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“OUR RELIGION IS NOT HOSTILE TO REAL SCIENCE”: EVOLUTION, EUGENICS, AND RACE/RELIGION-MAKING IN MORMONISM’S FIRST CENTURY

Joseph R. Stuart

In 1890, Wilford Woodruff’s announcement of the Manifesto officially withdrew public sanction for new plural marriages, the result of a decades-long campaign by the U.S. government and its citizens to end the Mormons’ peculiar practice. In that year’s October general conference, only days after Woodruff’s public announcement of the Manifesto, he dejectedly informed his flock that the Church would face extinction if they did not accept their place in a pluralistic American society.1 Three years later, organizers of the

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1“Sixty-first Semiannual General Conference of the Church,” Monday, October 6, 1890, Salt Lake City, Utah. Reported in Deseret Evening News, October 11, 1890, 2. See also Sarah Barringer Gordon, The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Terryl L. Givens, The Viper on the Hearth:
1893 World Parliament of Religions rejected Mormons’ efforts to participate on the grounds that they were neither “wholly Christian” nor “totally heathen.” The Parliament’s leadership had not issued an invitation to the Utah-based church, although that did not deter the Mormon hierarchy from sending a representative, Brigham Henry (B. H.) Roberts, a General Authority in the third-ranked body, the First Council of the Seventy. The parliament, however, would not allow him to present his prepared remarks. Though he cried foul, the organizers barred him, along with Muslim representatives, from presenting their speeches at any of the meetings.

Mormonism took approximately fifteen years to determinedly turn away from plural marriage, but it took even longer for larger American society to erase the link between Latter-day Saints and hyper-sexualized non-whites, such as Asians, Native Americans, Muslims and peoples of African descent. Despite LDS leaders’ bitter disposition toward most Americans and Protestants at the turn of the twentieth century, they took steps to harmonize with American pluralism and to be recognized as an authentic religion rather than systemized heresy. The Utah-based church faced an


3Ibid., 59.

4As the Mitt Romney campaigns showed in the early twenty-first century, the association between Mormonism and polygamy was still strong, in spite of nearly a century in which Mormon converts generally claimed “white” Anglo-Saxon, Great Britain, or Scandinavian heritage. W. Paul Reeve, _Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15–20.

uphill battle. Anti-polygamy thought and rhetoric during the
nineteenth century had rendered Mormonism “fundamentally
irreconcilable” with generally accepted religious and racial
norms.6 Latter-day Saints had long been considered to be non-
white, based on their practice of plural marriage, their theocratic
government, and a host of other factors, despite their white
skin color and European heritage. As a result of these practices
and beliefs, confused outsiders labeled Mormons as unfit for
inclusion in either religious or racial hierarchies.7

In 1903, the Senate began a four-year inquiry into the
suitability of LDS apostle Reed Smoot to represent Utah as a
Senator. During the course of their investigations, a congressional
committee grilled various Mormon hierarchs about their beliefs
and practices, including their authorization of plural marriages
and temple rituals. As Kathleen Flake has written, this episode
altered the LDS Church’s rhetorical direction and re-centered
the Mormon memory of their persecution—blaming religious
groups rather than the federal government.8 The result of the

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6Margaret Denike, “The Racialization of White Man’s Polygamy,”
_Hypatia_ 25, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 854. Also see J. Spencer Fluhman, “An
‘American Mahomet’: Joseph Smith, Muhammad, and the Problem of
Prophets in Antebellum America,” _Journal of Mormon History_ 34, no. 3
(Summer 2008): 23–45.

See also Reeve, _Religion of a Different Color_, 1–13, 16, 171–87; Newell
G. Bringham, _Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black
People within Mormonism_ (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing,
1982), 152–59; Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, _The Color of Christ:
The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America_ (Chapel Hill: University
of North Carolina Press, 2012), 135–37; Fluhman, _A Peculiar People_,

8Kathleen Flake, _The Politics of American Religious Identity: The
Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle_ (Chapel Hill: University
of North Carolina Press, 2004), 109–37, has argued that the Smoot
hearings shifted the Mormon memory of the First Vision from
persecution by governments to persecution by religious movements.
committee’s investigation, led to “a compromise that required Mormons to conform their kingdom to that most Protestant form of religion, the denomination.”

Mormon leaders also desired to shed racial labels associated with the practice of plural marriage, a connection that prevented full acceptance in American culture. Mormons changed more than their Church’s structure to gain recognition from American Protestants. However, that new identity presented an opportunity for Mormonism to become “white,” or racially mainstream, instead of being labeled as racially Other. The social construction of whiteness, like all forms of race, results from a host of factors, most especially class and other markers of socioeconomic status. At this time those with racial privilege, usually attached to economic and political power, maintained “a hierarchical structure of racial classes with whites firmly at

However, it could also be argued that the Reed Smoot hearings led Mormons to seek acceptance by Christians, even as they felt persecuted by them.

Ibid., 8.

I restrict “Mormon” primarily to Latter-day Saint leaders, rather than lay Latter-day Saints or other members of Joseph Smith’s religious family tree. While the experiences and opinions of Mormons who did not hold prominent positions in Mormonism are valuable, I here address how the LDS hierarchy appropriated evolution and eugenics to gain acceptance in the American religious marketplace. It is not a comprehensive study of Mormon beliefs in evolution, eugenics, or scientific principles more broadly. LDS leaders steered the Church toward American acceptance, both racially and religiously, and therefore, their opinions found in sermons, diaries, and letters show how they positioned Mormonism within their contemporary racial and religious milieu.

Jan Shipps, Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 109–11, has written that if Mormons living before the end of plural marriage were to attend Church services in the mid-twentieth century, they would hardly recognize their own religion because of all the changes to doctrine and practice after the turn of the twentieth century.
the top.” During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, Mormons had been viewed as racially inferior to “whites” because of their perceived friendliness towards peoples of African descent (which, in the Jacksonian Era, no “respectable” whites engaged in). This article does not seek to provide a comprehensive overview of Mormon doctrinal beliefs concerning evolution or eugenics. Rather, I aim to explore the methods by which Mormons employed evolution and eugenics for religious and racial acceptance.

To reposition itself and move up America’s racial hierarchy, and to gain acceptance as an authentic religion, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints harmonized its beliefs with scientific arguments in the early twentieth-century United States. This momentous, difficult transition came in response to the onslaught of negative attention from American Protestants, although other religious groups also looked askance at Mormon theology and the Church’s dubious racial status.


14See Thomas G. Alexander, Mormonism in Transition: A History of
Mormon leaders adapted their rhetoric to engage with modern American concerns, as seen in the LDS Church’s 1909 official statement enumerating its position on the theory of evolution and the creation of the Earth. Mormons also contributed to national conversations on eugenics, or the science of improving the human race through selectively breeding those with desirable hereditary characteristics, in order to gain racial acceptance in the United States. A willingness to engage with eugenics, evolution, and more broadly, science, symbolized Mormonism’s quest for religious acceptance and simultaneously made a case for Mormonism to call itself “white.”

Along with other statements made in the next three years, Mormons explicitly crafted their official statements of Church doctrine on evolution to appeal to both Mormons and American Protestants, the vast majority of which had also incorporated new scientific discoveries into their theology. Although a small but vocal number of Protestants, called Fundamentalists, opposed the notion of evolution in either the creation of the Earth or the origin of the human species, most did not dismiss Darwinism outright. Instead, they used evolution as a means to strengthen their theology of an all-powerful God. After the turn of the twentieth century, as the LDS Church pushed for inclusion in broader American society, several Mormon apostles publicly stated their belief in evolution and others participated in national discussions on the eugenics movement.

This article illuminates the process by which the LDS Church began to define and explicate official doctrine.

**the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), esp. 272–88 for an overview of some ways the LDS Church began to define and explicate official doctrine.


used science as a means of positioning itself as both authentically religious and racially “white.” First, I examine Joseph Smith’s theology as it relates to evolution. Then I explore how Smith’s successors emphasized certain portions of his unique religious thought to proclaim Mormonism not only to be true, but in line with scientific belief. Next, I examine the rise of a proto-eugenic thought within Mormonism before the eugenics movement began in earnest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I conclusively show that Mormonism presented itself as not only spiritually beneficial, but made Latter-day Saints mentally and physically superior to their Christian peers. The final sections illuminate the process by which Mormonism emphasized its religious beliefs that harmonized best with scientific thought to simultaneously appeal to conservative and liberal factions of American Protestantism as they altered their self-presentation to Americans in the wake of the Reed Smoot hearings.

Mormonism’s actions and reactions in regard to the introduction of Darwinian natural selection and the closely related eugenics movement demonstrate that alien religions in the early twentieth century could rely on science to find traction in the American religious marketplace as an alternate route to acceptance. For instance, Mark Singleton and David McMahan have argued that, in the early twentieth century, non-Christian religions like Buddhism and Hinduism dropped “superstitious” beliefs to align more closely with science. As Buddhists and

17“Authentically religious” refers to the nineteenth-century American Protestant designation of Mormonism as heresy. In short, to become authentically religious meant to be recognized as a valid religion by American Protestants rather than as systemized heresy.
18As Buddhists introduced their religion to the United States, they constructed “a relationship to modern scientific realism out of the philosophical elements of Buddhist doctrine.” This scientific construction and interpretation of Buddhism was remarkably successful. A large number of Americans today often recognize Buddhism as a religion “largely free of superstition and irrational belief, and in basic
Hindus emphasized the harmony of their beliefs with scientific findings and rationalism while entering the greater American consciousness. Mormonism made no distinction between science and its scripturally based beliefs. The Mormon acceptance of evolution and its willingness to engage with eugenics affirms the notion that non-Christian religions could reposition themselves as scientifically minded to gain acceptance from America’s Protestants. Latter-day Saints publicly framed their religious beliefs in scientific discourses to cross the bridge from non-white heresy to modern, authentically religious, and racially white in America’s racial hierarchy.

**Nineteenth-Century Mormon Views on Creation**

Early Mormon views of creation did not always harmonize with traditional Protestant views on the subject. In September 1830, Joseph Smith received a revelation on behalf of his nascent Church of Christ at the farm on which he lived in northeastern Ohio. The revelation declared that the New Jerusalem spoken of in the Book of Mormon would eventually be built on the American continent and directed Smith to gather the elect out of the nations to Zion before the second coming of Christ. In the midst of the revelation’s admonitions to seek for signs of the advent of Jesus’s return, Smith’s revelation veered into a description of the creation. Smith recorded Christ as saying that He had created all things “by the power of my Spirit . . . all things in harmony with science.” Likewise, Americans (and the West) co-opted Hinduism’s *hatha* yoga practices as “exercise science and movement therapy.” Outside the United States, Hindus defined *hatha* yoga as a religious ritual performed by eccentric, and sometimes dangerous, religious zealots. As Hinduism came to the West, spokesmen such as Vivekananda created a much more “vanilla,” scientific brand of *hatha* yoga that harmonized with American physical culture. David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 67; Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 13, 41, 78.
both spiritual and temporal.” As if to reinforce the importance of the spiritual creation of all things, Smith’s revelation repeated that all things were created “firstly spiritual & secondly temporal.” God gave no “temporal commandments . . . for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.” From the beginning, Mormonism taught that God created the heavens and the earth and all things upon the face of the earth. In the Genesis account of creation, God also created man after His own likeness, both “male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:26). Smith’s earliest doctrinal statements confirmed the biblical account of man’s creation—that Adam and Eve were created *imago dei*, not as products of evolution. The spirit was eternal, and the body resembled God’s, but Smith included no statement about how long it took for humans to appear on the earth. The Book of Mormon and another revelation received by Smith in 1830 echoed the King James Bible’s teachings—almost word for word. The Book of Mormon also echoes the Bible’s accounts of creation.


Further revelations from Smith aligned with the biblical account throughout the next twelve years of his prophetic ministry but added significant details to the narrative in Genesis. These details included repeating the concept of a “spiritual” creation of all things on the earth before its temporal existence and that the earth had a spiritual mission to fulfill before the second coming of Christ.\textsuperscript{22} In Smith’s mind, the physical and spiritual aspects of all living things could not be disentangled one from another.

In early 1842, Smith published a revelation that Latter-day Saints canonized in 1880 as the “Book of Abraham.”\textsuperscript{23} This scriptural account taught that God did not create the world \textit{ex nihilo}, or out of nothing. Rather, several “Gods” assisted God the Father as he “organized” the raw materials of the universe to form the earth, separate light from dark, bring land forth from the earth’s bodies of water, and to introduce all forms of flora and fauna to the earth.\textsuperscript{24} God “created” or “organized” all of his creations spiritually before organizing them as objects in corporeal form. As the last act of creation, the Gods created Adam “from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit, that is the man’s spirit, and put it into him, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” In Smith’s revelation and in Genesis, God introduced Eve soon after Adam’s formation. Smith also taught that God had organized the universe’s materials (“intelligences”) to organize human beings before they were created in the flesh. Smith’s revelation did not address human evolution but also did not preclude the


\textsuperscript{23}Richard Lyman Bushman, \textit{Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 72–73 (on translating the Book of Mormon) and 137–38 (on translating the Book of Abraham).

possibility. He further stated that the six “days” of creation were not necessarily twenty-four hour periods but could have meant any unit of time.  

Smith viewed creation as a collaborative event, made possible by the power and authority of God. This radical new interpretation of creation set Mormonism apart from any other American religion in the antebellum period. Despite these doctrinal additions to the Christian canon, early Mormons did not believe that creation had come about by any other means than by divine design. Their views as stated in 1842, even Smith’s unorthodox revelation on God’s “organizing” of the earth, agreed with traditional Christianity in teaching that creation had been possible only through the power of God. Also in 1842, Smith introduced his teachings on creation into the temple rituals that he instituted, which taught his followers that God had created the earth and humankind.

The Mormon prophet’s explanation of human origins is important in the context of prevalent scientific theories during Smith’s lifetime. In the Jacksonian Era, the Western world categorized members of different races (what today would be called ethnicities), as different “species.” Christians who tried to harmonize their religious beliefs with scientific evidence often explained that different “species” of humans could be attributed to different periods of creation. Those who subscribed to this belief


26Ibid.


taught that Africans, Asians, and other non-Europeans had been created before Adam as something less than human (a theory known as “polygenesis”). In contrast, Smith's creation narratives always asserted that all humans descended from Adam (a theory known as monogenesis), which aligned with most conservative Protestants in the Jacksonian Era. Smith's successors did not alter his teachings on the creation of the earth and humankind in the fifteen years after his assassination in June 1844.

In 1859, British botanist and zoologist Charles Darwin published his landmark work *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin argued all living things that possessed natural advantages, such as speed, strength, brainpower, or other gifts would have the best chance to survive in the wild. Their extended lives would allow them to procreate with other members of their species equipped to survive and, in turn, would then pass on their genetic traits to ensuing generations. Darwin gave the name of “natural selection” to this process by which “favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations” were promulgated through successive generations. He also posited that humans had evolved through natural selection (evolution). Darwin predicted near the end of his book, “Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history,” but he quickly pointed out that such a theory did not rule out God's existence nor argue for the futility of religion. Darwin's controversial book promptly went through four printings in its first thirteen years after its initial publication.


31 Ibid., 488; see also 486–90.
Darwin had anticipated resistance to his ideas on natural selection (evolution) as they related to the possibility of human evolution. He was not disappointed. A significant number of religionists, including many Protestant men of science, found *Origin of Species* blasphemous. Several authors launched pointed attacks at Darwin and his ideas, though many committed Christians and trained scientists embraced the concept of natural selection as an expression of natural law. Several of these men sought to find “mediating evolutionisms” within the broad spectrum that incorporated both “fut creationism and goalless, atheistic, ‘pure’ Darwinism.”

Some Protestant clergymen viewed natural selection as evil and doggedly attacked natural selection in print and in the classroom from 1859 through the end of the nineteenth century. Their opposition was formidable. Protestant organizations sponsored roughly one third of all American universities. Professional Protestant clergymen constituted nearly one third of the American university professoriate. Clergy on the liberal end of the religious spectrum devoted hundreds of sermons and tracts in pastoral attempts to harmonize religion and science by using natural selection. Perhaps because professors who wrote rebuttals to Darwin were also clergy, or because students were overwhelmingly religious, the ideas in *Origin of Species* did not fracture Protestant America in the forty years after its release. Many Protestant theologians and thinkers opposed evolution,

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but they did not “pronounce it anathema.” Indeed, most religious intellectuals “made their peace with evolution.”

In the decades after Smith’s death, Brigham Young and most other Latter-day Saint leaders maintained their founder’s teachings on creation. One apostle, Orson Pratt, sought to reconcile new scientific theories with Mormon scripture. In February 1860, he posited, “The study of science is the study of something eternal.” Furthermore, he encouraged young Mormons to study “chemistry, geology, optics, or any other branch of science.” Pratt insisted that every discovery made by science contributed to knowledge of the “eternal; it is a part of the great system of universal truth. It is truth that exists throughout universal nature; and God is the dispenser of all truth—scientific, religious, and political.” Pratt’s rhetoric would not have been out of place if spoken from most Protestant pulpits.

Other Latter-day Saint leaders reiterated unique tenets of Mormonism’s teachings on creation to reinforce Smith’s teachings on creation, particularly the length of the creative periods. In 1871, Brigham Young taught that Moses had inherited the traditions of his fathers on the subject of creation. “No matter whether [the Bible] is correct or not, and whether the Lord found the earth empty and void, whether he made it out of nothing or out of the rude elements; or whether he made it in six days or in as many millions of years, is and will remain a matter of speculation in the minds of men unless he give revelation on the subject.” In 1883, George Q. Cannon, a counselor in the First Presidency, proudly preached, “Joseph [Smith] taught that a day with God was not the twenty-four hours of our day; but that the six days of the creation were six periods of the Lord’s time . . . [It] is now generally received as a great truth connected with the creation

of the world. Geologists have declared it, and religious people are adopting it; and so the world is progressing.” Mormons found great pleasure in the scientific rationality of their religion, especially that their founder’s teachings had not insisted upon ex nihilo creation.

Latter-day Saint leaders were less enthusiastic about contemporary science’s perspective on species evolution than they were about the creation of the earth. President John Taylor stated, “All living beings exist in the same form as when they first received their impress from the Maker.” Taylor stressed that humans had not originated “from a chaotic mass of matter, moving or inert, but came forth possessing, in an embryonic state, all the faculties and powers of a God.” Taylor believed that natural selection could not occur in a natural state because they could not procreate. (He cited the example of mules, which are sterile.) The LDS Church President’s statement demonstrates the diversity of opinions within Mormonism on scientific topics and how opinions could be shaped to make specific doctrinal or theological points.

The relatively low number of statements made by Latter-day Saint leaders suggests that they were aware of Darwin and natural selection but did not see the concept as sparking a crisis in Mormonism. Like many of their Protestant counterparts, their lack of concern can likely be attributed to more pressing issues (like legal action related to plural marriage), not because they were uninterested in the relationship of science and religion. Nevertheless, at the close of the nineteenth century, the LDS Church remained committed to Joseph Smith’s doctrine of spiritual and physical creation through God’s organizing power.

40Taylor was making a broader point about the creation of man in God’s image and the Mormon doctrine of exaltation. Taylor, Mediation and Atonement, 164–66.
However, conversations surrounding creation intensified in the first decade of the twentieth century. One hundred years after Darwin’s birth and fifty years after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, the LDS First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund) published a statement on human evolution that responded to larger conversations in American culture. The authors of the 1909 document reiterated Joseph Smith’s teachings—that creation occurred first spiritually and second temporally. Smith and his counselors not only quoted the Bible as evidence, but also Mormonism’s unique canon, to keep Mormon youth “from drifting away from their religious moorings.”

President Smith remained committed to teaching doctrines from the revelations received by his uncle, Joseph Smith, nearly eighty years before. However, the statement declared, “It is held by some that Adam was not the first man upon this earth, and that the original human being was a development from lower orders of the animal creation. These, however, are the theories of men.”

Less than two years later, the LDS First Presidency shifted course and presented themselves as open to the idea of human evolution. During a Christmas devotional in 1910, the First Presidency declared, “Our religion is not hostile to real science. That which is demonstrated, we accept with joy; but vain philosophy, human theory and mere speculations of men, we do not accept nor do we adopt anything contrary to divine revelation or to good common sense.” Almost any scientific findings that did not stunt the growth of faith would be accepted in Mormonism, including the possibility of human evolution.

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Smith's (and Mormonism's) openness to multiple interpretations of human origins was consistent with contemporary Protestant incorporations of Darwinism into their theology and acceptance of evolution within their religious purview.44

In the same year as the First Presidency's statement on the origin of man, Brigham Young University (BYU) biology professor Ralph Chamberlain "publicly pronounced [Darwin] one of the greatest scientific minds of the era" and declared himself an evolutionist.45 Controversy over organic evolution then erupted at BYU. Chamberlain and two other professors were called before the university’s Board of Trustees because of their teachings on evolution and acceptance of higher biblical criticism. Parents had complained that their children had lost their faith as a result of such teachings. One administrator summarized the issue by comparing the struggle and frustration of a student learning about evolution to “the sorrow of the little child when first told there is no Santa Claus."46

Administrators terminated the professors, despite the lack of testimony from any particular students who had lost their faith. Indeed, more than 95 of the 125 students in the biology department signed a petition requesting that the professors should remain at BYU; this sign of support suggests that the students could and did reconcile their religious beliefs with scientific findings.47 After the firings, President Joseph F. Smith

46Horace Hall Cummings, Letter to Joseph F. Smith and Members of the General Church Board of Education, January 21, 1911, BYU Archives, quoted in ibid., 27.
47“B.Y.U. Students Adopt Protest,” Salt Lake Tribune, 11. It is unclear in the article whether there were only 125 students at BYU or
again spoke publicly on evolution. In an April 1911 article in an LDS magazine for young people, Smith stated: “The Church itself has no philosophy about the modus operandi employed by the Lord in His creation of the world. . . . We should regret very much to see the simplicity of those revelations involved in all sorts of philosophical speculations.” The true origin of man remained a religious issue in Mormonism, but not one that Joseph F. Smith felt should divide his church between the unlearned and a “theological scholastic aristocracy.”

He did not believe that God had revealed in full how the earth had been created but believed that it could be unfolded through revelation—not theology or academic scientific discourse.

THE AMERICAN EUGENICS MOVEMENT AND MORMONISM, 1880–1918

Religious conversations about evolution were not limited to human origins; they also addressed the possibility of purposefully improving the human race through selective breeding. In 1883, Francis Galton, Darwin’s half-cousin, expounded on Darwinism and theorized that his ideas could improve the human race through selectively allowing individuals of “desirable” races to bear children. The British anthropologist predicted that, by preventing “undesirable” individuals from reproducing, the health and vigor of the human race could be universally improved. Galton proposed the name of “eugenics” for this movement. It had existed in Western thought since the time of Plato, who argued for the creation of a “guardian race.” Gynecologist William Gooddell had advocated castration and spaying for the insane just a year before Galton published his research. Galton later defined “National Eugenics,” or eugenics implemented in the department.

on a national scale, as “the study of agencies under human control which can improve or impair the racial quality of future generations, either physically or mentally.”50 Often, eugenicists (as they came to be called) made pointed references about the lower classes and “inferior” races of ethnic minorities to highlight the need to improve the racial quality of American society. In short, eugenicists suggested that better breeding would prevent the poor and people of color from procreating, inevitably leaving the children thus produced trapped in the mires of poverty and supposedly degraded cultures.

Religious peoples participated in such conversations and many embraced the science behind eugenics. Many liberal Christians would later adopt Galton’s ideas as they sought to make religion useful and important in the rise of modernity, by accepting and incorporating science into their theologies to reach a modern audience. Eugenics eventually came to mean much more than the strategic breeding of the human race through sterilization (in the United States and western Europe) and euthanasia (Nazi Germany), often called “negative eugenics.” The term also referred to a host of non-violent causes (referred to as “positive eugenics”).

Because of the ambiguity and abundance of definitions of eugenics, individuals could both subscribe to and reject certain aspects of what the term represented. Religious leaders, especially liberal Protestants, tended to focus “on the social message of eugenics rather than its scientific details,” which only broadened the definitions and employment of eugenics in the early twentieth century.51 Although fewer conservative Christians supported the racial engineering aspects of eugenics, enough supported the theory in the first few decades of the

twentieth century that it permeated national religious, political, and scientific conversation. Conservative Christians preached the importance of good hygiene, the improvement of mental health, and other causes through eugenics using the language of religion.\(^{52}\)

During the decades after the publication of Galton’s work, Mormons occupied a unique place in the racial imagination of most Americans. To the general puzzlement of clergy and scientists alike, Mormons, both new converts and second-generation Latter-day Saints, were generally of western European ancestry but subscribed to a religion that many Christians believed physically or racially degraded them. Whereas most American Latter-day Saints would have been considered white if they were not Mormon, Latter-day Saints were castigated with terms that echoed racial or religious pejoratives like “Celt” or “Dago.” Along those lines, historian Paul Reeve has written, “Mormons were conflated with nearly every ‘problem’ group in the nineteenth century—blacks, Indians, immigrants, and Chinese—a way to color them less white by association.”\(^{53}\)

Whiteness meant much more than skin color in the nineteenth century and, indeed, in the twentieth century. Although race was often connected to physical appearance, skin color did not singularly define a person’s race. For instance, Irish immigrants had to gain the privileges of whiteness in the nineteenth-century United States through adopting American manners, customs, language patterns, holidays, and other hallmarks of American culture. Their white pigmentation did not make them white. Through dropping certain aspects of what would today be called their ethnic heritage, they became white through losing their

\(^{52}\)See Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

Irishness and becoming American. However, whiteness has never simply been a matter of heritage, skin color, or ancestry. Whiteness has been the sum total of arbitrary racial definitions by the dominating privileged class. Religious beliefs and values have consistently been used by those in power to explain the racial differences seen in human bodies. Many Americans believed Mormons to be racially “Other,” despite their (largely) European ancestry and white skin. Americans assigned the privileges of whiteness not only to those bodies who were believed to have descended from proper ancestry, but also those who were acceptable to participate in American civics. Groups or individuals who observed heteronormative, monogamous social mores, and whose religion could be proved to be definitively Christian could also prove themselves to be definitely white. In the eyes of many Americans, Mormon marriage practices were too close to black to be considered white—“whiteness, measured in distance from blackness.”

Although the battle for “whiteness” had begun during Joseph Smith’s leadership, American concern about the racial status of Mormons ratcheted up after Latter-day Saints began to publicly preach and practice plural marriage in 1852. Latter-day Saint polygamy repulsed most Americans, who believed that the Mormon marital practice signaled a racial regression by reason of their sexual degradation. After Latter-day Saints

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54Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 2008); Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color, 39–90.


57For a summary of how Mormons were associated with blackness
publicly avowed their theological commitment to polygamy, “it confirmed to the outside world a conclusion already made, that Mormonism represented both a religious and a racial decline.”

Many Americans believed that conversion to Mormonism would cause a negative physical change to previously “white” groups like Nordics or Anglo-Saxons. Racially degraded converts would in turn create further racially suspect children, propagating a vicious cycle of degradation and reproduction. Scandalized Americans believed the sexual licentiousness espoused by Mormons through polygamy connected them to African Americans or Muslims, who were regularly portrayed as sexually aggressive in popular media.

Mormons fired back at those who argued that their religion degraded its members. They countered that Mormonism and plural marriage empowered the human race and benefited both converts and children born to Latter-day Saint families through polygamy. George Q. Cannon, then a mission president in


58Reeve, Religion of a Different Color, 16.
Oregon Territory, wrote an article entitled “The Improvement of Our Species” in 1857. Cannon stated, “Experience has long since taught mankind the necessity of observing certain natural laws in the propagation of animals, or the stock will degenerate and finally become extinct. But strange to say, in regard to the human animal, these laws, except in certain particulars, are more or less disregarded.” Cannon worried that society did not create or enforce laws “best calculated to develop [sic] our physical nature. A well formed, healthy, vigorous race should be the end sought.” After suggesting that the law should forbid “the unhealthy to beget children” and should compel “every healthy man to marry,” Cannon promised that under those conditions, no healthy girl would remain single and “no whore shall be permitted to live.” He argued that the simultaneous commitment to sexual purity and racial engineering leading to the improvement of the human race “is precisely what the Saints in the valleys of the mountains are endeavoring to accomplish.” The future apostle then argued, “The genius of Christian monogamy is to encourage prostitution; because it forbids plural marriages, yet compels no man to marry, and thus debars thousands of females from gratifying the strongest instincts of their nature”—by which he meant becoming a wife and mother.61 Far from degrading their race, he implied that Mormonism actually improved a person’s physical well-being and eliminated prostitution and the social burden of single women.62

Furthermore, Apostle Orson Hyde argued in that same year that plural marriage as taught by Joseph Smith produced a plethora of robust, hardy children, as opposed to children from monogamist relationships, who were “helpless, scrubby.”63

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62 Clark, “No True Religion without True Science.”
Hyde’s fellow apostle George A. Smith predicted in 1867 that, through polygamy, Mormons “should produce a race of men who would be able to walk the rest of the human race under foot.” As if to call attention to his seriousness—that he was not merely boasting—he flatly stated, “This is just what we expect.”64 Decades later, as Mormons battled the Supreme Court and the court of public opinion over polygamy, Cannon and others continued to assert the eugenic benefits of plural marriage. In 1882, Joseph F. Smith, then a counselor in the LDS First Presidency, preached: “Our system of marriage promotes life, purity, innocence, vitality, health, increase and longevity, while the other [monogamy] engenders disease, disappointment, misery and premature death.”65 Mormonism, in other words, improved each of its members both physically and spiritually. By doing so, Smith implicitly argued that his religion benefited the United States and its citizens, or, at least could if they would convert to Mormonism.

These beliefs in the physical improvement of the human race through Mormonism built upon a theology developed and espoused by Apostle Parley P. Pratt in his 1855 book Key to the Science of Theology, a few years before Cannon’s newspaper article appeared. Pratt wrote that Mormon beliefs had the power to “improve or regenerate a race.”66 Historian Blair Hodges observes that Pratt’s theology suggests that the practice of plural marriage would allow God to “facilitate the proper distribution of premortal spirits and their subsequent development” to righteous parents who would raise them as Latter-day Saints.67

Findings Regarding Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Mormon Polygamy,” Utah Historical Quarterly 73, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 220.

64George A. Smith, October 9, 1867, Journal of Discourses, 12:144.
66Parley P. Pratt, Key to the Science of Theology (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1855), 176.
67Blair Dee Hodges, “Intellectual Disability in Mormon Thought and History, 1830–1900” (M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 2013),
Pratt’s theological construct predicts that such breeding habits would empower Latter-day Saints to simultaneously overcome the persecution of all other peoples and display the correctness of Mormonism through racial superiority. Pratt also argued that those with undesirable traits should be prevented from procreation altogether, predating Darwin’s published work by four years and Galton’s thought by several decades. Furthermore, the apostle argued that the most righteous, healthy, and robust spirits created by God before the physical creation of the Earth would be born to polygamist parents. Through this logic, Pratt connected Mormonism’s peculiar beliefs about evolution and the divine order of families to eugenics. Premortal creation meant that God would assign the worthiest spirits to Latter-day Saint polygamists, who would then nurture their genetically superior children in the Mormon gospel. Cannon, Hyde, Smith, and others expounded upon Pratt’s theology in ensuing decades.

As with their response to Darwinism and natural selection, Mormons took available (or soon to be available) scientific ideas to reinforce the correctness of their own beliefs. They simply incorporated such ideas into their theology so as not to allow science to trigger any sort of doctrinal crisis. They followed the examples of Americans across the religious spectrum, who similarly folded science into their theological worldview. For Mormons, eugenics also reinforced their notions of possessing correct doctrinal principles through their practice of plural marriage.68

After the Mormons’ slow but definite public backing away from plural marriage after 1890, they continued to espouse eugenic ideas, both for passing on desirable genetic traits to ensuing generations and the general uplift of society at large (positive and negative eugenics). Pre-natal care, hygiene, nutrition, and a host of other movements throughout the first decades of the twentieth century claimed that their aims would

79–83.

68 Clark, “No True Religion without True Science.”
improve the human race and found room for their causes under the umbrella of eugenics—which also included the idea that one could “play God” through racial engineering.69 Both conservative and liberal Protestants, as well as Catholics and Jews, supported various causes that could rightly be called eugenic. Historian Christine Rosen has written that self-identified religious liberals subscribed to eugenics “to seek relevance in modern debates” without espousing the wholesale murder or sterilization of any particular group.70 At the same time, conservatives often filtered eugenics through their post-millennial eschatological expectations.71 Eugenics was accepted widely in American culture and provided a catch-all term for any movement that sought the betterment of society—although those movements were also tied to the xenophobic racialism often associated with eugenics in modern times.

Although Mormons had already employed eugenics to justify their practice of plural marriage for more than four decades, by 1900 they shifted their rhetoric to coincide with broader American conversations about topics that fell under the umbrella of eugenics. Mormons also adopted eugenics as part of their efforts to make Mormons “white” in American culture.72 Mormon leaders took advantages of ambiguous definitions of eugenics in order to please believers across the religious spectrum. Mormons also remained committed to the nineteenth-century rhetoric extolling the eugenic “benefits” of plural marriage after the Manifesto. Galton’s call for “judicious mating”

70Ibid., 5.
71Ibid., 17–18.
had not been paired with plural marriage by happy accident; but as Mormon leaders had long argued, eugenics was a primary benefit of polygamy.\textsuperscript{73} In one oft-quoted 1912 statement, B. H. Roberts of the First Council of the Seventy wrote that Latter-day Saints had lived in plural marriage after the “divinely ordered species of eugenics.” Roberts further stated that polygamy had produced and improved the “type of man the world needs to reveal the highest possibilities of the race, that the day of the super man might come, and with him come also the redemption and betterment of the [human] race.”\textsuperscript{74} Such notions fit with the motives of religious liberals for eugenics; the human race could improve through a combination of science, practical charity work, and religious devotion through movements such as the Social Gospel.\textsuperscript{75} These comments also affirmed the correctness of Mormon practices and doctrines as Cannon and other early Mormon leaders had done: Mormonism was true because subscribing to its practices and beliefs directly led to the betterment of the human race.

Roberts’s ideas become clearer in light of the Apostle John A. Widtsoe’s support of eugenics: “The present agitation for eugenics is really for more information. . . . It is in this direction that eugenics work is now being done in Utah, and very probably nothing more important can be done in behalf of the science for some years to come.”\textsuperscript{76} Eugenic discourse also tethered Mormonism

\textsuperscript{73}Francis Galton, \textit{Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development} (New York: Macmillan, 1883), 25.


\textsuperscript{76}John A. Widtsoe, “Our Interest in Eugenics,” \textit{Young Woman's Journal} 24, no. 2 (1913): 83. I thank Bradley Kime for directing me to this source in his “Mormons and Eugenics in the Early Twentieth Century.”
and its members to scientific discussions in a time when religion strove to maintain its power and influence in the public sphere.

Latter-day Saint leaders worked to maintain their identity as a “peculiar people” with unique doctrines and religious practices while doing all within their power to be accepted as “white.” To accomplish this task, Mormons sometimes framed eugenics as scientific proof of the benefits of plural marriage. But more often they emphasized other aspects of their religion, like adherence to the Word of Wisdom and high fertility rates, to explain the superiority of LDS mental and physical capacities. Whereas Mormons in the nineteenth century had been rendered non-white on the American racial scale, by the early twentieth century Latter-day Saints gradually “became considered as producers of the right type of citizen.”77 Mormon leaders employed such arguments to appeal to both conservative and liberal religionists in the United States. At the expense of peoples of African descent, the Mormon engagement with eugenics helped Mormonism gain acceptance as both a religion and to be viewed as racially white.78

Latter-day Saints not only appealed to liberal justifications for eugenics but also connected their beliefs to conservative Protestant causes like opposition to birth control and a “focus on the social message of eugenics rather than its scientific details.”79 Julina Lambson Smith, the wife of LDS Church President Joseph F. Smith and mother of Mormon apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, instructed Relief Society teachers to warn Mormon women against the “Evils of Birth Control or Race Suicide,” in their Relief Society classes.80 Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith

77Marianno, “Passing as White,” 57.
78For more on Mormon racial policies and peoples of African descent, see Reeve, Religion of a Different Color, 188–214; Marianno, “Passing as White,” 57–71.
79Rosen, Preaching Eugenics, 122.
80Amy Brown Lyman, “Conference of the Relief Society,” Relief Society Magazine 3, no. 12 (December 1916): 670. I thank Amanda Hendrix-Komoto for directing me to this source. Both the father and
further warned Mormon women that white Americans were slowly being choked out by new immigrants, who averaged more than six children per family—four more than the families of the “old Colonial stock.” He declared, “The old stock is surely being replaced by the ‘lower classes’ of a sturdier and more worthy race. Worthier because they have not learned . . . to disregard the great commandment” to multiply and replenish the earth. The “old Colonial stock” would lose its strength and power in society for rejecting the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth and adopting the “pernicious doctrine of ‘birth control.’” 

Apostle and future LDS Church President David O. McKay also decried the “evil of race suicide now sweeping like a blight through the civilized nations.” A home economics lesson published in the *Relief Society Magazine* cautioned against “Race suicide, and its twin sister—prevention of child bearing through so-called harmless methods.” Birth control “had no place in the heavenly home”—meaning Mormon homes, which tacitly meant white, Christian homes. The lesson went on, “True Christians, and Latter-day Saints are the truest of all Christians, cannot acquiesce in any doctrine or practice which sanctions marriage and allows restriction of offspring.” 

Latter-day Saints, who believed that spirits already possessed physical and spiritual characteristics before birth, vehemently opposed the tendency for wealthy (white) families to have small families while (non-white) immigrants raised large broods.

These quotations condemn birth control as a form of “race suicide. The son were named Joseph Fielding Smith; they usually added Sr. and Jr. to their names while both were alive. I follow the current convention of referring to the father as Joseph F. Smith and to the son as Joseph Fielding Smith.

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suicide,” or allowing one’s race to die out through refusing “to multiply and replenish the earth.” Whereas nineteenth-century Mormons had argued that spirits declared worthy and righteous from before mortality were sent by God to Latter-day Saint parents, these twentieth-century statements suggest that Mormons had a duty to produce offspring to further the white race. However, this commitment to rearing large families was explicitly encouraged to increase their level of whiteness. Joseph Fielding Smith, for instance, observed that immigrant families had not subscribed to birth control and had many more children than white families. He aimed this statement at Mormons who used birth control despite the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth, even though the average Mormon family still had as many children, or more, than other Americans.84 Joseph Fielding Smith was the first child of his father’s second wife, one of Joseph F. Smith’s forty-three biological children. (Joseph F. Smith fathered forty-five and adopted five children.) His status as a child of polygamous union would have meant that many Americans would have found him racially degraded and unfit to castigate others as non-white. In the next sentence of his article, he called for the preservation of the “old stock,” which, as a child of polygamist parents in the nineteenth century, he would not have belonged to.85 Joseph Fielding Smith’s warnings against race suicide and the evils of birth control were celebrated in the Journal of Heredity.86

These racial statements demonstrate that Mormons were doing more than joining a host of conservative crusaders by decrying race suicide and birth control during the Progressive Era. They defined themselves as, and identified with, white

84For Mormon fertility rates compared to the national average, see Lester E. Bush, “Birth Control among the Mormons: Introduction to an Insistent Question,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 10 (Autumn 1976): 23, Fig. 1.
Americans. Through both arguing for the eugenic superiority of Mormon offspring and decrying the use of birth control among American whites, Latter-day Saints claimed whiteness without giving up their unique doctrines of a premortal life and the foreordination of individual children's spirits being sent to Mormon parents. Such a rhetorical approach demonstrates that Mormons fought to gain the privileges of whiteness by separating themselves from non-white “lower classes.” Most importantly, eugenics allowed Mormonism to align with both liberal and conservative Christians who had persecuted their faith for nearly a century. Mormons scored points for both being modern and progressive, while also being favorably viewed as conservative, traditional, and racially respectable.87

**Evolution in Mormonism and the United States, 1918–31**

In the wake of the First World War, large swaths of American Protestants fell into crisis. Many religionists encountered difficulty in shepherding their members through scientific evidence and theories, such as evolution and eugenics. Some conservative Evangelicals who witnessed the Great War believed that the Second Coming was at the door. As doughboys returned home bearing the psychological and physical scars of modern combat, a growing number of Christians blamed modernist American culture for causing World War I. Concerned Americans lamented the roles of science and industrialization in the development of weaponry that could kill and maim on a scale previously unimaginable. Anti-German sentiment also became popular. Some Americans reviled “Germanized” Darwinism, or evolution—the first step in the rise of fundamentalist anti-evolutionism.88

Some Protestants, William Jennings Bryan among them, made a connection between social Darwinism and the advent

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87 Clark, “No True Religion without True Science.”
of the First World War. They argued that if only the fit survived, stronger nations would prey upon weaker nations to assert their strength and power, eliminating those that could not defend themselves. Bryan and others also feared that a belief in social Darwinism would lead the U.S. government and its citizens to abandon charitable causes and other relief efforts. Many liberal Christians relied on social Darwinism to justify supporting only those who were most fit to survive.89

Although a small group of conservative Protestants had published twelve tracts from 1910 to 1915, *The Fundamentals*, Fundamentalist Christians did not fully enter upon the national stage until May 1919. During that month, participants at a Philadelphia conference organized the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) to combat the “evils” of modernism. The meeting’s organizer, William Bell Riley, later wrote that the establishment of the WCFA would one day be viewed as more influential “than the nailing up, at Wittenberg, of Martin Luther’s ninety-five theses. The hour has struck for the rise of a new Protestantism.”90 Although the WCFA has had an enormous impact on American religion and politics, Fundamentalists, or Creationists, have never comprised the majority of American Protestants at large.91

Fundamentalists began to attack printers of academic school textbooks for presenting evolution in the place of Creationism when they taught the origins of man and the earth. Many Protestant parents worried that their children were instructed by teachers, paid for with their tax dollars, to trust science in place

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89For more information on the wide array of evidence marshaled against evolution, see Webb, *The Evolution Controversy in America*, 66–70.


of God. In 1923, the Baptist evangelist Thomas T. Martin published an attack against “high brow” supporters of evolution entitled *Hell and the High Schools: Christ or Evolution, Which?* The title of Martin’s diatribe demonstrates the juxtaposition of science and religion emerging in early 1920s Fundamentalism, and with it, Creationism. Fundamentalists held the extreme position that no good Christian could accept both evolution and religion in spite of the fact that their intellectual parents and grandparents had come to grips with the need to balance belief with scientific data since *On the Origin of Species* had rolled off the printing press in 1859. George McCready Price, a staunch Seventh-day Adventist, wrote extensively about the evils of evolution and explained the appearances of fossils and rock formations in the geological record as the result of a cataclysmic storm. Price popularized the phrase, “No Adam, no fall; no fall, no atonement; no atonement, no savior.” Two years after Price published his book, the 1925 Scopes trial took place in Tennessee. While Fundamentalists lost public credibility through the trial, they also gained a crucial legal victory. In the court proceedings, Fundamentalists argued that teaching evolution in public schools was unconstitutional, and Tennessee declared the teaching of evolution to be illegal. Within six years, thirteen states had proposed bills that would prevent evolution from being taught in public schools, although few laws that prevented the teaching of evolution remained on the books after 1931. This is probably because most American Protestants did not oppose evolution.

