch, who is an ex-Mormon lesbian. It has been devastating to her to be cut off from the Church. I know one gay ex-Mormon who is a talented, self-destructive alcoholic. Whenever he is drunk and going on a tear, we are back to the Mormon Church and his being thrown out of the Mormon Church and growing up with this sense of being evil. I grew up with much milder disapprobation, and I know how poisonous that was for me. The idea of what it is like to lose everything is awful.

When, however, the Mormon Church moved beyond rejecting non-celibate gay Mormons and got involved in trying to prevent non-Mormons from accepting gay unions, as happened most visibly in the Proposition 8 debacle, it was very hard for me not to think of the Mormon Church as an evil organization without which the world, as I see it, would be better off. To pursue those policies insistently and so aggressively when there are people who are starving, who are dying of AIDS, who have no education, who have no drinking water—I thought, “All of those resources? Really? So that people like John and me can’t have the life that we have? Is that *really* the priority of a church?” I have read the Old and New Testaments many times. I know there are lines that are used to justify such positions, but I think the message is of love

and mercy and turn the other cheek is far more central than the prohibitions, most of which we now ignore. How do Christ's words about compassion justify financing Proposition 8 to take away marriage rights where they had already been established? What is the harm that these people who were getting married were doing?"

We are sitting here because of Helen Whitney. Helen is one of my closest, closest friends in the world, and I not only love but also admire her. I had real problems with her doing that Mormon film,<sup>2</sup> because I really saw the Mormon Church as an evil force in the world, and she didn't. She persuaded me, over time, in our conversations, in her film, in introducing me to you, that I was making a facile judgment. We are morally complicated, and we all do good and bad things. Every organization does good and bad things, and she opened up for me a way to see what is good and beautiful and wonderful in Mormonism. I found her film incredibly powerful. It certainly shifted my understanding enough so that I was eager to meet you, and so that I'm sitting with you now and trying to speak as much from my heart as I possibly can.

Despite all of that, I really feel that the Church leaders have blood on their hands. I feel that there are gay Mormons who have committed suicide or whose lives have been destroyed because of the attitude of the Church. I also think that when you got Proposition 8 through, you sent a message to all kinds of people who were tentatively thinking that maybe they were going to have an OK life. You made them think, "Everyone hates us. It's not just my mom, my church, my family; the kind of person I am is repulsive to the world." Some of those people end up killing themselves even if they're not Mormons, even if they're not religious. When a church manipulates the law to say, "These people are lesser," it takes a lot of resilience to hold your head up and say, "I am not lesser!" Some people can do it and some cannot; and some of those people who cannot will be destroyed.

The absence of marriages will result in all kinds of financial burdens that gay people wouldn't face if they could get married. If my brother gets hit by a car tomorrow, my sister-in-law will go on living materially in the same way that she does now. If the same thing happens to me, a great deal of what I have will go off to the

taxman. That's because of one of, as you doubtless know, eleven hundred federal laws that favor marriage.

John and I just returned from a trip with George. We got an inquisition at customs as to where the child's mother was and whether we had permission to travel with the child without his mother. I knew this kind of thing could happen, so I had the birth certificate and I had all of the other legal papers we needed. But this kind of thing is toxic, and it's pervasive.

Having said that the Yale undergraduates whom I sponsor are doing so much better, I also mention that a child in my extended family has been subjected to terrible bullying in a liberal New York school where the administration has effectively said, "We'll do our best, but kids will be kids." I thought, "Well, it's partly the way kids are because it comes from their parents and families." The law supports or undermines social values, and that's doubtless why the Mormon Church wants to be so involved in them.

So I have two nexuses of sadness about the Mormon Church. The first is the effect the Church's position on homosexuality has on Mormons. Two people I know whose lives have been destroyed, for whom this is a devastating experience, and the untold thousands of others like them.

*Prince:* And where would they be had they still remained in that community?

*Solomon:* Yes.

*Prince:* Certainly in a better place than they are now, both of them.

*Solomon:* Yes. And the woman, at least, has been cut off from all of what she, herself, perceives to be the good that there is in Mormonism. And whose interest can that possibly serve? Not theirs; but also, I think, not the Mormon Church's.

The second concern about the Mormon Church's stance, the thing that makes me really outraged, is the idea that the Mormon Church would presume to get involved in decisions that have little to do with Mormonism.

I understand perfectly well why the Catholic Church preaches against abortion. But it shouldn't be the purpose of the Catholic Church to prevent non-Catholics from having abortions if they feel that abortions are morally acceptable. They can certainly only

argue for what they believe to be right in the court of public opinion and try to persuade people. And frankly, if the Mormon Church still supported polygamy, and if it appeared to be a system that was not exploitative of women, I wouldn't feel that it's my place to forbid it.

It does seem to me, though, that there is a difference between the Mormon Church saying, "We don't accept gay people within the Church; we don't accept gay marriage within the Church; we don't accept people who act on their homosexual desires within the Church;" and trying to interfere with what happens outside of the Church. That seemed to me to be an abomination. As I say, if it weren't for Helen, I wouldn't sit down with a practicing Mormon.

Now, because it is for Helen, I have seen that there is a lot that is beautiful and wonderful in the Church. It would have been sad for me to miss out on all of that. I think it is sad for lots and lots of other people to end up with the very reductive understanding of Mormonism that is generated by such a high-profile campaign as that organized around Proposition 8.

Does that sort of answer the question about the Church?

*Prince:* Yes. It answers the past and the present. Let's talk about the future. Part of that future is a minute but significant transformation that is taking place within Mormonism. We spoke of it a little bit at lunch. If you go back into the Church handbook three to four decades ago, when homosexuality was first mentioned, the sin was to *be* homosexual. If you were homosexual and if it were known that you were, you would be expelled if you were a student at Brigham Young University; or, even worse, perhaps subjected to electrotherapy. It was that draconian, and you know horror stories about that kind of treatment. And you probably would have been excommunicated. All of this would have been on the basis of *being* homosexual.

That has changed now, so that not only is being homosexual OK, but you can serve a full-time, proselytizing mission if you are openly homosexual, as long as you have not engaged in homosexual acts. Now, there is a bit of a double standard there. I know how pervasive heterosexual promiscuity is in our society in general, and Mormonism is not immune to that. Were that same standard

to be enforced in the heterosexual population, we would have a lot fewer missionaries out there. That said, this is nonetheless a significant shift in a church that otherwise has had a pretty dismal track record in dealing with homosexuality. There are gay men in the Church whom I know now who feel that their spiritual life is starting to blossom in the open because they can be gay in a church that otherwise has not countenanced that in the past. So there is some progress there.

Where do we need to go? How do we get there? How much of it involves doing what we are not doing, and how much of it involves ceasing to do what we have been doing? Those are the issues that I throw to you. This, of course, is in the form of commentary from both of us. We don't know the future, and yet I think that some thoughtful speaking and writing on the subject has the potential for steering us in a better direction.

*Solomon:* In coming to an appreciation of the Mormon Church, one of the things that has been most compelling to me is the Mormon understanding of family, which extends beyond the general injunction to be fruitful and multiply, and addresses the permanence of love relationships into eternity, and embraces the sanctity of having children.

If I understand correctly, part of the objection to homosexuality used to have to do with the fact that gay people didn't reproduce. Part of it seems to have to do, as a lot of Christian resistance to gayness does, with a dim view of sex that is not procreative, and that is therefore lascivious. There is a great deal of sin that comes from homosexuals who believe their homosexuality is a sin. This is a downward spiral. If you can remove some of those negative associations, it will bring enormous riches to the Church. The Church responds to antiquated social realities, and those realities remain much more current in Utah precisely because of the Church. People who believe that they are going to be excommunicated and shamed, or whatever other dark things may happen to them, are much less likely to enter open, loving relationships. And they are also much less likely to have the self-esteem that is required to be monogamous and loving. And in consequence, they are much less likely to create families. So I think the Church is exacerbating the very problem that it seeks to erase.