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95Quoted in ibid., 373.
96For a detailed account of the general decline of anti-evolutionism after the Scopes trial, see Webb, *The Evolution Controversy in America*, 81–108.
Clergymen simply incorporated Darwin’s theory into their belief system rather than discarding its scientific concepts.97 Utahns, as well as Latter-day Saint leaders, engaged with antievolutionism, generally by supporting evolution on its scientific, rational merits. University of Utah geology professor Frederick Pack, a Mormon, penned several articles on the scientific validity of evolution.98 The LDS Church’s First Presidency, then presided over by Heber J. Grant, issued a statement that largely echoed the 1909 statement on creation, including a paragraph affirming the premortal creation. However, it omitted any description of human evolution as a theory “of men.”99 The omission suggests that Grant and his counselors had no interest in debating Creationism from the pulpit and sought an alliance, not with Fundamentalists, but with broader American Protestantism. They conceded the possibility of evolution, but did not want to set forth a specific position. The only difference between this statement and the attitude of the majority of American Protestants was that Mormons accepted not only what they believed God “had revealed” but believed that God would “yet reveal many great and important things” in matters of science and religion.100 Although Grant did not know if evolution had actually occurred, he had not received a revelation to the contrary and kept the possibility open for revelation in the future.

Despite his desire to remain out of discussions about evolution, Grant had to confront the issue in the late 1920s. In

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98Webb, The Evolution Controversy in America, 97–98. Pack was hesitant to declare evolution or Darwinism correct, however.
99“Editor’s Table: ‘Mormon’ View of Evolution,” Improvement Era 28, no. 11 (September 1925): 1090–91.

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May 1927, B. H. Roberts presented an 847-page manuscript on Mormon theology to LDS leaders for approval to publish. Entitled *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, Roberts relied on scientific evidence to address creation and evolution. He firmly believed that his work harmonized science and scripture in Mormonism so that no Latter-day Saint could doubt their compatibility. In *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, Roberts devoted an entire chapter to the existence of organisms before the fall of Adam, including “pre-Adamites,” who, Roberts believed, evolved into human beings. Roberts also emphasized the geological evidence that the earth was much older than 6,000 years. The committee of apostles that examined Roberts’s work in October 1929 rejected certain chapters because of their speculative nature. Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, who chaired the committee, had been a longtime reader of George McCready Price. He vehemently opposed Roberts’s inclusion of pre-Adamites because he rejected the theological concept that death had occurred before the fall of Adam. Smith’s committee recommended that Roberts incorporate their suggested changes, shorten his mammoth manuscript, and resubmit his work to the committee. Roberts refused to incorporate any corrections or trim the manuscript. He did not publish the book but refrained from publicly commenting on his disappointment and did not promulgate his scientific views.

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In January 1930, Joseph Fielding Smith went public with his opposition to Roberts's work. In addressing the Utah Genealogical Society, he informed the crowd and members of the press that some in the LDS Church accepted “worldly philosophies” and demonic “theories of men” over scripture or modern prophetic authority. Although he did not mention Roberts by name, Roberts knew that Smith was referring to him and quickly penned a fiery letter to the LDS Church’s First Presidency complaining that Smith’s letter was too “dogmatic” and out of harmony with prior statements by LDS Church presidents. After more than a year’s worth of meetings discussing the topic, Heber J. Grant announced to his counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve (Smith was a member of the quorum, but Roberts was not) that he felt it best to “let the matter drop” so as not to hurt either Smith’s or Roberts’s reputation or feelings. However, Grant directed Elder James E. Talmage, a geologist and the LDS Church’s most prolific twentieth-century apologist, to deliver a sermon on the subject of evolution.

In his sermon, Talmage stated that there was “a very definite order in the sequence of life embodiment” and that he believed humans had not descended from Cro-Magnon men or other pre-Adamites. However, he took care to mention that the Church did not have enough information to dismiss any notions of human evolution: “the opening chapters of Genesis, and scriptures related thereto, were never intended as a textbook of geology, archaeology, earth science or man science. Holy Scripture will endure, while the conceptions of men change with new discoveries.” Talmage elaborated, “The accounts can not be fundamentally opposed; one can not contradict the other; though man’s interpretation of either may be seriously

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at fault.”107 The scientist apostle further stated, “Let us not try to wrest the scriptures in an attempt to explain away what we cannot explain.” Talmage’s arguments, minus Joseph Smith’s peculiar teachings on creation, could have easily been found in any non-Fundamentalist Protestant newspaper anywhere in the United States.

**Eugenics in Mormonism and the United States, 1918–31**

While their fellow Americans debated the place of evolution in public schools and from the pulpit, Latter-day Saints continued to participate in conversations about eugenics. The national conversation on eugenics escalated to the point that some states approved the forced sterilization of those perceived to be intellectually disabled, as well as people of color.108 Despite rampant xenophobia, the boundaries of who could be included as white also expanded at this time. In 1920, Takao Ozawa, a man of Japanese ancestry who had lived in the United States for more than two decades, sued for the inclusion of Japanese persons under the legal umbrella of whiteness. In their decision, the Supreme Court ruled that Asians were not white, because they lacked hereditary ties to Caucasians (those of the Caucasus on the European/Asian border). The court admitted that they did not know how to define who could legally be considered “free white persons,” but they knew that Ozawa, as a man of Japanese ancestry, could not be properly white. The Ozawa decision did, however, expand the definition of whiteness to reflect a person’s skin color as much as a person’s heritage. This

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new provision for skin color opened the door for Mormons to become white, although even twenty years earlier they would have been viewed as the spawn of supposedly racially degraded parents and members of a corrosive religion.\textsuperscript{109}

Despite broadened legal limits of whiteness, eugenics, including compulsory sterilization, became accepted and encouraged following the Great War. In the midst of the 1925 Scopes trial, “one of the largest standing committees of the American Eugenics Society was the Committee on Cooperation with Clergymen.”\textsuperscript{110} Most Americans were not ashamed to support what they believed to be the betterment of their nation through eugenics.

The Supreme Court case \textit{Buck v. Bell} (1927) demonstrates the general acceptance of eugenics by the American public. In 1924, Virginia had adopted a legal statute that authorized compulsory sterilization of the intellectually disabled. Dr. Albert Sidney Priddy, the head of the Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feebleminded, requested that the pregnant, eighteen-year-old Carry Buck be sterilized, to confirm the law’s constitutionality. Carrie’s mother had been convicted of prostitution and was also considered to be “feebleminded.” According to the colony’s head, Carrie represented a genetic threat to Virginia and the American people because (as he believed) her mother’s disability had been passed on to her and she would in turn pass on her disability to future children. Eventually, the case made its way to the Supreme Court, where Virginia’s law was upheld, 8–1. The ruling penned by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes referred to the First World War: “We have seen more than once that the public welfare may call upon the best citizens for their lives. It would be strange if it could not call upon those who already


\textsuperscript{110}Reeve, \textit{Religion of a Different Color}, 1–13.
sap the strength of the State for these lesser sacrifices." Holmes then argued, "It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind." Justice Holmes’s opinion also included the famous declaration, "Three generations of imbeciles are enough." Eugenicists deployed this logic to justify involuntary sterilizations for decades after the Bell decision.

Utah was one of thirty states to enact compulsory sterilization laws (1925). While it would be unfair to pin these laws on the LDS Church, Mormonism still exercised enormous influence over state politics and many Utah lawmakers were Mormons. The original Utah legislative bill allowed for the forced sterilization of "habitual sexual criminals, idiots, epileptics, imbeciles, and the insane." It is difficult to ascertain how many LDS leaders or laypeople supported such measures; the vast majority of Latter-day Saints were more comfortable participating in conversations about issues like birth control or hygiene than racial engineering.

For example, the Relief Society Magazine repeatedly emphasized the essential role of motherhood in improving the human family. Silas L. Cheney’s short story, “Lest Ye Regret,” offered the cautionary tale of Mrs. Van Devener who had put off the responsibility to “multiply and replenish the earth.” In the story, a gallant Senator “from the West” spoke to a large audience, but his remarks “seemed to be aimed directly at her.” The Senator asserted, “The crowning glory of any woman, the glory before which all else dims into insignificance is motherhood. Our reason, based upon the history of the race as well as the revealed word of

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God, bears ample testimony of this." Women who reared children in righteousness and provided physical education and schooling perpetuated “the race, the advancement of our civilization, and the maintenance of our sacred institutions [more] than she possibly could have done in any other way.” The story ends with Mrs. Van Devener weeping uncontrollably over her refusal to become a mother and perpetuate the human race, advance civilization, and maintain her church’s and nation’s “sacred institutions.”

Other articles in the Relief Society Magazine supported various causes also popular among conservative American Protestants, including birth control, improved conditions for mental health patients, and medical advancement.

However, Latter-day Saint leaders, as in previous years, continued to ally not just with conservatives, but also with liberal American Protestants. In appeals to science, Latter-day Saints like Josiah Hickman, a graduate student at Columbia University, argued for the genetic superiority of Mormons as the offspring of plural marriages. In 1924, he conducted an unwieldy (and scientifically suspect) study comparing the children of polygamist parents to children born to monogamists. He found that polygamous progeny were taller, in better physical health, and smarter. To Hickman, these conclusions were unsurprising. Polygamists came from “a select class of the population,” recognized for spiritual and physical strength and authorized by LDS Church leaders to marry and procreate. Four years after Hickman completed his thesis, former president of the American

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Eugenics Society Roswell H. Johnson congratulated Mormons for their eugenic theology, high birth rates, encouragement to marry young, pro-natalism, and attention to physical health.117

Johnson was not the first to praise Mormon breeding. Eugenicists had complimented Joseph Smith for having “few defectives” in his family tree in 1916 and one researcher had studied the “untapped treasure trove of hereditary information” in Brigham Young’s family.118 “This praise, from non-Mormon scientists, whose opinion mattered in American society, was a major public relations success for Mormonism. Praise for Mormonism generally came from its entertainment value—not its theology. Apostle Melvin J. Ballard proudly announced Johnson’s opinion of the Mormons and their opposition to race “suicide” in a 1927 general conference address: “Dr. Johnson, a professor in the University of Pittsburgh . . . believes that the 'Mormon' religion is the most eugenical religion in the world.”119 Ballard’s enthusiasm for Johnson’s remarks speaks volumes about how the LDS hierarchy welcomed the label “eugenical,” or in other words, white. They most likely took the statement as a validation of their theology as well. Mormons had become “white,” at least in the eyes of some influential members of the scientific community. In Ballard’s eyes, Mormonism had been accepted within the nation’s racial hierarchy.

**CONCLUSION**

Mormonism’s participation in national debates about evolution and eugenics reveals how Mormons employed science to position themselves as truly religious in the early twentieth

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119 “Elder Melvin J. Ballard,” in *Ninety-Eighth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1927), 68.
century religious marketplace. Despite the changes that Mormonism undertook during and after the gradual demise of plural marriage, Latter-day Saints chose to articulate their beliefs using scientific language and racial conversations without dropping any aspects of their unique theology or omitting references to their unique canon.

Although American Protestantism had to confront Darwinism and evolution, very few churches or religious movements required members to either wholly endorse or wholly dissociate themselves from belief in scientific theories. This response complicates the notion that religions could find a place in early twentieth-century religious culture only by dropping explicitly “superstitious” beliefs or rejecting science. Attracting converts and pleasing powerful religionists did not depend on belief in or rejection of scientific principles in the first decades of twentieth-century America. Mormons found new ways of articulating their beliefs in scientific terms without abandoning scripture or their peculiar religious practices.

Although total acceptance as a legitimate religion eluded Mormonism, Mormons used contemporary scientific discourse to secure a place in modern society even while complete religious recognition escaped them. Mormonism’s membership grew more than 70 percent between Joseph F. Smith’s published support of human evolution in 1910 and Talmage’s carefully worded, though equivocal, sermon in 1931, demonstrating that non-Christian religions could employ science to draw attention and win converts.¹²⁰

There is no evidence to suggest that any new converts joined Mormonism because of the LDS Church’s engagement with evolution or eugenical discourse. However, the Mormon push for mainstream acceptance driven by such discussions

undoubtedly brought a modern appeal to their religion and created more favorable associations with the Latter-day Saints than plural marriage had. In the United States during the early twentieth century, minority religions like Mormonism could gain acceptance as authentic religions, and perhaps even make their members white, through engagement with science and scientific discourse.
“NO TRUE RELIGION WITHOUT TRUE SCIENCE”: SCIENCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORMON WHITENESS

Cassandra L. Clark

In 1857, George Q. Cannon, president of the California and Oregon missions, soon-to-be apostle for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and editor of the Western Standard, an LDS newspaper printed in San Francisco from 1856 to 1857, published an article in the periodical defending the practice of polygamy. In his piece, Cannon argued for the superiority of polygamous marriages because only those individuals considered “healthy” were allowed to participate in the union. He explained that these marriages produced large families of “robust and healthy children” who had a particular “mental vigor.” Cannon claimed that polygamy reduced or actually prevented such social ills as “bastardy, whoredom, and degeneracy . . . concomitants, irreligion, intemperance, licentiousness and vice of every kind and degree.” According to Cannon, plural marriage offered stability to women who otherwise lacked the opportunity to marry. Poverty-stricken widows could join other families instead of turning to illegal behavior to make a living, including prostitution. To reiterate his point, Cannon stated: “There

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is not a whore in Utah, neither is there a single female but what can find a husband and a home if she so desires.”

In this strongly worded editorial, Cannon established a scientific foundation for the religious practice of polygamy by claiming that plural marriage would lead to the “improvement” of the human “species.” Polygamy’s absence, he compared, was akin to “improper” breeding of livestock. Failure to observe “natural laws” of breeding led to the decline and eventual extinction of the species. Humans, he asserted, “disregarded” these “natural laws.” He sternly warned that the “inevitable consequence” was the “degeneration” of the “race,” the introduction of “new diseases,” and an increase of “effeminacy and barrenness.” Worst of all, “this evil condition of the body had its effects upon the mind.”

Cannon’s argument correlates with statements made in a number of articles published in Mormon prescriptive literature during the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth century. In these articles, Mormon leaders and LDS scientists and doctors used religious and scientific terminology to justify and support Mormon marriage practices. Many articles published in LDS periodicals explained how science justified and promoted Mormon religious marriage practices. This prescriptive literature, aimed at a surprisingly diverse range of audiences, depending on the publication, instructed readers how to achieve an “ideal” gender and racial identity. Many aspects of this identity corresponded with nineteenth-century American racial ideologies claiming that certain characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon “race . . . proved” their racial superiority. Indeed, as historian Matthew Frye Ja-

2Ibid.
cobsen indicates, when discussing race, many Americans appeal to high authorities, even scientists, to “prove” the strength, even the infallibility, of their racial theories. As demonstrated by the writings of Cannon and other Mormons highlighted in this article, many Mormons claimed that they held the necessary keys to racial betterment. Cannon was far from unusual in linking adherence to polygamy to ensured racial purity—in other words, an ideal prescription for “whiteness.” As time went by, Mormon analysis and promotion of certain “scientific” theories played an important “objective” role in “proving” that theologically based theories regarding religion, marriage, family, and race were true.

The use of whiteness as a category of analysis has given dimension and depth to the study of race in America. Historian David Roediger has argued that whiteness became an indicator of class as the nineteenth century progressed. Whiteness, as defined by Roediger, became a constructed identity from the pre-Civil War white American working class. They described themselves as “not black” to differentiate their societal status—that of a class dependent on wage labor—from that of slaves, who were entirely dependent on their masters. Other scholars, including Nell Painter, Neil Foley, and Noel Ignatiev, explored different classifications of race that extend beyond the black/white dichotomy after the Civil War. Then American identity
shifted as a result of the abolition of slavery, rapid industrialization, and the absorption of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Ireland, and Central America. Whiteness studies of the past twenty years each explain how race is not a biological category defined by “nature,” but a social construct designed to grant power to those who espouse certain characteristics considered the “norm” in society.

Other historians have examined this time period to uncover the idiosyncrasies of American society. The Progressive Era, which ran from roughly from 1880 to 1920, was a complex time of widespread societal reform movements all designed by members of the “new” middle class who hoped to “perfect” society. As historian Robert Wiebe argued, the “new” middle class, or Anglo Saxon Protestants who became wealthy as a result of post-Civil War industrialization, instituted reform programs addressing social ills brought on by immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. These social programs reached a multitude of individuals considered “less fortunate,” including lower-class individuals and immigrants, seeking to introduce “order” to the rapidly industrializing nation. “New” middle-class activists organized a myriad

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7 The fluidity of the Progressive movement allowed individual groups to choose programs to fit their personal agendas. Social reform programs sought to force individual groups to adopt characteristics that reformers saw as solutions to certain ills, including but not limited to prostitution, alcoholism, overpopulation, and poverty. Many historians have worked to understand the social and political programs as well as the ramifications of these movements. For the complexity of Progressive reforms, see Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877–1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966); Glenda Gilmore, Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Michael McGerr, A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), xiv.

of programs addressing specific issues in need of “reform.”

Different Progressive groups addressed perceived social ills including reforming politics, controlling big business, instituting government control over the economy, instilling Victorian values, transforming gender roles, and eliminating poverty. As historian Michael McGerr has stated, each group of Progressives worked to “transform other Americans, to remake the nation’s feuding, polyglot population in their own middle-class image.”9 During this time, white middle-class Americans believed that they held the keys to solving America’s ills and, with an air of superiority, instituted social programs designed to acculturate their targeted group of choice. In addition, Progressive Era thinkers and other Americans studied why Anglo-Americans were having fewer children than the “new” immigrants from Eastern Europe and turned to scientific studies hoping to find an “objective” answer to this question.10 Eugenics became one outlet for some Progressives to address these issues.

Sir Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin and known, among other professions, as a sociologist, psychologist, and anthropologist, looked for a solution to social problems. He began formal work on eugenics as early as 1863 and published writings regarding better breeding and mate selection by 1866. He officially coined “eugenics” in 1883 by combining the Greek words for “well” and “born.”11 In May 1904, he read a paper to the Soy say's/1900-1911/galton-1906-eugenics.pdf (accessed April 4, 2013), 3.

9McGerr, A Fierce Discontent, xiv.

10Edwin Black, War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Race (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), 15. See also Donald Pickens, Eugenics and the Progressives (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), and Daniel J. Kevles, In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

11Sir Francis Galton, Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development (London: Macmillan and Co., 1883), 25, http://babel.hathitrust.org.ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015002397670;view=1up;seq=13;v1=eugenics;st Councils, 10;size=10;page=search;orient=0;num=v (accessed
cological Society hosted by the School of Economics at London University in which he defined eugenics as a “science” that dealt “with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of race: also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage.”

He emphasized the inheritability of human traits, arguing that social vices like prostitution, alcoholism, and crime, would pass from parent to child. He urged the proliferation of members of society deemed “fit” and taking steps to discourage the reproduction of the “unfit.”

America’s eugenics movement was multifaceted, thus making interpretation important to analyze. Many Americans who eagerly adopted eugenic theories often interpreted these works to meet their own needs, making the varied programs diverse, contradictory, and often oppressive. For example, “Free Lovers,” according to scholar Jesse Battan, were left-wing individuals who rejected sterilization but advocated birth control, thus making sexual expression, not procreation, the key to their social organization. Historian Christine Rosen argues that “liberal” religious leaders adopted some eugenic theories to remain relevant, making religious support important in the success of the eugenic movement. Groups seeking to reform or assist sought compatible aspects of eugenics theories and adapted them to fit their cultural, political, and religious understandings of soci-

March 13, 2013).


Within a few years of Galton’s coinage of eugenics, it had infiltrated many aspects of American life. Eugenics also fit within Progressive Era Americans’ broader emphasis on a growing reliance on trained “professionals.”

Combining Progressive Era reforms and scientific theories with Mormon racial prescriptive literature, becomes a useful lens for viewing the construction of race in America. The articles, sermons, and other documents discussed below explain how Mormons used scientific studies to understand and define racial categories and to illuminate more broadly how Americans used scientific racial ideas to categorize, marginalize, and oppress individuals considered inferior. At the same time, comprehending how Mormon dedication to religious principles, science, and...

15 The eugenics movement in America, Great Britain, and Germany followed a strict “racialized” scheme, focusing specifically on the dangers of procreation by the “unfit” (usually lower-class citizens in every nineteenth-century “racial” classification). Elites in many Latin American countries, including Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, embraced “Neo-Lamarkianism,” or specific programs that reformers initiated to rid society of ills that were, they considered, destroying their countries’ race. According to Nancy Leys Stephan, “The Hour of Eugenics”: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), “Neo”-Lamarkianism was a fluid form of eugenics, allowing for broader interpretations that each culture could adapt to fit its own traditions.


17 I use “science” as nineteenth and early twentieth-century Americans understood the term. Because of the highly racialized and otherwise discriminatory nature of the “scientific” studies mentioned throughout this paper I hesitate to use the word without quotation marks. It is certainly weighted, connoting objectivity and undisputable “truth.” However, to avoid distraction, I have chosen to use the term without quotation marks and trust that the reader will understand the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century context and not interpret the term as reflecting my personal promotion of the related theories.
American racial categorizations assists in uncovering Mormonism’s highly complex and complicated racial past.

In late 2013 and early 2014, LDS leaders published two essays, well-documented but without identifying author(s) or date(s) of posting, on the Church’s official website discussing racial topics. The first essay, published in December 2013, traces the African American priesthood ban and the restriction of black men and women’s participation in temple ordinances to the racial theories of Brigham Young, thus discrediting formerly held beliefs that God revealed to Young that black men should not hold the priesthood nor participate in those ordinances associated with the calling.18 This ban had been lifted in June 1978. The second essay, “Book of Mormon and DNA Studies,” was posted in January 2014. It discussed the derivation of American Indians, and how genetic testing can neither “affirm or reject the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon.”19 Both articles summarized a long history of controversial Church-promoted racial classifications that different groups, each with their own agendas, continue to debate, defend, and denounce. Now scholars are beginning to weigh in on these 2013 and 2014 announcements, work that requires an unpacking of historical and contemporary Mormon racial ideologies.

In 2003, sociologist Armand Mauss tackled this issue in his sweeping analysis, All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Perceptions of Race and Lineage. Mauss argues that, as the Mormon Church embraced a worldwide missionary effort, leaders altered their racial perceptions of other cultures. Initially, Church


leaders and members understood their identity as that of a chosen people. As the missionary movement spread worldwide, exposure to other cultures, combined with mid-twentieth-century societal pressures, led the Church to abandon previously held notions regarding race, especially in regards to the priesthood ban.

Placing Mauss’s work beside the racial language of Cannon and other authors of Mormon prescriptive literature, one sees a complex process of the construction of a Mormon racial identity. Isolation in the Great Basin allowed Church members to practice polygamy beyond the jurisdiction of the American government for three decades. Yet, as Paul Reeve demonstrates, the Mormon exodus to the Great Basin did not reduce the amount of scrutiny that members faced. In fact, according to Reeve, because of polygamy, Mormons were conceptualized as a distinct scientifically and medically defined “race.” Reeve includes the reflections of U.S. Army doctor Roberts Bartholow stationed in Utah Territory in 1857–58, who depicted Mormon men “as lecherous and lascivious patriarchs” and Mormon “women as helpless victims enslaved in a system against their will,” while Mormon children were “the deformed offspring of moral depravity.”

An interesting dichotomy emerges when comparing the arguments of Bartholow and Cannon. For Cannon, Mormons situated within the “isolated” boundaries of the American West could freely practice polygamy without persecution. Cannon believed that God had instituted polygamy, and adherence to this principle led to the strengthening of the “race.” Historians B. Carmon Hardy and Dan Erickson argue that Mormons “borrowed extensively from guidebook authors, scientific thinkers,

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22 Roberts Bartholow as quoted in ibid., 17.
and sexual theorists of the day,” seeking information from these source materials to persuade others that polygamy was the solution to restore people to their “pristine capacities” and to prepare “the world . . . for the millennium.”\textsuperscript{23} The comparison of this work with the documents unveils an interesting dichotomy of racial perceptions contingent on the observer’s geographic position within the country. In the case of twentieth-century eugenic scientists, the Salt Lake Valley became a useful petri dish for the examination of inheritable traits.

For nineteenth-century non-Mormons gazing westward to the Salt Lake Valley, members of the LDS Church were an inferior and degenerate race, a view Reeve summarizes as a population consisting of “overwhelmingly white” people who were “imagined as not white.”\textsuperscript{24} In response to these national declarations of racial degeneration, Mormon members and leaders dug their heels into western soil to prove that Mormons were not only white, but polygamy was a guarantee of ultimate “whiteness.” This was not racial purity limited to American and European scientific findings, but whiteness defined by God, who directed and guided man in his quest for knowledge. Scientific findings only proved what leaders had taught before, thus becoming evidence of Mormon communication with God. In essence, Mormons held a monopoly on the meaning of whiteness; and despite outside scrutiny from the rest of the country, their adherence to God-ordained marriage and procreation practices led them to foster a “perfect” white race.

Joseph Smith, the Mormon Church’s founding prophet, testified throughout his life that he received direct revelation from God, instructions that he transmitted to his followers.\textsuperscript{25} One of


\textsuperscript{24}Reeve, \textit{Religion of a Different Color}, 4.

\textsuperscript{25}For a brief and accessible account of Joseph Smith’s testimony, please see, \textit{The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ} (Salt
the most controversial of these revelations, polygamy, has a long and complex history. Joseph Smith initially kept the practice secret from his legal wife, Emma, who later denied the handful of other wives she had acknowledged during Joseph’s lifetime.26 Although the secret practice was a major factor in Joseph’s assassination, outsiders noted that Mormon leaders practiced polygamy, thus “tying political power to plural marriage.”27

Cannon’s *Western Standard* article was one of many contemporary efforts to justify the practice of polygamy by using scientific principles. Cannon first discussed the physical advantages of polygamy, then explained how Latter-day Saints living in the “valleys of the mountains” endeavored to practice polygamy, thereby achieving “a purer state of society.” Joseph Smith knew that “as long as the bodies of men are weak, degenerate, and tainted with impurities inherited from their fathers for a thousand generations, it is impossible to accomplish with them any great moral improvement, or indoctrinate them with many divine truths.” According to Cannon, Smith taught that only healthy men “should marry” and that, once married, they should abstain from intercourse during pregnancies and while the child was being breast-fed, that adulterers should die, that there was no tolerance for “whoredom,” but that adherence to these laws produced “healthy and vigorous” children.28

Cannon’s words reflect much more than a mere backing of polygamy. Because of national scrutiny, Cannon rationalized po-
lygamy using both spiritual and scientific arguments. As national opprobrium built against the practice, he followed up his 1857 article with additional defenses using scientific vernacular. In 1867, writing as an apostle, he published an article in the *Millennial Star*, the Mormon periodical printed in England, arguing that “the only remedy” for the “evils existing in a monogamic society was for politicians to ‘prune’ the branches of society.” Lawmakers’ failure to do so had resulted in a “more abundant crop of” corrupted “fruit.” According to Cannon, in addition to the practice of polygamy, “race improvement” came because of adherence to the “celestial law of marriage” and direct separation from individuals who practiced “social evil[s].” Mormons had immigrated to the Utah Territory to distance themselves from “Babylon” and “her plagues,” and members who married the sons and daughters of “Babylon” (individuals who accepted social vices), were inevitably destined to partake “of her sins and their consequences.” Cannon called the “virtuous and honorable of all the earth” to migrate to Utah where they could “establish a pure society and nation, in which our children can marry without danger of corruption, and where we can educate them in the knowledge and practice of those principles of social purity so essential to their existence and happiness.” Those who continued “comingling with the corruptions of the world” would, within one or two generations, negate all efforts to maintain a pure society.29

The doctrine of the “gathering,” which drew believers into a holy city had been preached from the Church’s organization, first in Kirtland, Ohio; next in Missouri, then in Nauvoo, Illinois; and finally in Utah. When considering Mormon nineteenth-century emphasis on geographical segregation as a protection from the influence of non-members within a racial context, a Zion established in what they perceived as the “isolated” West offered the seclusion needed to create a “strong race” of people who could

choose other members for marriage partners. In other words, moving from Nauvoo to the American West offered an ideal place to ensure racial purity, or “whiteness,” by removing those considered “inferior,” not necessarily because of their heritage, but because they were not members of the Church.  

Cannon continued his 1867 article by depicting an “exceptional” Mormon identity tied inexorably to faithfully following Church leaders’ teachings, including marrying nonmembers. He also indicated that “the only remedy” for societal corruption was the practice of polygamy or “Celestial” marriage. Celestial marriage would endure throughout all eternity. Therefore Mormon theological teachings trumped all scientific findings. Only two or three generations in the future, Church leaders would assert that God revealed scientific knowledge to the diligent researcher blessed with a passion for truth, including scientific truth.  

30LDS leaders did not necessarily believe that membership ensured racial purity for all. Reeve, Religion of a Different Color, 123, 144–48, demonstrates that late nineteenth-century Mormon leaders did not allow full membership to African Americans and other marginalized peoples by restricting the priesthood to white men. Armand Mauss, All Abraham’s Children, 43, offers an insightful analysis of Mormon ideas regarding American Indians. As other historians have shown, by the close of the nineteenth century, immigration complicated American understandings of race, and therefore “whiteness” became complex and hard to obtain. Nell Irvin Painter, The History of White People (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 210–11, argues that late nineteenth-century “racial science” concepts emphasized the impossibility that “new” immigrants from eastern and southern Europe could become “Americanized,” a reversal of pre-Civil War beliefs.


32Many Mormon leaders and lay members argued that God assigned talents to His children and that scientific knowledge was one of these talents. One of the strongest supporters of this idea was Apostle John A. Widtsoe, a renowned scientist who published a plethora of books and pamphlets that explained how religion and science complemented each other. Widtsoe claimed that scientific knowledge came as
One year before Cannon’s *Western Standard* article, Apostle Orson Pratt, preaching at the Salt Lake Tabernacle, urged the Saints to “store” their “minds with arts and sciences, not with foolish conjectures” nor “vain philosophy that” would “fly away with the beams of the sun.” Instead, he urged his listeners to turn to “useful facts” sought “by men influenced by the inspiration of the Almighty and recorded in books.” Pratt cast God as the author of all knowledge and the giver of information to inspired men; that scientific “discoveries” aided the advancement of “civilization,” which he defined as the “acquirement and correct application of useful knowledge.” He later condemned the world for failing to “comply” with the basic “principles of civilization and praised Mormons for making “better use” of the scientific principles they received.

In 1874, Brigham Young also weighed in on scientific information. Speaking at the Tabernacle, Young stated that “intelligence” was contingent upon one’s personal desire to obtain knowledge. Scientific men, he explained, believed that their knowledge extended beyond “those of their neighbors.” He condemned their arrogance, emphasizing that all wisdom came from God. Science and religion were one. There was “no true religion without true science, and consequently there is no true science direct revelation from God as a result of continued personal progression. As human beings continued to seek education, they would reach a level of knowledge that would allow them to live with God again. See, e.g., Widtsoe, *What Is Man?*, pamphlet (Salt Lake City: Council of the Twelve and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, broadcast by Columbia Broadcasting’s program, Church of the Air, October 4, 1936).


without true religion.”35

According to Young, both scientific and religious certainty came from God. The harmony between Young, Cannon, Pratt, and Smith’s ideas shows that Mormon leaders then believed that their membership allowed them access to knowledge regarding racial purity, which included comprehension regarding “proper” lifestyles. Those who understood that God was the “author” of all “knowledge” could claim access to information about “proper” marriage and lifestyle practices that secured racial superiority. In essence, Mormons understood “whiteness” better than scientists because their belief in God opened doors of scientific knowledge not available to those who did not express faith and dedication to His principles. According to Young, combining religion and science gave Mormons all-encompassing access, if they proved themselves faithful, to those steps needed to obtain and secure racial purity.

In 1890, Wilford Woodruff, then Church president, released a statement popularly referred to as “the Manifesto” that withdrew official sanction for new plural marriages, although without mentioning on-going plural cohabitation. As historian Carmon Hardy has shown, however, polygamous unions were still authorized in the United States, Mexico, and Canada until 1910.36 Woodruff’s declaration came after years of national and political scrutiny and after many failed attempts to gain statehood. Cessation of polygamous practices and Utah statehood altered the ways that Mormons understood their identity. As Carmon Hardy stated, “Claiming to have quit the practice, many Mormons craved full partnership with other Americans in support of


their nation’s highest values.” As I will show below, this shift in mindset is also reflected in articles published after the 1890 Manifesto that referenced scientific theories, including eugenics, to encourage proper mate selection and the birth of healthy children. Many LDS publications included articles on eugenics, indicating that science became one way for members to embrace a national identity by demonstrating how Mormon mate selection and large families adhered to scientific prescriptions of “proper” marriage practices. In turn, referencing scientific studies also allowed members to remain dedicated to a “Mormon exceptional” identity rooted in revelation from God and guidance by a modern-day prophet.

Meanwhile, scientists interested in eugenics found Mormon lifestyles a fertile field of study. Some looked westward from the Eugenics Records Office located in Cold Springs Harbor, New York, to members of the LDS Church who offered a testing ground to prove their heredity theories. Scientists believed that Mormon isolation and its history of community settlement kept them mostly apart from other settlers of westward expansion. In addition, member dedication to genealogy also offered eugenicists the documentation needed to study inheritable traits. Finally, Mormon standards of living fit easily into scientists’ positive eugenics ideals. Utah’s geographical position allowed Mormons to grow as a community without significant outside influence. As discussed below, Utah Mormons offered a unique sample group that could provide eugenicists with the credibility they needed to become a distinguished branch of the American scientific community.

Many early twentieth-century Mormon publications contained articles discussing the importance of eugenics. Amey B. Eaton, a non-LDS field worker sent by Harry H. Laughlin, director of the Eugenics Records Office, to study the children of polygamous families, published an article in the LDS Young

37Ibid., 286.
Women’s Mutual Improvement Association magazine. Eaton explained that practicing eugenics would lead to the improvement of the “race of men and women” and a person could not find a “nobler cause or loftier purpose” than compiling information for the eugenics movement. Asserting that the union of the feebleminded “seems” to produce feebleminded children, she urged Utahns to pass legislation to “prevent the continuation of such intolerable conditions” that allowed the “imbecile” to reproduce.

She also called for a state home to segregate feebleminded men from “our young girls” to prevent their possible “ruin.” Eaton’s overt support of the eugenics movement, her self-identification with the presumed goals of the Mormon people, and her proposal to segregate the “feebleminded” offer interesting insight into understanding American whiteness. Wendy Kline has argued that the “feebleminded” label referred more often to

38 The Special Collections and Archives at the Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, in Logan contains correspondence between Harry H. Laughlin and John A. Widtsoe, a university-trained chemist. He served as president of Utah State Agricultural College (now Utah State University), as president of the University of Utah (1916–21), and as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1921–52). Both men were enthusiastic about the usefulness of the Mormon population in eugenic studies. Laughlin recommended Eaton to Widtsoe for her expertise in working with Amish peoples in the East and her broader experience studying isolated religious communities. Widtsoe, Letter to Laughlin, Box 26, fd. 8, John A Widtsoe Papers, 1907–16, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University. Eaton also taught one semester at the University of Utah. Amey B. Eaton Papers, Historical Faculty Files, Reference Number UU-ACC0526, Marriott Special Collections, University of Utah. See also Petrea Kelly, “Young Woman’s Journal,” The Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 4:1615.


40 Ibid., 13–14.

41 Ibid.
sexual misbehavior than to intellectual shortcomings. Women who engaged in premarital sex were often stigmatized as “feebleminded” and placed in state institutions.42

Other historians have studied the effects of eugenic sterilization, especially of marginalized peoples including Mexican immigrants living in California and American Indian women.43 In Utah, the majority of the population was white and American-born.44 Thus, segregating the feebleminded would prevent the intermingling of supposedly racially superior young women with those deemed racially inferior; considering the population of Utah, the inferior could include other “white” individuals. In addition, if a young woman engaged in a relationship with a feebleminded individual, then her whiteness could be called into question. If this relationship evolved into a sexual relationship that produced offspring, eugenic emphasis on the inheritability of traits would deny whiteness to the children.45 The appearance of Eaton’s article in a periodical approved by Church leaders and directed toward Mormon young women also demonstrates that the editors supported eugenic whiteness ideas and wanted LDS

42Wendy Kline, Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 29.
43Jane Lawrence, “The Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American Women,” American Indian Quarterly 24, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 400–419; Alexandra Minna Stern, Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
44Reeve, Religion of a Different Color, 4.
45Philosopher Anna Stubblefield argues that feeblemindedness became an “umbrella concept” that assigned “tainted whiteness” to individuals who were considered “off-white” because of ethnicity, poverty, or a lack of moral character. This “off-white” racial classification applied to immigrants from Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and Ireland, and eventually extended to impoverished whites. Stubblefield. “Beyond Pale”: Tainted Whiteness, Cognitive Disability, and Eugenic Sterilization,” Hypatia 22, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 162.
young women to identify as racially superior.

The same issue also included an article by Widtsoe, who provided a brief synopsis of eugenics, explained how Mormons could apply this theory, urged care in choosing a “proper mate,” and reminded his young female readers that children had a right to be “well born” of a “good and honest lineage.” References to being “well born” indicate a desire to ensure that LDS marriage practices promoted better breeding among the “fit,” or in terms of racialized categories, those that would prevent the proliferation of a tainted race.

These ideas correlate with another article appearing in 1916 written by A. Lee Brown, a physician. He explained that parents’ obligation to care for their children begins before conception with proper mate selection. Children had the right to enter a family “not only well” but “on purpose.” Both Widtsoe and Brown stressed the importance of physical health, with Brown focusing primarily on the mother’s well being. Brown’s discussion of the link between a “healthy body” and a strong “spiritual mind” differed from traditional eugenic teachings. His emphasis on “spirituality” linked religious beliefs with scientific, suggesting that for Mormons race was inextricably tied to physical and spiritual health.

Brown’s article stressed the importance of nurture and its influence on the mind while Widtsoe focused specifically on eu-

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47 Archie Lee (A. Lee Brown) was born in Ogden, Utah, served in the U.S. military, earned a medical degree from a school in London, England, and was a general practitioner in Salt Lake City from the 1920s until his death in 1953. My thanks to Christopher Jones for this biographical information.


50 Brown, “Education for Parenthood,” 133.
genics as a “new brand of science” that placed the best of human means forward through “discovering such laws of nature.”

Brown encouraged young women to select their spouses carefully, and Widtsoe called them to complete genealogical studies to link heritage and eugenics teachings. Healthy parents who lived in accordance with Church-defined principles would allow a child to reach his or her full racial potential (whiteness), and eugenics provided the scientific data needed to define proper parenting roles.

The *Relief Society Magazine*, published for the Church’s women, also included similar themes, but many directly conflicted with popular eugenic recommendations to curtail the undesirable population by using birth control. The magazine’s goal was to provide information that “strengthen the testimonies of its readers.” In 1916, five apostles were quoted in an article entitled “Birth Control.” Apostle Rudger Clawson warned women that those who limited their family size would regret their decision because they would have no children to “smooth their pathway down to the grave.” Their choice not only denied them the opportunity for the “ministrations of loved ones” during their old age, but their names would also “disappear from among men.” Those who chose to use birth control to restrict the size of their family faced the “displeasure and righteous anger of an offended creator” who sent man to the earth so He could bring “to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”

Apostle Orson F. Whitney argued that people who limited

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their family size rebelled against God’s commandment to “multiply and replenish the earth” and therefore would commit their own “race suicide.” In addition, while the “eugenists” sought to limit the proliferation of the “unfit,” their devotion to a science rather than to religion restricted the amount of knowledge they could receive because all information came from God. \(^{55}\) According to both Whitney and Clawson, racial purity, or whiteness, was linked directly to Church membership. In this view, those who sought racial purity would not obtain it unless they joined the Mormon Church and adhered to procreative and morality standards. Within this context, whiteness was obtained through scientific and religious channels, and only Mormon leaders and members could fully obtain this racial status.

While Mormons integrated eugenics teachings into their theological publications to influence their members to increase family size through “better breeding” practices, early twentieth-century eugenic scientists became interested in Mormon polygamous families as examples of inheritable traits.

In 1912, the first article written by scientist Henry H. Laughlin, superintendent of the Eugenics Records Office, appeared in the *American Breeders Magazine: A Journal of Genetics and Eugenics*, a periodical published quarterly by the American Breeders Association that sought to improve breeding of both humans and animals. Laughlin explained that data collected from Mormon families living in Utah could help to prove theories of heredity. Laughlin popularized the work of the nineteenth-century German monk, Gregor Mendel, who crossbred different types of peas and determined the existence of dominant and recessive genes. Laughlin explained that Mendel’s work applied to human reproduction as parents passed both desirable and undesirable genes to their children. \(^{56}\)


Laughlin and C. B. Davenport, director of the Carnegie Station for Experimental Evolution, trained a group of researchers to collect as much data as possible on families “black [and] white, poor and rich” to further their eugenic theories.57 During training sessions, Laughlin provided a list of nine objectives, each varying in purpose and execution, but all designed to collect and study authentic data to promote and organize additional eugenic centers of research that would advise local populations of proper marriage unions “for the betterment of the human stock.”58

Administrators at the Eugenic Records Office instructed researchers to concentrate on “isolated communities,” including the “old Mormon families of Utah.”59 In 1913, eugenics scientists applauded Utahns’ support of eugenics as indicated by the inclusion of an article in the American Breeders Magazine about the organization of a Utah Eugenics Society. The article praised the Utah branch for utilizing “the abundant research material available in the race conglomerate of Indians, half breeds, oriental and especially the old Mormon families of whom no doubt church and other records exist reaching far back.”60 Laughlin and Davenport felt that Mormons’ geographical location, their dedication to “better breeding” standards, and the “racial” diversity of Utah, offered a unique test tube for not only analyzing heredity theories but, more importantly, to prove the authenticity of eugenic studies.

By February 1916, The Journal of Heredity published, as a major article, “Brigham Young: A Illustration of Prepotency.” This article compared the “inheritable” traits of Brigham Young’s eleven daughters “by eight different mothers” as a case study for “prepotency”—the situation in which one parent “contributes”

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57 Black, War against the Weak, 52.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 67.
more physical characteristics than the other. According to the author, identified as J. Hered, the female offspring of Young’s polygamous marriages “graphically” illustrated the “phenomenon of prepotency.” The article included a photograph of Young’s adult daughters and one of Young with a caption identifying Young as of “old Puritan stock, and although not all his ancestors have been traced, it is believed that he was of exclusively English descent.”