I am enormously heartened by the news that you shared with me about the Church's disengagement from this issue in Maryland.

*Prince:* And by Harry Reid's engagement in "Don't Ask, Don't Tell". He did that as a thinking, believing Mormon; clearly not acting on behalf of the institutional church, but clearly not abandoning his Mormon identity at the same time.

*Solomon:* Yes, absolutely. He was heroic, and he is a hero to me.

I think these signs are promising. I'd love to see the process accelerate. I don't know the inner workings of the Church well enough to say how that acceleration could be achieved, but I do think that if the Church can see its way to greater tolerance, Church members will have greater exposure to gay people, and the lives of those gay people will be better.

Having read Martha Beck's book,<sup>3</sup> having heard the story that you shared with me earlier, I feel like this Mormon thing of gay people who get married to members of the opposite sex and really try their best to make it work, and then the marriage falls apart and everyone is devastated—that is not a very happy or positive or constructive story.

*Prince:* No, and I have seen many of those. I know two of them that wound up in death by suicide. Who wins?

*Solomon:* One has to weigh all of one's values always in relative terms. On the upside, you get people who are not acting on their homosexual attraction, who are avoiding the sin of practicing homosexuality. On the downside, you have destroyed marriages, traumatized children, and dead people who have taken their own lives.

My own moral calculus—and I am not a devout Mormon—is that there is no comparison. The tragedies that are being brought about vastly outweigh the benefits that are being achieved.

*Prince:* Even though we can claim that there have been incremental improvements—and there have been—we have a long, long way to go. One of the most telling parts of Helen's documentary was when a Church authority acknowledged on camera that the Church practices a double standard for unmarried heterosexuals and gay people. I'm paraphrasing, but the sentiment was some-

thing like, “We don’t offer hope to gay people. If you are heterosexual and single, maybe tomorrow or maybe next year you will fall in love, and you will be able to get married. There’s no similar hope or promise for homosexual singles.” I wish that had not been cut from the televised version of the documentary. That is something that we have to wrestle with. There is no easy resolution to it. It’s a much bigger theological problem for Mormons than, say, for Catholics, who have a doctrine of consecrated celibacy. Celibacy is unthinkable as an ideal in Mormonism, so what we offer to gay people is inevitably a second-class status.

It is wonderful that I have friends in the Church who are openly gay, who feel that they are now thriving spiritually. But, if they choose not to remain celibate, it is a game changer.

*Solomon:* It comes back to my previous point, which I know is contentious to people who are deeply committed to dogma. At the end of the day, will God be interested primarily in whether I have been kind and helped others, or in whether I was baptized and how? If really good people who are deeply committed and who are thriving spiritually have to beat down the nature with which they seem to have been born and cut themselves off from the full realization of love, how can that be pleasing to God?

It seems particularly ironic that a church that at one stage, a long time ago, fought to redefine marriage should now be so opposed to these attempts to redefine marriage. As I said, my own view is that the campaign against polygamy, around which a lot of anti-Mormon sentiment was organized, seems horrific to me. What was the basis for everyone else getting up on their high horse about it?

Penalizing homosexuals does not save any innocent victims. The idea that God and the Church accept these people while they are celibate; and then if they go off and do something with someone else and both derive joy from it without any apparent harm to anyone else, the Church excommunicates them—that, to me, is bizarre.

I understand why there would be prohibitions on straying from monogamy because of the harm that it does not only to the person who is betrayed, but also to the person who is betraying. “Betray” is a sort of shorthand for what happens. If you are mar-

ried and you go off and have an affair with someone, if you are a husband who does that, it may potentially hurt your wife enormously. But it seems to me likely also to compromise your marriage. That seems to me to be a harm.

*Prince:* And certainly the kids are injured.

*Solomon:* Yes. I think that's different from my life with John. I come back in the end, always, to the autobiographical. I just look at my own life, which is full of error as all life is. I have done plenty of things that I am not proud of. But that central fact of the life that John and I have with George, Blaine, Oliver, and Lucy, and the extended family of parents: I just don't find that there is any perspective from which it feels to me like a crime against God.

*Prince:* And where has it allowed you to go that you weren't?

*Solomon:* Right. As I said, deeper into a relationship with the idea of God, and deeper into the territory of joy—and not of selfish joy. There is also somehow the idea that this gay thing is all just about indulgence in carnal pleasure. When I was twenty and felt that nobody could know I was gay, I was having sex with strangers in public parks. I don't think it was evil exactly, but it wasn't so great either. There was nobody particularly benefitting from it, except, I suppose, to the extent that it gave some pleasure to me and perhaps whomever I was with.

But I don't feel as though the relationship that I have with John or with the family is one in which I am wanton. I feel as though it is one in which I am, or try to be, enormously responsible. It comes with a great debt of care and caretaking and support. There is a line that I always loved from Lucretius. He said, "The sublime is the art of exchanging easier for more difficult pleasures." The presumption of that formulation is that the more difficult pleasures are actually better than the easier pleasures. That is why one makes the exchange. Being in a marriage and having children is the greatest pleasure, but it is certainly not the easiest pleasure. It is not like eating ice cream. It takes a lot of effort and work, and I feel like that is where, to me, the Mormon Church is missing the point. Though I don't expect that that epigram from Lucretius would be the basis of church policy, I think what the Church should ideally do, and does appear to do in the context of

straight relationships, is to support people in crossing from the easier pleasure of momentary carnal satisfaction, into the more difficult pleasure of love and family and relationship.

So when you ask about the future, I feel it would be presumptuous of me to say, “Well, they should pass this rule, and they should do this and that.” I am not a Mormon, and I am not as profoundly informed as I would wish to be, and I don’t think the Church wants to hear my instructions. But I hope the Church will examine what is good and what is ill, and what good could be achieved by getting the suicidal, self-destructive, possibly carnal, or celibate to move toward this experience of love. I don’t believe that there is anyone of faith whose faith would not be strengthened by those experiences of family. And the strengthening of faith, I think, is the ultimate goal of organized religion altogether.

### Notes

1. Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* (Scribner and Sons, 2001).
2. Helen Whitney, *The Mormons* (PBS, 2007).
3. Martha Beck, *Leaving the Saints: How I Lost the Mormons and Found My Faith* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005).

# The Revelations & Opinions of the Rev. Clive Japhta, D.D.

as extracted from a series of emails James Goldberg  
discovered in his junk folder

*James Goldberg*

I am—without question—an American. If I’ve ever doubted that, it was clear the moment I walked into the humidity and human warmth of the Atlanta airport after a two-year church mission in the former East Germany: though I’d loved and grown familiar with the land in which I’d served, I realized in Atlanta how much American manners and ways of being felt to me like home. And yet, since childhood, I haven’t known quite how to think about my own country. In elementary school, we’d talk to the flag, tell it about the stirring foundational values of our nation: liberty, justice, and equality protected through a holy national unity. But the flag didn’t have much of an answer for the 1990s Hindi films I’d watch with my mother’s cousins in California. In those films, America was a land of materialism, disintegrating families, and glorified vice. Was America—to use language I learned in church—a “city on a hill,” an example to the big wide world my extended family came from, or was it “Babylon,” worldwide marketer of wickedness, where wrong was called right and right called wrong?

As I’ve grown older, the evidence for both conclusions has mounted with no resolution anywhere in sight. I continue to be inspired and disgusted by the ideas my nation represents, ideas that—in the blessed absence of an ethnic core—must inevitably become the definition and center of the nation itself.

And so I’ve watched with more interest than insight as my own

questions about the nature of this idea called America have spread across the world, as they've become more pressing in every corner of the earth with each new stride in mass media and economic globalization. I've hoped that perhaps someday someone somewhere will explain to me in terms I can understand how the two faces of America relate to one another, although until I stumbled across the writings of the Reverend Clive Japhta, I never imagined anyone would tell me they were one.

My encounter with Japhta's thought began like this: I was missing an important email an employer swore he'd sent. As I was completely unable to locate it in my inbox, I embarked on a desperate search through my spam folder. For the first time in years, I read through the offers of cheap Vicodin and Viagra ("with anonymous delivery!"), of instant credit and real Swiss watches, of untold "wealth generation" online, and "sexy secrets to hot women exposed!" I figured that surely in the midst of all this confusion, the lost email would easily stand out, but the only subject line which struck me as out of place was "The Rev. Clive Japhta answers the Biggest Theological Question Known to Man." I paused. I was on a deadline, and I needed that email, but for some reason I still clicked to read more. . . .

Mahatma Gandhi once said that every religion is true, but each is truest in its own time and place. I must confess that some nights, I find myself searching my junk folder for messages from Clive Japhta, wondering if we've really reached the time and place for his unique theology. . . .

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### **The Rev. Clive Japhta Answers the Biggest Theological Question Known to Man**

Maybe you will be hit by a truck as it hurtles down the freeway. Maybe you will be knifed in some robbery or killed by stray gunfire—a victim of pure accident. Maybe you will languish and die of AIDS or tuberculosis or some diarrheal disease. It doesn't matter. No matter how you die, you will go into the afterlife with the same question: WHO WAS RIGHT? That's the Biggest Theological Question known to man. Was it the Portuguese with their golden crosses? Or the Dutch, whose sacred objects were the Bible and

the gun? Was it the British, who will welcome you into the back seats of a grand eternal cricket game? Or the Indians, and you'll be reborn in Durban under the protection of some smiling blue god? Or was it perhaps the Xhosa, so that you dwell forever near the place where your umbilical cord is buried and visit your descendants in visions and dreams?

No, I say. No to the Christians, to the Muslims, to the Hindus and the Voodoos and the Jews. The things they believe are all fantasy. When you die, you'll find out for sure, but listen for now to me—the Americans are right. Theirs is the only accurate religion.

Like when Jesus healed the blind man by spitting on the sand, this message I write should be clay on your eyes to make you see. You blind men and women! Look around the world, find out what kind of heaven is having its foundation laid in this generation! The Americans have discovered the secrets of faith and of the soul, and are using them to build a new heaven and a new earth. I know this because after years of dismissing them, I was moved at last to read the novels that are their scriptures, the ones they study in the temples they call universities. After years of standing aloof, I had a change of heart and began to partake each night of the cinematic sacraments that come from their holy city of Hollywood. And in that search, I have understood.

In American stories, sex is not simply lust, as I had always assumed. It is identity, reason for existence, means of self-discovery: in other words, sexual energy is the soul. If you don't have time to study these doctrines yourself, I offer you this proof: why else would the Americans invent the internet? You think it was only so I could write you this email? No, the Americans have begun to gather all the soul-energies of the world and wrap them into central points of concentration. The project of their pornographic prophets is to make celebrities into goddesses and models into angels. That's the purpose behind the great awakening we all feel spreading across the earth. A new religion is rising, a new system of values is treading the old under its feet. When their angels come for the harvest, will your soul be among those they gather? Or will you be left behind?

### **The Rev. Clive Japhta Speaks of Material Wealth**

Faith. That's the power. And does it matter if that power is



generated from devotion to this so-called god or that one, to ancestors or oceans or the sky? As an engine is only a means to create speed, so a god is a means to create faith. The religious eat faith instead of bread: it has the delicate flavor of manna to them. The religious drink faith instead of water, and it is sweet nectar on their tongues.

This is why, once, a long time ago, the religious rightly looked with anger at material things. They said: if you're going to choose between what you can see, what's right in front of you, and what faith allows you to imagine, well then always choose faith. The visible and the spiritual must always be enemies.

Oh, but the Americans learned to see like no one else could see! They made wealth invisible, abstract, a matter of faith, so that money in America is an engine just like any god. The dollar, as you know, has no value of its own like salt or cattle or gold. The dollar is an icon for a power that dwells beneath the surface of the visible world. And, just as the Hindu can see one universal godliness manifest beneath the surface of their hundred million gods, so the American can see every building, car, journey, every man, woman, and child, converted in a moment of decision into the underlying power of an invisible system of wealth. Americans believe in this invisible world, and the faith gives them power to level mountains, build cities on the sea, raise up towers that tear holes in the heavens for the world to see.

The American faith in invisible money is so powerful they don't even need the crutch of an icon or an idol to awaken their belief. They can believe in money, and move great sums of it, without so much as seeing a physical dollar. They can spend wealth they've imagined out of their homes or their futures: wealth they do not even need to have, wealth that need not even exist! America is so religious they have created a society in which it is impossible to live without faith. In which simple acts—washing one's clothes, procuring a meal, visiting one's sister or brother—invoke countless invisible forces, each of which (as the Americans must believe) has an underlying financial essence.

And so powerful is faith, so self-evident its endless benefits, that American missionaries have spread their faith-system into almost every corner of the world. And the day is close at hand when

every tongue and nation on earth will swear by the immaterial wealth so central to American faith.

### **Rev. Dr. Japhta Explains the Science of Creation as Seen Through History**

In 2004, I had a profound near-death experience when pulled below the waters of the Indian Ocean by a fierce and unexpected undertow. As the force of the water pressed the air from my lungs, the life I had led and considered righteous flashed before my eyes. “Oh God have mercy on me!” I cried. The mercy came as I never expected: after I blacked out, powerful, striking images filled my mind. Things began to be revealed to me: unexpected truths about the nature of the universe and of the world in which we live.

It was there, unconscious and perhaps medically dead under the churning waters, that I learned for the first time the falsehood of the so-called “Big Bang Theory.” In the beginning, there was no concentration of energy: only an absolute entropy, or universal sameness. We all existed, but there were no differences between us, and the tedium was oppressive. First we made a God by common consent to concentrate something somewhere, and then God made a world, the purpose of which was to reverse spiritual entropy by increasing difference and concentrating power.

This is the reason for history: that in every dispensation, a different inequality may be developed toward a climax. In one age, we reverse entropy by dividing black from white, in another, we increase the distance between rich and poor, in yet another we focus most on the differentiation between educated and ignorant. And yet, each past dispensation has failed. In the Bible, the children of Israel rejected the proto-American sexual practices of the sons of Eli, rejected the great concentration of wealth offered to them through Rehoboam, Solomon’s son. And so it is also in our so-called secular history: just when a tide of concentration rises high, a hidden undercurrent of entropy cuts away the privilege so carefully concentrated from the many spirits to the few. The peoples of the world celebrate when they should mourn because they have forgotten the reasons for the earth’s creation.

But it will not be forever so! The last days, in which we now live, will culminate when new global systems make it possible for

all the power in the world to be drawn into a few individuals, charging them like grand cosmic batteries. In that day, entropy will be defeated, history fully realized.