Alluding to Young’s ancestry was important for the authenticity of Hered’s conclusions. Eugenicists promoted the breeding of the “fit,” or “old stock” Anglo Americans who could trace their lineage back to early English Americans. Young’s English heritage proved his possession of the physical and biological characteristics considered “ideal” to those interested in eugenics. For these readers, identifying Young’s heritage proved his racial superiority, indeed his whiteness, making this article an important addition to understanding one aspect of eugenics.

Hered further claimed that the daughters’ physical characteristics “show as much resemblance to each other as one often finds in the children of one father and mother.” Hered also concluded that studying the Mormon population would benefit eugenicists who sought to accurately “advance” the research of “human heredity more rapidly” than “any other American genealogical data.” According to Hered, Mormon marriage practices combined with their dedication to genealogy presented an important case study for “biological” research and could assist in proving eugenic race theories true.

61J. Hered, “Brigham Young: An Illustration of Prepotency,” The Journal of Heredity 7, no. 2 (February, 1916): 51‒54. At this point, the sponsoring agency had been renamed the “American Genetics Association” from the “American Breeders’ Association.”
62Ibid.
63 Ibid., 52–53.
64 Ibid., 51.
65 Ibid., 54.
Interest in polygamous families remained a topic of research for eugenic scientists well into the 1920s. The January 1924 edition of the *Journal of Heredity* included a lengthy article by J. E. Hickman, long-time educator who held teaching positions at Brigham Young College in Logan, Utah, principal of the Oneida LDS Stake Academy at Preston, Idaho, and head of the Physics Department at Brigham Young University (1900–1907). Hickman hoped that his article would dissolve some of the misunderstandings about polygamous offspring that continued to circulate in American society rooted in the perceptions of nineteenth-century “religious intolerants” who he said claimed these unions produced “dwarfed, ill shapen [sic] and demented” offspring that “fostered ignorance, crime and squalor.”

He included the findings of two studies, one examining students, and another from the statistical information of “three to four times as many monogamic families as polygenic” that was “gathered mostly from the writer” of individuals living in “forty-one towns and cities, only one which had more than 3,000 inhabitants.” After providing a series of statistical information that compared the education, public office involvement, and “moral standards” of his subjects, he concluded that among the polled students, the progeny of plural unions were “endowed from birth with a physical and mental advantage” that manifested “itself throughout the history of the individual while for those adults he interviewed and who completed questionnaires, more children of polygamous families had completed high school, attended an institution of higher education, avoided contact with the law, and held some form of public office. These findings, he concluded, indicated that polygamy produced children whose intellectual aptitude and moral character were superior to those of “monogamic” offspring. This, he said, was because only the

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most “noble men and women who entered this principle—wom-
en who sought noble companions and longed to bear the souls of
men into the world.”

Hickman’s lengthy article reflected years of dedicated re-
search. He claimed that his work was unbiased despite being a
member of the LDS Church, because he masked the identities
of his subjects until after he concluded his study. Mate selection
and large family size allowed Mormons to prove their whiteness;
and for Hickman, the Mormon lifestyle paralleled the ideal pro-
moted by eugenicists.

Unique to the inclusion of Hickman’s article, was a brief ed-
itor’s note included directly below the title and before the in-
troductory sentence of Hickman’s work. The unidentified editor
explained that Hickman’s article was published to showcase the
statistical data of Hickman’s research but that the article was
“shortened” to “the extent of omitting discussion” of defending
polygamy. It was “far beyond the province” of the Journal to ad-
dress the “religious question” derived for or against the practice
of polygamy. Hickman’s work was published because its findings
displayed “differences” that were “so pronounced after so short a
period of selection.” He felt those conclusions were of “great in-
terest” and “unusually pertinent” in establishing that “the mating
of the hereditarily well endowed would produce striking results
in few generations.”

Hickman’s article along with the editor’s addendum high-
lights a power play that occurred among two eugenic scientists.
Hickman’s study sought to dispel long-held stereotypes about
polygamous families, and thus he attempted to prove the racial
superiority (whiteness) based on character and intellectual scales
of the children of plural marriages to those produced from mo-
nogamous unions. He sought to defend polygamy by showcasing
how adherence to the principle, by those deemed “noble,” result-
ed in intellectually superior beings, thus indirectly proving that

68Ibid., 55.
Mormon polygamists were not only white, but whiter than those individuals who participated in monogamy. At the same time, the editor’s note indicated that the staff at the *Journal* avoided taking a position on religion and were interested in Hickman’s findings only because of the “unusually pertinent” results. While Hickman was suggesting that adhering to a religious principle secured whiteness, the editor avoided any connection with religion and focused on statistical data that could prove the benefits of better breeding.

Eugenic scientists continued to study Mormons into the twenties. In November 1928, Roswell H. Johnson, former president of the American Eugenics Society, wrote that the “eugenic situation is better in Mormonism than in other cults.” Johnson argued that the Mormon practices of mate selection, their religious beliefs regarding a pre-earth existence and the afterlife, and their dedication to large family size embodied how one group could advance the cause of race improvement in America. Not only did he applaud Mormon marital, health, and procreation practices, but he also focused on their spiritual beliefs, something that other scientists had avoided. Johnson accentuated how Mormon human origination dogmas corresponded with eugenic theory, thus blending scientific study with religious dogma and allowing readers of the journal to engage both.

Johnson explained his understanding of Mormon “eternal progression,” calling it of “greatest moment to the eugenicist.” According to Johnson, Mormons believed that all humans are spirit children of God, “created in the first estate as unembodied spirits.” Prior to birth, each spirit child exercised his or her own agency by exerting “moral freedom.” They had progressed “to a greater or less extent at the time when the opportunity” came for them to “enter a human embryo which become available.” Because these spirits were eager to obtain a body to ensure their

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70 Ibid.
eternal progress, some chose “too uncritically,” entering bodies that were “not equal in desirability” and that it would have been “better to have rejected.”

Mormon ideas regarding the afterlife also appealed to Johnson’s interests. Mormons taught that at death the “spirit” was “disembodied” but retained its “moral freedom,” allowing for continued “advancement.” During the “Great Judgment Day,” God divided these spirits based on their “rate of progress” into three kingdoms, the celestial was occupied by the “rapidly advanced,” the “middle rate” went to the terrestrial, and the “slow rate” were sent to the telestial.

Johnson saw two important features that made Mormonism a unique eugenic religion but which were also its “weakest feature biologically.” Mormon belief that the “human spirit” maintained “moral freedom” after death extended proper living choices and mate selections beyond mortality. Members who contracted “proper” marriages and raised large families (e.g., progressed eugenically) were blessed on the judgment day by assignment to the celestial kingdom, or highest degree of heaven. Choosing a “fit” spouse benefited the member both in mortality and afterward. This LDS theological position exalted the motivations of “better breeding” as part of God’s plan because Mormon theology explained that spirits who entered “defective” bodies prohibited the “best possible progress” of that individual. It was therefore “the soundest Mormonism to strive diligently to keep spirits out of bad brains and on the other hand to provide good brains for them.”

Yet Johnson was critical of some Church policies and felt that the Church should encourage lower classes to use contraceptives and other forms of birth prevention. He complained

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71Ibid., 5.
72Ibid., 5–6. These are Johnson’s interpretations of Mormon exaltation and should not be taken as official Church teachings.
73Ibid., 8.
74Ibid., 7.
that the “Women’s Relief Society” gave money to “many morons and feeble-minded and other defectives and tolerates in this way the production of defective children.” Relief Society women should carefully assess “dubious” cases of relief to prevent the “reproduction” of those whom they helped. Using “segregation, sterilization, or approved contraception,” he taught, should be implemented on a case-by-case basis to restrict procreation. He praised “Mormonism for encouraging the policy in Utah of “an institution for defectives in which sterilization of some of the inmates is authorized”—but “the number of cases so treated is so small and . . . the facilities for segregation are inadequate.”

Despite his criticisms, Johnson praised Mormonism high family and marriage practices, which gave “Mormonism an assured future.” Reaping “eugenic rewards,” the Church would become one of the “more successful religions or combinations of religions to arise in the future.” Johnson’s article created an ideological space where religion and science collided with the hope of improving the “race.” While he highlighted Mormon theology to suggest that eugenic race theories might have eternal ends, he also underscored the importance of restricting procreation among “defectives,” which he identified mainly as those experiencing cognitive incapacities. In this context, whiteness was contingent on the reproductive possibilities of individuals who espoused particular physical, mental, and personal characteristics, including an emphasis on marriage and family; yet he

75Ibid., 8.
76Ibid.
77Ibid.
78Many historians have examined the influence of eugenics on gender and race during this period, though understanding how eugenics influenced constructions of whiteness is in its infancy. For key discussions of the gender and race aspects of eugenics, see Kline, Building a Better Race; Nancy Ordover, American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), and Nancy Leys Stepan, “The Hour of Eugenics”: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University
took these ideas one step further. By tying race, both white and non-whiteness, to eternity, he crossed into a realm that most scientists did not entertain.

As the prescriptive literature indicates, Mormons wanted readers to believe that they held the key to creating a “superior” race. Initially leaders argued that polygamy was central to the “improvement of the species,” yet this claim to the sanctity of whiteness persisted after the end of polygamy. Instead of losing confidence in their ability to promote proper breeding practices, Mormon prescriptive literature emphasized monogamy and encouraged members to follow strict breeding and partner selection. Utah became a place where science and religion forged a new relationship. Mormons who promoted eugenics participated in a national movement that sought to improve the American “stock.” Eugenics also fit Mormon regional needs as the Saints used scientific theory and methods to explain “objectively” their positions within a “God ordained” hierarchical scale. Regardless of the motivations, Mormon support of the eugenic movement highlighted a move by Church leaders and congregants to use scientific studies to understand race in twentieth-century America.
QUITTING TEA AND COFFEE:
MARKETING ALTERNATIVE HOT
DRINKS TO MORMONS

Melvin L. Bashore

In 1833 Joseph Smith received the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom. It offered instructions and guidance on food and enjoined all Saints to abstain from wine, strong drink, tobacco, and hot drinks. While the revelation declared that it was suited “to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints” (LDS D&C 89:3) many—both leaders and members alike—found it hard to obey all of its proscriptions.

While many struggled to abide its tenets, leaders wrestled for decades with questions of interpretation and how to administer standards of adherence. It wasn’t until 1921 that the Church invoked obedience to the Word of Wisdom as a requirement for entrance to its temples.¹ One of the issues that leaders and members debated was the revelation’s ban on “hot drinks.”

As early as 1842, Hyrum Smith noted that many members were unclear what “hot drinks” meant. “I say it does refer to tea, and coffee,” he wrote authoritatively; but others were less certain, and


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the issue remained unsettled for many decades. In 1901, Joseph F. Smith reiterated that “hot drinks” meant tea and coffee. The term did not refer to “pepper, ginger and other such things which people were referring to in rationalizing their drinking of tea and coffee.”

While science writers and medical researchers were beginning to identify caffeine as the harmful stimulant in coffee several decades before 1900, Church leaders did not specifically focus on its chemical properties. Rather, they were distressed at its addictive hold. “Some people have become so addicted to the use of coffee,” said Joseph F. Smith, “that they do not have the power to resist its temptation.”

Joseph F. Smith was one of the more outspoken nineteenth-century Church leaders preaching about the Word of Wisdom. For him, the standards in the revelation were a spiritual matter. “I do not care a groat about your tea or your coffee,” he said, “What I have in mind is this: God has said that these things are not good.” He hated to see people resort to these habit-forming stimulants when they became fatigued or weary. He bemoaned the practice of “a good housewife who takes her tea or coffee to stimulate, and to enable her to finish her day’s work.” In his view, she was injuring her spirit and enslaving her body.

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4Articles identifying caffeine as the stimulant property in coffee began appearing in American newspapers as early as the 1850s. For example, see “The Beverages We Infuse,” New York Daily Times, February 6, 1854, 4.

5“President Smith Scores Fashions,” Box Elder News (Brigham City), October 9, 1913, 2.

“I would rather feel tired and exhausted by labor, and let nature have a chance to restore itself,” he said, “than I would attempt to doctor myself by the use of narcotics and drugs that would sap the foundation of my physical and spiritual health.”

When he became Church President, Joseph F. Smith did not cease to stress the importance of the Word of Wisdom. He did not always specifically comment on coffee and tea, but he continued to stress the Word of Wisdom in general conference and stake conference addresses. He criticized lax members who made excuses for not living the Lord’s law of health. He observed that “some people saw no evil in drinking tea and coffee because these items were not specifically mentioned in the revelation.”

In 1892, Joseph F. Smith, then second counselor in the First Presidency, confessed in general conference that he had experienced times when “he seemed to crave everything that the Lord had said was not good for man.” He placed himself in broad company, adding that he been told on good authority that no more than 10 percent of Church members kept the Word of Wisdom. And among that health code’s prohibitions it seemed to be tea and coffee—not tobacco or alcohol—that were the greatest stumbling blocks for many otherwise faithful Mormons.

It is understandable that many converts brought into the Church a lifetime of acquired habits and tastes—some of which proved very hard to abandon. In 1894, Apostle George Teasdale confessed his own difficulty after he joined the Church. “I was raised on tea and coffee, like the rest of the English,” he confided. For him, the tea and coffee drinking habit was a simple matter of taste coupled with pleasure. “Why do we take it?” he asked. “Well, it’s a warm drink, and it is comforting to us.”

Before 1900, Church members and leaders shared a general

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7Ibid., 674.
8Peterson, “An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom,” 82.
Apostle George Teasdale confessed that drinking tea and coffee was “comforting.” Photo courtesy of LDS Church History Library.
acceptance and sympathetic understanding of members, especially older adults, who had a weakness for those proscribed hot drinks. “I do frequently sympathize with aged brothers and sisters when they are drinking tea and coffee,” said George Q. Cannon. He said that while he personally wished these members could enjoy drinking tea and coffee “all their lives,” God’s law was clear on the matter. He expressed hope that they could somehow overcome their weaknesses.\footnote{George Q. Cannon, “Discourse, Delivered at Mill Creek . . . August 26, 1894,” Deseret Semi-Weekly News, September 25, 1894, 1.}

While the Brethren could be understanding of those struggling with these habits, they undertook a Word of Wisdom reformation at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Heber J. Grant, a forty-seven-year-old apostle in 1904, led the crusade for strict obedience to the Word of Wisdom, although he lamented that he sometimes felt as though he was preaching to deaf ears when he issued calls for reform. He told about two instances in 1904 that disappointed him greatly. After preaching obedience to the Word of Wisdom earnestly at a stake conference, he went to the stake president’s home and was hurt to the quick when the president’s wife asked him if he would like a cup of tea or coffee with his meal. At another stake conference, he preached zealously on the same topic. The stake president then followed with some remarks at the pulpit, commenting pointedly that he thought the Lord would forgive them for drinking coffee because the water in that stake tasted so bad. Grant didn’t say anything, but inside he was fuming. “I had to pray to the Lord and to bite my tongue to keep from getting up and . . . thrash[ing] him from the public stand,” he said. “I felt that God owed me a blessing for not publicly reproving that man, because I wanted to do it so badly.”\footnote{Heber J. Grant, “Word of Wisdom,” Deseret Weekly, December 22, 1894, 1.}

Calls from the pulpit to obey the Word of Wisdom became increasingly imperative and pricked the consciences of many
Heber J. Grant, as both an apostle and as Church president, led the crusade for stricter observance of the Word of Wisdom. Photo courtesy of LDS Church History Library.
who had a craving for a cup of hot tea or coffee. “From their actions, many Latter-day Saints evidently think that when the Lord gave the Word of Wisdom, He was not in earnest, that He did not mean what He said,” Apostle Abraham O. Woodruff proclaimed in 1903, “for they have gone right along drinking tea and coffee . . . as if not a word had been said.”

Church leaders during the first decade of the twentieth century placed ever-increasing strictures on violators of the Lord’s law of health. “I believe the time has come when all Latter-day Saints should be held to a little stricter account,” Apostle Francis M. Lyman told members in 1908. “I say I believe the time has come when they should observe the Word of Wisdom.” Speaking as president of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, he believed it was time for a reformation. As a result, ecclesiastical leaders began questioning members about drinking tea and coffee during interviews for temple recommends or Church callings, and leaders themselves had to answer to other leaders on the same topic. According to Thomas G. Alexander, in June 1902, Joseph F. Smith urged stake presidents and others to refuse recommends to flagrant violators but to be somewhat liberal with old men who used tobacco and old ladies who drank tea. Habitual drunkards, however, were to be denied temple recommends. . . . After the inauguration of Heber J. Grant’s administration in 1918, however, the advice became less flexible. In 1921, church leadership made adherence to the Word of Wisdom a requirement for admission to the temple. Before this stake presidents and bishops had been encouraged in this matter, but exceptions had been made.

13Abraham O. Woodruff, Seventy-Fourth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 1903 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1903), 23 (hereafter cited as Conference Report).
14Francis M. Lyman, Conference Report, April 1908 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1908), 15.
16Ibid., 82.
C. W. Post, a health food entrepreneur, named his most popular drink after himself—Postum. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress, 16071u.tif.
It was in this reform-minded climate that manufacturers and advertisers of tea or coffee substitutes targeted the Mormon market, especially in northern Utah. This article focuses on these coffee/tea substitutes that were advertised heavily in Utah for about two decades starting in the mid-1890s. In some cases the advertisements for these products differed from advertisements for the same products in other states, principally because they were directed at Mormons. But these coffee/tea substitutes also came on the market in Utah at a time when Mormons were very receptive to trying them. They were motivated to find a replacement for coffee and tea because their Church leaders were increasingly pressuring them to stop using those drinks.

Almost a dozen hot drink alternatives were advertised during this period in Utah newspapers. A few of them were even manufactured in Utah, some with a modicum of success.

Postum was the first and, in the end, the most successful of all coffee substitutes. Created by C. W. Post in 1895 and marketed as a healthful alternative to coffee and tea, it began appearing in advertisements in Utah newspapers only a year later. The advertisements used a two-pronged approach to sell the beverage. First, they enumerated the many negative effects believed to result from drinking tea or coffee, including such ailments as heart and kidney disease, general nervousness, memory loss, and sallowness of the complexion. Second, the ads touted pseudo-scientific claims and customer testimonials promoting the healthful attributes to be gained by drinking Postum.

One 1907 Postum ad in the Deseret News discussed some of the “facts” about coffee and tea. It stated that coffee and tea contained “the same kind of a drug as cocaine, morphine, [and]
How to Tell

Whether Coffee is causing your Troubles

It seems easy to leave off drinking coffee and note the results.

But you say “I can’t get along without coffee,” so the dreary days follow one another, the same old pains and aches, slowly growing a little worse. Do you dare think of the road ahead, if that downward tendency keeps on, and why shouldn’t it unless you change the daily habit?

Suppose today you assert your right to crush this habit and start a new and healthful life. It’s easy to quit coffee and take on Postum

Which is made of clean, whole wheat, and contains no caffeine—the drug in coffee that causes so much trouble.

Postum

Is not only free from the harmful coffee poison, but contains the natural phosphate of potash found in a part of the wheat berry which is included in making this famous food drink.

It builds up broken-down brain and nerve cells, and no one needs this more than the chronic coffee drinker.

Ten-days freedom from coffee will show

“There’s a Reason”

for Postum

Postum was successfully advertised in newspapers with testimonials and scientific “facts.” Courtesy Salt Lake Tribune, 80407p3.jpg.
strychnine.” The stated similarity between such drugs and poisons and coffee or tea is that they are all alkaloids, some more harmful than others. The advertisement neglected to mention the varying levels of potency of different alkaloids. The information in the ad was meant to shock.

Postum had been successfully using this scare-tactic approach in its advertisements almost since the introduction of its product. “Nearly all of the disorders of the human body arise from some derangement of the nervous system,” declared one 1897 Deseret News Postum ad, “and this is caused by unnatural substances put into the stomach, such as coffee, tobacco, whisky, morphine, etc., all of which contain definite alkaloids as shown by analytical chemistry.” The notice continued: “These alkaloids are all poisonous, varying in degrees of course, as strychnine is very much more poisonous than tobacco and tobacco is more poisonous than coffee, but they all belong to the same family.”

Interestingly, this 1897 Postum ad was more honest in specifying comparative levels of potency in different alkaloids than its 1907 counterpart. Both ads were consistent, however, in stressing that coffee contained a harmful substance. While reliable medical information about alkaloids was also reported in newspapers in the 1890s, half-truths in coffee-substitute advertisements (like Postum) were effective in frightening coffee drinkers.

The Postum testimonials, pioneered successfully by patent medicine promoters of earlier years, were a key element. Postum drinkers, usually unnamed, claimed that drinking the beverage calmed their nerves, improved their sleep, and brought them renewed vigor. A 1903 Deseret News Postum advertisement quoted the testimony of a school-age girl (unnamed) from Alva,

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Oklahoma, who claimed that drinking coffee and tea had made her complexion “sallow and muddy.” She also suffered from painful, constant headaches. However, “I dropped coffee and took up Postum and now my dull headaches have disappeared, my complexion is fresh and rosy, eyes bright and mind clear.”

The design of these early Postum advertisements, formatted more like news articles than display advertisements, was another successful ploy.

The makers and marketers of Postum enjoyed marked success for decades—especially in Utah. The Postum Cereal Company eventually became General Foods, which later was purchased.

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23“Hot Beverages,” 8.
by Kraft Foods. When Kraft Foods discontinued its production of Postum in 2007—more than a century after it first came on the market—it brought a hue and cry from Utah Mormons. The Salt Lake Tribune reported that “Mormons Mourn[ed] Postum’s Passing” and the Deseret News stated that fans of the drink were “in withdrawal.”

In 2013, Postum returned to stores in Utah and other nearby states, having been bought, produced, and marketed by Eliza’s Quest Food.

It may have been Postum’s success that piqued the interest of other entrepreneurs. In 1897, an article in the Ogden Standard reported that “a great many ‘imitations’ of, and ‘substitutes’ for coffee are being offered on the market at present.”

Two early coffee substitutes were produced in California and first advertised in Utah newspapers in 1901. In 1898 the St. Helena Sanitarium Food Company, a commercial offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventist health retreat in California, began distributing Caramel Cereal Coffee on the West Coast. The company began advertising its cereal coffee in Utah in 1901. Deseret News advertisements noted that it had received the “highest award” at the California State Fair annually since its inception. Caramel Cereal Coffee had initially been concocted and manufactured in 1896 by brothers J. H. and W. K. Kellogg. In addition to being administrators at the Seventh-day Adventist Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan, they conducted food experiments, one of which led to the development of the first

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26Advertisement, Deseret Evening News, November 1, 1901, 5.
27Early advertisements for Caramel Cereal Coffee stated that it was manufactured by the Battle Creek Sanitarium Food Company in Battle Creek, Michigan. See “Health Food Exhibit,” Alexandria Gazette, March 17, 1896, 3.
edible corn flakes. While Caramel Cereal Coffee product enjoyed little success in Utah, it was marketed elsewhere throughout the country for several years.

The second California coffee substitute that began promoting its product in Utah in 1901 was Figprune Cereal. Advertisements in the Ogden Standard claimed that it was the “best and most palatable coffee and tea substitute . . . on the market.” Consisting of 54 percent fruit and 46 percent grains,

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Harvey W. Wiley, the father of the Pure Food and Drug Act, scrutinized Figprune’s overblown claims. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.
Cere was one of several Utah-produced coffee substitute beverages. Photo courtesy of Salt Lake Tribune, 1128p21.jpg.
it boasted of being the “perfect breakfast beverage.”

30 It claimed to both look and taste like coffee. “None but coffee experts can tell the difference between Figprune and the best Mocha and Java,” ads crowed.31

Figprune sales declined after 1909 when the U.S. District Court in California found it guilty of violating the Pure Food and Drug Act by misrepresenting its contents on its package labels.32 In 1911, Harvey W. Wiley, chief chemist in the Bureau of Chemistry, who was regarded as the “father” of the Pure Food and Drug Act, pounced on Figprune’s advertising claims. His office found that it “possesses no particular value as a nerve preserver, brain feeder, or health restorer” despite its claims to the contrary.33

In 1902, Anthon H. Lund recorded in his journal that a Brother Peterson from Elsinore had asked him if it would be wrong to concoct and drink home-made cereal coffee. Lund told him “I would rather have them make it at home than import ‘Postum.’”34 In 1903, the first of several commercial coffee/tea substitutes began production in Utah. Produced by the Cache Valley Tea and Soda Water Company in Logan, Monogram Cereal Coffee’s advertisements claimed that it was the “most wholesome beverage ever sold” and the “best Cereal Fruit Coffee on the market.”35 It had to be boiled for ten minutes to give it the best flavor.

In 1908 the Cereo Manufacturing Company in Logan purchased the formula and right to manufacture the beverage

32“Two Firms Guilty of Violating Food Law,” San Francisco Call, October 10, 1909, 24.
35“The Cache Valley Tea Co.,” Logan Republican, April 8, 1905, [4].
Tests performed by the Utah State chemist assured ZCMI's customers that Kneipp Malt Coffee contained no harmful ingredients or elements of coffee. Photo by Salt Lake Tribune, 9294901.jpg.
and changed the name to “Cereo.”\footnote{City and County, \textit{Logan Republican}, August 19, 1908, 5.} Frederick A. Neuberger, a German-born Mormon convert, was the company’s president. Manufacturers boasted that it tasted like coffee but offered a reward of $500 to anyone who could find “one grain of coffee in our Cereo.”\footnote{Ibid.}

In 1910 the company looked into moving its plant to another city to find a larger market and increase its production capacity—which then was reported as 88,000 pounds of Cereo per month. Ogden looked attractive for the opportunities it offered in rail transport, but the firm moved to Salt Lake City and set up a manufacturing plant at 747 South State Street.\footnote{“New Manufacturing Industry Is Coming,” \textit{Salt Lake Tribune}, January 21, 1911, 14.} Cereo was stocked on floor shelves in Utah for at least a decade.

At first available only in Europe, Kneipp Malt Coffee was introduced to America in the mid-1890s. From 1904 to 1909, it was sold in ZCMI and other Utah groceries. ZCMI advertisements proclaimed its merits: “Kneipp Malt Coffee Makes Rosy Cheeks!”\footnote{Z.C.M.I. [advertisement], \textit{Goodwin’s Weekly}, September 24, 1904, 5.}

It had reportedly been concocted by Father Sebastian Kneipp, a Bavarian Catholic priest who became a celebrity of sorts in the nineteenth century for his water cure treatments and healthful regimens. Hordes of believers were drawn to the tiny Bavarian village of Woerishofen to improve their health. Father Kneipp was an “enemy of coffee” and forbade its use, replacing it with a kind of “soup made from flour and finely ground bran.”\footnote{Stockingless Belles, \textit{Anaconda Standard}, January 25, 1891, 10.} Advertisements claimed that it tasted so much “like real coffee that . . . there must be some coffee in it.”\footnote{Opinion of Experts, \textit{Minneapolis Journal}, June 11, 1904, 9.} Using a ploy familiar from other substitute products, the manufacturers offered $1,000 “for anybody who can find a single trace of coffee, chicory or other
foreign substance or adulteration in any original factory-sealed package of Kneipp Malt Coffee.” Knowing that its Mormon clientele needed assurance that it did not contain coffee, Utah State chemist Herman Harms analyzed it and certified it as “absolutely free from ‘Coffee Essence.'”42 With that scientific endorsement of content purity, Mormons could be assured of not violating the coffee proscription in their health code.

Utah was not alone in having experts testify to Kneipp Malt Coffee’s purity in its advertisements. In addition to similar certification in other states, Dr. Von Pettenkofer, the personal court physician of Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, certified that the hot beverage was “entirely free from all injurious substances.” This advertisement, which appeared in a Wisconsin newspaper, continued by quoting him that Kneipp Malt Coffee was “far superior to all other coffee substitutes.”43 But in no other state than Utah was the advertising of its claims to purity as extensive or as central to its advertising message.

A short-lived coffee substitute was started up in 1906 by the Hewlett Brothers Company in Salt Lake City. The president of the company was Frank Hewlett, who five years later would be called to serve as a mission president in South Africa. Called Golden Grain Cereal Coffee, it was analyzed by Herman Harms, the official chemist for the State of Utah, and found to be “strictly high grade” and “absolutely pure.”44 Golden Grain Cereal Coffee saw the wisdom of getting an official endorsement of their product’s purity for their Mormon customers, and achieved that goal when the Manufacturers and Merchants Association of Utah deemed it worthy of purchase and recommended it to the buying public.45

42“Is It Pure?” Deseret Evening News, September 24, 1904, 2. He did not define what he meant by “coffee essence.”
44“Fine Testimonial,” Logan Republican, April 21, 1906, [8].
45“Manufacturers and Merchants Association Endorses Hewlett’s Three Crown Products,” Garland Globe, April 21, 1906, [6].
Nutrito was another cereal coffee that was marketed in Utah in 1906. First manufactured and distributed in 1905 by the Girard Cereal Company in Girard, Kansas, advertisements claimed it to be “the finest non-stimulating drink on earth.”46 In advertisements, they extolled their unionized labor force, which they claimed was “composed of socialists alone.” They urged customers to support “reliable union goods, and not nauseous mixtures made by citizens alliance presidents like [P]ostum.”47 But in February 1906, the Girard Cereal Company admitted that, since inception, its “biggest day’s business done had been something over $200.”48 With earnings so low, it was unable to stay in business.

Dr. Shoop’s Health Coffee was another competing brand that began marketing its cereal coffee in Utah in 1906. Clarendon I. Shoop began producing a line of cure-all patent medicines in a plant in Racine, Wisconsin, in the late 1880s. Made from cereal grains, malt, and nuts, his Health Coffee was advertised in Utah as being “safe even for the youngest child” and, importantly, “containing not a grain of real Coffee.”49 While Shoop’s Health Coffee was advertised for several years nationally, it was marketed for only a brief time in Utah.

Although the government was strengthening its enforcement of truth in advertising, the entrepreneurial climate in coffee and tea substitutes was brewing. In mid-August 1907, a team of south-of-the-border pitchmen came to Utah to interest people in purchasing stock in a banana plantation in Tampico, Mexico. Their offer gained traction after Judge C. C. Goodwin voiced

46“Nutrito Cereal Coffee [advertisement],” *Typographical Journal* 29, no. 3 (September 1906).
49“Does Coffee Disagree with You?” [Dr. Shoop’s Health Coffee advertisement], *Spanish Fork Press*, February 21, 1907, [4].
Nutrito was manufactured in Kansas by a union labor force “composed of socialists.” Photo courtesy of Rare Books Division, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.
interest in using banana extract “as a substitute for tea and coffee” in an editorial in Goodwin’s Weekly, his Salt Lake newspaper. The Tampico Fruit Company, owned exclusively by Utah people, purchased 1,000 acres of land for a banana plantation. Banker, horticulturist, and fruit grower J. M. Jensen of Brigham City was appointed the managing director of the operation.

Two months later, Professor A. F. Spawn of Vera Cruz, Mexico, came to Utah to promote his discoveries of banana food products including banana coffee. The Deseret Evening News noted that Spawn had been experimenting with bananas for over twenty years and wanted to give a practical demonstration of his discoveries. He hoped to convince the First Presidency and other leaders that “to drink his banana coffee would be in no sense a violation of the Word of Wisdom.” He prepared a lunch of his banana products in the Lion House for fifty young women enrolled in a domestic science class at LDS University. The Salt Lake Herald stated that the purpose of the luncheon was to “illustrate the nutritive and harmless qualities of banana coffee.” It was reported that the young ladies enjoyed the luncheon including the banana coffee “with much relish.”

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50“City and County,” Logan Republican, August 14, 1907, [5].
51“A Statement Concerning the Banana Plantation Owned and Operated by the Tampico Fruit Co.,” Salt Lake Herald, March 31, 1907, 11.
52Prof. Spawn’s daughter was married to L. H. Davis, who was in the real estate business in Salt Lake City. “Here’s a New Food Product,” Salt Lake Herald, July 14, 1907, 11.
53Prof. Spawn’s Specialty,” Deseret Evening News, October 15, 1907.
55“Novel Dinner to Convince Mormons That Banana Coffee Is All Right,” Salt Lake Herald, October 16, 1907, 12.
56“Luncheon of Bananas,” Salt Lake Herald, October 23, 1907, 10.
Banana coffee was “made by drying and roasting the fruit and afterward grinding it up.”

ZCMI advertised banana coffee for sale in newspaper advertisements in 1908. Its advertisements proclaimed that it was the “best substitute for Java and Mocha you ever tasted.” They attested that it was “neither stimulating nor injurious, and is highly recommended for young or old.” Although reports stated that it was a popular drink in Mexico, Utahns never

57“A Statement Concerning the Banana Plantation,” 11.
acquired a taste for it.

One of the pioneer businesses with a long tenure in Salt Lake City, the J. G. McDonald's candy company began the production of soluble cocoa in 1908. Using specially made German machinery, McDonald's was one of only four factories in the world that made soluble cocoa. One floor of its large plant located at 155 West 300 South was devoted to the production of cocoa. For three years (1908–11), it marketed its beverage worldwide under the name McDonald's Coffee Cocoa.

Its print advertisements usually stressed that “excessive coffee drinking” was “injurious” but that McDonald’s Coffee Cocoa had “the opposite effect” and, indeed, was a “nourishing and delicious drink.” While its advertisements marketed the drink as a coffee substitute that had a “distinct, delicious coffee flavor,” it is not known whether the contents actually contained coffee. One ad claimed that “unsweetened, ground chocolate is a delicious, inexpensive substitute for tea.” In 1911 it changed the product name from “Coffee Cocoa” to “McDonald's Soluble Cocoa” and thereafter made no mention of whether the drink's flavor resembled that of coffee.

A common thread in many of these coffee substitute advertisements was the nutritional and healthful benefits that could be gained from drinking their beverages. The Fisher Brewing Company, which was established in Salt Lake City in 1884, began running advertisements in about 1909 praising the nutritional value of their beer. A 1909 ad in the Salt Lake Herald asked the question, “Why not use a table beverage that is a food?” It argued that “coffee and tea are not foods in any sense” whereas

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the extract of barley malt in Fisher Beer was a “splendid food.” In that sense, it was the “logical table beverage, because it is a part of the meal.”

Fisher Beer certainly deserves credit for creative marketing, but it is doubtful that many Mormons would have been persuaded to placate their thirst for coffee or tea with beer. Most of these coffee/tea substitutes (except Postum) enjoyed limited success in Utah. While most of them lasted under five years, in 1908 a company in Logan produced a coffee substitute that was manufactured and sold for fourteen years. Made by the College Pure Food Company, Koffe-et was begun by John A. Hendrickson, a Norwegian-born Mormon who came to Utah in 1863 at age three with his parents. Hendrickson, who had

63“Why Not Use a Table Beverage That Is a Food? [advertisement],” Salt Lake Herald, January 18, 1909, 6.
a knack for business and marketing, also started the highly successful Cache Knitting Mills.

He successfully battled and changed public impressions that his beverage would violate the Word of Wisdom, using scientific testimonials, product demonstrations, and newspaper advertising. John A. Widtsoe, then president of Utah State Agricultural College and a fellow Norwegian, endorsed Koffe-et in advertisements. "I have carefully analyzed . . . the . . . Koffe-et Compound . . . and find it entirely free from injurious substances," Widtsoe stated. "It possesses a flavor very much like the real coffee and makes a good wholesome drink . . . a beverage
that young and old may use freely with absolute safety.”64

One 1908 ad in the Logan Republican approached the Word of Wisdom question head-on with the format of an informative article. It noted the range of opinions about what was meant by “hot drinks.” While some thought it meant any drink heated on a stove, others thought it referred to drinks that were specifically “hot or stimulating within themselves.” The ad argued that if the hot temperature were the prohibitive factor, then there would be no harm in drinking cold coffee or tea. But if it was the “hot or stimulating” contents of the drink that were of greatest concern (which was probably the belief of most Mormons), then Koffe-et was safe for Mormons to drink because it contained no stimulant. The ad claimed that if coffee or tea drinkers would begin drinking Koffe-et, “their health will be improved and their conscience will be clearer.”65

Koffe-et advertised in Church publications like the Young Woman’s Journal. In a column entitled “Girl Queries” in that publication, one young lady asked if the Church approved of drinking Koffe-et since it allowed its advertisements in the Journal. “There is no serious objection to Koffe-et,” Catherine Hurst replied. “It is not well, however, to form the habit of taking hot drinks regularly.”66

Koffe-et was regularly dispensed in product demonstrations in stores and public gathering places, like fairs. In 1908, the company gave out samples at a banquet for old folks at the Agricultural College in Logan. The newspaper reported some of the remarks overheard: “Why that is better than the real coffee”

64“Koffe-et [advertisement],” Logan Republican, August 26, 1908, 8.
65“A Drink That Is Always Good,” Logan Republican, November 21, 1908, 1.
66Catherine Hurst, “Girl Queries,” Young Woman’s Journal 23, no. 11 (November 1912): 646. The name of the beverage was misspelled in this article. Its proper spelling was Koffe-et, not Koffee-et.
and “No trouble now to keep the Word of Wisdom.”\textsuperscript{67}

In 1915 Koffê-et was sold to the Utah Cereal Food Company, which had moved the manufacturing operation from Logan to Ogden in the latter half of the previous year. Hendrickson stayed

\textsuperscript{67}“Koffê-et Stood the Old Folks’ Test,” \textit{Logan Republican}, June 27, 1908, 1.
on as second vice president, but the business was bought by Utah capital investors. Matthew S. Browning, an Ogden financier, was named president and Governor William Spry was first vice president. It was sold in stores for another six years until 1922 under the brand name of Sunripe Koffe-et.

While these commercial hot drink products tried to imitate the flavor of coffee, several of them also claimed in their advertisements to be a substitute for tea. British Mormon converts found it difficult to suspend their comforting, social tea-drinking habits. George Teasdale understood that his British countrymen craved the comfort and sociability of their warm tea. He knew that it was hard to wean them from such an ingrained habit. But with God’s help, he had left off drinking it. “I have no desire for it now,” he said. “Why do you not take some native herbs and make your own tea,” he suggested, “if you are obliged to have the warm drink?” His suggestion likely fell on deaf ears. Most herb teas were used for medicinal purposes. The tea concocted from the plant Ephedra nevadensis, which was popularly known in pioneer times as “Brigham tea” or “Mormon tea,” was used more for medicinal purposes than as a tea substitute. Its harsh flavor was hardly the soothing beverage that English converts relished.

Did commercial coffee/tea substitute beverages help Mormons obey the “hot drinks” tenet of the Word of Wisdom? While that question can’t be answered with certainty, three factors may be useful in reaching a general conclusion: anecdotal evidence, market success of the products, and estimates of Word of Wisdom compliance to help in this regard.


69Several commercial herb tea products were available in Utah. Garfield Tea was used to treat constipation and relieve headaches. See advertisement in Emery County Progress (Castle Dale, Utah), May 11, 1901, 2. “A.D.S. Herb Tea,” Salt Lake Herald-Republican, August 27, 1909, 2.

70“Medical Uses of Herbs Told by D.U.P.,” Mount Pleasant Pyramid, October 6, 1933, 1.
While the abundance of coffee/tea substitutes on the market may have helped wean some Mormons from the real thing, Heber J. Grant and others continued to speak about the Word of Wisdom for many years. In 1925, President Grant bemoaned the laxity in observing the Word of Wisdom among the Saints. “I regret to have heard that there are men occupying positions as bishops’ counselors, and as members of high councils, who do not observe this law,” he lamented, “that certain bishops’ counselors and members of high councils are not only drinking tea and coffee, but some of them are using tobacco.” Coffee and tea drinking were hard habits to abandon.

While most of the coffee/tea substitute beverages did not enjoy commercial success in Utah, Koffe-et remained on store shelves for fourteen years and Postum prospered for decades. The market demand sufficed to keep them in business. We can only conjecture, but most of their trade probably were faithful Mormons who wanted to keep the Word of Wisdom.

Estimates of Word of Wisdom obedience is the third factor in attempting to measure the appeal of these commercial hot drink substitute beverages to Saints who were trying to live their religion. In 1892 Joseph F. Smith had reported that he had been told by a source he did not identify that “not more than one-tenth of the people . . . absolutely kept the Word of Wisdom.” In a 1921 address, Apostle Richard R. Lyman said, again without attributing his source, “It has been variously estimated that ten per cent or twenty per cent, or forty per cent of the people in the Church use tea and coffee.” Six years later, Heber J. Grant said that Church members were still lax in obeying the Word of Wisdom. He declared that all the presidents of the Church had “begged and begged, advised and advised, and still there are one-third of the church members who do not observe the commandment.”

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71Heber J. Grant, Conference Report, April 1925, 9.
73Richard R. Lyman, Conference Report, October 1921, 103.
74“Card Playing Breaks Rule, Heber J. Grant Tells Throng,” Ogden
leaders, that probably wasn’t far from the mark. If these estimates are close to accurate, Word of Wisdom obedience among the Saints may have improved from a low of 10 percent adherence in 1892 to 60-90 percent compliance almost thirty years later. Given the wide range (30 percent) and the way Lyman phrased his remark in 1921, these estimates are sweeping guesses rather than accurate surveys. Even so, if the 1921 estimates were closer to 40 percent of the members still drinking coffee and tea, that is still a marked improvement from the 90 percent estimate in 1892.

While these estimates are decidedly conjectural, given the complementary success of Koffe-et and Postum during this period in Utah, we could surmise that commercial alternative hot drinks might have played some part in helping some Saints quit drinking coffee and tea. However, in the eyes of Church leaders, there were still far too many who remained enslaved to their tea and coffee habits. While the advertisements of most of these beverages claimed to taste as good as the real beverages, they apparently couldn’t or didn’t satisfy the many Mormons who craved the flavor of real coffee or tea.

_Standard Examiner_, August 29, 1927, 1. Grant was addressing the Ogden Stake quarterly conference, Ogden Tabernacle, August 28, 1927.
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (TEMPLE LOT): A SOCIOHISTORICAL STUDY OF A PARTICULAR SOLAE SCRIPTURAE MORMONISM

Chrystal Vanel

Most scholars of Mormonism focus on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, and currently presided over by Thomas S. Monson. However, according to Massimo Introvigne, a specialist in new religious movements, “six historical branches1” (I use the term “Mormonisms”2)

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2“Mormons,” “Mormonites,” and “Mormonism” originally referred to believers in the Book of Mormon. Mark Lyman Staker, Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith’s Ohio Revelation
developed after the death of the founding prophet, Joseph Smith, in 1844: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; the Community of Christ; the Church of Christ (Temple Lot); the Church of Jesus Christ organized around William Bickerton (1815–1905) leadership; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that accepted James J. Strang (1813–1856) as prophet and king; and the Church of Jesus Christ that followed the leadership of Alpheus Cutler (1784–1864).