Dead below the waters, I saw the awesome glow of Big Bangs yet to come, Big Bangs of creation that will radiate out of the hyper-charged souls of the victorious. When I awoke, alone on a beach some fifty miles from where I had first gone for a swim, I realized that the past life that had flashed before my eyes was irrelevant. The key to the universe is in the future, not the past. This truth echoed again inside me with a force that shook my bones when I began, exactly one year later, to study America's religion.

### **Why Adam Killed God and America Builds Parking Lots According to the Rev. Dr. Japhta**

There is nothing God is so afraid of, you will learn from the Americans' books and films, as religious extremists. In the beginning, God created a tree of knowledge of good and evil in his Garden of Eden, but then he was afraid: if the man and woman learn about good and evil, they may become zealots. Better that mankind should be left without speaking of good and evil than the beauty of the Garden be marred by terrorists. But the man and woman ate! The woman covered herself, as free women should not do, and the man also covered himself. God said: this is not good. God said: get out of this Garden! I curse the earth that it might choke you with thistles and thorns! And God wished that the earth would bury Adam alive so that God could forget forever the mankind he'd been commissioned to create.

So Adam tilled the earth with his bare hands until there was dirt always underneath his fingernails, until his skin was covered by dirt mixed with blood that came from pricking thorns. His beard was caked thick with dirt and his hair was matted with dirt and his tears came out muddy from the dirt that collected around the edges of his eyes. So Adam cursed the earth and cursed God and wished that he could die. But God saw Adam in the dirt and felt sorry for him. God decided to visit Adam in disguise, to tell him that if he would forget about the difference between good and evil then God, too, would forget and all would be saved.

So God visited the earth, disguised as a shepherd. God found Adam and said: let's be friends. But Adam recognized God and

his heart turned cold with hate inside of him, and his tongue turned sly like a snake's. Adam said: let's make a sacrifice to my God to seal our friendship. So God was happy and said: what shall we sacrifice? and offered Adam one of his sheep. But Adam led the sheep into a thicket of thistles and thorns. Oh no! said God, how shall we free our sacrifice from these thorns? But behind his back, Adam was already raising the knife.

After Adam killed God, he called all his children together. He said: as the earth tried to choke me, you should choke the earth! Bury it, grind it under your feet: don't be stewards and caretakers, but masters over it! But Adam hadn't seen that when God had been killed, some of His blood had trickled down into the earth. And Adam didn't know the anger of that blood, or how desperately the earth would fight against his children: drowning them, burning them, shaking down their homes.

And so it has been for millennia: a war between the descendants of Adam and the blood of God in the earth. But the Americans are not afraid of God. In their hearts, the Americans remember the ancient words of Adam and they fight the earth as none have before them. As God tried to bury Adam in the dirt, the Americans lock the earth that received God's blood under endless expanses of pavement. As immigrants to a wild and untamed country, Americans know how to overcome the earth.

### **The Rev. Dr. Japhta Elucidates the Difference Between Hedonism and the Pursuit**

Among my former friends and colleagues, there is tendency to watch American culture from a distance—a distance which shrinks around them like the beach against the rising tide—and to dismiss it simply as a recent incarnation of the old school of hedonism. What these men do not understand, and what perhaps even some of the followers of the American faith in our country do not sufficiently understand—is the difference between simple hedonism and the Pursuit.

Hedonism is centered on the actual experience of pleasure. A hedonist who encounters a source of pleasure will focus all his energies on it: he will drink sweet wine with abandon until he gets drunk; if he tastes a rich food, nothing else will exist to him in this world until the meal is finished. The hedonist's life-course, then,

is haphazard: he is always running about in different directions, only to stop at each discovered pleasure from which he fails to move at all.

The Pursuit is different. Americans place fun, happiness, and pleasure all before their eyes like a carrot before a mule, following the pleasure not for its own sake but for the sake of progress. If an American tastes sweet wine, he imagines wine that is still better. If an American sees a striking woman, his heart longs for a woman who is more striking still. Where hedonism brings chaos, the Pursuit brings ambition and economic growth.

In the old days, a man judged his life through harmonies: by his ability to maintain static and stable relationships with family, community, god, and friends. Americans, blessed with a vast land and good roads to walk, learned never to accept the static. The Pursuit means that the American can always find new family, new community, new gods, and new friends. The Pursuit allows the American to find meaning neither in pleasure nor in relationships so much as in the constant forward movement. The hedonist and the traditionalist will finally be left to choke on the dust that rises in the wake of the American Pursuit.

### **Rev. Dr. Japhta's Five Reasons Why Jesus Was the Antichrist**

Every day, I am receiving forwarded emails saying this or that person or president is maybe the Antichrist. Yesterday, I received a long email from one reverend who said that the Antichrist is no person at all, but America itself. You fools! Why do you look for an Antichrist who has already come? Examine the signs that are given to you in your own scriptures:

1) Jesus attacked the holiest part of the Temple, where the people communed with one another through the medium of sacred finance.

2) Jesus ruined crucifixion as an instrument of social order, crippling the Roman Empire after its conversion to Christianity and directly causing the subsequent Dark Ages.

3) Jesus's teachings speed up entropy, the cold hand that seeks to extinguish the universe. If we return to bland equality, we will have made no progress and the earth will have existed for no reason.

4) Jesus set up a shadow kingdom meant to conspire against

and suppress the Truth. He wanted his apostles to rule the world, and if they had succeeded, the culture of today would never have emerged to lay the foundations of heaven, as I have previously explained.

5) Jesus died, went to heaven, and came back after three days: a clear rejection of the afterlife and a sign of sinister obsession with his past. He is likewise obsessed with our pasts: the doctrines of repentance and atonement seek to purify the past, making the past into an idol. (The past is, in fact, the Beast itself. If you have ears to hear or eyes to see, try to understand that.) Since the purpose of the universe is in the future, Jesus's attempts to defeat time, merging future and past into one, are a clear challenge to the grand purpose of History, as I have explained. All these proofs and many others show plainly that Jesus was the Antichrist!

And yet—we don't need to fear. Though a billion people, for many years including myself, swear faith in his name, what has this Antichrist accomplished? The altars of sacrifice in the temple have been broken these two thousand years, but still we exchange money in the banks. Crucifixion is no more, but in the past century alone, we've invented and used far worse. The cold hand of entropy stretches forth again and again and always we build up inequality to create charge again in its aftermath. The Antichrist can challenge the plan of the world, but he cannot overcome it.

### **Where Shall the Faithful Gather? Asks the Rev. Dr. Japhta**

On a beach fifty miles away from where I'd been pulled below the dark waters of the Indian Ocean by a treacherous undertow, I awoke from a profound near-death experience into a vision, the memory of which still brings sweet tears of gratitude to my eyes. Hovering majestically perhaps ten meters off the ground, I saw a building unlike any other known to man. The highest floors were made of gold, and shined enough to light the world up like noon though in fact it was dusk. The floors below were silver, as if floors of the moon had been crafted below floors of the sun. Below the silver floors were floors of bronze, with rooms as numerous as the stars in the heavens. Last came an iron floor, where security guards monitored the building's airy entrance.

I called to the guards to ask them where I was, and how I had come to this place. They told me that it didn't matter: the building

was so vast it could be reached from almost anywhere. I then asked them: how can I ascend into this great building? How can I join the joyous, laughing multitudes there? One of the guards told me to wash my eyes with the sand beneath me: as I did, I could see mighty pillars and swirling stairwells made of thick, dark liquid. My heart despaired then: the sight of that building so close, and yet so unattainable for a mortal made me wish to throw my body back into the sea behind me, to let myself be swallowed up again and forever. But as I fixed my eyes on the floors of gold, as I filled my mind with images of the fine clothes and bodies of the men and women there, I gained faith and I closed my eyes and I swear to you that I *walked on crude oil* to get into that building. Once I arrived, I knew I never wanted to leave there.

Where should the faith-filled gather in the last days? You don't have to go to Hollywood or Las Vegas or any of the holy cities of America. You don't have to own your own mansion or drive a big yacht or own the majority shares in a Fortune 500 company. Just look for and stay close to the people, wherever they may live, in whom you can glimpse the glory of the building I saw.



## REVIEWS

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### Worth the Wait

*Reviewed by Jonathan A. Stapley*

Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds. *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, in THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman, general eds. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008. xlvii + 506 pp. Cloth: \$49.95. ISBN: 978–1570088490.

Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds. *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, in THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman, general eds. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011. xl + 558 pp. Cloth: \$54.95. ISBN: 978–1-60908-737-1.

I am a relative newcomer to the academic side of Mormon history. I never traded photocopies of photocopies of historical documents. I only know of the most scandalous shenanigans in the field through my reading of secondary treatments such as Turley's *Victims*<sup>1</sup> and my own limited sleuthing of such primary sources as issues of the *Seventh East Press* and federal court records. I did start researching in the old LDS Church Archives on the first floor of the Church Office Building in 2006 and I have sometimes been denied access to materials requested, but I personally only know a field of increasing access, openness, and—as evidenced by the Joseph Smith Papers Project—institutional support.

Documents are the foundation of Mormon history. Sometimes the content of a historical document is so important or the demand is sufficient to warrant the distribution of simple or uncritical typescripts. I cannot imagine anyone arguing that the digital publication of Wilford Woodruff's diaries has not been tremendously beneficial to the field. Even documents with such sketchy provenance as the typescripts of William Clayton's and William Law's Nauvoo diaries, published by George D. Smith and Lyndon Cook, respectively, have merited the attention of every serious scholar who treats the period.<sup>2</sup> However, there has also been a chronic uncritical approach to documents generally, and

Mormon history publications are frequently saturated in references to typescripts of documents where a more careful analysis of the original document yields contradictory (or at least more complicated) information. I understand that such analyses are not always possible, but most of the time they are. The single greatest contribution of the Joseph Smith Papers Project will not be a particular volume published, but will be instead the unparalleled (though of course still imperfect) example of professional precision with which its editors analyze their material. If there is a golden age in Mormon history today, its root is (or must be) a new, robust source criticism, and the project is to be commended for its lead in that area.

While I have made use of and commented upon each volume in the Joseph Smith Papers Project as it has been released,<sup>3</sup> in this review I focus upon aspects of the first two *Journals* volumes. Joseph Smith's journals are key documents to any approach to early Mormonism. Their textual and publication history alone is worth examination. They were first popularized by the apostle-historians of early Utah (and their scribal compatriots) as edited, redacted, and rewritten for the "History of Joseph Smith." Michael Marquart published an early transcript of the 1832–1839 journals<sup>4</sup> and Scott Faulring used microfilm images to produce his useful one-volume edition of all of Joseph Smith's journals besides "The Book of the Law of the Lord."<sup>5</sup> Dean Jessee's incipient *Papers of Joseph Smith*, Volume 2, included Joseph Smith's journals through 1842.<sup>6</sup> In 2002, the LDS Church History Department published digital images of the manuscripts of his journals, as well as other important collections.<sup>7</sup> To date, the Joseph Smith Papers Project has published two volumes of Smith's journals: *Volume 1: 1832–1839* (J1) and *Volume 2: 1841–1843* (J2). Even with the documents readily accessible to scholars, and transcripts available, the volumes themselves are nevertheless profoundly significant.

The documents are presented in a manner that illustrates the critical approach of the editors as well as the desire to contextualize both them and their content. Moreover, the volumes are presented in a manner to maximize the ease of access to the material for those not intimately familiar with early Mormon history. The documents have more to reveal than the words inscribed on

them, though the project's high standard of document transcription has resulted in significant improvements over previously available material. The annotation is extremely helpful and the foreword and back matter integrate the content of the volume for the expert and uninitiated alike.

The project's documents-focused approach has, for example, yielded new insights into the early Mormon impulse to create cosmic records that span heaven and earth. "The Book of the Law of the Lord," excerpts of which are included in *Journals 2*, is a prominent example of this. This volume is particularly interesting as it served as a sort of cosmic record in explicit recapitulation of the Dueteronomists' Book of the Law of God. It fulfilled the commandment to keep a record for heaven and earth. Its "sacred pages" (J2, 117) comprised a handful of revelations and journal entries kept by recorder-scribes (one of whom was Eliza R. Snow) punctuated with grand testaments to faithful people close to the prophet. It was also the ur-ledger for consecration and tithing.<sup>8</sup> "The Book of the Law of the Lord," like a few documents included in virtually every one of the project's volumes, has long been in the custody of the First Presidency.<sup>9</sup> That the First Presidency has released important materials to the project is a hopeful signal of openness and a confidence that accurate analysis of such items strengthens the Church.

One of the lasting contributions of the project generally will be its highly meticulous transcription process. The following are several examples of such improvements in *Journals 1* over previously published editions:

- The entry for November 29, 1832, initially concluded with the personal and urgent words "the Lord spare me[.]" Smith then wrote "the" over "me" and added "life of the servant[.]" There are several similar revisions new to this edition that restore some of the original texture of the manuscript document.
- In comparing the first sentence of the final paragrah of November 8, 1835, *Journals 1* restores the original text, regarding "iniquities" of William Phelps, as opposed to the later Phelps-redacted "errors," a significant shift in tone.

- Six instances of adhesive wafer residue in the second Ohio journal indicate that material was copied into the journal from a loose manuscript temporarily fastened to the document. This seems to include the November 9, 1835, account of Smith's first vision of deity.
- Jessee's previous volume artificially broke up organic multi-date journal entries under editorial datelines for single dates. This can give the impression that things were written day by day.
- Previously, the handwriting from December 23, 1835 (J1, 88), to January 16, 1836 (J1, 122), had been identified as that of Frederick G. Williams. Editors have identified the text after December 26 as being in the handwriting of Warren Parrish.

In the case of Willard Richards's scribal materials available in J2, the improvement is particularly evident. There are sometimes examples of dramatic divergences from Faulring's edition, but even subtle improvements can be very important. For example, the March 2, 1842, entry documents a medical malpractice suit before the Mayoral Court. In one particular argument, *Journals 2* editors correctly render the name of a person used as a legal example as "Rush," where Faulring transcribed "Brink," the name of the defendant in the case. This correction markedly improves the coherence of the argument (281). In that same trial, *Journals 2* editors transcribe the judge's requirement for "virodirce [voire dire?]" instead of Faulring's "vis a vis" (282).

The Joseph Smith Papers Project volumes are closer to a diplomatic transcription than most published editions. The results of this presentation approach are readily observed in Richards's January 5, 1843, report of Judge Pope's extradition ruling, which is particularly abbreviated. Judge Pope published his ruling, and may have referred to these notes (J2, Appendix I, 394). Faulring reproduced large swaths of the published ruling in his transcript of the entry, more than tripling the text in some sections, and organized the material into paragraphs. *Journals 2*, by contrast, reproduces only Richards's entry (note that here again, there are important divergences from Faulring's transcript). While appear-

ing more broken or disjointed, and perhaps more difficult to follow, the new volume allows readers to approach the original text instead of an interpretation of it.