Each of these Mormonisms had a unique historical trajectory and theological evolution. The LDS Church is today by far the “Majority Mormonism” with more than 15 million members worldwide. The Community of Christ, the second largest movement with nearly 200,000 members, was organized around the leadership of Joseph Smith III (1832–1914) in 1860. First called the New Organization, then as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, it adopted its current name in 2001. It evolved from a “moderate Mormonism” to a

(Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 72–73, 87. I argue that “Mormonism” exists wherever there is belief in the Book of Mormon, even though adherents reject the term to distance themselves from the LDS Church. The plural term “Mormonisms” may have been used for the first time by Grant Underwood, “Re-Visioning Mormon History,” Pacific Historical Review 55, no. 3 (1986): 420; and since then by Danny Jorgensen, “Conflict in the Camps of Israel: The 1853 Cutlerite Schism,” Journal of Mormon History 21, no. 1 (1995): 64; David Howlett, Kirtland Temple: The Biography of a Shared Mormon Sacred Space (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014); Christine Elyse Blythe and Christopher Blythe, eds., Mormonisms: A Documentary History, 1844–1860 (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013); Jorgensen uses “Mormonisms” following discussions with Jack Neusner, a scholar on “Judaisms.” Danny Jorgensen, email to Chrystal Vanel, October 5, 2010.

3Introvigne, Les Mormons, 22.

“Progressive American Protestantism, with Mormonism as an option.”

This article focuses on another particular historical Mormonism: the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). Organized in the 1850s around the leadership of Granville Hedrick (1814–81), the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and its members are thus often referred to by scholars as “Hedrickites.” Historical research on Hedrickite Mormonism has mostly been done by R. Jean Addams, whose wife, Liz, is from a Hedrickite background. I thank Addams for his generosity in sharing primary sources—mostly Hedrickite early records and periodicals—that he made accessible to me in Word format with the help of H. Michael Marquardt and Jason Smith. I also consulted the Hedrickite later periodical (Zion’s Advocate, published by the Church of Christ since 1922) at the Community of Christ Library-Archives in Independence, Missouri. I completed my historical study of Hedrickitism with sociological research in Independence where I had several conversations with officials from the Church of Christ (among them Apostle William Sheldon) and fellowshipped with members. I am very grateful to the members of the Church of Christ for their hospitality, willingness to share their story with me, and participation in a survey of their congregation.

In this article, I argue that the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) could be defined from its creation in the 1850s as a sola scripturae Mormonism, drawing from my PhD research, which endeavored to build a typology of the six historical Mormonisms. Sola scriptura is one of the founding principles of Protestantism, according to which the “ecclesiastical institution, not being holy of itself, can fail, and its faithfulness must be evaluated according to principles external to the church.”

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to the Scripture.” The Church is not bound by its traditions—embodied by a priestly institutional authority—but by scripture alone. The Church of Christ fits two characteristics of a *sola scriptura* Mormonism: (1) It bases its doctrines and practices solely on the two founding scriptures of early Mormonism, the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and refuses Joseph Smith’s late theological innovations—such as plural marriage and baptism for the dead; and (2) It is willing to evaluate and reform itself according to those two scriptures.

First, I will briefly summarize the origins of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). Then I will show that, from its beginning, Hedrickite Mormonism claimed to be solely founded on Mormonism’s two foundational scriptures. I will then argue that another foundational principle of Mormonism—continuing revelation—expressed itself in Hedrickism. Drawing mainly upon a survey administered to a Hedrickite congregation, I will show that Hedrickites recognize scriptures as the primary source of authority, above Church leadership and tradition, a characteristic that actually encourages individualism. In conclusion, I will share some thoughts on Mormon fissionaryness.

**THE ORGANIZATION OF HEDRICKITE MORMONISM**

Granville Hedrick, a farmer in Crow Creek, Illinois, joined Mormonism between 1841 and 1843. Three Illinois Mormon congregations gathered for the first time in his house during the winter of 1852. They were deeply concerned by developments in Utah Mormonism, especially polygamy. In March 1857, this group declared their “independence and separation from all those apostate and polluted characters who teach or practice polygamy,” stating that they “have no fellowship in union or

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association with any such person or persons who teach or practice
the doctrine of polygamy.”8 In April 1857, Hedrick was chosen
as presiding elder.

During a conference on November 8, 1862, John E. Page
(1799–1867) joined the group. Converted to Mormonism
in 1833, Page had been ordained as an apostle in 1838, after
a successful mission in Canada. After Joseph Smith’s death,
he briefly accepted Brigham Young’s leadership, then in 1846,
affiliated with James J. Strang, whose claims were bolder than
Young’s. While Young first considered himself to be Church
president, Strang claimed to be a prophet like Smith. However,
disappointed with Strang’s authoritarianism, Page joined James
Brewster (1826–1909), whose Mormonism was solely based on
the Bible and Book of Mormon. In 1850, Brewster moved to
California with his followers where his movement gradually
dissolved. Page stayed in the Midwest, joined the Hedrickite
congregations that declared their independence in March 1857,
and used his own apostolic ordination during Joseph Smith’s
lifetime as authority to ordain Hedrick an apostle on May 17,
1863.9 Two months later during a conference on July 9, Page
ordained Hedrick as president, prophet, seer, and revelator. But
given his skepticism about James Strang and Brigham Young,
Page refused to show deference to Hedrick and even cautioned
against the danger of corrupt prophets. Quoting a leader of the
New Movement who scoffed at Page’s ordination of Hedrick
as possibly resulting in a flood of “spurious revelations,” Page
warned: “Well, that may be the case if he becomes as corrupt as
his predecessor did the latter part of life; but we hope and pray
for better things.”10 Indeed, Hedrick was not an autocratic leader.

8 A Declaration of Independence and Separation, March 5, 1857
(Independence: Church of Christ [Temple Lot], 1857).

9 John Quist, “John E. Page: Apostle of Uncertainty,” in Mormon
Mavericks, edited by John Sillito and Susan Staker (Salt Lake City:
Signature Books, 2002), 19–33.

Truth Teller 1, no. 3 (September 1864): 41.
His branch of Mormonism seemed to revere only the scriptures.

**THE SCRIPTURES AS PRIMARY HEDRICKITE AUTHORITY**

From its beginning, the Hedrickite movement characterized itself as insisting on earliest Mormonism’s two sacred texts: the Bible and the Book of Mormon. As Granville Hedrick himself noted in the first issue of the *Truth Teller*: “The principles of the faith and doctrines which were given for the foundation of this church are recorded in the Bible and Book of Mormon, which is the rock and pillar of the foundation of this church of Christ, which was organized on the 6th day of April, 1830, for the last time.”

In October 1864, the *Truth Teller* editorialized that it “will not endorse any doctrine that cannot be sustained by the Bible or the Book of Mormon.”

Based on reliance in these two canonical books, the Church of Christ condemned the doctrines and practices of other Mormonisms, especially those of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Concerning the Reorganized Church, the Church of Christ denounced the doctrine of hereditary succession to the Church presidency. John Page wrote in the November 1864 issue of the *Truth Teller* that “there is not one word in the Book of Mormon nor Bible to sustain it.” Apostle Adna Haldeman compared hereditary succession to a monarchy, which was repellent to Americans, and argued that the Church president must be elected democratically as was Joseph Smith in January 1831. From 1856 to 1861, leaders of the RLDS Church and of the Hedrickite Church, united by a common loathing of

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11Granville Hedrick, “An Address,” *The Truth Teller* 1, no. 1 (July 1864): 8. This periodical was published 1864–68.
polygamy, sought a possible union, but the project failed, partly due to the Hedrickite rejection of hereditary succession.\textsuperscript{15}

Both Mormonisms unitedly condemned plural marriage, as taught by the “Brighamites.” The Truth Teller editorialized: “There is no book in the world that furnishes stronger evidence against polygamy than the Book of Mormon.” This article concluded: “All who are called Mormons whose faith and practice are contrary to the teachings of the Book of Mormon, are not Mormons. Therefore, there never was a Mormon who practiced polygamy, nor never can be, for that moment such a lewd practice is conceived in his heart, he ceases to be a Mormon.”\textsuperscript{16}

The official position of the RLDS Church was that plural marriage was Brigham Young’s innovation,\textsuperscript{17} but the Church of Christ attributed it to Joseph Smith. Granville Hedrick wrote: “It is a well known fact that can not be successfully controverted that the doctrine of polygamy . . . was taught by many of the elders in the church before Joseph preached his blasphemous sermon at the April conference, in 1844. Where did those elders get such abominable doctrines? It was not from Brigham Young, he was not yet in power. Joseph and Hyrum were still living and acting as the two great leaders of the church.”\textsuperscript{18} Polygamy was evidence that he was a “fallen” prophet: “And let it also be remembered that it is the design of this work to maintain the position that Joseph Smith was at one period of his life a true prophet of the most high God, and that he did fall from that standing and relation that he once held as a prophet, and

\textsuperscript{15}R. Jean Addams, “The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints: 130 Years of Crossroads and Controversies,” Journal of Mormon History 36, no. 2 (2010): 11–12.

\textsuperscript{16}Untitled article, The Truth Teller 1, no. 8 (February 1865): 115.


\textsuperscript{18}Granville Hedrick, “The Second Address,” The Truth Teller 1, no. 4 (October 1864): 53.
afterwards gave false counsel to the church, though it may sound
grating to the ears of some.”

Because the Hedrickite church concluded that some of Joseph
Smith’s late teachings contradicted the Bible and the Book of
Mormon, it ceased using the *Doctrine and Covenants*, reverting to
the *Book of Commandments* (1833), the first collection of Joseph
Smith’s revelations. Even though the *Book of Commandments* is
not part of the Hedrickite scriptural canon, it is still published
today by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot).

A second Joseph Smith doctrine espoused by the Brighamites
but denounced by the Hedrickites was baptism for the dead:
“The Bible and the Book of Mormon contain the fullness of the
everlasting gospel, which is the rock and pillar of the church. The
doctrine of baptism for the dead by proxy is not found in it.”

In founding itself solely on the Bible and Book of Mormon,
the Church of Christ claimed to be faithful to Mormonism as
founded in 1830. The *Truth Teller* mission statement stated from
its second issue: “The Truth Teller—Will advocate the Primitive
Organization of the Church of Jesus Christ (of Latter Day
Saints) which was organized on the 6th day of April, 1830, and
maintain her Doctrines in all Truth: Also, an exposition of all the
False Doctrines that have been imposed upon the Church.”

This return to the Mormonism of 1830 could also explain why
Hedrickite Mormonism stopped using the name of “Church of
Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints” in the 1860s, instead reverting
to the original name of the “Church of Christ” when it was
organized on April 6, 1830.

Hedrickite Mormonism not only justified its practices

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20*Book of Commandments* (Independence: Board of Publication,
Church of Christ, 2007).
23R. Jean Addams, “The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and Their
Quest to Build a Temple in Zion,” *John Whitmer Historical Association
and beliefs according to the Bible and Book of Mormon, but it also reformed itself according to them. In 1925, it gave up the office of “presiding elder,” held by Granville Hedrick and his successors, and reverted to a Council of Twelve Apostles, judging this type of organization to be more in accordance with the Bible and Book of Mormon. In *A Latter Day Apostasy*, a booklet dealing with Hedrickite beliefs of apostasy during Joseph Smith’s life, Hedrickite Apostle William Sheldon argues that “structural innovations in the church restored through Joseph Smith and others began at a much earlier time than is generally supposed.” Among other things, he considers the creation of the First Presidency to contradict the Bible and Book of Mormon. Hedrickite Apostle Clarence Wheaton explains three reasons for this position:

First, that God promised to establish his church in the last days “like unto the church in days of old”; Second, that ten months before the church was organized, the Lord gave two revelations directing that the church should be organized after the apostolic plan set forth in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon; Third, that the pattern furnished by the church “in days of old,” as set forth in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, the pattern pointed to and commanded in two revelations given preparatory to the organization of the church, make the twelve apostles the highest quorum in the church.

In short, the Bible and Book of Mormon are the primary source of authority defining truth in Hedrickite Mormonism. Based on these scriptures, the Church of Christ condemned other Mormonisms and reformed itself. Many scripturally based Hedrickite reforms were made in the 1920s, a period when

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Protestant Fundamentalism emerged in the USA. An orthodox reaction against the liberalization of Protestant theology, Protestant Fundamentalism defended biblical inerrancy.27

CONTINUING REVELATION, 1864 AND 1929

However, even though the Bible and Book of Mormon have been foundational since Hedrickitism’s beginnings, still the Church of Christ believes in an open scriptural canon, as their tenth “Article of Faith and Practice” states: “We believe in the principle of continuous revelation; that the canon of scripture is not full, that God inspires men in every age and among all people, and that He speaks when, where, and through whom He may choose. (Amos 3:7; Acts 2:17–18; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Ne. 1:82–83)”28

Early Mormonism was founded on two scriptural books: the Bible and Book of Mormon. But the Book of Mormon lies on the founding epistemological and theological principle of early Mormonism: continuing revelation. It is because the canon of scriptures is not closed that Joseph Smith added revelations to the Bible. Among them, the Book of Mormon, actually mocks Christians believing in a closed canon of scriptures: “Thou fool, that shall say, A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible.”29

Whereas the Book of Mormon mainly reflected American


evangelical populist Christianity, Smith's later revelations departed radically from orthodox traditional Christianity. Citing the authority of the Bible and Book of Mormon, Hedrickite Mormonism criticized those theological innovations yet also perpetuated a belief in continuing revelation. A resolution from the October 6, 1925, conference, “adopted by unanimous vote,” states: “Resolved, that this Church of Christ accept nothing purporting to be a revelation from God, past, present, or future, as a revelation from God, save that which is in harmony with both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Be it further resolved, that if there be any ruling, understanding, or resolution conflicting herewith, that it be hereby rescinded.”

Granville Hedrick announced revelation as a guide, including a commandment on April 24, 1864, to gather in Jackson County, Missouri: “Prepare, O ye people, yourselves in all things, that you may be ready to gather together upon the consecrated land which I have appointed and dedicated by My servant, Joseph Smith and the first Elders of My church, in Jackson County, State of Missouri, for the gathering together of my Saints. . . . [P]repare yourselves and be ready against the appointed time which I have set and prepared for you, that you may return in the year A.D. 1867.”

Joseph Smith, also by revelation, had designated this locale as the “New Jerusalem” in July 1831. The first Hedrickite families arrived in Independence in 1865–66. Granville Hedrick did not follow until late in 1868 or early 1869. Even before his

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31 Flint, *An Outline History*, 139.
32 Record no. 5, p. 85, quoted in ibid., 139.
arrival, Hedrickites began purchasing parts of the land Joseph Smith had dedicated for the temple which would see Christ’s second coming. Between August and December 1867, Hedrick’s brother John bought three lots. By 1906, the Church of Christ had nine contiguous lots from the original site. To this day, Hedrickites prize their possession of this land, which appears in the name often used to differentiate it from other similarly named denominations: “Church of Christ (Temple Lot).”

Beginning in February 4, 1927, “continuing revelation” was once again expressed in the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) through messages delivered by the Angel Elijah—John the Baptist resurrected—to Apostle Otto Fetting (1871–1933). Fetting joined Hedrickite Mormonism after leaving the RLDS Church following an internal controversy. Frederick M. Smith, the RLDS Church presidency, argued for a theocratic democracy under which “there would be a lasting centralization of church government in the office of the Presidency” or “supreme directional control.” The Presidents of the Seventy, the Presiding Bishopric and a few apostles opposed this form of church governance, arguing that supreme authority rested in the general conference and that, according to F. Henry Edwards, a member of the RLDS First Presidency, the “Three Standard Scriptures are the primary source of constitutional law in the church.” The April 1925 RLDS conference sided with the First Presidency. “Almost overnight, Church of Christ membership soared,”

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Ibid., 213. Jackson County old settlers forced the Mormons out of the county in 1833, putting an end to their plans to build this temple.


as dissident RLDS members joined the Hedrickite Church, a Mormonism without an autocratic prophet. Among them was Daniel Mcgregor, “a highly respected RLDS missionary and writer,”39 who became the editor of the Church of Christ’s publication *Zion’s Advocate*.

From the first “message,” Elijah reminded Hedrickites of the temple’s importance: “The revelation that was given for the building of the Temple was true and the Temple soon will be started.”40 During his fifth visit to Fetting, Elijah instructed: “You men, with others, shall assist in the building of the Temple, the House of the Lord, which shall be started in 1929. The Lord will give you seven years in which to complete the work. While it may be slow in the beginning, the Lord will open the way and many will help.”41

The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) endorsed these messages by Elijah/John the Baptist to Fetting through its official institutional publication *Zion’s Advocate*. An article in August 1927 quoted the Bible and the Book of Mormon as prophesying about these visits, thus concluding: “The visitation therefore to Bro. Fetting agrees with the prophetic word.”42 On April 6, 1929, the Church of Christ broke ground for the temple’s construction.43

But Hedrickites became divided on the fourth verse of the twelfth message that Fetting claimed to have received from Elijah on July 18, 1929: “Behold, the Lord has rejected all creeds and factions of men, who have gone away from the Word of the Lord and have become an abomination in His sight. Therefore,

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39Ibid.


41Ibid., 14.

42“John The Baptist,” *Zion’s Advocate*, August 1927, 114.

let those that come to The Church of Christ be baptized.”

This verse challenged the 1918 “Agreements of Working Harmony” signed by the RLDS and Hedrickite Mormons that recognized the other's priesthood as valid. Thus, RLDS members could join the Church of Christ without rebaptism, as Otto Fetting himself and more than 3,000 Josephites had done after the supreme directional control controversy. According to Fetting’s interpretation of the twelfth message, all should be baptized anew, including him. The Church of Christ rejected Fetting’s twelfth message and, in October 1929, “voted . . . to silence Fetting, effectively ending his ministry.” Nearly one-third of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), (then numbering 4,000 members) followed Fetting, and two churches now claim to perpetuate his legacy.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST TODAY: SURVEY RESULTS

As part of my PhD thesis on “Mormonisms,” I conducted a survey questionnaire in one congregation of each of the six historical Mormonisms. Although membership numbers vary from the LDS Church’s 15 million members to the dozen in the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite), the survey is a good methodological tool for analyzing whether members follow the official institutional discourse. The questionnaire was confidential and anonymous, allowing respondents to express themselves beyond the official institutional discourse and also the researcher's personal biases—like the stereotype of Mormons as right-wing conservatives. One might argue that

44 The Word of the Lord, …, 17.
48 The relative majority of respondents (13/34) from the Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonite) are said to be Democrats. The Bickertonite
in a conservative, prophet-led church, respondents might reflect institutional discourse, rather than their personal convictions (if the two differed). However, from my personal interactions with Hedrickite members, I have concluded that they openly differ on matters of faith, as long as these beliefs do not contradict the “Articles of Faith and Practice.” Furthermore, my questionnaire moved beyond surveys of LDS Church members in the USA and France, by also focusing on other Mormonisms.49

I administered my questionnaire in the Church of Christ congregation in Independence. The meeting hall also houses Hedrickite headquarters. The congregation meets twice a week. The Sunday worship service, following the Sunday School, consists of sermons based on the Bible and the Book of Mormon and hymns. A communion service is held monthly. The Wednesday evening service meeting, like the Sunday worship service, has hymns and sermons.

Before the service on Wednesday, April 28, 2010, I introduced myself to the pastor as a PhD student from France, described the questionnaire, and asked if it would be possible to conduct it. I positioned myself in the lobby of the main worship room at the end of the service. The pastor made the announcement at the end of the worship, and twenty-five individuals accepted the questionnaire and pencils.

The full questionnaire, was divided into six sets of questions. The first section had five yes/no questions dealing with beliefs about the Church: (1) Do you believe that the Church is essential

congregation where I administered the questionnaire on February 27, 2011, is in a majority Democrat city (Monongahela) in a majority Democrat state (Pennsylvania).

for salvation? (2) that its sacraments (ordinances) are essential for salvation? (3) that it is the “only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth”? (4) that other religions have truth? and (5) Do you support interfaith dialogue?

The second set of three questions dealt with authority. (1) Do you believe that authority in the Church lies mostly in (check 2 answers): the Bible, Book of Mormon, Church leaders, and/or your own personal revelations or those of other individuals (not necessarily leaders). The last two questions were yes/no: Do you always agree with Church leaders and Church policies? and Do you believe that complete obedience to Church leaders is important?

Section 3 contained nine yes/no questions: (1) Do you believe in the Bible literally? (2) Should the Bible be interpreted through scientific research? (3) Do you believe in the Book of Mormon? Literally? (4) In the Doctrine and Covenants? Literally? (5) In the virgin birth of Jesus? (6) In the resurrection of Jesus Christ? (7) in The Trinity? (8) Do you believe the USA to be a special place, a promised land? (9) Do you think the Church’s beliefs and practices should be adapted to different cultures?

The fourth section queried five areas of ethics and politics: (1) Should abortion be legal? (2) Should gay marriage be legal? (3) Do you support the death penalty? (4) Do you believe sexual relationships should be practiced outside of marriage? (5) You vote mostly: Republican? Democrat? Independent? Other?

Four religious practices were the focus of the fifth section: (1) Do you attend church weekly? monthly? Other? (2) Are you a priesthood member? (3) Do you consume tea? coffee? alcohol? tobacco? (4) Do you give regular financial contributions to the Church? [If yes], less (or more) than a tenth of your monthly salary/pension?

Standard demographics constituted the sixth section—age, sex, occupation (or previous occupation). I also asked: (1) Are you a member of the Church? (2) Why are you a member of the Church? (3) If you are not a member, why do you attend this Church?
Because this article focuses on the importance of the scriptures to modern Hedrickites, I analyze only the questions pertaining to “the Church” and “authority” (Sections 1 and 2). The first section shows the importance respondents attribute to the institution, while the second set probes what has the most authority for respondents: the scriptures, Church leaders or personal revelation. In this analysis, I sometimes compare Hedrickites’ responses to those of members of other Mormonisms. I administered the survey to thirty-six LDS respondents at Independence Second Ward, on April 18, 2010. In answering the question about whether the Church is essential for salvation, 64 percent (16/25) of the Hedrickites said that it was while 92 percent (33/36) of LDS respondents agreed.

First, one must admit that despite the importance of scriptures that even reformed the institution itself, the latter is still more important to 64 percent of Hedrickite respondents. Yet, it is less important than among 36 LDS respondents. One of the five Hedrickites who did not answer the question, wrote an explanation instead: “Belief in Christ not Church is essential to Salvation.”

In responding to the question of whether the sacraments are essential for salvation, 76 percent (19/25) of Hedrickites and 91.5 percent (33/36) of Latter-day Saints agreed. This belief reflects the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) fifth “Article of Faith and Practice”: “We believe that through the atonement of Christ all men may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel; viz.: Faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ; Repentance and Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; Laying on of Hands for: (a) Ordination; (b) Blessing of Children; (c) Confirmation and the Gift of the Holy Ghost; (d) Healing of the Sick. (John 3:16–17; Hel. 5:69–72, 6:1–2; 2 Ne 13:12–17; Mi. 8:29; (a) Acts 13:1–3; Mi. 3:1–3; (b) Mark 10:13–16; 3 Ne 8:20–27; (c) Acts 8:14–17; Mi. 2:1–3; (d) Mark 16:17–18; James 5:14–16).”

Seventy-two percent (18/25) of Hedrikites agreed that the Church was the “only true and living Church upon the face of the
whole earth” while 94 percent (34/36) of the LDS respondents did so. Even though they believe in an exclusivist ecclesiology, most Hedrickite respondents also believe that “other religions have truth” (72 percent, 18/25) and support interfaith dialogue (68 percent, 17/25).

But although they showed some variation on beliefs about the church, all Hedrickite respondents checked the two same options in the second set of questions concerning the primary sources of authority: the Bible and the Book of Mormon. This belief accords with the Church of Christ’s ninth “Article of Faith and Practices”: “We believe that in the Bible is contained the word of God, that the Book of Mormon is an added witness for Christ, and that these contain the fullness of the gospel.”

On the final question, “Why are you a member of the Church?” many Hedrickites expressed the value of a church founded on the Bible and the Book of Mormon, stating, for example: “Because I am convinced that the Lord restored His authority to the earth and that it is contained in the Bible and Book of Mormon”; “I grew up without a church but was converted by the message of the Book of Mormon after my grandmother married an apostle of the Church of Christ”; “based on the 2 scriptures it is the near duplication of the Church Jesus established 2 000 years ago”; “Because I believe the Church of Christ TL [Temple Lot] adheres most closely to the principles of the Gospel of Christ and the New Testament Church”; “Because I believe words, commandments and blessings of God and that Gospel is contained in Bible and Book of Mormon”; “Because in accordance to the Bible + Book of Mormon”; “I believe this church follows and practices the teachings of Christ as contained in Scripture.”

Responding to the same question, LDS members often focused on the institution: “Because I know it is the only true Church of Jesus”; “Because I know this Church is the True Church of Jesus Christ”; “Because I know that out of all churches on this Earth that this one (LDS) is the true one”; “A personal testimony that it is the Lords Church”; “I have faith and belief
that this is the true church”; “I received personal revelation from the spirit that this church belongs to Jesus Christ.”

Even though Hedrickite Mormonism still accepts an open scriptural canon, the authority of the Bible and the Book of Mormon serve as safeguards against “prophets” who could appear as authoritative charismatic leaders. However, members also express individual freedom as a core value. Eighty-eight percent of Hedrickite respondents (22/25 “no,” 3 “yes”) say that they do not always agree with Church leaders and policies; and 92 percent (23/25 “no,” 2 did not answer) claim that total obedience to Church leaders is not important. Here is expressed a Midwestern identity attached to individual liberties. A woman who had converted to the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) from the RLDS Church, explained: “We have freedom to question, express opinion.” In contrast, half of the thirty-six LDS respondents said they “always agree” with Church leaders, and 89 percent (32/36) replied that “complete obedience to Church leaders” is “important.” In even more striking contrast, 100 percent of Community of Christ respondents answered “no” to the question about “always agree[ing]” with leaders and policies, and 88 percent (43/49) did not believe that “complete obedience to Church leaders” is important. However, the Community of Christ is not a solae scripturae Mormonism. The Book of Mormon is seldom mentioned in official institutional discourse, which relies mainly on a progressive American Protestant cultural trend.

Hedrickite individualism, like the orthodox Protestant sola scriptura, accepts that the believer has direct access to the truth through unmediated access to the Bible. Consequently,

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50I administered this survey to forty-nine members at the Colonial Hills Community of Christ congregation near Independence on September 12, 2010.

this theology produces a "privatization" of religion. Indeed, Hedrickite beliefs foster democracy and individual freedom, rather than charismatic authoritative leadership. As an example, in 1930, following Fetting’s message on rebaptism, the Church instructed each congregation to organize a referendum on the issue and communicate the results to headquarters using a coupon printed in the February 15 issue of Zion’s Advocate.

According to Apostle Samuel Wood:

“Re-baptism” is not the real issue that the church has been called upon to decide by referendum at this time. As I see it, underlying the whole matter is a question of far greater importance. And it is of an astonishing and dreadful nature. It is the question of church government. Can the church as established by Christ, with Twelve Apostles at the head, survive? If this “Twelfth Message” in its entirety is accepted, together with the attempt of the brethren to force it upon the church; if their attitude in ignoring the Twelve, and their rebellion against the action of the conference in referring the whole matter to the people for decision, finds support in the referendum, then the order of church government as we now have it will go down to defeat, and one man will emerge as PROPHET SUPREME.

Wood, a former member of the RLDS Church who had been ordained a Hedrickite apostle at the same time as Fetting, may have been alluding to RLDS President Frederick M. Smith’s insistence on supreme directional control. But no “prophet supreme” emerged from the rebaptism referendum, as Hedrickite congregations from 20 states, Canada, England, and

53“Proposal for Referendum in the Acceptance of Members from Other Factions,” Zion’s Advocate 7, no. 4 (February 15, 1930): 35.
Wales returned a total of 369 “no” votes and 71 “yes” votes.56

CONCLUSION: MORMON FISSIPAROUSNESS

Max Weber’s analysis of charisma helps clarify why Mormonism splintered following the founder’s death. That result is common following the death of a charismatic religious leader dies.57 Ron Graves observed that the death of Muhammad was the catalyst for the first large-scale schism in Islam.58 Alan Cole argues that “the history of Buddhism, in the twenty-five centuries since the Buddha's death, could be told as a series of schismatic developments.”59 And when William Miller died in 1849, Adventism, yet another American denomination, splintered into many movements, with the Seventh-day Adventist church comprising the largest number.60 The Mormon propensity to schism could also be explained like Protestant fissiparousness about which sociologist Steve Bruce writes:

For Protestants, schism is easy. The Bible, the sole legitimate source of authority, is accessible to all believers and hence it is always open for one group to challenge the dominant orthodoxy by


showing that its new revelation accords better with scripture than the doctrine of the establishment. While committed Protestants believe that the Bible is in some sense self-interpreting, the history of conflict among those who claim no source of authority other than the Bible makes it clear that such a belief does not solve the problem of divergent interpretation.61

Mormonism’s many scriptures are the objects of multiple interpretations, a role played by the Bible in Protestantism. Furthermore, Mormonism’s high propensity to schism is due to and multiplied by its particular characteristic of continuing revelation. Thus, continuing revelation leads to continuing fissiparousness. Mormon denominations have tried to control continuing revelation, thus limiting fissiparousness. In the LDS Church and Community of Christ, only the Church president can receive revelations. In the solae scripturae Mormonism of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), continuing revelation is highly limited by its primary sources of authority: the Bible and Book of Mormon. Hedrickite fissiparousness is limited, or at least less important, than LDS and Community of Christ schisms.62

Hedrickitism emerged following the 1844 succession crisis. At present, 8,000 Hedrickites63 still rely primarily on the Bible and Book of Mormon for matters of faith and beliefs. Those scriptures are understood literally, like the Bible in Fundamentalist American Protestantism. But Hedrickism is not the only solae scripturae Mormonism. Another historical Mormonism, the Church of Jesus Christ, organized around the

62As of 2001, specialist Steven L. Shields identified ninety-four breaks-off from the LDS Church; twenty from the RLDS Church to which we can add the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; twenty from the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). Shields, Divergent Paths of the Restoration (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 2001).
63R. Jean Addams, email to Chrystal Vanel, August 6, 2013, printout in my possession.
leadership of William Bickerton in 1862, also reformed itself in the name of the Bible and the Book of Mormon. But that is another history…
“TEMPERED FOR GLORY”: BRIGHAM YOUNG’S COSMOLOGICAL THEODICY

J. Chase Kirkham

On June 15, 1856, at the Bowery in Salt Lake City, President Brigham Young addressed the Mormons on the subject of memory. In his speech, Young emphasized how it is easier for people to remember injuries than kindness, blaming this human weakness on the power of the devil and the evil of the world. Immediately after this opinion on evil, Young began teaching about the purpose of human beings. “[Matter],” Young instructed, “is brought together, organized, and capacitated to receive knowledge and intelligence, to be enthroned in glory, to be made angels, Gods—beings who will hold control over the elements, and have power by their word to command the creation and redemption of worlds, or to extinguish suns by their breath, and disorganize worlds, hurling them back into

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their chaotic state. This is what you and I are created for.”

This 1856 speech calls our attention to a tendency in Young’s thinking to find discussion about evil compatible with cosmological speculation. Young’s cosmology (a small but key dimension of his thought) includes his teachings about eternal and dynamic matter; a universe filled with an incalculable number of exalted human beings—gods and goddesses—who are improving *ad infinitum* along with individuals who are dissolving back “into their native element”; the potential for his followers to craft worlds of their own; and the teaching that the biblical Adam was the God who created this earth.

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1 Brigham Young, June 15, 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854–86), 3:354–61. Despite its faults, I use the *Journal of Discourses* as the major source for Young’s speeches in this article. One disadvantage of relying on the *Journal* is that George D. Watt’s transcriptions (1851–68) of Young’s speeches from the Pitman shorthand include editorial additions and deletions; Mark Lyman Staker, however, comments that this was a “common professional practice among transcribers.” Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith’s Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 559–60. LaJean Purcell Carruth is currently transcribing Watt’s shorthand, bringing us one step closer to Young’s addresses before they were edited for publication. See “Lost Sermons,” https://history.lds.org/search?lang=eng&query=lost%20sermons&section=treasures&sort=rel (accessed March 7, 2015).

2 The *Journal of Discourses* offers a broad cross-section of Young’s thought, containing almost 400 of the 800+ sermons that were recorded. Ronald W. Walker, “Raining Pitchforks: Brigham Young as Preacher,” *Sunstone* 8, no. 3 (May-June 1983): 5. The *Journal of Discourses* records what British and Utah readers learned from Young and which sermons Young and Watt decided were important enough for publication. Ronald G. Watt, *The Mormon Passage of George D. Watt: First British Convert, Scribe for Zion* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009), 134–36. For Young’s thought before 1852, I rely on Richard S. Van Wagoner, ed., *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2009).

3 For “incalculable,” see Young, *Journal of Discourses*, October 8, 1859, 7:333–34; for “native element,” ibid., February 27, 1853, 1:118. To
This article engages these particular teachings and asks why Young went to such theological extremes in his discourses. I argue that these cosmological teachings collectively functioned as a theodicy.

“Cosmology” is an apt word to describe the collective nature of these teachings. Depending on its scientific, astronomical, and philosophical contexts, the term can carry various meanings. Here, I define “cosmology” as the study of reality or Young’s attempt to make sense of his world. I also use “cosmology” to classify this dimension of Young’s teachings because of the term’s astronomical connotations, since Young’s reality consisted not only of his desert kingdom but included as much of the universe as his imagination allowed.4 And theodicy, as I will show, is an appropriate concept to explain the collective function of Young’s cosmology.5 A theodicy “is the word . . . for an argument that meet space constraints, I limit my study to these aspects of his thought. A more exhaustive study would also explore Young’s Christology, his views on the devil, his views on time and eternity, and plural marriage.


5Samuel Brown’s “divine anthropology” references Joseph Smith’s April 1844 teachings about the close relationship of humans and God. Brown also correctly notes that Brigham Young’s views on Adam were
attempts to show that God is righteous or just despite the presence of evil in the world.” Or more generally, a theodicy can function as “any response to the problem of evil.” One example of this response occurs in the above 1856 speech where Young responded to evil, in part, by reflecting on the Saints’ future potential. Thus, it is my contention that, through such concepts as fluctuating matter, multiple gods, the potential to create on a planetary level, and a divine Adam and Eve, Young was employing a theological strategy to respond to the evil that was manifested in the collective suffering of the Mormons.

But why is it important to classify Young’s cosmological thought as a theodicy? And how can such an interpretation of Young’s thought benefit historians and students of Mormonism? First, such an approach simply furthers the work of bringing order to and finding patterns within the massive corpus of Young’s “rambling discourses.” Second, appreciating his theology helps us understand what teachings motivated Brigham Young to persevere while he attempted to establish the kingdom of God in the wilderness. In the preface to his study of “Mormon thought,” Terryl Givens correctly notes that the “enduring fascination” with Mormonism’s “stark supernaturalism” has not helped to explain how the religion has endured. Such contemporary fascination, an echo of Smith’s divine anthropology. Samuel Brown, “William Phelps’s Paracletes: An Early Witness to Joseph Smith’s Divine Anthropology,” International Journal of Mormon Studies 2 (2009): 63–64, 63 note 3. While Brown’s term is an excellent description of Smith’s teachings and could be applied to the cosmological portion of Young’s theology, I nevertheless suggest that “cosmology” is slightly more useful for my project because its astronomical connotations emphasize the relationship of men and women to the whole of the cosmos.


8Terryl L. Givens, Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity (New York: Oxford University Press,
at least with the planet issue, is captured by The Book of Mormon musical, which explains to its Broadway audience that God’s plan includes obtaining one’s own planet.9 By singling out one function of Young’s cosmology, this article attempts to get beyond the shock value of getting a planet to discover why Young employed this and other cosmological elements in his teachings.

But why focus specifically on Young? After all, he was not the only early Church leader to use cosmological themes in his ministry. Philip Barlow prefaced his book Mormons and the Bible by stating that much can be learned from mining the details of “a few crucial individuals . . . over a long period of time.”10 “Crucial” is an accurate characterization of Young; indeed, he was a major reason for the survival of Mormonism.11 Thus, by understanding the theology that helped Young persevere, we will be able to understand better how Mormonism survived because we will be clarifying the thoughts of the man who held the rudder of the religion for more than thirty years.

Givens’s Wrestling the Angel begins with a caveat that it would not “trace every byway and cul-de-sac of Mormonism’s theological development.”12 This article is an attempt to take a few steps down the cul-de-sac of Brigham Young’s thought to find out why he employed such ideas as dynamic matter, a

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12Givens, Wrestling the Angel, xi.
plurality of gods, and a protean Adam in speeches that were mostly about practical matters. I therefore propose to flesh out a framework that can explain the collective function of these teachings.

Why is a collective understanding important? One reason is that these teachings are inherently compatible. One example of this compatibility is the above 1856 quotation where the subjects of controlling element, a plurality of gods, and creating worlds dovetail to explain the telos of human beings. A survey of Young’s 1844–52 speeches in Richard S. Van Wagoner’s collection, along with all of Young’s speeches in the *Journal of Discourses*, reveals that, with the exception of his teachings on Adam, Young’s cosmological views in the 1840s are remarkably consistent with his views in the 1870s.

This article will first isolate and systematize these teachings (again, such systematizing works in Young’s case because of the teachings’ consistency and compatibility) and examine their function as a response to suffering and as an attempt to offer consolation. The next part briefly compares Young’s teachings to the cosmological thought of other early Church leaders as well as places him in a broader historical context.

Young delivered his Salt Lake City sermons at a “makeshift bowery” until 1851 when the Saints began meeting at a tabernacle made of adobe. Sixteen years later, Young took the pulpit at the tabernacle that sits today on Temple Square. His speeches were characterized by an impromptu, informal, and rambling style. But even though his discourses lacked polish, his listeners were impressed, if only by Young’s physique and mannerisms.13

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From Joseph Smith’s death in 1844 to the public declaration of plural marriage in 1852, Young laid claim to Smith’s authority, urged completion of the Nauvoo Temple, puzzled through the doctrine of adoption, and focused on settlements in his desert colony. From 1852 to the end of the Civil War, he spoke on polygamy, the temple, the government, spiritualism, handcarts, the Mormon Reformation, missionary work, riches, and Buchanan’s army. And from 1865 to the end of his life, Young spoke on the Black Hawk War, being self-sufficient, merchants, the Relief Society, and the United Order or the Order of Enoch. This is not an exhaustive list of Young’s speaking topics, but it does highlight some of the important subjects of his preaching. Arching over these moments of Mormon history were Young’s theological emphases. These included his thoughts on the kingdom of God, the nature of God, Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith, priesthood, tithing, and improvement of self and community.

His cosmology was not the main focus of his teachings. In fact, many of his cosmological observations are buried in his speeches, yet these ideas were key for Young because they helped him respond to human suffering. If Young’s theology can be compared to a cathedral, the cosmological elements would be the flying buttresses. Even though such buttresses can be impressive and beautiful, their primary function is to support the main structure. Such is the case with Young’s cosmology. It was not the most prominent feature in his theology, but it was essential in supporting the edifice of his belief—namely, the importance of building the kingdom of God. Thus, to understand their place in the thirty-three-year spectrum of Young’s speeches, it is best to view them as ancillary and supportive doctrines to Young’s broader themes.

Young’s cosmology can be summarized as follows. Matter or element, one of the fundamental and eternal components in

Young’s cosmology permeates the entire cosmos.15 And all matter, whether it constitutes a distant planet or a discarded wagon wheel, is in a constant state of change. It is either improving and growing or dissolving and decomposing.16 Human beings are composed of two kinds of matter. Their spirit consists of refined matter, while their mortal body is composed of “coarser” matter.17 If one followed Jesus and were righteous,18 then one would receive a

15See Young, *Complete Discourses*, August 3, 1845, 1:90; August 26, 1849, 1:348; April 21, 1850, 1:374; June 23, 1850, 1:386; September 22, 1850, 1:403; September 24, 1850, 1:404; May 25, 1851, 1:429; and in *Journal of Discourses*, June 13, 1852, 1:93; October 9, 1852, 1:219–20; January 16, 1853, 1:2; February 27, 1853, 1:116; August 14, 1853, 1:268, 275–76; June 3, 1855, 2:304; March 23, 1856, 3:277; June 15, 1856, 3:356; February 1, 1857, 4:201; July 19, 1857, 5:53; June 6, 1858, 7:65; June 12, 1859, 7:172; October 9, 1859, 7:285; March 25, 1860, 8:27; January 20, 1861, 8:340, 341; July 28, 1861, 9:140; February 9, 1862, 9:193; March 6, 1862, 9:242; April 8, 1862, 10:35; July 13, 1862, 9:316–17; September 28, 1862, 10:3; October 6, 1862, 10:22; October 6, 1863, 10:253–54; June 4, 1864, 10:301; December 10, 1868, 13:76; July 11, 1869, 13:141; November 14, 1869, 13:151; April 17, 1870, 13:316; May 8, 1870, 14:42; September 25, 1870, 13:248; April 8, 1871, 14:95; April 9, 1871, 14:80; May 14, 1871, 14:116; September 17, 1876, 18:232.

16See Young, *Complete Discourses*, September 2, 1849, 1:350; April 21, 1850, 1:375; June 23, 1850, 1:384; September 24, 1850, 1:404; May 25, 1851, 1:429; and in *Journal of Discourses*, February 27, 1853, 1:116; October 9, 1852, 1:219–20; July 10, 1853, 1:349–50; August 14, 1853, 1:267; March 23, 1856, 3:276–77; June 6, 1858, 7:65; July 3, 1859, 7:3; October 6, 1863, 10:253–54; September 17, 1876, 18:232.


18See Young, *Journal of Discourses*, February 27, 1853, 1:113–14, 116; June 19, 1859, 6:333; July 15, 1860, 8:121; October 14, 1860,
resurrected body that would not be subject to change and would become exalted with the gods where they would progress and increase in intelligence throughout eternity.19 The exalted Saints

8:209; April 14, 1867, 12:39; September 16, 1871, 14:232; April 29, 1877, 19:2.

19See Young, Complete Discourses, July 20, 1845, 1:89; February 23, 1848, 1:275; February 16, 1851, 1:421; and in Journal of Discourses, June 22, 1856, 3:364; June 6, 1858, 7:65; June 12, 1859, 7:172; July 3, 1859, 7:3; July 31, 1859, 7:202–4; January 5, 1860, 9:106; April 8, 1860, 8:43; February 9, 1862, 9:193; February 23, 1862, 9:287; November 29, 1864, 10:367; September 17, 1876, 18:232. For “exalted with the Gods,” see Complete Discourses, June 29, 1851, 1:440; and in Journal of Discourses, August 8, 1852, 3:93; August 15, 1852, 6:297; February 20, 1853, 1:312; December 5, 1853, 1:338; April 6, 1855, 2:251; July 8, 1855, 2:314; February 1, 1857, 4:197–98; July 19, 1857, 5:54; December 27, 1857, 6:146; May 22, 1859, 7:149; July 3, 1859, 7:4; September 1, 1859, 7:238; October 6, 1859, 7:276; March 4, 1860, 8:7; May 20, 1860, 8:63; June 12, 1860, 8:294; June 13, 1860, 8:92; September 2, 1860, 8:160; September 9, 1860, 8:179; September 16, 1860, 8:168–69; September 30, 1860, 8:190; October 7, 1860, 8:194; October 14, 1860, 8:207; January 12, 1862, 9:148; February 23, 1862, 9:282; April 8, 1862, 10:32–33; April 27, 1862, 9:291; June 15, 1862, 9:305; July 13, 1862, 9:309; April and May, 1863, 10:223; May 31, 1863, 10:194; October 6, 1863, 10:251; November 6, 1864, 10:354–55; June 18, 1865, 11:122; July 11, 1869, 13:145; June 3, 1871, 14:200; August 24, 1872, 15:137; September 17, 1876, 18:234; October 8, 1876, 18:259–60; August 19, 1877, 19:97; August 22, 1877, 19:220. For “progress and increase in intelligence,” see Complete Discourses, April 20, 1845, 1:82; June 13, 1847, 1:229; February 17, 1850, 1:367; April 21, 1850, 1:374; June 23, 1850, 1:384; and in Journal of Discourses, January 16, 1852, 1:6; June 13, 1852, 1:92–93; August 8, 1852, 3:93; February 6, 1853, 2:91; February 20, 1853, 1:313; February 27, 1853, 1:116; April 17, 1853, 2:129; May 8, 1853, 1:110; July 10, 1853, 1:352; December 18, 1853, 2:135; June 3, 1855, 2:301; June 22, 1856, 3:375; October 18, 1857, 5:340; June 5, 1859, 7:162; July 31, 1859, 6:344; March 16, 1862, 9:256–58; July 13, 1862, 9:317; October 30, 1864, 10:350; March 29, 1868, 12:167–68; December 10, 1868, 13:76; May 26, 1872, 15:34–35; August 24, 1872, 15:138; June 28, 1873, 16:70;
would have their own spirit children,²⁰ exercise power over the elements²¹ like God²² and create planets.²³ But if persons were rebellious,²⁴ then they would “decrease and decompose” “into their native element.”²⁵


²⁰See Young, Complete Discourses, June 13, 1847, 1:229, December 6, 1847, 1:267; September 2, 1849, 1:351; December 10, 1851, 1:464; and in Journal of Discourses, August 28, 1852, 6:275.

²¹See Young, Complete Discourses, April 21, 1850, 1:374–75; February 2, 1851, 1:417–18; and in Journal of Discourses, August 14, 1853, 1:269, 271, 272, 276; June 15, 1856, 3:356–57; August 28, 1852, 6:275; June 12, 1859, 7:174; January 20, 1861, 8:341; April 8, 1862, 10:35; October 6, 1863, 10:267, 273; August 24, 1872, 15:137.

²²See Young, Complete Discourses, July 24, 1847, 1:233; February 25, 1849, 1:325; April 21, 1850, 1:375; February 2, 1851, 1:417–18; and in Journal of Discourses, August 14, 1853, 1:270; June 3, 1855, 2:300; October 8, 1855, 3:119; June 8, 1856, 3:331; February 8, 1857, 4:217; July 3, 1859, 7:2; January 20, 1861, 8:341; January 26, 1862, 9:169–70; October 6, 1862, 10:23; August 9, 1868, 12:260; April 8, 1869, 13:33; July 11, 1869, 13:141; April 17, 1870, 13:317; September 25, 1870, 13:248; October 30, 1870, 13:279; April 9, 1871, 14:80; August 11, 1872, 15:126–27; June 17, 1877, 19:36–37.

²³See Young, Complete Discourses, December 29, 1844, 1:61; June 13, 1847, 1:229; September 2, 1849, 1:351; and in Journal of Discourses, August 8, 1852, 3:93; August 28, 1852, 6:274–75; June 15, 1856, 3:356; February 1, 1857, 4:199; January 5, 1860, 9:108; October 6, 1860, 8:200; October 14, 1860, 8:208; July 19, 1874, 17:143; October 8, 1876, 18:259–60.

²⁴See Young, Journal of Discourses, February 27, 1853, 1:118.

²⁵Young, Journal of Discourses, February 27, 1853, 1:114, 116–18; July 10, 1853, 1:352; August 14, 1853, 1:275; December 18, 1853, 2:135–36; June 3, 1855, 2:301; February 17, 1856, 3:203; June 22, 1856, 3:373; August 17, 1856, 4:28, 31–32; September 21, 1856, 4:55; July 19, 1857, 5:54; October 18, 1857, 5:340; June 27, 1858, 7:57; July 31, 1859, 7:202; October 7, 1859, 7:276–77; October 9, 1859, 7:287; March 25, 1860, 8:27–28; July 15, 1860, 8:123; January 12, 1862, 9:149; April 7, 1869, 13:4; April 17, 1870, 13:316; September 17,
The final point about Young’s cosmology is his controversial and problematic speculation on Adam, Eve, and the creation. Called the Adam-God theory, this “notoriously difficult” teaching includes Young’s belief that Adam was not only one of the creators of the earth but its God as well.26 Young’s cosmology included a reality of numberless gods and goddesses who were bringing worlds into existence as part of a plan to exalt their spirit children. Thus for Young, this earth and the conditions of humankind were not unique. Young even went so far as to declare that each earth had an “Adam,” an “Eve,” and a “Savior.”27 But despite the existence of a pantheon of gods, humans on this earth were accountable to only one of them. Eloheim, Young’s title for “Adam’s grandfather,” directed the pre-mortal Michael to create this planet. Michael thus became the creator of this world as well as its God.28 To people this new world, Michael descended to this earth with one of his wives to become the first two people on the earth—Adam and Eve.29 Adam took his wife Eve to eat the fruit of this world so that their “systems were


28Young, Complete Discourses, October 8, 1854, 2:848–51; for “Adam’s grandfather,” see Buerger, “The Adam-God Doctrine,” 19.

29Brown, “Brigham Young’s Teachings,” 3.
charged with the nature of Earth, and then they could beget bodies, for their spiritual children. Once they had finished their mortal stewardship, they would ascend and resume their places as deities.30

Part of the theological friction from this teaching arises when one attempts to reconcile Young’s belief that Michael/Adam and his wife Eve had already lived on a planet, believed in a Savior, died, and were resurrected with the Book of Mormon teaching asserting that those who are resurrected “can no more see corruption” (Alma 11:45).31 Such, in brief, is a condensed sketch of the cosmology that appeared in Young’s discourses. But how did it function as a theodicy?

A theodicy is a theological strategy used by philosophers and theologians to reconcile the existence of evil and suffering with the belief in an omnipotent, personal, good, and just God. Such a strategy is especially needed for theists because of their belief that a single God is responsible for the creation of the world. Evil becomes problematic for theists because it casts doubt on God’s power and goodness; after all, if God is all-powerful and benevolent, why does God allow evil and suffering to exist? Theodicy has been properly gauged as “the most vexing religious challenge of the Western tradition.”32 But for theists, a theodicy need not be limited to justifying God’s character alone; additionally it can act as “any response to the problem of evil”33 — one of the most famous being the book of Job. This latter function of theodicy is especially important for understanding Young’s cosmological response to suffering, for Young’s cosmological theodicy was more of an attempt to explain the value of suffering

30Young, Complete Discourses, October 8, 1854, 2:852; Brown, “Brigham Young’s Teachings,” 2, 4.
32Terryl L. Givens, When Souls Had Wings: Pre-mortal Existence in Western Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 323.
33Davis, Encountering Evil, viii–xi, esp. xi.
for his followers than it was to justify God’s existence. But before examining the particulars of Young’s theodicy, I will briefly lay out the components of three influential theodicies to provide evidence that Young’s cosmological thinking can be viewed in this manner.34

Christianity, philosopher John Hick has noted, broadly offers its followers two kinds of theodicies, which are respectively influenced by the views of Augustine and Irenaeus. Augustine situated the origins of “moral evil” at the fall of Adam and Eve from their state of perfection. Their fall not only caused moral evil but it was responsible for the destruction caused by nature. Evil, for Augustine, did not come from the creator since God is completely good. Instead, evil originated in an improper use of “free will.” Thus, in Augustine’s view, God “is justified in inflicting evil as a punishment for sin.” Augustine also reasoned that what we may perceive as evil—suffering from sin, for instance—is actually God working to mete out just punishment, which can ultimately benefit us; moreover, God can bring goodness from sin. Thus, it is through this “opposition of contraries” that God beautifies the world.35

While the Fall was foundational for Augustine, it was not so for Irenaeus. Having lived and died long before Augustine weighted the fall with theological importance, Irenaeus gauged it as more of a “minor lapse” than as a cataclysmic event. Such a view of the Fall along with his assertion of “a two-stage creation of humanity” (the first stage is humankind’s creation in God’s image and the second is their creation in God’s likeness) helps support Hick’s view that human life “is not a perfect creation


that has gone tragically wrong, but a still continuing creative process whose completion lies in the eschaton.” Perfection, then, was not something that humans had lost because of the Fall but was an experience for the future after a period of improvement, or, as Hick writes, “growth and development.” Evil and suffering, then, are components used to facilitate this growth, since, in Hick’s view, “God is gradually creating children out of human animals.”

A third response to evil comes from process thought. Process theism, greatly shaped and influenced by the writings of Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), asserts the beliefs in “a personal creator who is perfect in both power and goodness” as well as in “creation out of chaos.” Dispensing with creation *ex nihilo*, process thought postulates that the building blocks of the world were not created and are active. Because these building blocks were not created and have a degree of power, God cannot be considered omnipotent as this term is understood in classical theism and therefore cannot be blamed for allowing the existence of evil.

Elsewhere, philosopher David Ray Griffin has shown how one’s cosmology affects God’s power. The view of creation *ex nihilo* establishes God as omnipotent, since “the basic elements of the world, owing their existence wholly to the Creator’s will, would have no inherent power with which to offer any resistance.” On the other hand, if God used preexisting elements to fashion the universe, an idea present in ancient cosmologies, then God fails to have complete control over the cosmos because, as Griffin notes, this preexisting element “had some power of its own, so

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that it would not be wholly subject to the divine will.” Thus, something as basic as whether matter was created or not can affect the nature of God. 37 Such is the interpretive power of a cosmology, a power that Brigham Young harnessed to respond to the Mormons’ collective suffering.

The sketches of these important theodicies no doubt inadequately represent their complexities and controversies, but this brief review is nevertheless helpful in revealing that their central elements are also key in Young’s cosmology. For Augustine, Adam and Eve are paramount for understanding the presence of evil. A theodicy grounded in Irenaeus’s thought emphasizes improvement. And finally, a process theodicy responds to evil, in part, by postulating that the creation occurred from chaos and not ex nihilo. Examples from Young’s addresses show that he employed these teachings to respond to suffering, thus constituting a theodicy.

About the Mormons’ suffering, Harvard law professor Noah Feldman concluded: “The LDS Church has suffered greater religious persecution in its history than any other religious group in American history.” Gordon Wood has similarly observed: “Mormonism was undeniably the most original and persecuted religion of this period or of any period of American history.” 38 It is impossible to know exactly how Young would have responded to these assessments; but if he agreed with them, he definitely would not have wallowed in self-pity. His resolute attitude about suffering is evident during the first half of the 1860s as he reflected on and compared his people’s suffering to that of others.


in the context of Missouri and Nauvoo, leaving the United States, the Mormon Battalion, and the struggles with crop-devouring crickets. His comparisons pitted the sufferings of his people against the wicked, specifically those suffering from the effects of the Civil War. He concluded that the Saints “never suffered anything in comparison to what the people in many of the States are now suffering.” Appreciating Young’s cosmology helps to explain this attitude towards suffering, not only during the period of the Civil War but throughout his tenure as Church president.

The suffering of the early Mormons not only included their persecution from mobocracy between 1833 and 1847 but also included the migration to the American West, publicly living and defending polygamy, the handcart experiment, the Reformation, facing the threat of Buchanan’s army, suffering from the weather, dealing with crickets, the loss of family and friends through alienation or death, as well as struggling with the fears and anxieties common to all people. In appraising these challenges, Young gauged suffering as a means of transforming “individual Mormons into a people set apart by their own enduring character” and used a cosmology to help facilitate that uniqueness. Young’s cosmological theodicy is quite simple and straightforward. Suffering has value because it offers human


40 In addition to “comparisons,” these references include Young’s general thoughts on the Civil War. Young, *Journal of Discourses*, April 6, 1861, 9:2; July 28, 1861, 9:142–43; March 9, 1862, 10:38–39; April 6, 1862, 9:272–73; July 6, 1862, 9:320, 323; May 31, 1863, 10:189; July 8, 1863, 10:230; October 6, 1863, 10:248, 255; May 15, 1864, 10:294; May 15, 1865, 11:106–7.


beings essential knowledge and experience that will enable their exaltation and allow them to live with the gods.

The second point of his theodicy is primarily consolatory in that the gods and goddesses of eternity who rule in heaven and who have the ability to control matter, create planets, and people them at one time in their existence had a mortal experience. Thus, his theodicy provides perspective, vision, and consolation that the Saints were not alone in their suffering.

Young saw suffering and chastisement as divine blessings that purify and prepare human beings for exaltation.\(^{43}\) But how did suffering prepare one for eternal life? Young explained that suffering provided human beings with the essential and exalting knowledge of good and evil.\(^{44}\) Part of the preparation for heaven

\(^{43}\)Young, *Complete Discourses*, December 29, 1844, 1:61; July 7, 1846, 1:145–46; May 23, 1847, 1:216; June 13, 1847, 1:229; December 23, 1847, 1:269; February 23, 1848, 1:275; January 14, 1849, 1:309; February 11, 1849, 1:316; June 24, 1849, 1:336; September 2, 1849, 1:350; October 29, 1849, 1:363; February 10, 1850, 1:366; April 21, 1850, 1:375; June 1, 1851, 1:430; June 22, 1851, 1:436; July 20, 1851, 1:443–44; October 6, 1851, 1:461; and in *Journal of Discourses*, April 7, 1852, 6:322; July 24, 1852, 1:144; August 1, 1852, 1:358–59; February 14, 1853, 1:279; February 20, 1853, 1:313–14; February 27, 1853, 1:114; October 23, 1853, 2:9; June 3, 1855, 2:302–3, 307; July 13, 1855, 3:54; October 8, 1855, 3:116–17; January 27, 1856, 3:195–96; February 17, 1856, 3:205–6; March 2, 1856, 3:221, 224; June 15, 1856, 3:338; June 22, 1856, 3:362–63, 365, 369; November 16, 1856, 4:90; March 8, 1857, 4:266; June 19, 1859, 6:333; October 6, 1859, 7:268; January 5, 1860, 9:106; March 25, 1860, 8:31; April 22, 1860, 8:71; May 20, 1860, 8:61; August 26, 1860, 8:150, 154; September 2, 1860, 8:166; September 30, 1860, 8:190; February 16, 1862, 9:219; March 9, 1862, 10:38; May 25, 1862, 9:292; July 13, 1862, 9:316; May 24, 1863, 10:175; June 14, 1863, 10:211; December 11, 1864, 11:17; January 8, 1865, 11:42–43; February 16, 1868, 12:161, 163–64; March 29, 1868, 12:167–68; July 24, 1870, 13:272; April 28, 1872, 15:3; June 28, 1874, 17:116; July 19, 1874, 17:141–42; April 22, 1877, 19:221.

\(^{44}\)Young, *Complete Discourses*, December 28, 1843, 1:32; February 23, 1848, 1:275; September 18, 1849, 1:357; June 15, 1851, 1:435;
was in learning how to enjoy it. In 1849 he explained that, if one never experienced bitterness or darkness, then the “sweet would be irksome” and the “light would be weary.” He spoke again on this subject in 1857 and explained that one’s ability to “appreciate . . . comfort and happiness” depends on one’s ability to perceive a “contrast.” “Facts,” Young explained to an 1865 Salt Lake audience, “are made apparent to the human mind by their opposites.” Acknowledging that mortal life presented one with “an almost endless combination of opposites,” he instructed that such circumstances foster the “experience and information” required to live in eternity. Thus, in order to enjoy heaven, one must “become acquainted with the opposites of happiness and pleasure.”

In spite of Young’s confidence regarding the value of suffering, a comprehensive explanation for suffering still remained a mystery. But despite the mystery, there was sufficient explanation for Young to attach an exalting value to suffering. His cosmology provided a conceptual framework in which to

Attributing a saving quality to knowledge has its genesis with Joseph Smith who most famously joined the two concepts in his King Follett discourse by stating that eternal life is a kind of knowledge. Joseph Smith, “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff,” Nauvoo, Illinois, the Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents, id: 1320 (accessed March 14, 2015).

Young, Journal of Discourses, March 25, 1860, 8:28; October 6, 1857, 5:294; January 8, 1865, 11:42; and Complete Discourses, September 18, 1849, 1:357. Sterling M. McMurrin, Theological Foundations, 97 and note, points out that “the most common explanation of evil found in Mormon literature and discussion . . . is grounded in . . . the Book of Mormon which asserts that there must be opposition in all things [2 Nephi 2:11–16], including the opposition of good and evil.”
view suffering as an exalting experience as Young enthusiastically explained in 1853: “Everything in heaven, earth, or hell, is for your glory, exaltation, and excellence . . . and, in the proper time, all will become subservient unto you.” Exaltation not only meant the ability to enjoy heaven but it also meant participation in the hierarchy that shepherds the cosmos. After declaring in October of that same year that persecution “is one of the greatest blessings” from God, Young explained that “it is the very means of adding to him [a human being] knowledge, understanding, power, and glory, and prepares him to receive crowns, kingdoms, thrones, and principalities, and to be crowned in the glory with the Gods of eternity.”

In addition to the value that Young attributed to suffering, he also promised his followers that, at a future time, they would be able to control matter and create planets. Such are some of Young’s most striking teachings; but when considered within the context of suffering and theodicy, these teachings reveal a consolatory dimension. The potential consolation offered by this extraordinary promise perhaps cannot be appreciated as readily today as by nineteenth-century Mormons, for the promise of controlling matter and creating worlds suggested that, at some future time, instead of being subjected to mobocracy, the military, political machinations, and a harsh natural world, the Saints would govern the very foundations of reality while the unrepentant dissolved back into the native element.

But a more immediate sense of consolation comes from Young’s views of the gods. This consolation came from the mythological dimension of Young’s cosmology—namely, his belief that the gods of eternity have all had the experience of mortality. One of the best ways to understand the concept


47Young, *Complete Discourses*, December 29, 1844, 1:61; August 3, 1845, 1:91; April 21, 1850, 1:374; June 22, 1851, 1:436; and in *Journal of Discourses*, August 28, 1852, 6:275; June 3, 1855, 2:307; September 21, 1856, 4:54; February 8, 1857, 4:217; May 22, 1859, 7:146–47; October
of myth (especially as it functions in Young’s teachings) is to classify it as a narrative through which the listener can navigate his or her life. Exploring this aspect of myth, historian Peter Burke, paraphrasing anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski’s observation, wrote: “A myth . . . is a story about the past which serves . . . as a ‘charter’ for the present.”

Mircea Eliade has noted that, for the ancients, myths alleviated suffering because one’s sufferings were first experienced by a “prototype.” He observed that “in the Mediterranean-Mesopotamian area, man’s sufferings were early connected with those of a god. To do so was to endow them with an archetype that gave them both reality and normality.” Thus, when the ancients suffered, they could find consolation that a god had suffered with them. Eliade also explained that “this mythical drama reminded men that suffering is never final; that death is always followed by resurrection; that every defeat is annulled and transcended by the final victory.”

Young’s teachings on the gods had the potential to console the Mormons in a similar way. By characterizing the gods of the cosmos as beings who had experienced mortal trials, Young offered the Mormons the potential to read their own lives into the lives of the gods and vice versa.

For example, in 1859 Young specifically connected the doctrine of a plurality of gods with consolation: “There never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds, and when men were not passing through the same ordeals that we are now passing through. That course has been from all eternity, and it

8, 1859, 7:333; May 25, 1860, 8:31; June 3, 1860, 8:66; June 12, 1860, 8:81; July 8, 1860, 8:115–16; January 20, 1861, 8:341; February 23, 1862, 9:286; March 6, 1862, 9:243; December 11, 1864, 11:15; June 17, 1866, 11:249; July 19, 1874, 17:142.

48 Peter Burke, History and Social Theory, 2d ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 112.

is and will be to all eternity. You cannot comprehend this; but when you can, it will be to you a matter of great consolation.”

This mythical approach to the gods is also helpful for making sense of Young’s teachings on a protean Adam. While the teaching is known as the “Adam-God theory,” I find that the phrase “protean Adam” describes it more accurately. The phrase “Adam-God” is an exclusive one and ignores the fact that Young’s Adam and Eve shared identities with every man and every woman. The teaching of the protean Adam was introduced in 1852—the same year that polygamy was publicly introduced, a theologically bold year indeed. Young expounded on the protean Adam in 1854, then referenced the teaching here and there throughout the rest of his life; but this concept was only one part of Young’s use of Adam and Eve. Young’s teachings on Adam and Eve can be roughly divided into three areas: his radical interpretation of Adam, his views on Adam influenced by Joseph Smith’s temple endowment and Freemasonry, and finally his use of Adam and Eve as rhetorical devices in his speeches. A strand of theodicy appears when we examine all of his views on Adam and Eve together.

There is evidence to suggest that Young’s protean Adam had a mythical and therefore a consolatory element to it. One key for understanding how the protean Adam teaching can operate as an element in a theodicy is to recognize that Young viewed Adam and Eve simultaneously as figures not only of myth but of

50Young, Journal of Discourses, October 8, 1859, 7:333.
51Givens, Wrestling the Angel, chap. 13, offers a brief and excellent history of this teaching and its reception by Church leaders. For examples of Young’s adjustments to this concept, see Turner, Brigham Young, 205, 232–36, 351–52, 403. While I contend that we can find theodicy elements from Young’s radical speculation about Adam, my thesis needs to be balanced with Gary Bergera’s statement that Young’s “repeated espousal of Adam-God was prompted in large measure by [Orson] Pratt’s continued opposition to it.” Gary James Bergera, Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 126, 115.
history. In this case, the Adam and Eve story, according to Young, functioned not only as a literal history of the creation and fall of men and women but also as a story by which one could navigate oneself in the “present.” In his famous 1854 explanation of Adam, Young taught that “every world has had an Adam, and an Eve: named so, simply because the first man is always called Adam, and the first woman Eve.” Young viewed the names “Adam” and “Eve” not only as the names of this planet’s first parents but also as titles signifying the names of each earth’s progenitors. In 1852 he asked, “How can they do it [create a world and people it]? Have they to go to that earth? Yes, an Adam will have to go there, and he cannot do without Eve; he must have Eve . . . to produce mortal tabernacles for their spiritual children.”

In addition to these cosmic roles, Young affirmed that Adam and Eve lived historical lives on this earth. In June 1860 he observed that the “land where our father Adam dwelt . . . is on this continent.” The consoling power of Adam and Eve’s story came as he blended the mythical element with his literal interpretation of Adam and Eve’s lives. Four months later, Young, addressing women who had not been able to raise children, commented: “Many of the sisters grieve because they are not blessed with offspring. . . . If you are faithful to your covenants . . . you will become Eves to earths like this; and when you have assisted in peopling one earth, there are millions of earths still in the course of creation.” The potential for this passage to console comes not only from its promise of having an innumerable posterity but from identifying Mormon women with Eve who, for Young, was a woman who lived on the Earth like them but who also symbolized the mother of every planet in the cosmos.

52Young, Complete Discourses, October 8, 1854, 2:849; Young, Journal of Discourses, August 28, 1852, 6:275 (emphasis mine). See also Burke, History and Social Theory, 112; Brown, “Brigham Young’s Teachings,” 3.

53Young, Journal of Discourses, June 3, 1860, 8:67; October 14, 1860, 8:208; For other examples of Young viewing Adam in a mythical light, see Turner, Brigham Young, 205, 232–33.
In his study of Freemasonry and Mormonism, Michael Homer references scholars who have critiqued “Mormon historians” for having “neglected Masonic influences on their religion and rituals.” Such influences are indeed helpful for making sense of Young’s teachings on Adam. Young’s reasoning about Adam and Eve as historical and mythical beings could also have been influenced by Freemasonry. In their induction ceremony, Masonic initiates performed the rituals symbolically as Hiram Abiff, the legendary architect of Solomon’s temple who was murdered and then revived by fellow temple masons. In his examination of the effects of Masonry on Mormonism, Samuel Brown notes the mythological element in this ceremony: “Impersonating Abiff provided a way for Masons to experiment with their own deaths and anticipated resuscitations.” Hinting at Abiff’s historical life, Young (himself a Master Mason) said: “We enjoy privileges that no other people enjoy, or have enjoyed. In the days of Solomon, in the Temple that he built in the land of Jerusalem, there was confusion and bickering and strife, even to murder, and the very man [Hiram Abiff] that they looked to to give them the keys of life and salvation, they killed because he refused to administer the ordinances to them when they requested it; and whether they got any of them or not, this history does not say anything about.”

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54Michael W. Homer, *Joseph’s Temples: The Dynamic Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), 1–2.


It can be inferred that Young simultaneously viewed Abiff as both a historical and a mythical figure: historical—he was a living figure in the past; mythical—all men who entered the Masonic rites went through as Hiram Abiff. Richard Bushman has noted that Joseph Smith was “intrigued” by Masonic rituals as he formulated the Nauvoo Temple endowment and “turned the [Masonic] materials to his own use.” But instead of being initiated as Hiram Abiff, couples went through the temple rites as Adam and Eve. It is possible, then, that the mythical-historic point of view that Masonry and Smith’s endowment presented Young led him to posit that Adam and Eve were simultaneously living, exalted beings and also prototypes of every man and woman. Such identification held cosmic significance as Brown insightfully observes: “The connections to Adam that the Nauvoo liturgy amplified both personalized the Fall and situated human life on a cosmic scale. By returning to the beginning, the Saints could see the glorious ending.” Thus, the ritual of identifying as Adam and Eve had a consolatory dimension in that it pointed them to a future time when they had completed their journey through suffering.

This return to the beginning that Brown mentions was also fostered—in a less ritualistic way—through the rhetorical use that Young made of Adam and Eve throughout his discourses. In fact, his most radical speculation on Adam is the exception to his use of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve most often functioned as figures that gave temporal structure to Young’s discourses—that is, they directed the attention of his speeches to a beginning. Although there are too many instances to document, two examples will illustrate. While speaking about the relationship of humans to God in 1857, Young noted the common heritage Abiff by name, the parallels between Abiff and the murdered man are unmistakable. Special thanks to my friend Brandon Berrett for alerting me to Young’s assertion of a historical Hiram Abiff.

57Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 450–51; see also Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 183–85, 194, 199.
of all humans: “You may . . . trace the human family back to Adam and Eve, and ask, ‘are we of the same species with Adam and Eve?’ Yes.” And while speaking about the celestial kingdom in 1876, Young pessimistically gauged that “very few of the children of Father Adam and Mother Eve . . . will be prepared to go into the Celestial Kingdom.”59 This rhetorical use alone does not constitute a theodicy (the 1876 quotation is proof of that), but it helps us to see that Young was frequently referencing a beginning.

Why is a beginning important? Discussing the function of time in ancient myths, Barbara Adam notes the importance of understanding the beginning of life for getting perspective on its end: “Since death is outside the realm of experience, knowledge about the end of life is often sought in its beginning.”60 In other words, since the end cannot be known, emphasis is placed on the beginning. Such an explanation helps us further to understand why Young speculated on Adam, why the endowment focused on Adam and Eve, and why he referenced the first couple throughout his speeches. By referencing them, he was orienting his audience to a beginning.

My method in this section has been to isolate Young’s teachings so as to emphasize that his cosmology can be categorized as a theodicy. This approach, however, must be balanced with the reality of the situation. These cosmological elements had a context. One way to make sense of the context is to identify the trigger for each particular cosmological reference. Though this approach is valuable, there is another way to understand their context that offers further evidence that Young viewed these speculative teachings as capable of responding to suffering—namely, to appreciate that these striking ideas accompanied


practical counsel. While Young’s is a striking case, his tendency to blend creative speculation with practical counsel was not a religious aberration but was symptomatic of what Nathan Hatch notes as the “blurring of worlds” that occurred during the Second Great Awakening. Singling out the ministry of Lorenzo Dow, Hatch observes that Dow “was able to depict his times . . . as an ‘Age of Wonders,’ in which the divine continued to permeate everyday life.”

Understanding this context gives further credence for identifying Young’s cosmology as a theodicy. By weaving his speculation with more practical counsel, Young viewed these concepts as compatible. Consider how this blending occurred in a few speeches. In December 1844 Young spoke on Adam and Eve, the preexistence, exaltation, and creating worlds. Also included in this speech is an explanation of how Satan “causes contentions.” In 1852 Young suggested constructing the Salt Lake Temple from adobe because it had not reached its “zenith of perfection” and would last longer than stone which, having arrived at its “state of perfection,” would decay faster than adobe. But before he speculated on the nature of matter, Young talked about gathering wood from the canyons, chastised the men for cursing, and spoke on tithing. In his 1854 speech on Adam, Young used the end of his discourse to express his thoughts on marriage and the evils of prostitution. Young began a speech in 1866 by speaking about God’s mortal trials. Later in the speech he spoke about the duties of bishops. And in a funeral sermon in 1874 for Thomas Williams, Young spoke on the worlds God has created, exaltation, and the potential of righteous human beings to someday create worlds themselves. He closed his sermon by encouraging his listeners to pattern their lives after Williams and specifically made note of Williams’s diligence at his job.

63Young, Complete Discourses, December 29, 1844, 1:61–62; and Journal of Discourses, October 9, 1852, 1:209–20; October 8, 1854,
This section has attempted to show that Young’s cosmology can be classified as a theodicy for three reasons. First, some of the key elements which construct his cosmology (matter, progression, and Adam and Eve) are elements that have also been used in theodicies constructed by philosophers and theologians. Second, Young’s texts respond to suffering and offer consolation. And third, recognizing that Young’s cosmology blended with practical matters demonstrated that Young gauged it compatible with the sufferings of everyday life.

The second part of this article will briefly contextualize Young’s thought to show that his teachings were not anomalous and also to show briefly other uses of early Mormon cosmology, beginning with Joseph Smith. Cosmology happens to be one of the first fruits of Smith’s revelatory career. This nascent cosmological insight, found in the 1830 revelation about Moses’s encounter with God, appears, in part, as a response to suffering. Sensitive to the importance of contextualizing Smith’s thought, Stephen Webb mentions the mobocracy and legal opposition that preceded this particular revelation. He correctly observes that “the revelation does not address his [Smith’s] legal battles or the precarious state of his finances.” While this is true, the lack of specific references to Smith’s troubles in his revelation does not mean that his persecution is divorced from the cosmology. B. H. Roberts’s *History of the Church* yokes the Moses revelation to Smith’s suffering by calling it “a precious morsel” given by God as “a supply of strength” in response to “trials and tribulations.” Included in this morsel were teachings about Adam and the “worlds without number” that God has created.

Webb correctly gauges matter as part of the pivot on which


Mormon theology swings. But it is unclear what triggered Smith's teachings on eternal matter. In fact, Joseph Smith's teachings on eternal matter took time to appear in the Mormon consciousness. Despite the decisive nature of Smith's teachings on matter—"the Elements are eternal" (D&C 93:33) and "there is no such thing as immaterial matter" (D&C 131:7)—these teachings were not the focal point of the Mormon message. Richard Bushman observes: "The ideas were not incorporated into the missionary message, made the subject of sermons, or systematized." Brigham Young's and Joseph Smith's general interest in the nature of matter and the cosmos also dovetailed with the broader nineteenth-century reconfiguration of the cosmos. Givens notes how thinkers like William Herschel, Antoine Lavoisier, Thomas Dick, and Georges Cuvier were responsible for advancing the ideas of a "dynamic cosmos." And Isaac Orr specifically theorized on the subject of eternal matter.

The connection between consolation and matter is not as direct as it was for Young; however, Bushman notes that Smith's ruminations on eternal matter reveal "a concern about nothingness." The teaching on eternal matter ensured that "personality" would exist forever; thus, at the very least Smith was using matter to respond to a kind of existential anxiety. As discussed above, Young frequently blended the cosmic with the mundane. In addition to the influence from the Second Great Awakening, Young's speaking style was also made possible due to Smith's views on matter because they facilitated the "collapse" of "the earthly and the heavenly." For instance, in 1841 Smith was celebrating a physically embodied God, and in 1842 he

66Webb, Jesus Christ, 253.
67Givens, Wrestling the Angel, 52.
was publicly advocating a purely material cosmos.\textsuperscript{70} Associating cosmology with theodicy becomes clearer in Smith’s letter from Liberty Jail. Well-known in contemporary Mormonism for its consoling tone (“my son pease be unto thy soul thine adversity and thy afflictions shall be but a small moment”), Smith’s letter was responding not only to his suffering but to the “unlawfull oppressions” that his followers had experienced. Amid the suffering, the “voice of inspiration,” whispered to the jailed seer that “thou shalt triumph over all they foes.” The letter also speaks of a time when God would reveal knowledge concerning the number of gods, the nature of “thrones and dominions principalities and powers,” and the “set times” of the sun, moon, and stars. Thus, this letter is important for our project because it reveals that like Young, consolation and cosmology were compatible topics for Joseph Smith.\textsuperscript{71}


\textsuperscript{71} Joseph Smith et al., Letter to “the Church and Edward Partridge,” Liberty, Mo., March 20, 1839, Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents id: 430 (accessed March 14, 2015), 3–4, 8, 13–14. See also Bushman, \textit{Joseph Smith}, 374–81. It is noteworthy that the consoling and cosmological dimensions of the 1839 letter were both selected for canonization in the Doctrine and Covenants; furthermore, Smith’s Book of Abraham asserts that knowledge about the creation, the planets, and the stars would “benefit” Abraham’s descendants. “Book of Abraham,” \textit{Times and Seasons} 3 (March 1, 1842): 705, Joseph Smith Papers Online, Documents id: 7813 (accessed March 14, 2015). In 1841, Smith contributed further to this cosmological vein of thought by stating that this planet was “formed out of other planets.” Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., \textit{The Words of Joseph Smith: The
The most famous exposition of Smith’s cosmology occurs in the King Follett discourse where he, like the 1839 letter, associates consolation with cosmology. The sermon, which was triggered by the death of King Follett, instructed that consolation about the death of one’s friends came from understanding the nature of God.

And what did Smith teach about God’s nature in this sermon? In part, he taught that God with the help of other gods created or “organized” a world from eternal element. Thus, Smith offered consolation, in part, by publicly expounding on such topics as eternal element, a plurality of gods, and the creation of a planet. Moreover, in his analysis of King Follett, Webb establishes consolation as the key for making sense of the speech: “The context is crucial and frequently overlooked. These are words of consolation, not systematic theology. Taken out of that context, no matter how often you read them, they can sound astonishingly strange.”

Commenting on the way that Smith’s cosmology responds to evil, philosophers David Paulsen and Blake Ostler observe that “Joseph Smith’s way out of the logical problem of evil is to avoid going in.” Smith avoided it in part, Paulsen and Ostler write, by denying creation ex nihilo. One of the implications of rejecting creation ex nihilo along with postulating that matter contains “inherent tendencies that are eternal” is that some potential degree of evil exists in any of God’s creations. For example, Paulsen and Ostler point to the reality that the creation of water subsequently entails the potential for someone to drown in that water. Therefore, since “God’s creative fiat” is incapable of exercising absolute control over matter, some degree of potential evil is “endemic to any creation God could bring about.” Here is not the place to analyze the logic of Smith’s response to the problem of evil. I bring in this philosophical approach to Smith’s cosmology in order to understand the beliefs that informed his consolation in the King Follett discourse.
only to emphasize again that a cosmology as I have defined it and as Young used it has the potential to function as a theodicy.\(^{73}\)

Interpreting Young’s cosmology as a theodicy adds an additional dimension of understanding concerning the theological disagreements between Brigham Young and Orson Pratt. Orson and his brother Parley were the two most important explicators of Smith’s thought and are essential figures to include in a discussion about Mormon cosmology.\(^{74}\) Orson Pratt, writes Stephen Webb, “was a creative and quirky thinker” who revealed the “true revolutionary potential of Smith’s metaphysics.”\(^{75}\)

Some of this potential appeared in his attempt to defend polygamy. In 1852, Brigham Young assigned Pratt to publicly explain the practice of plural marriage for the first time. One year later, Pratt put an expanded justification in his newspaper, The Seer, which he published in Washington, D.C. Part of Pratt’s method for justifying polygamy was to explain it within the context of teachings of premortal life and other elements of the early Mormon cosmology.\(^{76}\) Young expressed disagreement with


\(^{75}\)Webb, Mormon Christianity, 89.

some of Pratt’s conclusions, one being the belief that God was not a person but was the truth possessed by an exalted individual. Upon Pratt’s return from the nation’s capital Young privately corrected Pratt about his belief concerning “God’s absolute omniscience” and instructed the apostle that the gods always have and always will be gaining knowledge.77 Pratt’s views posed a tacit threat to Young’s theodicy, which depended on individual gods progressing through eternity. If Pratt’s teachings were correct, then two bulwarks of Young’s theodicy were threatened; namely, his belief that exalted humans were the gods of the cosmos who continued to progress. Such an observation, however, is not to conclude that Young responded to Pratt’s ideas to ensure the survival of a theodicy. It only notes the presence of a somewhat nuanced threat that Pratt’s views posed to Young’s thought.

Young’s and Smith’s uses of cosmology were triggered by moments of suffering, persecution, and death. Terryl Givens and Matthew Grow speculate on the possibility that the death of Parley Pratt’s son Nathan contributed to an 1844 “outburst of speculative theology.” This outburst included the publication and refinement of Pratt’s cosmological ideas in “Immortality and Eternal Life of the Body.” Even though the connection between Nathan’s death and Pratt’s publication is tentative, it is still important to point out because it contributes to the evidence that early Mormon cosmology functioned as a reactionary strategy against suffering. This is not to reduce every early Mormon use of cosmology to a theodicy, but it emphasizes that the Mormon cosmology seems to be ready-made as a reactionary theology. Pratt’s use of cosmology also highlights that the early Mormon cosmology had other functions. In their examination of Pratt’s

1845 cosmological article “Materiality” (which contained teachings that would be further fleshed out in his famous *Key to the Science of Theology*) Benjamin Park and Jordan Watkins keenly observe that, in the wake of Joseph Smith’s death, the piece “likely served as evidence . . . that the Twelve had received the theological mantle from the martyred Prophet.” In addition to its consolatory function, we see that one who interpreted the cosmology was simultaneously attempting to prove that he shared in the authority held by Smith.78

Part of the argument for viewing Young’s teachings on Adam and Eve as contributing elements of a theodicy was their protean nature. For Young, Adam was the first man but he was also God and he simultaneously symbolized all men. Such an interpretation becomes less jarring when we remember that Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and Romans used “Adam” as a title to denote the man in the Garden of Eden as well as Christ.79

Another text supporting this protean interpretation of Adam comes from one of Smith’s interpreters, W. W. Phelps. Writing in 1845, Phelps crafted an early Mormon “science fiction” that summarizes a number of Smith’s 1844 cosmological teachings. In brief, Phelps’s story recounts the adventure of Milauleph—an Adam-type figure—as he helps create an earth named Idumia, takes on a physical body, and with his wife experiences mortality with the purpose of achieving exaltation. This story is important for contextualizing Young’s Adam teachings because it is an example of an early Mormon text from one of “Smith’s inner circle” that incorporates the “fluidity of identification.” Milauleph is one of the gods but is also the first man. Noting

78Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 210–11; Peter L. Crawley, Foreword to *The Essential Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), xviii–xix; Park and Watkins, “Riches of Mormon Materialism,” 160. I include Parley only to emphasize that the Mormon cosmology appears, in part, as a reactionary theology and that it has different functions. For Pratt’s theology, see Watkins, “All of One Species.”

the connections between Phelps’s Milauleph and Young’s Adam, Samuel Brown rightly observes the importance of contextualizing Young’s protean Adam with Phelps’s text. The two interpretations of Adam are not exact parallels, one major difference being that Milauleph is a “junior god” in Phelps’s story. But for our purposes, Phelps’s story shows that Young’s practice of attributing other identities to Adam and Eve was not an anomalous approach among the early interpreters of Smith’s thought.

Moreover this text reveals another function for invoking a cosmology. Brown observes that Phelps used “his public and private writings” to support Smith and “to prove his worth” after his 1838 signing of a document used by anti-Mormons in Missouri. If Phelps had these intentions as he wrote his “Paracletes,” which is possible, then the Mormon cosmology indirectly functioned as a means for Phelps to prove his loyalty to Smith.