The scope of annotation is bound to be a locus of disagreement among reasonable readers. In my opinion, frequently the editors' annotation is exemplary. For example, the 1839 diary is sparse, but the annotation brings tremendous insight and cohesion to the narrative. Regarding *Journals 2*, the amount of extant records documenting events in Nauvoo is orders of magnitude over those sources for the earliest years of the Church, and the editors consistently and meticulously explicate the legal and financial context for the often sparse entries. They have ferreted out the most obscure references to people and places. In contrast, the editors are frequently not generous when presenting items of liturgical, theological, or religious significance.<sup>10</sup> In both volumes, biblical allusions are generally but not always indicated. And while I understand the desire to focus on primary documents for context, sometimes the events are so complicated or heavy that readers not familiar with the secondary literature will simply miss enormous chunks of Smith's life just under the surface of the entries. Only rarely do the annotations seem out of place.

A particularly important and intriguing aspect of the editors' annotation of the second volume is the frequent reference to, and summation or reproduction of, several items long unavailable to researchers. The William Clayton journal is often quoted and cited and is particularly important to documenting Smith's life (see especially the April 1–4, 1843, entries excerpted in J2, Appendix II). The Nauvoo Quorum of the Twelve minutes are also a frequent referent, as well as the Nauvoo High Council minutes. As a researcher, I hope that the incorporation of these sources into published volumes, as with the material from the First Presidency's holdings, is indicative of future accessibility.

Over twenty years ago Dean Jessee published the second volume of the *Papers of Joseph Smith*—Smith's journals up through 1842. The final year and a half was to be next. With the publication of the Joseph Smith Papers Project's first two *Journals* volumes we have the journals through the first four months of 1843; we have a few more years to wait for the last fifteen months. Yet we have them and it has been worth the wait. In two decades we have

seen the complete reconceptualization of the Joseph Smith Papers Project and a level of professionalized precision that flirts with the incredible. The volumes include generous reference materials documenting civil and religious leadership, biographical details, and local cartography. *Journals 1* and *Journals 2* are also important documents themselves; a critical evaluation of them suggests that their creation came during a time quite different from when editors prepared previous transcripts. They are also a call to all researchers and authors in Mormon history to hone their craft in the creation of a more analytically robust and accurate future.

### Notes

1. Richard E. Turley Jr., *Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

2. The lack of acknowledgement of their problematic nature is a significant failure of these publications. Publications offering less than critical approaches to the documents should certainly disclose it as well as consciously grapple with what that means for readers and researchers.

3. My reviews are available online at *By Common Consent* (<http://bycommonconsent.com/joseph-smith-papers-project-volume-reviews/>).

4. Michael H. Marquardt, *Joseph Smith's 1832–34 Diary* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1979); *Joseph Smith's 1835–36 Diary* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1979); *Joseph Smith's 1838–39 Diaries* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1982).

5. Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

6. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith, Volume 2: Journals, 1832–1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

7. Richard E. Turley, ed., *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2 vols., DVD (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, [2002], Vol. 1, Disk #20).

8. Earlier, in 1834, both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery pestered John Whitmer to create the “Book of Remembrance” another reification of ancient chronicle. That same year, Cowdery began a narrative history apparently on behalf of the Presidency that was also to perhaps serve as such a record (H1, 26–28).

9. The most complete discussion of the “First Presidency’s vault” to date, including some of the spurious claims associated with it, is Turley, *Victims*, index: “First Presidency—vault.” See also JSP, J2, 5 note 8; JSP,

R1, 5 note 6; Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836* (Provo: BYU Studies/Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1994), xiii.

10. E.g., a quick review of the religious significance of perihelia would have been helpful to many readers of J2, 314–17. It is also unfortunate that only baptism for the dead is emphasized though it was one of three baptismal rituals performed in the temple font.

## Odysseus in the Underworld

Samuel Morris Brown. *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. xii + 392 pp., notes, index. ISBN 978–0–19–979357–0.

*Reviewed by Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp*

In a remarkably deft work of scholarship, Samuel Morris Brown offers a rich and compelling view of early Mormonism's sacramental and theological emergence up to the death of Joseph Smith Jr. This book makes many outstanding contributions to discussions of this foundational period, interventions that extend well beyond the stated framing device of conquering death.

The first half of the book sticks to this theme, reading the rise of Mormon beliefs and practices through the lens of the antebellum "death culture." Brown surveys the ways in which the ubiquitous fact of death and the desire to mitigate its psychic effects shaped all aspects of American life. This was particularly true in frontier communities, where enormous death tolls touched everyone. In this context, Brown explains worries surrounding the material degeneration of the corpse, grave relics, treasure seeking, a preoccupation with the interment of ancient peoples in the earth, and the embrace of seerhood as means by which Joseph Smith Jr. and his followers wrestled with the reality of death and sought to overcome it. The second half explores the various sacramental and theological elements of the community Smith created before his death in 1844 as responses to the desire to conquer death. In viewing Mormon sacramental theology through the lens of death, Brown leads the reader through many of the central and most



highly charged aspects of early Mormonism, including temple rites and their relationship to Masonry, genealogy, polygamy, and the plurality of gods.

One of Brown's many salutary contributions is to situate early Mormons within a broader framework of religious thought and practice. Those who came to embrace Smith's teachings, like other antebellum Americans, faced fundamental questions of the meaning and place of death and suffering. Their concerns may not have been unique, but increasingly their answers were. Living in a culture literally saturated with separation and death, the Smith family endured an endless string of losses of siblings, children, and friends, including the death in 1823 of Joseph's brother Alvin, and the first three infants born to Joseph and Emma. Those not taken by illness or accident were removed by migration, a displacement that often proved permanent. Rejecting some elements of the "death culture" of Protestantism, which focused attention on the importance of a "holy" and salvific entry into eternity, Smith sought to resolve the theological tensions he experienced. Brown is at his most compelling and ingenious as he explains the more unusual facets of Smith's biography, e.g., treasure seeking and claims of plates left by ancient peoples as attempts to mediate between the living and the dead. Early Mormons did not simply live on top of the earth, Brown suggests, they interacted constantly with its many historical and sedimentary layers, living simultaneously in a past and present constituted by a visceral connection to the dead. Overcoming that ultimate separation led them to think about bodies and their afterlife, to worry over the placement of burial grounds, and to see the very ground under their feet as a hallowed mingling of dirt and human remains.

These early chapters are a gold mine of novel thinking about antebellum culture. Brown provides insights that can usefully be applied to other religious traditions, and his reading of Mormonism is, in turn, enriched by his thorough grounding in a broader comparative framework that allows him to suggest the differences between Smith's theology and the Calvinism and Arminianism around him. Refusing to treat Mormonism as *sui generis*, Brown outlines the rich intellectual stew out of which Smith chose freely and eclectically to fashion a radically new understanding of hu-

man relationships to one another and to God. Smith embraced some elements of Calvinist communitarian covenantal theology, rejecting the individualism and anticlericalism of upstart Methodists and Baptists; but he also disputed the Calvinist notion of election, arguing instead for a universalism that would unite all believers in an endless “chain of belonging” (222). This, in short, was his response to the troubling fact of death: through the rites of the temple cultus, and through the sealing of individuals to one another, Mormons would transform human relationships into an eternal web of affiliation.

These were Smith’s distinctive intellectual contributions passed on to his followers: a rejection of Protestant theology, an otherworldliness, a “potent sacramentalism,” and a “simultaneously domestic and hierarchical model” (241) of church governance. Brown is at once both elegant and ambitious in his comparison of Smith to a “Heracles, a Beowulf, a Gilgamesh, an Odysseus,” who sought out the living and the dead in order to place them into family relationships that would link the heavens to the earth (12). The rites of the temple, which by the Nauvoo period came to include baptisms for the dead, eternal and plural marriage, and finally, a divine anthropology that asserted the potential for humans to become gods themselves, all resulted from Smith’s overwhelming desire to unite the ecclesial community in the bonds of eternity, a sacred lineage that would give the lie to the material evidence of the grave. Masonry provided some of the initial inspiration for Smith’s use of the temple, but in Brown’s reading the prophet translated the nascent truths of Masonic rites into a full-blown, coherent theology of salvation.