From these four views, we see how religious influences affected and shaped one’s cosmology. Such influences have also affected how several scientific views of the cosmos were shaped. Descartes’s mechanical theory imagined the cosmos full of matter. This matter, in turn, was subdivided into “three elements, luminous, transparent, and opaque.” Such elements were responsible for the composition of the universe as well as the motions of planets. God, for Descartes, was the cosmic installer, the agent who squared the workings of the heavens to his laws; however, Descartes “sought to understand nature in purely mechanical terms.” This motivation led him to jettison a teleological universe with one that operated by “mechanical laws”; that is, the “laws of nature.” Newton, however, extricated the cosmos from Descartes’s mechanistic reductions and placed “the wonderful uniformity in the planetary and sidereal systems” within a theological construct. Not only did the universe require

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a designer but it needed “an intelligent agent” to maintain it. Such was Newton’s God.81

In the eighteenth century, English author Thomas Wright, motivated by a curiosity to understand “the composition of the universe and its relation to God,” wrote An Original Theory of the Universe wherein he envisioned a universe full of “other star systems, similar to our Milky Way . . . that . . . surrounded their own local divine centres.” (While Wright’s views in this book were not well-known, they would come to indirectly affect the 1755 cosmological model of Immanuel Kant.) And Kant’s cosmological views of 1749, which considered the possibility of other “spatial dimensions” existing in other universes, were shaped by “theological arguments.” In the nineteenth century, one view of the cosmos held “that the solar system, and possibly the entire universe, was decaying.” Religious motivation also affected how this view was interpreted, for Glasgow astronomer John Pringle Nichol’s interpretation of this dissolving universe was overshadowed by “his religious belief in a progressive and teleological development.” And within the debates over the second law of thermodynamics, Helge Kragh notes that “in this discussion, however scientifically it was framed, matters of ideology and faith played an important role.”82

Motivation not only affects what is taught but how a teaching is framed. Consider again the idea of planets. Erich Paul, in his study of Mormon cosmology, has established that the notion of a universe containing inhabited planets was an active idea among intellectuals: “By the beginning years of the nineteenth century, the concept of multiple inhabited worlds found wide acceptance among secularists, deists, and theologians.” But depending on the writer’s motivations, this idea could be used for a number of ends. For instance, deist Thomas Paine used it to critique Christianity by arguing for the absurdity of the idea of Jesus visiting every planet to die. Reverend Thomas Chalmers, however, used the

81Kragh, Conceptions of Cosmos, 67, 68–69, 71.
82Ibid., 77–79, 96, 105.
“idea of multiple inhabited world systems” in 1817 to expand the Atonement’s effects from this world to the cosmos. Thus, the efficacy and potency behind this particular idea—inhabited planets—does not come solely from its shock value but from the motivation for using the idea.83

As discussed, Smith’s use of cosmology was fostered by suffering. But a theodicy was not the only impetus Smith had for introducing and employing these cosmological teachings. Indeed, Smith’s vision was more ambitious and included, as Philip Barlow has persuasively argued, attempts to heal “reality itself.”84 While Smith’s theology does stand apart from that of his contemporaries, his was not the only nineteenth-century American response to society’s fissures. For instance, in his book on American reform, Robert H. Abzug observes that “the vast social, political, ideological, psychological, and economic transformations afoot in the early American republic provided the earthly stage for the birth of reform and in a hundred ways shaped its development.”85 Amanda Porterfield in her recent Conceived in Doubt marshals evidence that the rise of Evangelicalism in early America occurred, in part, as a response to the “bitter partisan conflict” of early American politics. All of this is to emphasize that Young’s cosmology appeared within a broader American setting that was responding to a broken, changing, and uncertain world. Historian Catherine Albanese in her survey of American metaphysical religion has argued that part of the American religious movement responded to the need for “solace, comfort, therapy, and healing,” and specifically identifies salvation as “healing and therapy.” She asks, “who in America needed such salvation and healing[?] . . . Practically

everyone.”  Young’s cosmology offered the potential for such healing.

In conclusion, I briefly reflect on the effectiveness of Young’s cosmological theodicy. He used a cosmology to respond to suffering and to console. But was this strategy effective? Such a question is difficult to answer because it suggests that those listening to Young’s speeches were searching for the connection between cosmology and theodicy as we have done. Furthermore, referring to Young’s Salt Lake sermons, John Turner has gauged it “impossible to exactly recreate the impact of Young’s sermons on the crowds.” But even if this was an effective strategy, the effects did not last. “Ironically,” as Breck England has observed, the contemporary Church collectively “leans in its dogma much in Orson’s direction.”  Gone are the teachings of progressing Gods and a protean Adam. And eternal matter and planets are not fixtures of contemporary Mormon responses to evil and suffering. Moreover, none of Young’s sermons lasted as did Smith’s King Follett, and he never penned treatises like the Pratt brothers.

What then do we make of Young’s teachings? At the very least, we have made clearer the supporting doctrines of Young’s theology. But such is not a pyrrhic discovery. As stated earlier, by understanding these teachings, we better understand the theology that supported Brigham Young as he led his people into the wilderness as well as into an uncertain future. On July 24, 1870, Young described the purpose of mortal life: “Every intelligent being on the earth is tempered for glory . . . and for immortality and eternal lives in the worlds to come.”  In a condensed example, this description captures what this article

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has attempted to show—that Young responded to suffering with a cosmology. These teachings enabled him to transform suffering into an experience of preparation and tempering as well as to establish that the trials of life (with their illusions of permanence) would ultimately lead to an everlasting life of growth and glory.
COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE, AND ROMANTIC MONOGAMY: YOUNG MORMON WOMEN’S DIARIES AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Natalie Kaye Rose

In 1900, ten-year-old Mary Bennion1 and some of her siblings received “little black bound note-books” from their father for Christmas.2 He instructed the children to “write in them every day, all the work we did, and all the meetings we attended and the church duties

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1Mary was born January 11, 1890, the third of the ten children of Heber Bennion Sr. and Susan Marian Winters Bennion. They were living in West Taylorsville, Utah, where her father was a ranch owner. Mary Bennion, Journal, 1901–6, n.d., 2, Bennion Family Papers, MS 0251, Box 4, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. All of Mary’s journals quoted in this article are in this collection and are cited by date. Her first journal, 1901–6 is paginated; the others are not.

2Ibid, flyleaf side 2.
we did.”\textsuperscript{3} Mary heeded her father’s advice and filled her first diary for five years with details about her many responsibilities from milking cows on the family farm to teaching Sunday School.\textsuperscript{4} A dutiful and nearly daily diarist during her first year, Mary’s notebook for the second year contained gaps of a week or even a month. In February of 1902, twelve-year-old Mary explained: “I thought it would be of little use to write my journal for the last few months because I did the same thing nearly every day.”\textsuperscript{5} While monotony likely played a substantial role in her lack of entries, gaps in writing from later in that same year reflect disruptive shifts in Mary’s family life.\textsuperscript{6}

After rereading her diary as an adult, Bennion wrote on that first journal’s flyleaf:

As we had been trained from babyhood to blind obedience to his [her father’s] every word, we automatically, and mechanically, carried out his instructions. . . . We didn’t even record the fact that our father was a polygamist, with three wives—our mother the first one; or that we had, throughout the years, acquired eight half brothers and sisters; even though these facts conditioned our lives more than anything else that has ever happened to any of us. Births, deaths, marriages, riches, poverty, sickness, war, depression, all these things put together do not count at all, in our struggle for happiness, when compared to the fact that our father was a polygamist.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid
\textsuperscript{4}Unless otherwise indicated, all underlining and strike-outs are in the original diary. I use “journal” and “diary” interchangeably.
\textsuperscript{5}Bennion, Journal, February 1, 1902, 42.
\textsuperscript{6}Most diaries center on an assumed “dailiness,” the notion that the diarist will make regular entries. Of course, long detailed entries did not necessarily imply that the writer had more to say, just as short entries or an absence of entries did not signal a period of monotony in a writer’s life. See Harriet Blodgett, \textit{Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen’s Private Diaries} (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 21; Elizabeth Hampsten, \textit{Read This Only to Yourself: The Private Writings of Midwestern Women, 1880–1910} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 4.
\textsuperscript{7}Bennion, Journal, January 1949, flyleaf side 2. The theological
Although Mary discovered her father’s plural marriages when she was twelve, her diary remained a record of chores, educational achievements, Church responsibilities, and family activities. However, as she matured and gained confidence, she used her diary as a space to critique her father’s child-

idealization of plural marriage in nineteenth-century Mormonism overshadows the actual number of those involved in the practice. Stanley S. Ivins, “Notes on Mormon Polygamy,” Western Humanities Review 10 (Summer 1956): 229–39, calculated that 10–20 percent of Mormons lived as members of a polygamous family between the mid-1840s and the early twentieth century. Lowell “Ben” Bennion, “The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy in 1880: “Dixie versus Davis Stake,” Journal of Mormon History 11 (1984): 27–42, points out that many of those called to settle Dixie were polygamists and that the combined average of practicing polygamists there and in Davis County made up one more than one fourth of each location’s ten thousand Mormon inhabitants. Kathryn M. Daynes, More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 91–115, estimates that 20-30 percent of Manti Mormons, including children, lived in polygamist households. Further, she documents that both polygamist and monogamist couples revered plural marriage as the ideal form of matrimony.

Heber Bennion Sr. also married (n.d.) Mary Emma Jane Webster; they had no children. John Bennion, “Mary Bennion Powell: Polygamy and Silence,” Journal of Mormon History 24 (Fall 1998): 86. Based on Mary Bennion Powell’s 1949 annotations in her 1901–6 journal, Heber married Mary (“Mayme”) Bringhurst around 1901. They had eight children. Mary Bennion, Journal, 1901–6, 1; p. 50, annotated entry from January 1949 next to the original entry from February 19, 1902. The 1920 census lists Mayme Bringhurst (listed as “Mary Bennion”) as the wife of Heber Bennion Sr. in a Bountiful, Utah, household suggesting that Heber Bennion Sr. and Mayme Bringhurst were living as husband and wife during this time. U.S. Census, 1920, FamilySearch, https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8PX-GKN (accessed August 12, 2015); LDS Family History Library (hereafter FHL) microfilm 1,821,862.
rearing practices, his preferences for his sons, and his belief that education was not beneficial to women. The question remains: If Mary Bennion was so blindsided and hurt by her father’s practice of plural marriage, why did she explicitly avoid discussing her feelings of betrayal? To grasp the reasons behind the limited content and gaps in her diary, it is necessary to understand the cultural, familial, and larger national circumstances under which Bennion started writing her girlhood diary.

This article examines how multiple components of both LDS and mainstream prescriptive literature, Church theology, parental urging, and a young diarist’s own motivation affected how young Mormon women kept their diaries and what they were (and were not) writing. Though this examination is based upon a conversation between sources, the words of the young women who were writing from the 1880s to the 1910s remain at the center of this study. I draw particularly on the writings of Mary Bennion, Marian Gardner, Amelia Telle Cannon, Mary E. Perkes, and Rose Jenkins, whose diaries span from 1867 to the 1940s. What these diaries capture is a moment in flux for young Mormon women as they make their personal transitions from girlhood to womanhood and interact with the Church as it acclimated to broader American standards. The United States was in the midst of its own transformation, brought on by increased immigration, the expansion of cities, and advancements in technology and industrialization.9

What do these young women’s points of view reveal about these transformative moments? Though direct references and detailed discussions of widespread changes like the announcement

of the Manifesto that withdrew official permission for new plural marriages (1890) and Utah’s long-sought statehood (1896) were mostly absent from these diaries, the overall content demonstrates that these changes in Mormon society altered the ways in which young women related to shifting Mormon gender ideals, their families of origin, the revised process of courtship, and expectations for their futures as adult Mormons. Additionally, exploring young women’s diaries elucidated the ideals and expectations that they set for themselves beyond the guidelines prescribed by their parents, families, Church leaders, and didactic literature. The diary was a “middle way” and functioned as a site for young women to mediate their multiple roles as daughters, Church members, and young American women coming of age.10

Religious groups have long worried about the future of their children, and the Mormon Church was not unique in its concern that its youngest members live up to the ideals of that particular community.11 What was distinct about the worries of older generations of Church members was their theological belief that the potential missteps of the youngest generation in their mortal lives could lead to eternal repercussions for families. The abandonment of plural marriage, communistic ideals, and Mormons’ integration into the national political parties that led to statehood also led to a shift between the Mormonism of the nineteenth century—a religion that centered upon a separatist

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identity—and a more modern Mormonism in the twentieth century that strove to acclimate to American ideals.

Various concerns were expressed through gendered expectations directed toward young women. Nothing represented these concerns among Church leaders and influential members more than prescriptive publications like the Young Woman's Journal, a periodical for young women established, published, and mostly written by Susa Young Gates, Brigham Young's influential daughter. The preservation and nourishment of a proper Mormon identity, protection of a chaste sexuality, and future preparation for motherhood and wifehood were of utmost concern to older generations of Mormons. The Young Woman's Journal featured what historian Lisa Olsen Tait refers to as “post-Manifesto marriage fiction,” short stories whose basic instructive message was that young women “must marry within the fold of Mormonism.”

Though the content of publications like the Young Woman's Journal identifies the gendered and generational concerns of older influential Church members, the personal writings of young women reveal the issues they found urgent and describes how these issues intersected with and differed from the prescriptive literature.

**American Trends in Diary-Keeping**

Two pervasive assumptions about the diary-keeping habits of women and men have oversimplified the gendered history of the activity. First, women's historically lower literacy has been cited as a leading reason for the overrepresentation of men's diaries that are preserved and published. While women's literacy rates did lag behind men's for some time, there is ample evidence that more women began to keep diaries in the late 1700s and 1800s.

Second, scholars have asserted that varying influences

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of the historical preservation process, interventions of family members, and women’s own perceptions of the value of their writings worked to diminish the visibility of women’s diaries. Women’s unpublished manuscripts, “hidden” away in family attics or uncatalogued but preserved in smaller research facilities, have remained unknown and, therefore, underexplored. In her work on Mormon women’s diaries, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher comments: “It should not surprise us, then, that in Davis Bitton’s Guide to Mormon Diaries the ratio of women’s to men’s life writings is about one in ten, a discrepancy, I suggest, created as much by our failure to value and preserve women’s life writings as by their failure to write.”

There are many instances of women’s diaries being “censored” or destroyed by family members at the diarist’s personal request. Protective family members also destroyed the diaries of female ancestors, ostensibly to safeguard her privacy.

The automatic demarcation of the content of men’s and women’s diaries into the respective categories of public and private has also led to misunderstandings about the history of diary-keeping differences between men and women. Within the context of diaries, the terms “public,” “personal,” “private,” and “secret” often have confusing and conflated meanings and do not account for the myriad roles that diaries played in both women and men’s lives. The belief that most women’s diaries are


Gannet, Gender and the Journal Diaries, 122.
written to maintain secrets has diminished the communal role that diaries played in families, groups of female relatives and friends, and local communities. Many women’s diaries served as a chronicle of domestic life, family history, and a record of social gatherings. The content of women’s diaries thus usually remained in a gray area between public and private.\(^{17}\)

For example, when Mary Bennion celebrated her twentieth birthday in 1910, she and her family read passages of the diary she had written at age eleven.\(^{18}\) The shared familial reading of her diary still did not mark it as a public document, as the diaries remained within the realm of the family and home. Given her complicated relationship with her father, it is possible that Mary as a child purposely avoided writing criticism of her family. Ultimately, Mary was writing during a considerable evolution in diary-keeping, as it transitioned from being interpreted as an activity that was associated with community, self-discipline, and order to being characterized as an almost frivolous pastime practiced only by preadolescent and teenage girls.\(^{19}\) How did young women understand their desire to write, how to write, and how they wrote?

**Young Mormon Women’s Diaries**

On April 6, 1830, the day that the Church was organized, Joseph Smith announced a revelation that carried varied significance for Church members as it relates to theological beliefs about personal, family, and Church history: “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ” (D&C 21:1).

The first directive, “there shall be a record kept among you,” would not only guide Church members to create and preserve an

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\(^{17}\)Ibid., 130.


\(^{19}\)Hunter, “Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family,” 55, 75.
impressive historical record of the institutional Church but also comprehensive records of their lives and that of their families. The voluminous body of “Mormon life writing” includes published and unpublished autobiographies, personal history sketches, and journal writing. A recurrent theme is a belief in unshakeable and eternal bonds with other Church members, living and deceased family members, and the generations of Church members to come. In her scholarship on Mormon women’s autobiographical writing, Laura L. Bush asserts that the tradition of Mormon life writing as a religious obligation is nearly parallel to genealogy and temple work, tasks that Church members believe are necessary to their families’ attainment of “exaltation” with God after mortality, the ultimate communal experience.  

Many of these young women’s diaries fit within the genre of Mormon life writing by meeting particular writing conventions in the first few entries that can be considered identifiably Mormon. First, many diaries begin with a detailed personal and family history. Second, in an attempt to situate their life in the history of the Church, many writers initially include some mention of their lineage within Mormonism or the family’s conversion story. Finally, emphasizing the patriarchal nature of the Church, young women also frequently announce their father’s current calling in the Church.

Comparing the first diary entries of Mary Bennion and Marian Gardner, a woman writing twenty years later at age twenty-one in Star Valley, Wyoming, reveals both generational differences and overarching commonalities in writing conventions. After receiving her diary as a gift from her father,

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21Ibid., 8, classifies and describes five conventions: (1) They testify that their experience as Latter-day Saints is “true.” (2) They explain LDS doctrine. (3) They “document Mormons’ collective history and cultural heritage.” (4) They “defend their religion or membership.” (5) They often include nonmember readers in their audience.
Mary Bennion wrote her first entry dated January 1901:

Born on the Canaan Farm Taylorsville Utah, January 11, 1890.
Papa has a large farm with a lot of trees. We have 14 cows to milk. I have three pet lambs. One is blind in one eye. Heber [one of her brothers] has three lambs too. Heber has one big pig and three little ones. I have three brothers and three sisters. I am eleven years old and am in the fourth grade. Aunt Eliza Bennion is my teacher, and I like her very well. A new school house was built in West Taylorsville last December. We have religion class every Wednesday afternoon.
Papa is the bishop of the ward.

His birth day is on Thanksgiving this year. I am eleven years old. Heber is 13 years old. Ethel is 15. Lucile is 9. Helen is 6. Sterling is 3 yr. and Rulon is not one yet.22

Even as a girl and possibly at her father’s urging, Mary found it necessary to record her father’s Church position and aspects of his history in addition to details about her siblings, pet lambs, and education. She does not write about her mother, Susan Winters Bennion, until the next page when she includes a detailed family tree. Writing in 1923, the twenty-one-year-old Marian Gardner also began her diary after she received it as a gift from her father. Diverging from Mary Bennion’s straightforward, detailed entry, Marian immediately addressed how this journal would fit her personal purposes:

I am going to write in this little book (a gift from papa) to try to satisfy that desire for expression which is sometimes so intense within me, that it hurts. I am going to use this little record for my confidant and to it, I will tell my moods, my hopes, my ideals, my secrets and my highest aspirations. I will tell also of my family and my friends and those I love and of my associations with them. At all times I am going to write as I FEEL.23

Partly due to age differences, Marian treated her diary as

more of a personal space than Mary Bennion. In the first entry she also described her parents’ backgrounds. About her father, Clarence Gardner, she wrote: “He is the second son in the eleventh family of Archibald Gardner, sturdy Scotch pioneer and Mary Larsen of Danish birth—much younger than Grandpa and his eleventh wife. Eleven families for one man—imagine it!” In a more serious tone, she continued: “Papa has always been a prominent man in church and Politics and I am quite proud of him.” Despite her stated intentions that this book would serve as her “confidant,” it was still necessary for her to situate her family’s status within Mormonism. Though it seems that both women held different attachments to their journals, the repeated conventions point to the inherent Mormonness of the journals.

Of course, the urge to document family history and note one’s status in a particular community is not distinct to Mormonism. However, overlooking the theological underpinnings of these conventions in young women’s diaries would undermine their place in the genre of Mormon life writing. While young women had myriad reasons for maintaining a diary, their documenting family history should be understood in the context of Mormon theology regarding lineage and pre- and post-mortal lives. Mormon life writings, such as personal and family histories, created bonds between family members, both in the temporal world and in the afterlife. Whether it was a deliberate objective,

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26Bush, Faithful Transgressions in the American West, 3.
many adolescent writers likely wrote with the idea that they were preserving a version of themselves for their future children.

To guarantee the continuous record of the Church and its membership in generations to come, older generations encouraged the youngest members to continue the tradition of record-keeping. They used a blend of theological motivation and mainstream American culture. For example, in 1867, more than three decades before Mary Bennion began her journal, sixteen-year-old Mary Perkes was one of many young people who took up the pen because “I was reading in the *Juvenile Instructor* that it would be good for this generation to keep a journal.”

This article, by Apostle Wilford Woodruff, had been direct: It would be “pleasing” for one’s children or grandchildren to have a record of their older family member’s lives. Relying on generational exceptionalism to appeal to Church members like Mary Perkes, he wrote: “You are the children of Zion, and your parents have been called of God to build up the Church of Christ and the Kingdom of God upon the earth in the last days, and soon your parents will be dead, and you will have to take their places.” As Latter-day Saints believed that the second generation of Mormon children—who could learn about their religion from their parents, the first converts—had the potential to be a superior generation of believers, it was of utmost necessity for this generation to obey Joseph Smith’s revelation and keep a record.

Though Woodruff’s article spoke to distinct Mormon concerns, it also touched upon larger themes evident in mainstream children’s publications such as the Scribner’s periodical *St. Nicholas,* one of nearly 250 juvenile publications.

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to emerge between 1840 and 1900. The similarly titled article, “How to Keep a Journal,” offered extensive advice about sustaining interest in journal writing. It recommended that a young writer should choose a “substantially bound blank-book” to “set down the date at the head of the first page” and “then begin the record of the day, endeavoring as far as possible to mention the events in the correct order of time—morning, afternoon, and evening.” Addressing the weather was of utmost priority as well as what one has “seen or done during the day.” The St. Nicholas article, like Woodruff’s, also spoke to future benefits including the preservation of family history and refining “the faculty of writing history.”

Advice regarding diary writing presented in St. Nicholas became noticeably centered on perceived issues with young women’s writing. A few stories in this periodical described young women who misused their diaries to write down their daydreams. In one story, the father of a twelve-year-old girl states: “There is a vast difference between jotting and doing.” The twelve-year-old girl filled her journal with embellished stories about her life but later destroyed her journal when she recognized the importance of recording veracity over fabrication.

The words of this fictional father were not notably different from Mormon parental directives. When Martha Telle Cannon, one of the plural wives of George Q. Cannon, gave her sixteen-year-old daughter Amelia a blank book in 1886, she warned her against writing “foolish” things in it: “Now, Milly, I want you to take particular pains and write well in this. Do no scribbles as you did in your former diaries.” It was easier said than done for Amelia to follow her mother’s counsel, as she berated herself for writing “plentiful scrawls” and poems on pages

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30 Jane Greer, Girls and Literacy in America: Historical Perspectives to the Present Moment (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2003), 180.
Entries that parents encouraged included recording one's educational accomplishments, books read, letters written and received, trips to visit acquaintances and family, and a record of money earned and spent. For Mormon parents, the diary was not just a space for young women to record their family and life histories but an impressive written document that showcased self-refinement, not indulgent content.

The idea that a well-maintained diary was an integral activity for a proper Mormon girl was highlighted in the Young Woman's Journal in 1890. During a stake Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA) conference held on April 26, 1890, at the Logan Tabernacle, Zina Young, then Relief Society general president, urged daily journal writing to create a record of worthwhile information. She stated: “If you do not write every day, write now and then everything that you read and hear that impress you as good.”34 Though the reference is brief, the directive from one of Mormonism’s most influential and well-known female leaders underscored the centrality of record-keeping to the religion as an important tool in the proper development of a Mormon girl. Zina Young’s simple but declarative statement exemplifies how the lines between Mormon and mainstream American advice were starting to blur in some certain contexts.

“My Girlhood’s Ideal”

Despite the Church’s desire to be openly welcomed into the United States, its members and leaders were concerned about remaining religiously distinct. To protect the future of


34Zina Young quoted in “Young Ladies’ Conference,” Young Woman’s Journal 1 (June 1890): 326.
their religion during this transitional period, Church leaders and influential members of the older generations revised interpretations of Mormon femininity and masculinity. Young Mormon women were encouraged to focus their ambitions on finding and marrying a suitable Mormon mate, having children, and setting up housekeeping.\(^{35}\) This was a change from earlier in the nineteenth century when women were directly engaged in political movements such as suffrage and had the approval of Church leaders to pursue professions such as medical training, telegraphy, and publishing. Part of this shift in attitude toward behaviors and expectations for women was a growing fear that young women would marry out of the faith, thus risking Mormonism’s continuation into the third generation.

In direct contrast to changing attitudes about women, the new masculinity emphasized the need for Mormon men to attain success and achievement within the public (secular) sphere in the United States.\(^{36}\) Amy Hoyt and Sara M. Patterson described the Church’s revisioning of a Mormon masculinity:

Prior to 1890, Mormon masculinity had revolved around two pillars rooted in divine revelation: the priesthood and the practice of polygamy. Even Mormon men with only one wife saw polygamy as central to their identity. The idea that the group was carrying on a divinely ordained practice supported the sense that the practice itself made the group eligible for Zion. The new Mormon masculinity that developed from 1890 to 1920 was also rooted in divine revelation, but consisted of four pillars: a changed notion of priesthood; adherence to the Word of Wisdom (a divinely revealed health code that prohibits alcohol and tobacco use); an increased expectation that young LDS men would go on missions (which was understood as the time a Mormon man would stand against the wider culture); and monogamous heterosexuality. On

\(^{35}\)Amy Hoyt and Sara M. Patterson, “Mormon Masculinity: Changing Gender Expectations in the Era of Transition from Polygamy to Monogamy, 1890–1920,” *Gender & History* 23 (April 2011): 80.

\(^{36}\)Ibid., 73.
these four pillars, Mormons constructed a new man who, they asserted, was an ideal American citizen.37

Masculine Mormon success within the non-Mormon mainstream proved that Mormonism was compatible with the larger U.S. mainstream. Within Mormonism, this revised masculinity also served as a method to dictate to young women the Church’s standards of an acceptable husband.

This revisioning of Mormon gender ideals served as a way for Church members to simultaneously prove their Mormon separateness and assert their American identities. Three diaries written by young Mormon women—Amelia Telle Cannon, Rose Jenkins, and Mary Bennion—offer deeper understanding of how larger gendered changes within the Church affected common members. Though these women’s lives are by no means representative of all young Mormon women during this period, read together these diaries indicate how changing gender expectations and institutional adjustments defined every aspect of these women’s lives.

Born and achieving young adulthood between the 1870s and 1890s, these women grew up at a time when the Church was confronted with disruptive events such as the death of Brigham Young (1877), the federal intensification of harsh antipolygamy legislation (1883, 1887), and the official announcement of the Manifesto that withdrew official sanction for new plural marriages (1890). Yet, at the same time, the religion and its membership also experienced milestones that began to solidify their Mormon-American identities: the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated in 1893; Mormons participated in the World’s Fair in 1893; and the Territory of Utah finally won statehood in 1896. Many Americans, Mormon and non-Mormon alike, benefited from expanded employment options, educational opportunities, and increases in material wealth. However, the number and rapid pace of changes that accompanied the turn of the twentieth century also ushered in feelings of uncertainty.

37Ibid.
for many Americans. While these three diarists did not speak at length or directly about widespread changes beyond their immediate worlds, it is clear that they and their families were directly affected by the interrelated connections between changes in their religion and on the national stage.

Amelia Telle Cannon, the sixteen-year-old daughter of Apostle George Q. Cannon, wrote in the new “record” her mother gave her in August 1886. She focuses on her education, her part-time job at the *Juvenile Instructor*, extracurricular activities, and her relationship with her twin sister Hester. Her other family members slip in and out of her diary and mostly fill the background of her teenage life. Though references to her father in this diary are short, they are very telling of his time on the “Mormon underground.” Amelia wrote: “His visits are kept secret though and no one outside of the family knows about them. We always meet together Sunday evenings though for prayers. Then we have music until the guard comes to accompany papa to his retreat, which by the way is fifty miles distant. So papa has a long way to travel to meet with his folks.” 38 In 1888, he surrendered to federal authorities and spent six months in prison.

Amelia may not have recorded more details about her father’s need to hide because her parents may have urged discretion. If Amelia’s diary ended up in the wrong hands, it could have provided useful information for the deputies who were seeking to arrest her father. Or her reticence could mean that she was simply a teenage girl who, although obviously concerned about her father, was mostly interested in writing about details that directly pertained to her adolescent world.

At no point in her diary does Amelia indicate that she is considering plural marriage or that her parents would like her to marry plurally. Her 1890s diary is full of details about dances, entries about potential partners, and her concerns about marrying

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a proper Mormon young man. On the morning of January 11, twenty-one-year-old Amelia noted that it was her father’s sixty-fifth birthday, rebuked herself for not writing in her journal for several days, and added: “I have but one sleigh ride, and then I was not taken by a young man but instead I took a young man. How is that? Leap year, you know.” If Amelia Cannon’s diary is any indication of a young unmarried Mormon woman’s social life in 1892, it can be assumed that this year they were doubly busy as they were expected to organize leap year balls in order to initiate outings with eligible young men. As Amelia juggled multiple engagements, she expressed frustration over a leap year ball she was planning with some other young women: “I have exhausted my Leap-year partners. Oh there are a number of young men who would be glad to receive an invitation from me; but they are the ones I don’t wish to invite.”

Amelia’s comments about leap year indicate two separate phenomena affecting young Mormon women. First, they lived at a time when marriage was considered an integral rite of passage—the common view in the United States. Like other young women throughout the country, young Mormon women were encouraged to marry a suitable male. However, the connections between LDS theology regarding marriage and the shifting values of Mormon society cannot be ignored when evaluating their courtships. Five months after the announcement of the Manifesto, Susa Young Gates urged young women to not dismiss the sacredness of plural marriage. In the Young Woman’s

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39Cannon, Journal, 1891–92, typescript, January 11, 1892, 2; Leonard J. Arrington Collection, MSS 1, Box 5, fd. 9, Special Collections and Archive, Utah State University, Logan. Katherine Parkin, “‘Glittering Mockery’: Twentieth-Century Leap Year Marriage Proposals,” *Journal of Family History* 37 (2012): 86, explains that leap year folklore, which originates in Europe, declares that women can propose to men on February 29 of a leap year. This custom did not have a prevalent following in the United States, but leap year dances were quite successful beginning in the 1870s.

Susa Young Gates warned young women: “See to it that not one word of foolish, silly rejoicing passes your lips for what has been done. If you speak of it at all, let it be in the most solemn and sacred spirit. Beware how you treat lightly the things of the Kingdom, for there will come a time when your words will be known and you will be held accountable for them.”

Daughters of prominent Mormons like Amelia Cannon—her father was a counselor in the First Presidency—had to carefully negotiate the new world to which Gates referred. Amelia never extensively wrote about her feelings of her father’s hiding, subsequent arrest, and incarceration, and her family’s reaction. There is no doubt that her attitudes and action were caught between two ideals in Mormon society: honoring plural marriage but also aiming for a modern interpretation of Mormon marriage through monogamy. Even though Amelia respected Susa Young Gates’s words and her parents’ own marriage choices, she also had to conduct herself and her courtship plans in the modern world.

Her courtship experiences in early 1892 in many ways epitomized the ways in which Mormonism was attempting to develop new ideals for monogamist marriage while still clinging to old ideas bound up with polygamist marriage. Though polygamy is notably absent from her diary, it is evident that she was affected by the transformation of the marital system within Mormonism. As the content of Amelia’s later diary indicates, she was not only concerned about marrying but was largely consumed with finding the right Mormon marital partner. Her articulated selectiveness and declarations of her popularity suggested that she had many “cavaliers” calling on her at home and pursuing opportunities to spend time with her. Amelia was by no means unrestricted in her choice of interested young men, as she carefully considered their backgrounds. Based upon her diary, it is clear that she usually, though sometimes begrudgingly,
thought highly of her parents’ opinions regarding her potential partners.

Amelia’s stated preferences for a future husband fit many aspects of this developing concept of Mormon masculinity. Her “Ideal” beau must be religious and intellectual, and he “must make a mark in some way.” Nonetheless, despite these desired traits in a husband, she was still tempted to spend time with young men who did not have such an impressive record. Amelia felt especially attracted to two young men, Harry Chamberlain and Stephen Moyle.\(^42\) Chamberlain fit the new LDS male ideal—he was a mathematics professor at Latter-day Saint College, who studied under the Church’s top educational leaders—while Moyle beguiled her with his charming personality and obvious attraction. After a long and convoluted courtship, on September 28, 1892, Amelia at age twenty-two, married Chamberlain, a young man who squarely fit the new model of Mormon masculinity.\(^43\)

Church leaders and prescriptive literature asserted that


\(^{43}\)Marriage Certificate for Amelia Telle Cannon and William Henry Chamberlain, September 28, 1892, photocopy, Leonard J. Arrington Collection, Arrington Archives, MSS 1, Series VI, Box 5, fld. 9, Special Collections & Archives, Utah State University, Logan.
a vital tenet of the new Mormon masculinity was that every eligible young unmarried man should undertake a mission to proselytize for the Church. This was a considerable adjustment to the missionary system, which previously sent out men of various ages, several of whom already had wives and children. The emphasis placed on young men serving missions helped create a new marriage ideal for young women after the adoption of the first Manifesto. The most obvious way that “serving a mission” came to define pivotal moments in young women’s lives was the great popularity of missionary departures and homecomings as social events.

The ideal of missionary service appears prominently in the diary of Rose Jenkins, whose social calendar was filled with parties celebrating the departure of a young man or accomplishments of returned missionaries. As a young Mormon woman, Rose Jenkins held herself to the high standard of behavior prescribed in LDS periodicals like the Young Woman’s Journal. Like Amelia Cannon and Mary Bennion, Rose Jenkins was born into a polygamist family. Yet, while Amelia and Mary regularly write about regular interactions with their fathers, Rose’s diaries, which cover 1896 to 1899 when she was nineteen to twenty-three, remained noticeably muted about her father. However, when it was time for her brother Harry to leave on a mission in July 1896, she wrote that her home would be “strange and loney [sic] without him.” Reflecting on how his absence would affect the whole family, she wrote: “Mamma and we children have never been separated. We have not had the blessing of a father’s association but have been all in one together.”

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44 Rosalia (“Rose”) Jenkins (b. 1877 in Salt Lake City) was born to Thomas Jenkins and his fourth wife, Mahala Jenkins. “Utah, Salt Lake County Death Records, 1849-1949,” FamilySearch, https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NQH7-TZL (accessed August 12, 2015); FHL microfilm 4,139,809.

45 Rose Jenkins Badger, Journal, 1896–97, July 10, 1896; Carlos Ashby Badger Collection, 1895–1939, MSS 1298, Box 7, fd. 4, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. All
As a child of plural marriage, she did not always have the full attention of her father. Though she does not offer details about how this affected her upbringing or visions of her future, it seems likely that his absence made Rose more cautious when considering her own future marriage. She enjoyed close friendships with both young men and women. She eventually married her childhood friend Carl Badger, but she had earlier attempted to avoid his initial romantic overtures. In 1897, when she was twenty, she wrote:

Coming home Carl took a hold of my hand. I tried to draw it away but [he] held it fast, so I said “Please don’t Carl.” He dropped it and asked if he committed an unfavorable sin. I told him no. Both of us were silent for a few moments after that. Then he said he would exchange thoughts with me. I told him to begin. I’ll not write what they were. I will write only the promise I made him. I promised that if at any time, I would rather he did not show me any attentions, I would tell him so.

The expectations of proper behavior that Rose was following were high for young women. In 1890 the Young Woman’s Journal published a talk given in 1885 by Lucinda S. Dalton, a well-known suffragist, poet, and plural wife, to the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association in Beaver on “Love, Courtship, and Marriage.” Dalton advised a young woman to keep a physical distance from her suitor. It was permissible for a young man to give a young woman his arm when walking together in the evening, but he should not “attempt to place his [arm] around her” and “never touch her face, pat her on the shoulder, nor stroke her hair.” The reasons for keeping physical distance were twofold.

of Rose’s journals are in the Carlos Ashby Badger Collection.


First, it was widely understood that no “honest well-informed” young man would marry an unmarried woman who had allowed such physical familiarity to happen with a man. Second, if a man “manifests a spirit of undue familiarity” toward a young woman, it is an immediate sign that he is not worthy marriage material and more than likely carries “bitter contempt for womanhood.”\(^{48}\) Clearly Rose was extremely conscientious about her courtship behaviors, as she regularly admonished herself in her journal when she believed she displayed frivolous behavior. In one particular incident, she berated herself for teasing some male friends: “We acted perfectly crazy. I was disgusted. I shall not act so again.”\(^{49}\) Clearly consumed with displaying proper decorum, she maintained the prescribed appropriate guidelines for courtship by keeping her distance from Carl.

Despite Rose’s avoidance of a physical intimacy with Carl, it was clear they shared a close bond and similar interests and ideals. Nearly every Sunday, Carl would spend the afternoon at her home reading aloud from such books as *Ben Hur*. One Sunday when he was unable to visit because he had the mumps, Rose wrote “O, it seemed so lonely and strange not to have him come down.” On another Sunday when she was feeling “blue,” it was only Carl who was able to lift her mood. She wrote: “He understands my hopes and ambitions. He knows just how to encourage me and he shows me how to overcome my faults.”\(^{50}\) Their interactions conformed to suggestions of a proper courtship, as in her talk, Lucinda Dalton recommended that young couples should learn “each other’s views and opinions on all the important questions of life.”\(^{51}\) Despite their shared bond and appreciation for each other, Rose continually and firmly reiterated that they were friends, not lovers.

Young men leaving for missions was a frequent reality for


\(^{49}\)Badger, Journal, August 23, 1896.

\(^{50}\)Ibid., “Mon to Fri Mar 29 to Apr 2.”

Rose Jenkins. But when Carl left for his mission on June 28, 1897, she wrote, “I never felt so much like crying.” Despite her sadness at Carl’s departure, she interpreted his mission as an honorable and necessary aspect of his status as a Latter-day Saint male. Rose then went into a tailspin when he returned in March 1899 after spending nearly two years in the mission field. Although she does not specify his exact reasons, according to an overview of the Rose and Carl’s diaries in the Carlos Ashby Badger Collection, his reasons for returning were rooted in his personal struggle when the mission president, Apostle John W. Taylor encouraged the missionaries to preach plural marriage to potential converts. Carl later became Senator Reed Smoot’s secretary during the hearings and smarted under the accusation that the Mormons had lied in saying they had given up plural marriage. Presumably as a young missionary he also resisted preaching plural marriage given the Church’s public abandonment of the practice. Carl, the child of plural marriage, had experienced the burdens of attempting to live this family and marriage system firsthand.

But for Rose, Carl’s mission was a non-negotiable requirement. She wrote on April 17, 1899: “None, but my Heavenly Father, knows how hard it has been for me to see my girlhood’s ideal fall into darkness. . . . I care not what others may say, I shall never believe him wicked. He is willful and headstrong, but nothing worse. He is not all that I thought him, but I trust he will be some day. For the past, I have no regrets so far as my

52 Badger, Journal, June 28, 1897.
53 Harvard S. Heath and Candace Kearl, comps., “Carl Ashby and Rose Jenkins Badger Collection, Mss. 1298, February 1994, 1. Carlos Ashby Badger Collection, 1895–1939, MSS 1298, Box 7, fd. 4. John Taylor, Church president (1880–87), was John W.’s father. At the time of Carl’s mission, John W. was within a few years of being removed from the Quorum of the Twelve and was excommunicated in 1906 for contracting new post-Manifesto marriages. D. Michael Quinn, “LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 18 (Spring 1985): 4.
relations with him are concerned. I loved him, he loved me. That tells the story.” Fortunately, after contemplating his situation for two months, Carl returned to the mission field, completed an honorable mission, and married Rose following his return. No doubt a significant factor in his decision was Rose’s firmness about his mission. She was willing to forgo a marriage with a man she loved and who was well suited to her because it would not be a true Latter-day Saint marriage for time and eternity. As a proper Mormon girl, Rose believed that her religious ideals and responsibilities should come before her personal and romantic happiness.

Rose Jenkins’s words, “my girlhood’s ideal,” in reference to losing Carl as a potential husband, exemplifies how setting ideals for a future husband had become a significant aspect of a young woman’s girlhood. While earlier women, such as Mary E. Perkes, did write about their hopes for their future husband, the hopes of women like Rose and Amelia took on a different meaning as they did not focus on all worthy men, unmarried or not, but on single men who fit the emerging ideal for Mormon masculinity. These amended values intertwined with young women’s expectations for the future as they navigated a new terrain of courtship and living up to the model of a proper Mormon girlhood and womanhood while the Church moved into the early twentieth century.

Like Amelia Cannon and Rose Jenkins, Mary Bennion was acutely aware of the ideal that she was expected to exemplify. As a young woman, she religiously read both the Mormon *Young Woman’s Journal* and the secular *Ladies’ Home Journal.* The third volume of her diary, written when she was eighteen and nineteen, frequently refers to both magazines. Upon her graduation from the Relief Society nurses’ program in 1909, her maternal aunt, Augusta Grant, gave her a volume of the *Young Woman’s Journal* as a present, “something” Mary remarked “that I shall

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54 Badger, Journal, April 17, 1899.
always enjoy reading."55 In that same year, Mary “bought 3 more volumes of the Young Woman’s Journal (II, V, VI)” and early in 1910, she received a volume from her father’s third wife, Mayme Bringhurst.56 The fact that Mary received whole volumes as gifts and collected past volumes suggests that this was a practice shared by generations of women, with younger women wanting and/or directed to read the Young Woman’s Journal. Nonetheless, Mary’s reading habits did not stop with Mormon periodicals, as she was also an avid reader of the Ladies’ Home Journal, a woman’s publication that began in 1883. In her fourth journal, she wrote “The Ladies Home Journal came today and we took turns reading it.”57 Her reading of the Ladies’ Home Journal was an open activity, which suggested that it, too, was read widely and shared among women.

Mary’s reading of the Ladies Home Journal likely played a leading role in her distaste for plural marriage. She reached adolescence and adulthood in the Mormon world at a time when monogamy was becoming an expectation. In his work on Mary Bennion’s autobiographical and fictional writings, scholar John Bennion, whose paternal grandfather Glynn Bennion was Mary’s first cousin, asserts that her fierce embrace of monogamy was partly fueled by her own avid reading of the Ladies Home Journal, whose stories promoted monogamous and romantic love. Other contributing factors may have included hearing stories of her ancestor’s sacrifices in plural marriage; firsthand knowledge of her mother’s heartbreak over her father’s marriages; and the Church’s movement away from the practice itself.58

Perhaps the most important factor contributing to Mary Bennion’s disdain for plural marriage was her father’s surreptitious practice of the marriage system. In 1902, at age twelve, Mary discovered a letter that her father had written to his

55Bennion, Journal, May 14, 1909. Augusta was a plural wife of Apostle Heber J. Grant, a future Church president.
56Ibid., October 4, 1909; January 11, 1910.
57Ibid., June 21, 1910.
second wife, Mayme Bringhurst. At that point, the Manifesto was twelve years old. The General Authorities had an equivocal record of sometimes allowing some plural marriages, and slowly broadened interpretations to make the practice more restrictive. Still, Mary had accepted the Church’s turning away from plural marriage. Now she had to deal with the fact that her father was not only a deliberate lawbreaker but that he had


60After the 1890 Manifesto and before the 1904 Manifesto, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, and Joseph F. Smith (Church presidents) and Apostle George Q. Cannon were inconsistent in authorizing plural marriage, depending on the need to keep the practice secret. While they continued to publicly deny the practice, all of them allowed some plural marriages (usually in Mexico) but denied others. Ultimately, there was no one standard of allowing plural marriage during this period. Quinn, “LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages,” 59–103.