Brown’s most tenuous claims regard the rationale for polygamy, a doctrine practiced in secret in the 1830s, given theological grounding in the 1840s, and publicly announced by Brigham Young in the 1850s. In its development, marriage diverged gradually from a Protestant model. Smith drew on the rite of adoption as a means of uniting the notion of “sealing” as assured salvation to the concept of a bond between individuals (236); eventually salvation and sealing became inseparable notions in the Mormon worldview. So far, so good. But Brown may be on shakier ground when he links the notion of eternal marriage logically to plural marriage (since any subsequent marriage after the death of an

eternal spouse is, by definition, plural). Brown further suggests that this system demonstrates the ways that Smith was resolving some of the problems of Protestant theology, a tradition that drew on scriptures describing polygamous patriarchs while managing to argue that polygamy was sinful. Smith may well have seen this as paradoxical, but it is doubtful that many Protestants would have thought scriptural polygamy was a problem in need of solving (or, if it did need explanation, they found simpler justifications involving dispensationalism or arguing along with Paul for the new law of love in effect after Christ's resurrection).

In Brown's telling, plural marriage appears as the inevitable outcome of Smith's philosophy. Clearly, the Mormon prophet was relentlessly centripetal, attempting to draw all creatures, including God and humanity, into a sacred center. Yet it has to be said that Smith also risked tremendous alienation from his own followers by chasing this vision of a chain of belonging, and it is never entirely clear why he would risk the love of those he held closest to implement that grander scheme. Over time, he lost as many followers as he gained. From the perspective of the Utah Church, this argument makes great sense, since theirs was the branch that took the ecclesial community to its sacramental extreme. Brown argues that the final battle over Smith's physical remains can best be understood as a standoff between the sacerdotal (and potentially infinite) family he had worked so hard to construct, and the biological domesticated family that mirrored other antebellum understandings. I suspect that the Smith family, not to mention other aspirants to Smith's legacy, understood the theological stakes differently; Emma, too, was a member of the ecclesial family, one who had suffered mightily as her husband expanded his heavenly family. One has to wonder how she might have told this story.

That said, Brown's brilliant analysis provides plenty of fodder for continued speculation and debate. Did Smith himself construe his scattered insights in as coherent a way as later scholars would have it? Like Richard Bushman's and Terryl Givens's compelling renderings of Mormon theology, Brown's elegant exposition leaves one wondering whether Smith ever had as systematic a vision as this book attributes to him. It also cannot explain some

of the rhetorical gaps. Why, for instance, do some doctrinal elements (like the Heavenly Mother) remain a mystery—either for Smith or for Brown? What, exactly, did it mean theologically for early Mormons to consider Smith a “secondary savior”? (297). However one answers these remaining questions, Brown has set a marvelous new standard for work in this area, reframing our understanding of early Mormon ritual life in ways that bring the tradition into conversation with other religious movements of its time. This is surely compulsory reading for any student of U.S. religious life in this period.

## An Imperfect Brightness of Hope

*Boyd Petersen*

After admonishing his people to follow Christ and be baptized, Nephi said, “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Ne. 31:20). I see a paradoxical tension between the concepts of “enduring” and “having a perfect brightness of hope.” The word “endure” connotes little in the way of pleasure; its etymological root is “hard.” In French the word *dure*, which comes from the same Latin root, means “difficult,” “harsh,” “severe,” or “stern.” On the other hand, the words “perfect brightness of hope” connote light and optimism, warmth and peace. The two concepts don’t seem to go together.

Now Zina would be the first to tell you that having “a perfect brightness of hope” is not something I’m terribly good at. Depression does not just run in my family, it gallops. My mother stoically endured winter months with what we would now call Seasonal Affective Disorder. The Utah Valley temperature inversions that obscure the sun for weeks, sometimes months, on end left my mother sad, gloomy, and lethargic. Each year from December through April, I heard my mother repeat the words “I just *hate* winter,” her tone suggesting that the clouds were blocking the sun out of spite. My father, on the other hand, was perpetually dour. It was like living with Eeyore: “The sky has finally fallen. Always knew it would.” His depression was easily attributable to the fact that his own father was tragically killed in a lime kiln accident on his third birthday. The pain of that event was the cloud that hung over his family. His sister later committed suicide. But Dad, his

mother, and his other five siblings carried on, not with a “brightness of hope” but with a kind of hard-faced stoicism, a determined but gloomy grit. Of course, both of my parents grew up during the Great Depression. Don’t get me wrong: both my parents were kind, generous people, but “perfect brightness of hope” doesn’t describe my family of origin and, unfortunately, it doesn’t describe me. I’ve inherited Mom’s Seasonal Affective Disorder, and I learned Dad’s Eeyore all too well. Stoic I can do. Hope is much harder. When I read scripture passages that speak of “pressing forward” or “enduring to the end,” I automatically think of my parents, hunkered down and pushing forward, with an attitude of grim survival. To require endurance with “a brightness of hope” sounds tragically ironic. Like a clown at a funeral, it just doesn’t belong.

I see this same tragic irony in the LDS version of the fall of Adam and Eve. In stressing the fundamental truth of human existence that there must be “an opposition in all things,” the Book of Mormon states that only *after* the fall could Adam and Eve experience joy. In the garden, our first parents could have “no joy, for they knew no misery”; they could do “no good, for they knew no sin” (2 Ne. 2:11, 23). So ironically Adam and Eve can’t enjoy paradise until after they’ve been kicked out. Yet, Eve sums up the paradox in poignant but hopeful words: “Were it not for our transgression . . . we never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient” (Moses 5:11). It seems somehow cruel that Adam and Eve were evicted from paradise immediately *after* they gained the ability to enjoy it, but evidently it takes pain to understand joy and that’s something they could never have had in the garden.

I’m not sure we always appreciate the radical difference between our Mormon understanding of the fall and that of most contemporary Christians. For them, the fall of Adam and Eve was a disaster, the advent of all toil, sin, and suffering. Even for Milton, whose *Paradise Lost* posits a fortunate fall, it is only fortunate after God provides a savior. It was not part of an original plan, and it would have been much better if it had not happened: “Happier had it sufficed [Adam] to have known/Good by itself, and evil not at all” (11.88–89). For us Latter-day Saints, the fall was as much part of the original plan as was Christ’s atonement. They

were both intended from the foundations of time. They were Plan A rather than emergency-backup-Plan B. Both were essential for humanity to exist and for us to achieve our full potential.

And what potential! The Mormon view of the capacity for human development is so vast it's incomprehensible. But this infinite potential required Adam and Eve to leave the garden, to use their bodies to work, to create, to have children, to gain knowledge—in short, to live. Just as they had to know pain to understand joy, they had to lose their innocence in order to fully be. They could not become godlike and retain a childlike naiveté.

So earth life was intended from the start to be a place of trials, but also a place of joy. In the Book of Moses, Adam rejoices after the fall, stating, “because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God” (Moses 5:10). And Nephi states, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Ne. 2:25). For some of us, however, brain chemistry makes it easier to notice the pain than to notice the joy. The pain is inevitable; the joy needs to be sought after. The scriptures do tell us where to look for that joy. As Nephi says, it may be found in “love of God and of all men” and in “steadfastness in Christ.” I am struck by the word steadfastness. Steadfastness means having a fixed direction, a single purpose, and an unwavering resolution. But that also implies making a deliberate choice. We all have the choice to choose Christ or not, to choose joy or not.

Just as Adam and Eve were never meant to remain in the garden, they were never meant to remain in the lone and dreary world. They were not of this world, even though they had to learn from this world. But to return to their heavenly home required something impossible: to become wise but blameless, experienced but untainted.

Reconciling this paradox required the “glorious impossible,” as Madeleine L'Engle has called it, of Christ.<sup>1</sup> An angel describes Jesus's birth as “the condescension of God” (1 Ne. 11:16). The word condescension literally means “to descend with.” I have often wondered why Christ would have to become like us in order to save us. The answer seems to be for the same reason Adam and Eve had to leave the garden: the experience of human life is essential for god-



like understanding. Alma tells us that Christ endured “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” so that “his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12). Only a god could do the impossible: endure human experience and remain sinless. And only a god could effect a reconciliation that allows us the same possibility.

So our goal in this life, it seems to me, is to leave here with a different type of innocence than we had when we came into it. We arrived innocent of experience, but we must return *with* experience but innocent of sin. We only do that by taking advantage of Christ’s healing grace and by seeking out the experiences that will help us grow. Mortality is not just about testing; it is about gaining knowledge. Certainly there are types of human experience we should avoid (the scriptures and Church leaders are pretty explicit about these), but it also seems to me that it is just as important to seek the experiences that will make us grow. And it’s usually from these that we find joy. I am reminded of Joseph Smith’s admonition in an oft-quoted sermon that

the things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph seems to be just as concerned that the saints gain knowledge as he is that they avoid evil.

From my experience teaching primarily Mormon college students I have come to believe that we as a culture are often more concerned about not experiencing anything bad than we are about seeking out the good. Some want to wall themselves up in a room where nothing bad can get in, where they can maintain their child-like innocence. The problem with this is that nothing good can get in either. Mortality is a place for learning, for exploring, for growing, and you can’t do that walled up in a room. It’s as if we believe we could gain salvation while remaining in the Garden of Eden. We Mormons know that the Garden of Eden was safe, but it was never very interesting, and we could never progress there, never grow there. If our minds must “stretch as high as the utmost

heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss,” as Joseph said,<sup>3</sup> it seems to me we can’t get there by simply avoiding R-rated movies and wearing modest attire. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord reminds Joseph Smith that the trials of Liberty Jail “will give [him] experience, and shall be for [his] good.” But the Lord also called Joseph to “seek . . . out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). The two types of experience—the pain that happens without our pursuing it and the learning that can only happen when we do pursue it—are both important. And it’s primarily in the latter we find joy.

I believe one of the things that has made my life more joyful, more bright, and more hopeful than that of my parents has been the blessing I’ve had to pursue learning. I have been extremely fortunate to gain my living by reading good books, seeking learning, and studying. And I get to spend my time engaged in studying religion! A friend of mine said that if, as Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living,” then “the unexplored faith is not worth having.” I like this idea! And I’m blessed with the opportunity to spend much of my life exploring issues of faith.

But this would also be hollow if it weren’t the practice of faith, for the implementation of those principles in my own life. That is where I need the most work, but it’s also the main key to joy. I know that not long after I die, all that I have written and published, what I have said in the classroom, what I have accomplished, will be forgotten. But I know that if I have lived a Christ-like life, I will have, as Nephi said, eternal life. That gives me a “brightness of hope.” Due to my brain chemistry and upbringing it’s not perfect, but as imperfect as it is it makes my life lighter and more joyful as I endure the pains of mortality. The Gospel has been the place where I have found the most profound joy. The ordinances I’ve received, the ordinations I’ve participated in, the healing blessings I have received, my marriage to Zina, the sealing to my parents and sister, the birth and blessing of my children, even the deaths and funerals of my parents have all been made sweet by my knowledge of my Savior’s atonement and my Heavenly Parents’ love. It’s been these sublime moments and others that have given me the knowledge that Christ’s gospel is

true, that he loves us, that he died for us. So I close with Christ's words: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). With Christ, we can find joy.

### Notes

1. Madeleine L'Engle, *The Glorious Impossible* (New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1990), 5.
2. Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1961), 137.
3. Ibid.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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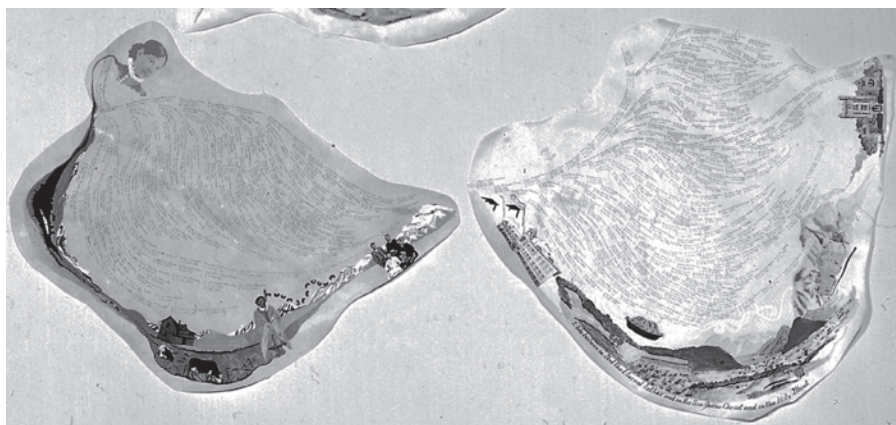
## ABOUT THE ART

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“Tanner Spiral” is an exploration of my great-grandfather’s (Henry S. Tanner) family. He decided to take his first polygamous wife ten years after the first Manifesto. He had already been the mission president of the California mission and had completed law school at the University of Michigan. There is much family lore surrounding why this decision was made and the consequences of it. After his five wives were publicly known, his law firm at the time closed and many financial and other trials began. This piece is my attempt to explore and document this family’s experience.

I decided to use the medium of vellum after deciding that paper was too fragile a surface to work as a metaphor for this family. Vellum is goat skin that is treated and scraped many times to form the flexible, but nearly indestructible, surface that for generations has been used to keep records and illuminate books. The use of vellum is also a pun on the name of Tanner.

In permanent ink I wrote all of the known living descendants of each wife. Laura, the first wife, fills up two skins, as she had many more descendants than the subsequent wives. Using gouache, the traditional medium used on vellum, I painted stories of



Valerie Atkisson  
Tanner Spiral (detail), gouache,  
ink on vellum,  
120"x 96"

their lives that have been passed down to me—including places lived, schools attended, careers the women had after Henry could not fully support them, and other oral and written traditions. Among the wives were a Utah State representative, a stenographer, an adoption facilitator, and a missionary—all them full-time mothers with effectively 1/5 or less of a husband.

Henry's middle skin contains a pictorial timeline of his life. He lost his mother and four siblings before he was fourteen when he ran away from home the same year his father took a wife in polygamy. He joined the army, and partook of the many vices available, only returning home after hearing the voice of his dead mother saying, "Henry, be a good boy." From there is depicted his rise in education, professional and ecclesiastical attainment.

The skins are placed in a spiral going out from Henry's middle skin. The spiral represents the effects of the decision to practice polygamy and the far-reaching consequences of it. The skins also represent the sacrifices the family made in all aspects of their lives to live this way. Henry and Laura believed that it was right to end polygamy in the Church, but that they were specially called to practice it.



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Tanner Spiral (detail), gouache,  
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