61The prohibition gradually extended to the cohabitation of couples, even those married before 1890, and loopholes such as marriages performed in Mexico and on ships at sea were closed. The Reed Smoot hearings (1904–7) by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections were underway in Washington, D.C., and Joseph F. Smith, after six grueling days of testifying before this committee announced the Second Manifesto at April 1904 general conference, warning new polygamists that their membership was at risk. Michael H. Paulos, “Under the Gun at the Smoot Hearings: Joseph F. Smith’s Testimony,” Journal of Mormon History 34, no. 4 (2008): 196, 221; Kathleen Flake, The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 91–92.
concealed the information from the children of his first marriage. Though her mother knew of his additional wives and children, Mary viewed her, not as an accomplice, but as a victim of what she saw as her father’s deceit. Based on her later writings, this traumatic discovery irrevocably changed her feelings toward her father, a man who she thought “was as good as God himself.”

As an adult she wrote both fictionalized accounts and personal essays about her discovery, also annotating her childhood journal to document retrospectively what she knew but did not record at the time. For example, in January 1949, at age fifty-nine, she wrote next to a January 1902 entry: “My half-sister Susie [the first child of Mayme Bringhurst] was born on Feb. 19th, 1902. Yet I did not even know my father had other wives than my mother months after Susie was born. When I found it out I wanted to die.” For Mary, plural marriage was not a sacred practice to be honored, but an act of adulterous injustice that her father imposed upon her mother, herself, and her siblings.

Mary’s initial reluctance to respond to her father’s betrayal in her diary is tied to her familial understanding of diary-keeping as a method of self-discipline and a record of her accomplished responsibilities. Over the years as she gained more confidence, Mary Bennion started to voice direct disapproval with her father and his decisions regarding his marital choices and child-rearing. In 1915, Mary’s younger full sister Lucile considered ending her college career at Utah Agricultural College in Logan when she became engaged. Heber claimed that financial constraints did not allow him to help Lucile continue her education. Heber claimed that financial constraints did not allow him to help Lucile continue her education.

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62 Mary Bennion Powell Muhs, “Incidents in the Lives of My Immediate Ancestors and Immediate Family,” 8, Bennion Collection, MS B-16, Box 7, fd. 2, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, quoted in John Bennion, “Mary Bennion Powell,” 104. “Muhs” was the surname of Mary’s second husband.

63 Bennion, Journal, 50, annotated entry from January 1949 next to original entry from February 19, 1902.

64 John Bennion, “Mary Bennion Powell,” 87.
five-year-old Mary recorded:

I could see then that if any of mothers children obtained a
good education it must be through their own efforts. I hardly
think Aunt Mayme’s children will care to go beyond high school.
They are being trained that is the aim of life to marry young, raise
as large a family as nature will allow regardless of the necessary
knowledge or money with which to educate children properly; and
that one should be satisfied with the mere physical necessities of
life. Papa holds these same views with the exception that he loves
literature and believes in a liberal education—for boys. He thinks a
girl should marry the first good man who asks her, and school for
her should be of only secondary importance.65

At this point, Mary’s negative attitude toward her father,
“Aunt Mayme,” and their children is clear. Her disapproval of
her father’s marital and family choices became more apparent
when she criticized: “Poor people who have large families are
either mistaken or as to their duty, or are merely thoughtless
and selfish.”66 Despite her disapproval of large families among
the poor, she states that she is, first and foremost, concerned
about the well-being of the child. When she writes that she
believes people should have as many children to whom they can
“give a healthy, carefree, childhood,” and provide education for
“congenial life work,” she is expressing her dissatisfaction with
her own childhood.67

To help Lucile continue her schooling, Mary insisted on
financing her sister’s education:

I told Lucile that I would teach school next year and send her
to the A.C. [Utah Agricultural College] She refused the offer at
first, partly because she thought it was too much of a sacrifice on
my part and partly because papa disapproved. It really would not
be as much of a trial for me to be a “school marm” another year,
much as I dread it, as it would be to allow Lucile to grow old be-

66Ibid.
67Ibid.
fore her time doing drudgery in some ranch away from everybody.
I want her to drain the cup of girlhood’s joys to the last sweet drop,
so that whatever comes after she may have these memories to keep
her from thinking that life is commonplace. Just lately to my great
relief she said that she would adopt my plan.68

Even though Mary describes her chief motivation in this plan
as assuring that Lucile experience the “joys” that are girlhood’s
right, it seems likely that Mary’s reluctance for her sister to marry
young and not finish college was most likely connected to her
belief that their mother had lost her chance at happiness when
she married as a young woman.69 While her comment that she
does not want her sister “doing drudgery” as a married woman in
“some ranch away from everybody” is likely not meant to be an
affront to her own mother, who spent her married life as a hard-
working ranch wife in West Taylorsville, Utah, it is clear that
Mary Bennion has no interest in seeing either herself or Lucile
follow her mother’s footsteps of being a lonely wife who gave up
other opportunities.

When Mary herself, at age twenty-six, was being courted by
Charles Francis Powell, her future husband, she articulated as her
ideal a romantic concept widely held among young American
women, not just Mormons: “There is only one soul for one soul
in the universe.”70

Despite Mary’s complicated family history with polygamy
and her disillusion with her father—indeed, perhaps because
of her disillusion and family history—she readily turned to the
popular romantic ideal of monogamous romance in courtship
and marriage. In doing so, she embraced and lived up to new
Mormon gender ideals. By the time she reached her twenties,
she was clearly very familiar with the messages outlined in the
Young Woman’s Journal: acquire a suitable Mormon marriage
partner, be knowledgeable in housekeeping and domestic science,

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68Ibid.
69John Bennion, “Mary Bennion Powell,” 100.
70Bennion, Journal, February 1915.
and bear and rear the next generation of Mormon children. 71 Though Mary Bennion did not immediately fulfill many of these aspirations (she waited to the “later” age of twenty-eight to marry), she likely internalized the ideal that a returned missionary would be a worthy husband. When the son of a family friend returned from his mission, she wrote:

A man waved at us from the back yard. I had a suspicion that it was Charles as he seemed too tall and narrow to be the bishop; and it was as I thought. When we arrived at the front door there was the long lost missionary to welcome us. . . . Alas he has sadly altered since I saw him at conference. Missionaries do look so deceptively handsome when they first come home, before they . . . [get] sunburned toiling on the farm. And yet it was a relief to know that he “still among us.”72

She had first seen Charles at April 1916 general conference, but her next contact with him was in July when he was sunburned from farmwork. She sighed over his earlier “deceptively handsome” appearance, but this comment illustrates her realization that the returned missionary status was a glorified stereotype—not necessarily an ideal that all returned missionaries would or could live up to. Nonetheless, Mary did not dismiss him because he was now less handsome; rather, she attributed to him increased faith and commitment, traits that made him a suitable husband. Perhaps what is most surprising was not that she would marry after being so hurt by her father’s betrayals but that she retained an undying faith in her religion. At no point in her journals does she question how her religion could have condoned an unusual marriage practice that had “officially” ended only the year she was born.73 For Mary, plural marriage was an event in the past, her father was a dishonest outlier, and his behavior was anachronistic within the larger story of family, religion, and life.

Examining the writings of these young women offers insights

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71 Hoyt and Patterson, “Mormon Masculinity,” 80.
73 John Bennion, “Mary Bennion Powell,” 100.
into how they experienced their lives in the context of this transitional period for the LDS Church. As Mormon adherents born between the 1870s and 1890s, they were of two worlds: one that honored and practiced polygamy and another that pushed for monogamy. In many ways, the lived experiences of Amelia Cannon, Rose Jenkins, and Mary Bennion fit the model of an appropriate Mormon girl and woman. They lived their girlhood years with a commitment to upholding Mormon ideals and eventually married men who fit the new ideal of masculinity.

For each of these women, the diary was a tool in the process of their identity formation as young Mormon women. This adjustment was not just the merging of their Mormon and non-Mormon identities, but also a way to define their individual personalities and help them find their place within their family and generation. In this instance of examining the Church’s long transitional period, their writing allows another view beyond prescriptive literature and the viewpoints of the Mormon leadership. Examining their writing reveals how all members of Mormon society, no matter their age, were deeply affected by transitions and had to manage their own identity within their religion, generation, and family.

As a fifty-nine-year-old woman reflecting on her diary, Mary Bennion wrote that her journal and those of her siblings “might be those of any of thousand[s] of orthodox members of the Mormon Church.”74 The discovery of her father’s plural marriage galvanized her to consider her father’s behavior critically and to write fictional and nonfictional versions of her childhood.75

Thus, while her diary may be similar to those of other “orthodox members of the Mormon Church,” her diary and those of other young women reveal that an “ordinary” Mormon girlhood was and is not a fixed experience. Instead, these young women lived full and complicated lives deeply influenced by their generation, family, position in history, and role as Church members during Mormonism’s transition at the turn of the twentieth century.

comprehensive analysis of these writings.
The faithful Nephites, under the guidance of prophets and revelators, . . . came on the waters of the rivers which we call the Magdalena. On this river . . . in what is now termed . . . Colombia they built their great capital city. They also discovered another nation [in] that country called the people of Zarahemla. —Orson Pratt1

The most popular current reconstruction of Book of Mormon geography locates that setting in a limited area of Mesoamerica;2 but a century ago, a serious expedition set out with First Pres-


idency approval to discover Zarahemla. Leading the expedition was Benjamin Cluff Jr. (1858–1948), president of Brigham Young Academy (BYA) who had taken his degree in English literature at the University of Michigan (1886–90). During the late nineteenth century, two classically trained Mormon scholars, George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, had painstakingly constructed a coherent geography from Book of Mormon descriptions that located the Nephite capital of Zarahemla on the banks of the Magdalena River in Colombia, South America.4

Believing Latter-day Saints had long expected archeological proof that would support the Book of Mormon as ancient history. In the early 1840s, Richard Lyman Bushman notes John L. Stephens’s immensely popular 1841 work, Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan.5 In the eyes of the faithful, such discoveries of an ancient American civilization vindicated the Book of Mormon.

In December 1899 after much thought and discussion with trusted friends, Cluff approached Joseph F. Smith and George Q. Cannon, counselors to LDS Church President Lorenzo Snow, about Brigham Young Academy’s sponsoring an exploratory expedition to Central and South America to find Zarahemla. Like similar expeditions by other American and foreign universities, the expedition would also conduct geological, biological, and linguistic studies, gathering artifacts and shipping them back to


3The name changed to Brigham Young University in 1903.

4See Givens, By the Hand of Mormon, 106. Philip C. Reynolds, son of George Reynolds, edited their manuscript, which was published as Commentary on the Book of Mormon, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1955–61); see also Bruce Van Orden, “George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl on Book of Mormon Geography,” The Thetan, April 1982, 60–79.

Provo for scientific study and display.

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve reviewed Cluff's proposal and approved it as a missionary endeavor. It thus became the first serious investigation into Book of Mormon archeology. The audacity and even absurdity of untrained college students and faculty members setting out for a foreign journey on horseback of more than three thousand miles stand out, but the nineteenth century had seen many imagination-capturing expeditions by amateurs, and enthusiasm was high. Using the Reynolds–Sjodahl reconstruction for the end point on the Magdalena River, Cluff planned a route south through Utah, Arizona, Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. After crossing the tropical Isthmus of Panama, they would enter northern Colombia and find the Magdalena River. On its shores, Zarahemla lay hidden in dense jungle cover. After locating this Book of Mormon city, the expedition would continue south to Valparaiso, Chile, and return to Utah by ship and rail. Six members of the original twenty-five completed this epic journey, the last, Heber Magleby, returning some twenty-two months later.

The Cluff expedition has never been adequately studied, probably because the ill-prepared expedition fizzled, and its collision with charges of polygamy proved embarrassing. In the 1970s, former BYU president Ernest L. Wilkinson published a chapter on the topic in his 1975 first volume of Brigham Young University's history. Three years later, journalist Samuel W.

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8Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, 4 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 1:140–62. Associate editors are listed as Leonard J. Arrington and Bruce C. Hafen. Although Wilkinson identifies himself as "editor," no chapter authors are identified; so I assume that Wilkinson
Taylor published a more highly colored account as part of his 1978 history of contemporary Mormonism. In the following three decades, BYU’s Harold B. Lee Library has assembled a sizeable collection of material on the expedition, much of it unavailable to Wilkinson and Taylor, including the excellent journal by Parley Pratt Nelson upon which this article is largely based. Because he joined the expedition late, his name does not appear in either Wilkinson’s or Taylor’s account.

Both Wilkinson and Taylor wrote with strong personal biases and concentrate their attention on the elites. Wilkinson treats at length the General Authorities involved and their subsequent misgivings about the expedition. Nevertheless, he gives a sound overview of the enterprise. In contrast, Taylor sets up the tale as a melodramatic contest between the altruistic, tall, handsome President Cluff and the sinister, short, ugly Professor Walter M. Wolfe; but his account captures the color, enthusiasm, and exoticism of the expedition. Neither account devotes much attention to the twenty-two young male missionaries who comprised the body of the expedition. Although they lacked rigorous training, either intellectually or physically for the difficult challenges, they were fired by dreams of high adventure.
made unquestionably “respectable” by their missionary calling. All of them had basic skills with firearms, horses and mules, and camping out. Their strong faith made for social cohesion and collaborative undertaking.

Both Wilkinson and Taylor neglect the company’s day-by-day dynamics. Wilkinson comments on the young expeditioners’ indiscretions, and Taylor on the journey’s frivolities. Neither acknowledges the young men’s seriousness. They studied Spanish and the Book of Mormon. As they traveled, they were keen observers of their changing physical environment. Both Wilkinson and Taylor also miss the historical significance of the Cluff expedition, which launched a century of Mormon Mesoamerican archaeological forays and became the cornerstone for future, more professionalized undertakings. But in the 1970s, it was still under a historic cloud. Church authorities had second thoughts after the expedition set out; when it was delayed at the Mexican border, the Church rescinded its support. Cluff and seven expedition members were allowed to continue at their own expense. Six reached the Magdalena River, but political turmoil made searching for Zarahemla impractical; and after nearly two years on the road, they returned home. Although “what if’s” are conjectural, under different circumstances and with different success, the young expeditioneers may have gone on to establish significant reputations in biology, archeology, linguistics, history, art, comparative religion, and geography.

**Parley P. Nelson and the Other Members**

Although Brigham Young Academy students and faculty figured largely among expedition members, other men joined from communities across Utah with one, Paul Henning, from Arizona. (See Table 1.) Wilkinson gives a list of twenty-three in addition to Cluff, and Taylor twenty-four. Wilkinson missed Parley Pratt Nelson and Christian Olsen, both students at the

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**TABLE 1**
**MEMBERS OF THE CLUFF EXPEDITION***

1. Benjamin Cluff Jr., Provo, expedition leader  
2. Walter M. Wolfe, Provo, professor, biologist, counselor  
3. Gordon G. Beckstead, South Jordan, chief captain, teamster, counselor  
4. Joseph Adams, Parowan, BYU student  
5. W. R. Adams, Parowan, BYU student  
6. Joseph Q. Cannon, Salt Lake City, BYU student  
7. John Fairbanks, Salt Lake City, artist  
8. Henry Giles, Salt Lake City, BYU student  
9. Soren Hansen, Castle Lake, BYU student, camping  
11. B. T. Higgs, Castle Dale, BYU student  
12. William Hughes, Spanish Fork, secretary, scribe  
13. Asa Kienke, Nephi, BYU student  
14. Heber Magleby, Monroe, replaced Seevy (#19), BYU student  
15. George Mumford, Beaver, BYU student  
16. Mosher Pack, Kamas, geologist, mineralogist  
17. Lafayette Rees, Wales, BYU student  
18. Eugene Roberts, Provo, BYU student  
20. Warren Shepard, Beaver, BYU student  
21. Walter Tolton, Beaver, photographer, bugler  
22. Chester Van Buren, Huntington, BYU student, biology  
23. Royal Woolley, Kanab, assistant chief captain  
24. Parley Pratt Nelson, Monroe, Snow College, cook  
25. Christian Olsen, Ephraim, Snow College, hunter

Sanpete Stake Academy in Ephraim (which I refer to by its later name, Snow Academy, now Snow College). Cluff organized the group into four specializations: (1) geology and mineralogy, (2) geography, including ancient sites, (3) photography and (4) hunting, fishing, and cooking.12

When Jesse May of Nephi dropped out as the company’s cook, Parley Nelson replaced him. It was an assignment for which he had little preparation; and from his journal, he apparently functioned more as a supply and logistics agent. His daily diary contains insightful observations about the expedition’s affairs and absorbing descriptions of the geography as the company moved south.

Parley Pratt Nelson, born February 17, 1875, in Monroe, Utah, was the fourth of the eight children born to Peter Nielsen and Bolletta Petronelle Svendsen Nielsen. Both were immigrant converts, Peter from Denmark and Bolleta from Norway. As a teenager, according to family recollections, Parley found time as a sheepherder to absorb a steady diet of good books. He was one of Snow Academy’s first graduates. In 1896 while he was at the academy, he changed his name from Nielsen to Nelson, a decision he never explains.13

12Eugene L. Roberts and Mrs. Eldon Reed Cluff (Benjamin Cluff’s daughter-in-law), “Benjamin Cluff, Jr., Scholar, Educational Administrator, and Explorer, Second Principal of Brigham Young Academy, and First President of Brigham Young University: A Study of the Life and Labors of One of Utah’s First School Administrators,” July 24, 1947, unpublished typescript, 103–4; L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).

13My mother gave me the middle name “Nelson” but never explained why when I asked her for the reason. “Nielsen” (spelled variously) appears in public records. Perhaps because English speakers in Sanpete and Sevier counties ridiculed their Scandinavian neighbors, I hypothesize that Parley changed his name to the English form. William Jenson Adams, Sanpete Tales: Humorous Folklore from Central Utah (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999).
Nelson joined the Zarahemla enterprise on his own initiative, recording in his diary in Ephraim on Sunday, March 11, 1900: “My cousin Heber Magleby14 [who was enrolled at BYA] came from Provo today. . . . We talked about his going to South America on a mission. The BY Academy has organized an exploring company . . . to this country to strengthen the internal evidences of the Book of Mormon. . . . The company will leave Provo April 17, 1900 and will be gone 1½ years. I have concluded to go provided the school [by which he meant the near-bankrupt Snow Academy] can get the necessary means for me.”15

Three days later on Wednesday, March 14, Nelson recorded: “Prof. Cluff came to visit the Academy . . . to get someone to join the expedition. A special meeting was held where financing was discussed. Names of the expedition candidates were submitted.” Nelson’s was obviously one of the names and so, although Nelson records no details, was that of Christian Olsen, a fellow student. Neither Wilkinson nor Taylor mentions Cluff’s recruiting efforts at Snow Academy.

Obviously, the organization was still somewhat fluid. On Wednesday, March 28, 1900, Nelson and Olsen were hosted at a farewell party; and the next day, Cluff told Nelson that if “Jesse May of Nephi cannot go that I could go as cook.” Nelson telegraphed the bishop at Nephi to ascertain May’s status and recorded, “Find affair in the hands of Apostle Teasdale” (March 29, 1900). Teasdale’s role is not clear; however, Nelson clearly felt that he had been accepted. On Saturday, March 31, he took the train to Elsinore where his father met him and took him by team to the family home in Monroe, five miles to the east. “Before going to bed I [tried] two horses to see if they suit me.”

14Heber Magleby, “Diary of Heber Magleby: During his BYU Exploring Expedition to South America,” compiled by Brigham Young University Library, 1957. Wilkinson had access to this diary and to Magleby’s detailed letters to his family.

15Parley Pratt Nelson, Journal, 1900-1901, March 11, 1900, photocopy of holograph and typescript in my possession. Cited parenthetically by date in the text if the date is not clear in the narrative.
More to the point, he enlisted his family's aid in financing the venture. According to the Taylor account, BYA would provide $100 dollars for each expeditioneer, making a total of $2,500. Each member was required to match it with $125 and provide his own outfit: a saddle horse, a packhorse, rifle, pistol, cartridge belt, Bowie knife, and camping gear. Two baggage wagons pulled by four-horse teams would carry tents, provisions, and photographic and scientific equipment. The company would thus have more than fifty horses and mules.

Snow Academy's faculty contributed toward Nelson and Olsen's $100 fee (March 14), and so did his parents: “G[o]t some money from father and my sister and then from mother. Mother always comes to the rescue” (March 17). Apparently the family had no horses to contribute. On Monday, March 19, “after trying a number of horses,” he purchased one from neighbor Albert Nilsson for $25. The saddle, ironically, cost “$26.50 and a bridle and spurs . . . $2.25. Oats for $3.10.” Nelson spent the next day looking for another horse but could not find a suitable animal. Over the next two weeks, in Monroe, Ephraim, and Salt Lake City, he purchased a “pistol, cartridges, knife,” had his horse shod, bought “nose band, hobblers etc.,” and, in company with his cousin, “purchased a gun 38-55, a scabbard, a cartridge belt etc.” (March 24, April 7). He apparently spent well over four hundred dollars for his outfit, not to mention the costs of traveling to collect these items. The financial commitment for him and his family was substantial, and the departure date, only a month

16Taylor, Rocky Mountain Empire, 149.

17To provide money for the family Mother Bolletta “carefully tended her flock of chickens and saved her ‘egg money.’” She also augmented the meager family income by weaving carpets. “That same loom that helped to feed him [Parley] as a child helped to send him on a mission to Central America.” Ella Nielsen Newby, History of Peter and Bolletta Nielsen, Grandparents (N.p., July 1954), 3; copy in my possession.

18Gun specialist Allen Bingham described it to me as a low-power hunting rifle that used black powder cartridges.
Standing left: Parley Nelson and his brother, William. Seated are their parents, Peter Nielsen and Bolletta Petronelle Svendsen Nielsen.
away on April 17, 1900, was pressing. He also spent considerable
time with Agnes Thompson, his current romantic interest.

On Friday, April 6, Nelson left Ephraim for Salt Lake City.
Although normally general conference sessions would have been held, he mentions attending an evening lecture on “all of the planets” with Heber Magleby and other expeditioneers. On Saturday, he did some more shopping, had dinner at noon with Christian Olsen, Magleby, and Asa Keinke, “took a bath at the Sanitarium,” and presented himself with his companions at President Lorenzo Snow’s office where they were set apart for their mission by Apostles John W. Taylor and Francis M. Lyman. Lyman spoke in blessing Nelson, the third to be set apart, including a safe return and the discovery of “external evidences [of] the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” according to Parley’s diary. Expeditioneers Kienke, Higgs, and Van Buren were set apart to remain in South America to study native languages after the company disbanded (April 7).

On Sunday, April 8, Nelson caught the early train and reached Ephraim about noon where eight inches of snow had fallen. He spent the next four days with his “dear Agnes” and “her sister Mrs. Johnson,” made final preparations, and bade other friends goodbye. On Friday morning, April 13, he went to Provo and camped out that night in “tents with the boys.”

On Tuesday, April 17, the day of departure, everything was ready. “The first thing this morning I fix the provision box onto the wagons. Finish the preparations for the South. At 10 o’clock we assembled at Bros. Cluff’s and marched in order to the BY

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19 The Salt Lake Sanitarium Baths (1893–1919) were located on the north side of 300 South between Main and West Temple streets. Darrell A. Jones and W. Randall Dixon, “It Was Very Warm and Smelt Very Bad: Warm Springs and the First Bath House in Salt Lake City,” Utah Historical Quarterly 76, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 224 note 62.

20 Taylor, Rocky Mountain Empire, 149-50, and Hemminger, “Forgotten Quest,” 23, say that the men were set apart in the temple. Wilkinson, Brigham Young University, 203, gives the location as Lorenzo Snow’s office.
Academy and file into the College Hall where we received a rousing round of applause. After the meeting the boys went to Pres. Cluff’s and mounted, formed line of march, and at the order marched. The South American Expedition moved forward at 1:30 p.m."

He failed to record additional details. On Monday night, the expeditioners were feted at a banquet with farewells being protracted until 2:00 A.M. Heber Magleby, riding a buckskin horse and carrying an American flag, led the parade.21 The expeditioners made a brave sight in leggings, gauntlets, broad-brimmed hats, neckerchiefs, polished boots and saddles, rifles strung on their saddles, and bandoliers of cartridge belts. The horses were well groomed and eager for exercise. Both sides of Academy Avenue were lined with cheering students and citizens. Buggies, riders, and pedestrians followed the procession. At Springville, a scant five miles from Provo, the company was regaled by “about four hundred children” singing songs. Cluff addressed the gathering, and the citizens contributed $16 to the company fund.”22

A bugle called the group back into the line of march, and they traveled an additional seven miles to Spanish Fork where a brass band escorted the expeditioners to the “tithing yards.” The expeditioners pitched their tents, but the community feted them at a “sumptuous banquet in the city hall,” followed by dancing and fun. The citizens contributed a generous hundred dollars.

The next day, the company broke camp at 7:00 A.M., gave the citizens three cheers, and moved out. Santaquin fed them dinner and Mona’s brass band escorted the company almost to Nephi, where the residents welcomed them with “cheers and shouts.” The mayor gave a speech, Cluff responded, and another banquet and party followed. One of the company, Asa Keinke, was from Nephi, so $53.75 was collected in his honor. The company had logged thirty-two miles on their journey.

21Magleby, Diary, April 17, 1900.
22Ibid.
The excited celebrations continued on Thursday, April 19. The small town of Wales, the hometown of expeditioneer LaFayette Rees, hosted them for dinner. Then “we were escorted to the edge of town by twelve beautiful young ladies who parted to either side of the road allowing us to pass between...[E]very one of them was crying.” Outside Ephraim, twenty-four riders, “a companion for each of us,” escorted them into town where “an excellent supper” awaited them at the meeting house. The hall was decorated with “festoons of flowers...and the Stars and Stripes with bunting occupied a conspicuous place.” Nelson “enjoyed a very pleasant evening” with “my dear Agnes,” and they talked until “the gray streaks of dawn gleamed in upon us...I bid her a sweet, loving goodbye. She bore it bravely, the dear one” (April 19, 1900). Friday morning Agnes was again on hand to watch him out of sight.

Saturday was cold and rainy, but the expeditioneers, wearing rubber ponchos, were relatively comfortable. That day, the fifth they had been en route, Nelson’s father met his son and Heber Magleby in Richfield and took them by wagon to Monroe, eight miles or more. At a reception, “the Young Men’s Association presented each of us with a $12.00 purse,” followed by “an excellent feast at father’s.”

On Sunday, Nelson and Magleby bathed at Monroe’s natural hot springs and received a blessing from C. P. Christiansen, who was “dying with the dumb palsy.” On Monday, they joined “the teams” hauling the baggage wagons at the village of Joseph and “arrived at the [Cove] Fort at dusk.” It was snowing, but Nelson and Magleby stayed in a sheepherder’s wagon while the horsemen in the party went “by way of Kanosh” (April 23, 1900).

By visiting in Monroe, Nelson and Magleby avoided an exercise in authority from Cluff, who was probably impatient at the succession of celebrations. On Sunday morning, he overrode

23Apparently Magleby and Nelson obtained their second horses in Monroe, although neither mentions it. This was probably why Peter Nielsen met them in Richfield.
the bad weather and pressing invitations from the Richfield Saints, ordering the company to ride to Kanosh over rough terrain and a high mountain ridge. Kanosh bent Sabbath-day propriety by holding the usual banquet and dance, which broke up about midnight. Since the baggage wagons had continued on, the company had to follow in the stormy darkness. The weary party arrived at Cove Fort at 6:00 A.M., ate a quick breakfast, and moved on to Beaver where the baggage wagons were waiting. They had been on the move for more than thirty-six hours, traveling over seventy miles in two days.

The mayor of Beaver, a brass band, and a large number of buggies met the group on the outskirts of town and led the weary men to Fort Cameron on the north side of the Beaver River. Beaver was the home town of expeditioneers George Mumford, Walter Tolton, and Warren Shepard, and the company stayed in Beaver from the afternoon of Tuesday, April 24, until Friday morning, April 27. Festivities were held at the Beaver Branch of the Brigham Young Academy, with a play, banquets, musical programs, and balls. Nelson met a number of old acquaintances, including settlers from Monroe. Wilkinson records that some of the boys were rebuked for associating with non-Mormon girls and one for going out with “girls of ill repute,” but Nelson does not mention these details.

On Friday morning, April 27, the expedition left Beaver, traveling over a muddy road that got worse when it began to snow again “at noon . . . and continued all day and all night,” Parley recorded. “We camp in mud and eat some of Pres. Cluff’s picnic—mostly cake from the Beaver banquet.” Despite the unpleasant conditions, the party had traveled fifteen miles.

On Saturday, April 28, the teams pulled the heavy wagons through mud and snow until the “animals were nearly exhausted.”

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25John W. Van Cott, *Utah Place Names* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 142–43. Fort Cameron, a U.S. military tent camp (1873–83) actually had a number of buildings.
Cluff again split the party with the wagons passing through the mountains on present-day I–15 to Highway 89, while the horsemen continued by way of Parowan. “At Orton a number of teams from Panguitch came to the rescue,” recorded Nelson, who was driving one of the wagons. At 12:25 A.M., a little after midnight, they dragged into the city, having made “25 miles” under difficult circumstances.

Meanwhile, Paragonah and Parowan, only three miles apart, both insisted on providing a banquet. The horsemen dutifully feasted at Paragonah at 6:00 P.M., then four hours later, ate again at Parowan, where they worked off the meal by dancing until 2:00 A.M. Sunday morning. For his part, Nelson rested, spoke at sacrament meeting, and was hosted by a delightful family named Clark.

On Monday morning, Nelson and his fellow teamster, Gordon G. Beckstead, plodded on through the spring mud, rain, and snow. At Hillsdale, twelve miles past Panguitch, Parley recorded that they “get fast in mudhole. Put on 6 horses to get out” (April 30, 1900).

The next day, conditions were so much worse that “at times six horses could not pull the wagons.” A local bishop came to their aid with fresh teams, but they eventually abandoned the wagons and took the teams to the bishop’s ranch, which they finally reached at 1:00 A.M., a distance of twenty-three miles (May 1, 1900).

The next day saw only nine miles covered, but it had required considerable backtracking, with eight horses required to pull each of the two wagons out of the mud holes. With six teams hitched to each wagon, they made it to the top of Graham Mountain. The following day, Thursday, May 3, “we pulled in[to] Kanab at 7 tonight. It has been a pull through mud and sand.” Although weary, Nelson was alert to new sights: “For the first time I saw some tree cactuses. Kanab Canyon is a peculiar one. The Jurassic rock crop out in the vermillion cliffs.”

27Ibid.
Despite the depressing weather, the company had been on the road for seventeen days, the teamsters were the only men to experience any significant hardship, and the expeditioners had yet to cook a meal for themselves. On May 3, Kanab’s mayor welcomed the company into the banquet hall where tables were loaded with “the bounties of life.” Parley enjoyed the grand ball “where a young lady recited [sic] a most beautiful piece.” On Friday, May 4, he took “an easy sleep” and had his “gray horse shod.” The blacksmith, a “Brother Brown refused to accept any pay. The bill was $1.50. May God reward him tenfold” (May 4, 1900).

Although Nelson does not mention it, Royal Woolley, the son of Kanab Stake’s president, joined the company at this point and was dismayed at the company’s amateurishness. Mormon homes supplied “meals and beds” for these explorers, and several expeditioners “could scarcely handle a horse.”

Two days out of Kanab on Sunday, May 6, Nelson ceremonially entered Arizona: “Goodbye to Utah, my hopes, my all are in thee. I love my mountain home and may God’s choicest blessings be upon all I hold dear in her borders.” Perhaps he was experiencing a pang of homesickness, but he was soon distracted as Woolley showed the travelers some of the notable sights. At Houserock Valley with its spring of pure water, Nelson visited a native cliff dwelling and found some “interesting history” (May 8, 1900). On Thursday, May 10, Nelson recorded that “a number of us under the direction of Bro. Walter Hamlin [Hamblin], son of our esteemed Jacob Hamlin, as guide, visited a number of cliff dwellings on the west banks of the Colorado River,” finding corncobs, potsherds, and other interesting items. They also descended into Wildcat Cave and “rang” the stalactites.

Kanab was the last of the hospitable Mormon settlements in Utah, so the company turned to hunting, finding considerable

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success in hunting rabbits and mixed success in hunting deer. After Nelson failed to bring down a deer, Beckstead borrowed his rifle and proved to be a good hunter.

After three days of hard travel across sand and slickrock, the weary company reached Lee’s Ferry on Thursday, May 17. The company had been on the road for one month. Horses were tired, water scarce, and grass sparse. The homestead, founded by John D. Lee in December 1871, appeared as a “green haven.” The weary expeditioners “looked longingly at the ripe cherries, almonds, green fruit and lush gardens.” Cluff refreshed himself at the home of John T. Emmett, the ferry operator, while instructing the company to cross the Colorado River. When passing Sister Emmett’s henhouse, Woolley noted that some company members surreptitiously gathered some eggs.  

John B. Fairbanks, the expedition’s artist, took photographs with a camera he had not fully mastered at the time from both sides of the Colorado River as the wagons and horses crossed on the ferry, while the expeditioners rowed across the “swift current” in a skiff (May 17, 1900). Emmett generously forgave the ferriage charge of thirty dollars, which Magleby considered to be a donation. Surprisingly, Nelson failed to record two mishaps. Expeditioneer Joseph Adams almost drowned, and a too-tight manila line injured Woolley’s horse, which had to be put down. After bathing close to shore, the company moved on to Navajo Springs for the night. Nelson nostalgically noted that it was commencement day at Snow Academy and “my sweetheart graduates” (May 17, 1900).

The company now faced its hardest stretch. Although the trail was well established, the horses were weakening on a diet of little grass and no grain. Navajo Springs was the last good water for more than seventy-five miles. At a council that evening, Cluff decided to push ahead to Tuba City or perhaps Winslow to

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29Woolley, paraphrased in ibid.
30Wilkinson, Brigham Young University, 1:300.
31Reilly, quoted in Webb, Lee’s Ferry, 182.
secure hay and grain, accompanied by Asa Keinke, B. T. Higgs, and Parley Nelson. The rest of the company would press on as the best it could.

The next morning, plans for an early start were thwarted when a number of the horses were missing, including one of Nelson’s. He found them on the bank of the Colorado River, and the foursome set off promptly, making thirty miles that day. On Saturday, May 19, they reached Tuba City. By now they were in Hopi-Navajo country. Nelson, impressed with the Indians’ large flocks of sheep, noted that they “are quite wealthy.”

The bishop refreshed them with bread and milk. The settlement’s eighteen Mormon families were located along the Moenkopi Wash, which was fed by numerous springs. The lucerne was nearly ready to cut, but no grain was available. On May 20, all four men spoke at sacrament meeting and, at the urging of the local people, also addressed an evening meeting. Nelson’s topic was faith.

Nelson records nothing about the strategic location of Tuba City/Moenkopi in the Mormon settlement of northeastern Arizona. Jacob Hamblin had visited the area in 1858 and a number of times in subsequent years. The Moenkopi area was prized because of its springs. In 1875 the settlement of the area began with the arrival of James S. Brown. Tuba City, located near Hopi villages and accessible to the Navajos, was a missionary center, especially after Hopi Chief Tuba was converted to Mormonism. Lot Smith, an illustrious Mormon pioneer, was killed by Indians near Tuba City in the winter of 1895. By the time of the expedition’s visit, the Indians were exerting pressure to remove the 150 Mormon settlers who were squatting on Indian property. In 1900, the federal government took control of the area to establish Indian reservations. After much negotiation, Mormon settlers in 1903 received a federal appropriation of $48,000. Tuba City continued to serve as a Mormon halfway station between Lee’s Ferry and the settlements
on the Little Colorado. Meanwhile, straggling behind Cluff’s party, the expedition traveled over the Painted Desert, finding scant water, scarcely fit for animal or human consumption. According to Nelson’s entry on May 21, the two parts of the party caught up with each other at Willow Springs.

On Saturday, May 26, the reunited expedition reached Winslow, a railroad town of about twelve hundred people. To Nelson, who had never before left Utah, the city appeared to be a wicked place. They stopped long enough to eat “dinner at the hotel” but camped a few miles outside Winslow, finding good grass and water for the animals. When the company neared the Little Colorado River, they were again in Mormon country. St. Joseph City, Holbrook, Woodruff, Snowflake, and Taylor settlements provided banquets and dances, opening their homes to the expediteers.

At St. Joseph City, Paul Henning, a recent German convert who was fluent in Spanish, joined the expedition bringing the total to twenty-five. Parley purchased an Indian basket and other “relics” which he mailed to his “dear sweetheart and also to mother” (Monday, May 28).

Two days later, Nelson was awestruck by the petrified forest ten miles east of Woodruff. “It is indeed the most wonderful sight of this kind I ever saw,” he wrote. He measured one tree that was “200 ft. long and 9 ft. in diameter,” collected specimens, and, with Christian Olsen, “sent a box of petrification’s [sic] to Snow Academy” (May 30–31, 1900).

Nelson’s cousin, Heber Magleby, had temporarily left the company at Parowan without giving a reason. His diary records visiting Washington, Toquerville, “Cannion Ranch,” and Pipe Springs, before rejoining the party at Kanab. He was visiting Effie Marie Sorenson, who lived in Washington County and whom

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32George S. Tanner and J. Morris Richards, Colonization on the Little Colorado, the Joseph City Region (Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland Press, 1977), chap. 16.
he married on June 23, 1903, in the St. George Temple. But a main activity seems to have been pursuing adventure. He got lost more than once, slept in a juniper, and shot a badger and a coyote. Interestingly, from Woodruff, Magleby again left the company, rode back “to Holbrook to see Miss Pearl Udell [Udall],” then caught up with the party the next day in Snowflake—covering more than seventy-five miles in two days (May 30–31, 1900).

At Taylor on Saturday, June 2, Cluff called a special meeting at which he rebuked the young men for a lack of discipline and order. Both Samuel Taylor and Ernest Wilkinson characterized him as stern and unbending; but Nelson’s report includes basic, practical instructions: The camp should “look neat and tidy. . . . No man should carry a loaded gun except in cases of emergency. Saddles and packs are to be orderly placed by the sides of tents or [inside]. . . . All are expected to be at meetings and parties given in honor of the company. Order of packing is to pack the horse after the riding horse has been saddled.” If Magleby was visiting girlfriends with Cluff’s permission, then Cluff seems accommodating, even lenient. But if Magleby had departed without permission, then he personally merited Cluff’s dressing down.

On Sunday afternoon, June 3, the company packed up and headed south across the Apache reservation to the Gila Valley and camped after ten or twelve miles on a rocky bench. The country was becoming mountainous again. Six days later, Saturday, on June 9, in the late afternoon the company reached the Mormon town of Thatcher on the Gila River.

Nelson admired the area’s “tall pines,” “huge oaks,” lush meadows, and clear lakes. His attempts at fishing were unsuccessful, and he had his first bout of ill health on Monday, June 4: “I had a very bad toothache, but I got the gum lanced at

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33Magleby, Diary, March 20, April-May 3, 1900. La Preale Magleby Isbell (Heber and Effie’s daughter), Untitled biographical sketch of Heber Magleby, n.d., photocopy in my possession. Heber’s informative letters to Effie are with the Cluff Expedition Papers, Perry Special Collections.
the ranch.” The ranch was “a government telegraph station for repairing the line.” Its director, a Mr. Coolidge, was married to an Apache woman. Nelson added admiringly, “See many of the Apache Indians. They are by far more intelligent than any Indians I have seen so far” (Tuesday, June 5). The next day after getting a horse shod at the Indian agency, he “fell in with a very intelligent Apache” and was surprised to learn that the Indian “did not know his exact age” and “had no particular way” to determine it. En route he visited Fort Apache where “two troops of cavalry [were] stationed.” Like all Americans, Nelson was aware of the Apaches’ military abilities. Eighteen years earlier in 1884, Geronimo had led a famous outbreak from the reservation. He recorded that the Indian women cut the local grass with sickles which the men “hauling . . . to the post” to sell for “20.00 a ton.”

On June 6, Nelson, who had fallen behind the company to take care of these tasks, rejoined the party. Cluff informed the “boys” that afternoon that they needed real missionary experience and assigned them to companions with the object of proselytizing when they reached Thatcher—although it was also a Mormon town. There were some protests at the delay; Cluff overrode them.

On Tuesday, June 7, several members “enjoyed a splash in the river before breakfast.” Others went hunting and fishing, with no success. Others shod their horses and mules. Warren Shepard broke the hind leg of a mule in attempting to pull her out of a mud hole and “she had to be shot.” B. T. Higgs was “called before the President’s Council for profanity” but was given another chance to mend his ways. Nelson bathed that evening in the river; and the next day the company came down a difficult mountain road to “a long, dismal flat” in debilitating heat exacerbated by a lack of water.

On Friday, June 8, the company departed without breakfast, their animals also suffering. “The sight of [Thatcher] was a welcome one,” wrote the relieved Nelson, “as we have seen so much of the dry, weary desert.” The people of Thatcher quickly “distributed” the men “among families of the Saints.” Nelson and
Royal Woolley were assigned to the home of Andrew Kimball, stake president and father of Spencer W. Kimball. They were made welcome, and Nelson called it “a most excellent place to stay” (June 9).

After fifty-three days of travel, the Zarahemla expedition had had little hardship and few problems beyond such predictable matters as keeping the camp and equipment clean, curbing profanity and abusive behavior, studying the Book of Mormon, and behaving like good Mormons. Cluff’s efforts to impose discipline seem to have been only temporarily effective, and the problems were exacerbated by personality differences between Cluff and his second in command, Walter M. Wolfe.

For dramatic contrast, Samuel Taylor casts Cluff as “tall and strikingly handsome, with dark hair, sideburns, and trim moustache” with “a commanding appearance and a mantle of authority.” He was oblivious to Wolfe’s deep resentment “born out of envy. . . . Wolfe was small and scrawny, with weak eyes, introverted, one to harbor grudges.” Taylor does not explain how he knows these traits of both men. Wilkinson engages in no personalities, simply presenting facts and data straightforwardly. But both agree that, by the time the expedition reached Thatcher, ill feeling was focusing on Cluff. The young men particularly resented being railroaded into proselytizing. Apparently, though not certainly, they were anxious to keep moving on to Zarahemla. My own interpretation is that these young men were not equally responsible or easy to get along with and that they succumbed to bad temper and boredom. Cluff seems to have been, by turn, lax and demanding. Furthermore, he lacked patience and technical skills. He was an intelligent and ambitious man out to make a name for himself.

Nelson sheds little light on tensions during those crucial four weeks between June 11 and July 15, when, in retrospect, the expedition was unraveling. He welcomed the “little missionary”

34Taylor, Rocky Mountain Empire, 179.
labors, and the opportunity to meet people and discuss the gospel. He observed how the long growing season allowed five lucerne cuttings and multi-cropping. Monroe farmers were fortunate to get three cuttings out of one season. Nelson was also fascinated by the continuous-flowing artesian wells.36 “The people as a rule are in better financial circumstance” than those in Utah, he summarized (June 11, 1900).

He happily recorded receiving letters from Agnes, who “still loves me as of old” (June 14, 1900), yet enthusiastically attended dances, admired the young ladies, and joined in high jinks that exasperated company and ecclesiastical authorities. On June 28, in 115-degree weather, two young women, “Ena and Ella gave me a good dunking with clear water from the well. I think they were equally well treated.” Magleby also records this “jolly event.” The two cousins had relatives living in the Thatcher area—stake president James W. Johnson and Hakan Anderson—who welcomed the young men into both extended families.

The infected gum that had plagued Nelson two weeks earlier recurred, bringing on an intense toothache. The dentist at Sanford lanced a wisdom tooth which brought on “lockjaw” and nausea.37 (On July 19 in Nogales, he had it extracted.) On Wednesday afternoon, June 27, something triggered a bout of nausea so intense that he woke Wolfe up the next morning at 4:00 A.M. Twelve hours and “thirteen remedies,” later, Wolfe corrected the problem with “some bismuth powder.” He had suffered from an earlier gastrointestinal attack on June 22.

On Friday evening, June 22, Nelson recorded a horrifying...
calamity. During a party, “the house of Mrs. Collier took fire and her entire family of 5 children burned to death. It was a terrible thing to not be able to do anything.” A shocked Magleby recorded, “It was a sad affair to hear the mother scream and see her try to cast herself into the fire.” Nelson never again mentions this fire, but he accompanied Magleby to the children’s funeral two days later, held an hour before the second day of stake conference.

The expedition “boys” spoke at the Sunday sessions. Magleby “was invited to the stand.” Nelson was not. Apostle Heber J. Grant and “one of John Taylor’s sons, Moses W. Taylor” arrived for the Sunday evening meeting but did not participate. On Monday, Moses Taylor “spoke of the manner of prayer” and Grant spoke on tithing.

After the conference, Grant met with the expedition members. Nelson records no details about his address, but according to Wilkinson’s history, he urged them to be humble and to leave the girls alone. They should avoid the “devil’s ground” and promised great honors if they remained faithful. It is not known whether he was giving them general counsel, or if he had collected troubling rumors as he had traveled south for the conference. But he had begun to have reservations about the expedition, particularly as a Church undertaking. Upon returning to Salt Lake City, he reported his concerns to the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve and recommended disbanding the expedition.

On June 22, Wolfe released the boys from their “preaching mission”—there is little evidence that they had done much proselytizing anyway—and told them to behave properly “in the

38Ibid., June 22, 1900.
39Ibid., June 24, 1900.
40Ibid., June 23, 1900; Nelson, Journal, June 23, 1900.
41Magleby, Diary, June 25, 1900.
presence of young ladies."

Time was working against the young expeditioneers. Beginning on June 7, they restlessly awaited Cluff’s return from the Mexican colonies. After twenty-four days of blazing desert heat, flies, insects, and long hours of idleness, they were miserable. Andrew Kimball informed Heber J. Grant that the company, with some fifty head of livestock, was becoming an increasing burden on the local Saints.

But a more serious matter had gone beyond the rumor stage, and that was forty-three-year-old Cluff’s romance with Florence Reynolds, a twenty-six-year-old BYU student who had, by the time the expedition left Provo, moved to Colonia Juarez where she was teaching at the academy under the name of “Florence Cluff.” Cluff had already married a plural wife in 1886—before the Manifesto had withdrawn official support for new plural marriages—but he intended to marry Florence during the expedition. Church President Lorenzo Snow, who considered the Woodruff Manifesto a good-faith commitment on the Mormons’ part, had refused to authorize the Cluff-Reynolds marriage before the BYA expedition left Provo, Utah, correctly reminding Cluff that plural marriages were illegal in both Canada and Mexico. Nevertheless, Joseph F. Smith, Snow’s counselor, quietly authorized a number of such marriages in the Mormon colonies in Mexico. On August 7, two months after Grant’s visit to Thatcher, Joseph F. Smith and Seymour B. Young, senior president of the Council of Seventy went to the colonies and granted Cluff permission to marry Florence; Young performed the ceremony on August 7.

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43Magleby, Diary, June 22, 1900.
44Taylor, Rocky Mountain Saints, 153.
Snow immediately telegraphed that the expedition should be disbanded or reorganized on a smaller scale as a private venture.\textsuperscript{46} Wilkinson phrased this heavy discouragement more positively as a decision that “the expedition could continue without official church sanction.”\textsuperscript{47} Nelson and Magleby, like their fellow missionaries, were unaware of the mounting difficulties.

The fact that Church authorities continued to authorize new plural marriages while issuing public denials greatly lessened the Church’s credibility, imposed intense secrecy on the participants, and carried with it the possibility of public scandal when rumors circulated. In 1904 at U.S. Senate committee hearings on Reed Smoot’s suitability to keep his seat as senator, Florence’s father, George Reynolds, who was then a member of the First Council of the Seventy, was called to testify concerning his daughter’s marriage. When queried about the Cluff expedition when this marriage took place, George Reynolds rather unconvincingly replied: “It was a few years ago but I don’t remember when. I had no particular interest in it.”\textsuperscript{48} From both the position of the Church in the community and its internal affairs, the Cluff marriage had damaging consequences. Not least among its casualties was the expedition.

On July 2, the expedition, still in the Thatcher area, received word from Cluff to be at Nogales on July 14 “to pass through customs.” The company was doubtless anxious to be on the move again and, in the next ten days, covered about 175 miles, traveling


\textsuperscript{47}Wilkinson, \textit{Brigham Young University}, 309.

every day except Tuesday, July 10, when they were at St. David. On today’s highway map, they would have passed through or near Cochise, St. David, Sonoita, Patagonia, and Nogales. Patagonia, though dry grassland, was a refreshing change after miles of barren desert. Nelson characterized Cochise as a wicked railroad town, reporting that “seven men have been killed . . . within a year, and not one of the murderers has been brought to justice” (Saturday, July 7, 1900). He does not identify the source of his information, and it is possible that one of the residents was pulling the leg of this naive Mormon. Water was so scarce that the expeditioneers were charged “five cents per head . . . for animals to drink” (July 7, 1900).

In a nearby valley that same day, the expedition encountered a haboob, an unusual dust storm up to ten thousand feet high and moving at speeds up to forty-five miles per hour with internal wind velocities ranging as high as ninety miles an hour. From a distance, the party thought that the advancing huge black cloud was the head of a thunderstorm, but it “proved to be a mountain of dust” that blocked out the sun’s rays, “travel[ed] nearly thirty miles an hour and covered the whole valley” (July 7, 1900). The next day was drier. At a “dragoon station” manned by the U.S. army, they could get no water for their animals, and a man tried to charge them for filling their “canteens from the cistern” (Sunday, July 8, 1900). Magleby noted, on Wednesday, July 11, “There are many trianthlers [tarantulas] here” and slept in his clothes. Before the expedition ended, he would see tarantulas whose leg-spread spanned eight inches.

On Saturday, July 14, the expedition reached Nogales, and settled into Camp U.S. (Uncle Sam), near the Mexican border. Curious about Mexico, Nelson visited the Mexican side but returned to the American side, congratulating himself on his good fortune to be an American and eating “American ice cream.” Cluff met the company at Nogales on Saturday, July

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14, and held a special meeting on Sunday. Cluff explained his absence by saying that he had gone to the Mormon colonies to secure bondsmen “to get . . . through the customs house.” The long meeting concluded with a covenant to “sustain and support those in authority,” a typically Mormon method of dealing with fractiousness. Nelson accepted without resentment Cluff’s statement that “he has done many things to try us and see of what metal we are made.” Instead he looked forward eagerly to the next step: “We entered Ariz. on May 6, and leave it on July 16, and this is our growing experience. Farewell to my native land.” However, a long period of frustrating delay followed.

On Monday, July 16, the company went to the Nogales customhouse and unpacked their outfits, placing their gear on a large platform for the Mexican authorities to inspect. The officials were most interested in the animals, registering the kind, number, and brands. The custom officials also demanded a “cash bond” of $2,367, refusing the offer of Mormon colonists in Mexico to guarantee the bond. Cluff instructed expedition members to ask their parents to pay some of the hundred dollars that each one should have paid into the company treasury. Meanwhile, they camped on the Mexican side of Nogales under guard.

Because grass was limited at this site, on Wednesday afternoon, July 18, the camp moved to the Santa Rosa River “some 12 miles east of Nogales, . . . a very pretty camp,” Nelson wrote. Two days later, the company moved to fresher pastures nearer Nogales for eight days. Nelson named it Camp Buena Vista and spent two and a half pages describing an extensive 24th of July celebration, which no doubt did much to relieve their boredom. In addition to giving a “stump” speech, Nelson as cook also prepared a midday feast of “bean soup, pigeon stew, tomato sauce spiced with chili, baked potatoes. Desserts of prunes and peaches, served hot.”

On Saturday, July 28, the expedition received word that Gordon Beckstead’s wife had died. The company held a fast day for him and his family and loaned him “$48.00 of the company’s money” so he could take the train, first to California
and then to Utah. Again, the expedition moved to find pasture for the animals, a pleasant spot with willows, oaks, sycamores, and walnut trees. Nelson received “a funny letter from my dear Agnes” (July 30).

When food ran low, the Mexican guards unsealed the expeditioners’ guns, and company members killed a large number of pigeons and squirrels. William Cluff, who had joined the expedition in Arizona, killed a bear with Nelson’s gun.\(^{50}\) Walter Tolton, also using Nelson’s gun, shot a deer (June 31, 1900). On August 6, Parley managed to bag his first deer. The hunters also found bee trees and harvested fifty pounds of wild honey, on which the men feasted. On July 31, Nelson ate bear meat for the first time but did not comment on its flavor.

On Friday, August 3, “about 8 p.m. it began raining,” Nelson wrote, “and ere long I looked out of the tent to see how matters were and a flood was coming down the canyon.” Soon “all hands began to carry luggage up . . . the hillside.” Nelson had never before witnessed such fierce thunder and lightning, but fortunately, the flood peaked at five feet (August 3, 1900).

Benjamin Cluff made a quick visit to the Mormon colonies on about August 7 where, as noted, Joseph F. Smith, who was accompanied by one of his wives, Edith, and Seymour B. Young authorized his marriage to Florence, with the ceremony being performed on Thursday, August 9. Cluff left the colonies the same day, reaching the expedition about midnight. He brought mail and Nelson enjoyed “letters from home and Agnes.” Cluff waited until the next morning to read Lorenzo Snow’s telegram canceling official sponsorship of the expedition. The telegram read, in part, that “it was the unanimous [sic] opinion of the Prest. & Apostles that the expedition disband . . . Cluff must assume

\(^{50}\)I do not know William’s relation (if any) to Benjamin Cluff. Benjamin’s family home was in Coalville, Utah. William’s family was one of the first to settle on the Little Colorado. Charles S. Peterson, *Take Up Your Mission: Mormon Colonizing along the Little Colorado River, 1870–1900* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1973), 25–26.
the entire responsibility.” As Nelson recorded it, the company must be reduced to “7 or 10 by action of the First Presidency . . . [and] the Twelve Apostles.” Cluff explained that “many false reports . . . concerning the boys” had reached the General Authorities. He did not mention the role his own behavior had played in their decision. Nelson felt “very peculiar about the matter” but concluded, “Let it be in the hands of the Lord” (August 10, 1900).

It seems likely that few of the young men ever learned directly about how this decision was made, but they must have felt greatly confused and let down. They had marched out of Provo, cheered by hundreds of well wishers. They had been feted, entertained, and helped along their way by Mormon villages down to the Mexican border. Their families had made significant financial sacrifices on their behalf. They had been lionized as courageous young men performing a great service to the Church that put them at personal risk. The cancellation of the expedition must have been a rude awakening from a wonderful adventure and a time of remarkable camaraderie.

Two days later—an “eventful day in the history of the Expedition”—on Sunday, August 12, Cluff met Joseph F. Smith and Seymour B. Young in Nogales and escorted them to the camp. Although Nelson had followed Cluff loyally and uncomplainingly, he was obviously confused and upset by this meeting and devoted two and a half pages to that “eventful day in the history of the Expedition.” Smith “read a letter from the First Presidency” concerning “alarming reports . . . in the conduct of the company. He then asked Cluff publicly why he had not disbanded the expedition and returned home as instructed—which was obviously the intended effect of the telegram. Cluff, however, stressed the loophole left by taking “the entire responsibility” and replied: “My personal honor is at stake as well as that of the BY Academy and I would rather die than lose my honor.”

The layers of interpretation possible in this exchange are intriguing. Only three days earlier, Cluff had been authorized by the two General Authorities to disregard the Church president’s refusal to authorize his post-Manifesto marriage, and one of them had performed the ceremony, presumably in the presence of the other. Now, he was being asked why he had disregarded the same Church president’s instructions on another matter by the same apostle who had authorized him to disregard an earlier prohibition. Could Cluff have considered this public exchange to be a charade on the same level as the earlier prohibition and overriding authorization? What clues would have signaled that Joseph F. Smith meant (or did not mean) his question to be taken seriously, especially given the public setting? It seems more likely that Snow’s telegram, reinforced by a “we really mean it” message from Smith, would have been communicated in a private meeting with Cluff.

Nelson heard Cluff’s ringing invocation of his “honor” but added skeptically: “Most of the boys thought these reasons were very insignificant in comparison to the lives of 24 young men.” Smith’s next move was to declare that the expedition was not a mission as “recognized by the first Presidency,” which certainly did not square with the fact that they had all been officially set apart. In fact, Smith tacitly conceded that fact by stating that the expeditioneers were “honorably released to return home.” Nelson also noted that, from the outset, Cluff had treated the expedition as an “organized mission with Pres. and counselors” and by assuming oversight for “our moral conduct. . . . Many of us would not have gone” if they had not considered it a mission calling. Seymour B. Young, observing the effect of the Smith-Cluff exchange and the resulting dismay of the expeditioneers, played a soothing role. He praised them for being part of the expedition, assured them that they could “now return home in honor,” and “asked us when we were ready to report to him and go on a [proselytizing] mission.” Edith Smith also “was a great consolation . . . like a mother advising her boys to return home.”

A face-saving compromise was reached. Cluff could
continue the expedition but without Church endorsement, “and
he was responsible for its success or failure” (August 12, 1900).
Nelson obviously felt disillusioned about Cluff by the end of
this mission and wrote (perhaps paraphrasing Smith): “Pres
Cluff had to feel the lash for leaving us more than half the time
running around in the colonies in Mex with his 3rd wife and
getting stranded trying to get through the custom house.” Cluff
was incompetent and the “company was too large.” Nelson does
not say how he learned that Cluff had married a plural wife in
the colonies. It seems unlikely that this detail would have been
part of the public meeting. Nelson concludes his entry: “It is a
most beautiful moonlight evening. All nature is quiet and we feel
the solemnity of the occasion. . . . Cluff’s future career hangs on
today’s proceedings” (August 12). And in fact, it did.

In consultation with the two General Authorities,
Cluff selected eight men as members of this stripped-down
expedition: Joseph Adams, John Fairbanks, Paul Henning, Asa
Keinke, Walter Tolton, Heber Magleby,52 Chester Van Buren,
and Walter Wolfe. After supper that evening, according to
Magleby, “we lined up on each side of the table: those who were
to return home on one side and those who were to continue the
journey on the other.” When we talked about parting we “cried
as children.”53 For the next two weeks, Nelson’s journal entries
are short, his handwriting scratchy. I hypothesize that he was in
a state of shock and at loose ends. He agreed to serve a mission
in California, effective immediately, but he gives no details about
how he reached that decision or how he (or someone else) made
the necessary arrangements.

Samuel W. Taylor states without documentation: “Most of

52 According to Magleby, Diary, August 12, 1900, there was an
initial misunderstanding about his participation, and he had agreed to
serve a mission to New Zealand. Seymour B. Young ordained him as
a Seventy on the spot; but when Cluff told Magleby “that he was very
sorry that I was not a member of his company,” Magleby was released
from the New Zealand mission and joined Cluff’s company.

53 Magleby, Diary, August 12, 1900.
the young men released . . . went on missions.”54 As for the equipment and personal property—including perhaps fifty animals and two wagons, Nelson's diary sheds no light on the topic. According to Taylor, Joseph Q. Cannon, a member of the expedition and a son of George Q. Cannon, was assigned to dispose of the horses and equipment. On August 14, the company moved to the American side of Nogales, and the money “which the boys had given to the company” was disbursed: “$40 to the company and . . . the rest refunded.”55

On August 13–14, Nelson unsuccessfully tried to sell his horse and outfit. If he had succeeded, no doubt he would have taken the train to California. On August 15, Cluff and his party headed into Mexico while the rest of the group rode east. They had moderate success selling some of the animals in Naco and Bisbee, Arizona (August 18, 20, 1900). Joseph Q. Cannon and William Cluff took some of the equipment to Thatcher where they hoped for a better market.56 While waiting, Nelson was pleased to discover that the Copper Queen Mining Company in Bisbee had a library “with thousands of good books” that supplemented his reading of the classic missionary tract, Parley P. Pratt’s 1837 *The Voice of Warning*.

On the evening of August 17, six of the expeditioneers, including Nelson, “with Mr. D. Russel for our guide went down the Copper Queen Mine through the Cyar [cage] shaft. When the cage began to descend I felt very peculiar.” For three hours, the group toured the large mine with nearly “100 miles of tunnel” and took up a collection of $2.50 for their guide, even though “his services were made free.” Considering the boredom and inactivity of the last few days, “it was a treat to us all.”

Finally, on August 27, word came from an otherwise unidentified “Bro. Spencer that notes are arranged for us. In the

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54Taylor, *Rocky Mountain Empire*, 155.
55Magleby, *Diary*, August 14, 1900.
56A year later, Cannon had “sold everything and forwarded payments to missionaries throughout the world.” Taylor, *Rocky Mountain Empire*, 155.
morning we will start for home.” “Home” for Nelson was not Monroe but California. He did some sightseeing in Los Angeles, then reported to missionary headquarters in San Francisco on Saturday, September 1.

**AFTERMATH**

*Parley Pratt Nelson*

Parley Pratt Nelson served a successful mission, primarily in California’s cities. Missionary work was a loosely organized affair, with substantial autonomy. He did not even have a companion all the time. His journal records attending plays, concerts, and educational lectures. He visited museums and comments occasionally on young ladies. References to “sweet Agnes” vanished.

Nineteen months into this mission, on Sunday, April 13, 1902, he received word that his mother was critically ill. He was released to return home, but she died before he arrived on April 18. Beside her coffin, Nelson wept inconsolably until his soft-spoken brother Brigham, my grandfather, led him away. Parley dedicated his mother’s grave and poured out his grief in a two-page journal entry (April 19–20). On the afternoon of the funeral, in his grief, he telephoned Sarah Ahlstrom, who had been teaching school in Monroe for three years, and who, according to a family story, had been selected by his mother as “a good Danish young woman for Parley.” They were married three months later in the Manti Temple on July 23, 1902, and he never mentions her again before making his final entry on Friday, January 9, 1903.

At that point, Parley was a schoolteacher but aspired to become a physician. In answer to his prayer, a well-to-do widow

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57[No author identified], “A Brief History of Important Events in the Life of Sarah Ahlstrom Nelson,” n.d., photocopy in my possession. Sarah was born November 15, 1877, in Ephraim, Utah. Her mother, Mary Larsen Ahlstrom, was from Holdensgaard, Alborg, Denmark, and her father, Peter Ahlstrom, was from Milo, Sweden.
loaned him the necessary funds. In September 1904, leaving Sarah and their baby son in Utah, he enrolled in the P&S Medical School in Baltimore, Maryland. A year later, he transferred to the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and graduated in 1908. Sarah termed those four years as “my greatest sacrifice.” After a few years in Sevier and Sanpete counties, Parley moved his family to Rexburg, Idaho, where he practiced medicine for four decades. He died on September 12, 1946, at age seventy-one. He seldom mentioned his experience as a member of Cluff’s expedition, even in the family.

Heber Magleby

Heber Magleby’s four-volume diary (1900–1902) and family letters relative to the Cluff expedition were transcribed and indexed in 1957 by Brigham Young University Archives and are in the library’s Perry Special Collections. Cited parenthetically by date from this point.

58Ibid.

59Heber was born July 7, 1875, the ninth of Hans Olsen Magleby and Eliza Martine Svendsen Magleby’s thirteen children. They had settled in Monroe, Utah, in 1875. After attending Sevier District School until age seventeen, he enrolled in the Sanpete Stake Academy at Ephraim (1896–97), then studied carpentry and blacksmithing at Utah Agricultural College, and in 1899–1900 was a student at Brigham Young Academy.

60Heber Magleby’s four-volume diary (1900–1902) and family letters relative to the Cluff expedition were transcribed and indexed in 1957 by Brigham Young University Archives and are in the library’s Perry Special Collections. Cited parenthetically by date from this point.
Garcia, the last of the Mormon settlements, where they stayed until September 17, to celebrate “the Mexican Declaration of Independence.” Florence returned to Colonia Juárez at this point, and Asa Kienke wrote, with unflattering relief: “Farewell. Sister Cluff, fare thee well. Oh happy day, thou has come at last when from females we are free.”

The group continued on through Mexico, sometimes splitting up, and frequently enjoying the hospitality of American plantation owners. Cluff was particularly impressed by these plantations and attempted a similar business venture for himself a few years later. The group reached Mexico City on January 11, 1901, and stayed a week, resting, studying, and sightseeing. They sent the specimens they had collected to that point back to BYA and left Mexico City on January 18, but without Paul Henning, who became a teacher and explorer in Mexico. On about March 20, they reached the Guatemala border and split up to gather specimens and make observations. In mid-April, they met again at Guatemala City. Chester Van Buren stayed to collect biological specimens with Joseph Adams, who was too ill to travel, and Wolfe returned to the United States.

On April 20, 1901, the party of five split to broaden their scope of investigation, agreeing to meet in Panama City. On September 14, the party reunited, then eagerly pushed on to Colombia. After they traveled up the Magdalena River for some distance, the American consul informed Cluff that the region was engulfed in civil war and that insurgents would likely kill them if they continued further. The 632-day expedition was at an end.

On January 18, 1902, leaving Van Buren to continue collecting specimens, the party sailed to Galveston, Texas, via Cuba, on the S.S. Yucatan. From Texas, they returned to Provo by train. On June 23, 1903, Heber married Effie Marie Sorenson in

61Asa Kienke, Diary, September 13, 1900, quoted in Wilkinson, Brigham Young University, 1:13.
the St. George Temple, and they had seven children. Soon after his marriage, Heber became the owner-manager of the Heber L. Magleby Furniture Store. He stayed in contact with Cluff and, in 1908, took his family to Tabasco, Mexico, where Cluff was superintendent of the Utah Mexico Rubber Company. They fled back to Monroe during the Mexican Revolution in 1912. Heber sold his furniture store to his brother Orson and farmed for the rest of his life. He enjoyed recounting tales of his adventures to his family and Church groups, including eating monkey meat with its human-like hands. It left the squeamish gasping but wanting to hear more. He died on January 15, 1941, at age sixty-six.

Benjamin Cluff Jr.

Cluff’s return to BYU’s campus was marred by rumors about improprieties regarding the Zarahemla expedition and his third marriage. During his long absence, Jesse Knight, L. Holbrook, W. H. Dusenberry, and Reed Smoot had been added to the school’s board of trustees, who favored a change of leadership. Soon after Cluff’s return, Wolfe formally charged Cluff with “acting dictatorially, extorting money, and embezzling funds.” Wolfe also brought up the new plural marriage, a charge joined by expeditioneer Gordon Beckstead. Joseph F. Smith convened an investigation, which lasted thirteen hours, exonerated Cluff, but barely agreed to renew his appointment as president for another year by a vote of 4-3.

Cluff, unable to stabilize his position, resigned as Brigham Young University’s president on December 23, 1903, and moved to Tabasco, Mexico, where the Utah-Mexican Rubber Company hired him as its superintendent. All three of his wives moved to Tabasco as well, although his first wife, Mary, remained only for

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63Isabel Magleby, untitled biographical sketch of Heber Magleby; Mac Vow Magleby (Heber’s youngest son), interviewed by Garth Jones, Cedar City, May 2001.
a year. Cluff formed the Mexican Land and Sugar Company and tried to raise funds to buy 376,000 acres in Tabasco for a Mormon colony that would raise sugar cane or rubber. This endeavor never worked out. On December 29, 1910, Cluff and his family, apprehensive about the rising political tensions, took a ship to Texas.

Settling in Springville with Florence, Cluff briefly worked for Consolidated Wagon and Machine Company in Salt Lake City, then in May 1913, returned to Tabasco with Florence in an effort to establish a banana plantation. His first two wives refused to accompany them because of unstable political conditions. After revolutionaries RAIDed the plantation in 1914, he established a small store in Huimanguillo that supplied items for U.S. oil company. When Mexico allowed the expropriation of foreign businesses, he returned to the United States permanently in 1924. Using Florence’s small inheritance, he established a fruit and grocery stand in Redondo Beach, California. Florence died in 1932; Cluff operated the fruit stand into his eighties and died June 14, 1948, at age ninety.

To the end of his life, he believed that Zarahemla would be found. Despite the disappointing ending to Cluff’s expedition, he is easy to admire. As a vigorous man in his early forties, he was short on wisdom and long on audacity and presence. His too-willing readiness to accept Joseph F. Smith’s “yes” about Florence Reynolds when Lorenzo Snow had already told him “no” probably would have capsized his career in any case. Although Smith may have harbored hopes for the revival of plural marriage after a season of discreet silence, he returned from being grilled during the Smoot hearings to announce the “Second Manifesto,” threatening those who contracted new plural marriages after September 1890 with Church courts for their membership. This decisive demonstration that he could abandon those hopes—and the men whom he had counseled to live in that hope—let him concentrate on political goals that would move the Church.

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65Ibid., 29.
more into the American mainstream.

Even without the calamitous third marriage, however, Cluff was short on the essentials of exploring. He had a weak grasp of where he wanted to go and inadequate means for getting there. As the tough-minded school of British exploration had proved in the nineteenth century, intelligent men explored regions/places for whose existence they had significant evidence. Furthermore, they succeeded only when equally tough-minded patrons put up sufficient funds to get them there.
REVIEWS


Reviewed by Jessie L. Embry

Thomas Carter’s lifetime work on Building Zion is a remarkable introduction to landscape and Mormon settlement. As part of the University of Minnesota Press’s series on Architecture, Landscape, and American Culture, he could have focused on a specialized audience; but for the most part he carefully defines his architectural terms. I’m a fairly nonvisual person who dislikes Mormon history books that repeat the same photograph of Brigham Young, but I found myself carefully looking at the photographs, maps, and floor plans and wishing they could be on the same page as the text that described them so that I did not need to flip pages to compare the words and the illustrations.

Carter shows sensibility in examining the social and cultural aspects of Mormonism and their relationships to American ideals. He concludes that the two are similar. “The best way to think of the material world of early Mormonism is an eclectic blend of new and old, of the sacred and the secular, the temple and the house. Making it required no wholesale destruction; instead the dream of Zion as the city on the hill gave way to the realities of Zion in the world, a place where the Latter-day Saints could be Mormons and Americans. It is a landscape of faith and works. It is an American landscape, with a difference” (284; emphasis his).

To make this point, Carter first explains Mormon landscape and how it reflects religious values. He pardons historians from not tackling the entire area because the Mormon corridor is so large. That is why he narrowed his study to Sanpete County, an area the Mormons settled early and which remained fairly isolated. Yet it had all the major elements of Mormon communities including the Manti Temple. Even today much of the original architecture remains. Carter could have added that it is an area that he studied his entire career.

I was impressed with Carter’s theories that provide an outline. He
tells how the Mormons were not simply creating towns. “Zion making, not building individual temples, meetinghouses, or houses stood at the center of the Mormon restoration project” (xx). The three factors that determined Zion during four periods of development (theoretical, 1830–41; experimental, 1841–47; experiential, 1847–70; and enduring, 1870–90) were millennialism, continuing revelation, and agency. Carter sees San Pete’s settlers as “religious people, but they were also people with a strong capitalistic spirit, and for the Zion-making project to succeed, the New Jerusalem had to serve both the spiritual and entrepreneurial sides of the Mormon psyche” (8).

Carter points out that many historians have focused on the differences between Mormons and Americans; but he, like Leonard J. Arrington, saw a blending of the Puritan work ethic and Jacksonian individualism. Through much of the nineteenth century, there were differences with American society in general because the Mormon landscape was “planned, equalitarian, ascetic, innovative, undifferentiated, otherness, and group” while the American focus was “unplanned, hierarchical, worldly, normative, differentiated, difference, and individual” (xxvii). Carter argues that by the 1890s Mormon values were shifting to the American list. The New Zion focused on “the public good (indivduals contributing to the general welfare of the community); . . . moral virtue (a code for individual conduct centering on honesty, temperance, frugality, and industry); . . . and equality (of opportunity but not wealth)” (279).

Carter’s topical chapters show the development of these theories. He describes city planning and shows that Joseph Smith’s City of Zion was not unique. Then he shows how Mormons combined communalism and individualism in dividing resources such as land and water. One of his strongest chapters outlines the house styles in Sanpete County by using stories, photographs, and floor plans. The chapter that follows shows how polygamous homes blended in with other dwellings.

I enjoyed Carter’s discussions of the changing house, business, church, and public building designs:

From the first settlement in 1849 through the 1850s . . . we see diversity in building types appearing downtown. This lack of design consistency was undoubtedly due to a combination of impermanence (things were getting started) and ignorance (the City of Zion as we have seen, had no blueprint, so no one knew exactly what to expect.) Granted options were
few: the basic compositional unit in architectural design, the rectangle, could be placed either broadside to the street . . . or it could have its ridgeline facing the street . . . During the first . . . experimental phase . . . warehouses looked like houses, houses looked like churches, and churches looked like stores. . . . From the late 1850s into the 1870s . . . conditions stabilized and a new architectural protocol surfaced where buildings were sorted generally into two classes, residential and nonresidential. . . . The final phase of main street architecture began 1870 and in various guises has lasted to the present. . . . During this time, the Saints rejected uniformity in favor of a more conventional design approach in which form and function were adjoined. (181–82)

Another chapter discusses the evolution of the LDS meetinghouse. Finally, Carter looks at the Manti Temple as a ritual space and provides a thoughtful discussion of its construction, pointing out the changing location of the temple and of the uses for the interior space.

The chapter on polygamy and patriarchy is where my research overlaps the most with Carter’s study. I am pleased that Carter points out that there was not a “typical” plural marriage. He has some wonderful examples of how several plural families planned their houses, but these distinctive examples are unique. My study (which also included unique examples) showed that whether wives shared homes or lived in the same space depended primarily on income, age of children and wives, and location.

The chapter on polygamy also discusses Mormon women. Carter says that, in reading “over fifty years of ward minutes for each town in the valley, I encountered no female voices. They were there, but in public at least, perfectly silent.” Based on that reading, he concludes that “Zion was a man’s world” (164). Carter continues that women are found in “journals and diaries” (164) but asserts that “Mormon women also had a specific building of their own, the Relief Society Hall” (165) and quotes from ward Relief Society minutes (166–67). I am not sure why Carter felt that the ward sacrament meetings were public and the Relief Society meetings were not.

In addition, Carter misunderstood the function of Relief Society granaries which he says were “to house [the women’s] in-kind donations such as wheat before it was distributed to the poor” (170). In fact, the granaries were part of a millennial project that the Relief Society started in 1876. They stored wheat in these granaries, assuming that it would be needed during famines that would characterize the last days.
As a result, they were reluctant to distribute their wheat to the needy until after 1890. Lacking that information, Carter focuses on 1871, the year when the Manti Temple’s location moved from the center of town to the hill overlooking the town. He interprets it as a “junction” between creating a sacred and secular space and showing that “millennial idealism gave way to pragmatic permanence” (182).

These points are minor and do not detract from Carter’s important thesis that Mormon scholars can learn much from the landscape and the built environment. His work will not only stand as a classic but hopefully will also encourage additional research.

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Reviewed by Gina M. Colvin

Marjorie Newton’s second New Zealand history volume is scrupulously researched. She has assembled an impressive and meticulous record from a dizzying array of primary source materials and has sought to place these documents in their broader political and cultural context.

Mormon and Maori offers a substantial historical account that structures and organizes te iwi Māori’s (the Māori people’s) often complex relationship and attachment to an American religion. In this respect Newton’s work should be considered groundbreaking. She fleshes out the thin narratives that have floated in the Mormon Māori cultural ether for decades with a highly ordered sense of context, place, and time.

In Chapter 1, Newton provides an astute and fearless treatment of the complexities and contradictions associated with the Lamanite/
Hagoth mythologies. She is even-handed with the literature that she cites, strenuously avoiding the inevitable polarities that characterize contemporary Book of Mormon origins theorizing.

Not only this, she places the Semitic origin theories in their fuller social context. Tracing the trajectories of this dogged Israelite/Maori relationship theory as it made its way through non-Mormon faith traditions, Newton positions the subsequent Book of Mormon genealogical claims in their broader perspective:

Aware of such hypotheses, he [Samuel Marsden] found little difficulty in carrying their theories over to Maori, who he suggested after observing them, may have “sprung from some dispersed Jews.” Marsden listed similarities between Old Testament Jews and early nineteenth-century Maori that ranged from warfare customs to the “great natural turn for traffic” of the Maori, who, said Marsden, would “buy and sell anything they have got.” The theory of Semitic origins of the Maori remained popular with scholars until at least the 1870s—much longer with followers of Maori prophets Te Kooti and Te Whiti. As Sorrenson points out, it took a new lease on life when Mormon missionaries came among the Maori. (14)

In Chapter 2, Newton highlights the almost infuriating resistance by the Church administration to address the pressing concern for academic rigour at the Church-owned MAC (Maori Agricultural College) during the early twentieth century. Instead of adhering to the New Zealand Education Department’s registration standards, the school administration (such as it was) adopted an American curriculum, assigned untrained Americans, usually missionaries, as school faculty, imported American agricultural textbooks, adopted American education rituals, imported desks from the United States, and even had a “picture of the United States President hung in the dining hall alongside that of the British King” (48).

This continued inability of the Utah church to respond to local education contexts, standards, and requirements ultimately doomed the MAC, although as Newton points out, the legacy and mythology of the MAC outgrew its reality. She is forthright in her disruption of the MAC “legend.” In piecing together the story from the archives she finds compelling evidence that optimistic claims that the school produced a generation of leaders are “at the very least debatable” (68).

The establishment and later closure of the Church College of New
Zealand is the final scene in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ involvement in secular education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Newton’s treatment of the school’s evolution, troubles, and eventual end is somewhat scant in comparison with her attention to earlier Mormon schooling enterprises, which may reflect a stronger interest in a prior time period or the fact that the closure occurred late in her completion of the book.

Chapter 3, a curious chapter, interrupts the generally predictable progression throughout the Mormon Church’s early years in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Titled “Mormon Legends in New Zealand,” it revisits some of the more prevalent mythologies that early missionaries and Church leaders purportedly experienced. While the chapter is diverting, as Newton uses her historical dab hand to put paid to the authenticity of several popular legends, I am left to wonder: To what end? In some respects, it renders the purveyors (most Māori) of said legends as somewhat foolish and unsophisticated. These mythologies that serve to make the religion live spiritually and heroically have some purpose in a cultural context that finds meaning in stories larger than life. In this space between te ao mārama and te ao pouri (the world of light and the world of darkness), Māori weave stories that, like a raupo cord, draw both realms together and in tension with each other in a transcendent coupling.

However, there is a charm about Mormon and Māori. As an Australian scholar, Newton is not bound by cultural conventions that might otherwise have us hold our tongue. While the veracity of these claims are not generally questioned in polite Māori Mormon company, it isn’t because Māori have a critical lack that has allowed them to be duped. These legends aren’t held up to the same academic scrutiny simply because there is no compelling reason to refute them. In any event, Newton has settled the record should anyone wish to do so. I expect few will.

The heart of Mormon and Māori lies in the final two chapters; “Mormon Leaders in Māori Culture” and “Mormon and Māori?” Newton shows some predictable limitation here because she is not Māori. However she demonstrates sensitivity to the complexity of the social, cultural, and economic contexts that make being Māori and Mormon an often vexed and conflicted state.

“There can be no doubt that the Mormon Church ideal today is that
of a homogenised, universalised ‘gospel culture,’” she writes. “However, many Maori are suspicious of assimilation or integration. Recalling the story of the shark and kahawai (fish) that swam together until the shark ‘assimilated’ the smaller kahawai, these Maori want biculturalism...”

There can be little doubt that those Maori Mormons who are able to compartmentalise their Maori and Mormon identities are more content with Mormon Church programs than those who cling to Maoritanga and regret what they see as the assimilationist policies of Church leaders in recent decades. Church leaders, of course, see these policies as being universal rather than assimilationist, necessary to enable the Church to fill the spiritual needs of a world-wide membership. (171)

The nature of the historical enterprise is to create accounts from the traces of humanity left behind on record. My only criticism is that too high a deference to the written Pākeha (white) and largely male record tends to diminish and invisibilize the indigenous and the female account without actually meaning to. Despite my misgivings, Newton maps out an area of continuing complexity that raises questions for Māori Mormons to this day. In many respects, she leaves Māori with a powerful challenge to build on the scholarship that she has undertaken, to raise our own questions about who we are in an American religion.

Though Newton rightly raises the absence of cultural mechanisms in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to translate an indigenous American religion writ large into an indigenous Aotearoa/New Zealand context, more has yet to be done to map this terrain. My sense is that, in the background, still sitting untouched in the archives, is another story: the story of an indigenous Mormon people, with names and tribal allegiances and their own narratives that are shaped by years of colonial and legislative violence. The story of an American religion in Aotearoa/New Zealand cannot be told in its entirety without paying significant attention to the whole social, economic, and political context affecting the lives of these early Mormon adherents. Newton successfully carves out a rigorous narrative from which those skilled in voicing the indigenous story more explicitly can be built. This is an early and much-needed layer of a deeper, more complex human story that I hope Māori scholars will begin to own.

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Reviewed by Connie Lamb

This book is the third in a series of biographical works edited by Richard Turley, Assistant LDS Church Historian and Recorder, and Brittany Chapman, historian in the LDS Church History Department. Contributing authors of these twenty-three biographical sketches include established historians, descendants, and freelance writers. The entries are quite brief, ranging from twelve to sixteen pages, and deal with women who were born between 1846 and 1870. (The subjects of Volume 1 were born between 1775 and 1820; those in Volume 2 were born between 1821 and 1845.) Although the book is arranged alphabetically by the subject’s last name, all were born during the pioneering period of Utah, which is marked by a continued emphasis on gathering to Zion in the Rocky Mountains, the reestablishment of the Relief Society, suffrage for Mormon women (bestowed, taken away, and re-bestowed), statehood for Utah in 1896, the end of authorization for new plural marriages, greater integration into the American mainstream, and World War I.

These women also lived through the first wave of the women’s movement (late 1800s) and the Progressive Era (1890s to 1920s) of social activism and reform when women in the United States experienced more opportunities in the public sphere—in education, politics, civic service, etc. Women like Ellis Reynolds Shipp went to medical school in the East, Emily S. Richards was very involved in the suffrage movement and other activism, and Martha Hughes Cannon, also a doctor and the first female state senator in the United States, attended medical school and the National School of Elocution and Oratory in Philadelphia. The lives of all the women in this book extended into the twentieth century and were, consequently, influenced by this reform
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and activism. The longest-lived woman in this collection is Ellen Johanna Larson Smith of Snowflake, Arizona, who died in 1965.

Although each sketch includes vital facts of parents’ names, birth/death dates and places, marriage(s), and children, the focus is on the faith and commitment of these women, using their own words as much as possible but fitting into a standardized format by the editors. Each chapter has a title that is specific for the woman, something said by or about them. A few examples are: “Give Us an Expanding Faith” (Maud May Babcock), “It Would Be Worth It” (Mary Book McCann), “Doing a Little Good for the Cause of Christ” (Elizabeth McCune), “Courage to Follow Convictions” (Tsune Nachie), “No Matter How Severe the Trial” (Ida Udall), and “Her Very Presence Is a Sermon” (Mere Mete Whaanga). In addition to portraits of each woman are other photos that help the reader visualize the person’s life and bring vitality to the text. For example, Annie Romney’s sketch includes a photograph of Latter-day Saints boarding a train when fleeing from their homes in Colonia Dublan in 1912 during the Mexican Revolution (168) and Cohn Zundel is shown doing beadwork (296).

Although not strictly academic, the essays are all well documented with references to primary and secondary sources. For example, the essays on Martha Hughes Cannon and Mary Elizabeth Chamberlain use both primary sources (letters and a life sketch) and secondary sources (articles and books). Among well-known women are Susa Young Gates, Brigham Young’s daughter, writer, and editor of the Young Woman’s Journal and later of the Relief Society Magazine; Ellis Reynolds Shipp, one of the earliest Mormon women to graduate from medical school and to train dozens of others in Utah; Clarissa Smith Williams, the daughter of George A. Smith and Relief Society general president, 1921–28; Louisa Yates Robison, Relief Society general president, 1928–39; and Ruth May Fox, general president of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1929–37. Though known by their public activity, it is interesting to learn more about their private lives. For example, Louise, as she preferred to be known, lived by the motto “Welcome the task which takes you beyond yourself.” She overcame shyness and a self-perceived deficiency in formal education to lead the Relief Society through an era of severe economic challenges (157).

The less prominent women are interesting in a more local and personal way. For example, Sarah Ann Howard (1856–1933), served a
mission at age fifty-six to the Birmingham England Conference where her husband and sons had earlier served, followed by another mission to San Francisco, when she was sixty-three. Because her husband married a second wife in 1908 despite the Manifesto in 1890, she had separated from him at age fifty-four, before these missions (72–73).

Edith Ann Smith, born in 1861, was the youngest daughter of Lucy Brown Smith and Elias Smith, a cousin of Joseph Smith Jr. She never married; but as the historian of the Smith family, she was given the privilege of unveiling the Joseph Smith Monument at his birthplace in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1905. She said of that occasion, “Before the service commenced George A[bert] Smith informed me that I had been chosen by Pres [Joseph F.] Smith to unveil the monument. I cannot describe my feelings, only that my heart was full of gratitude that I was considered worthy to fulfill this part of the exercises. Tears not of sorrow but of joy would continue to flow” (189).

One woman I found especially interesting was Mary Woolley Chamberlain. She grew up in St. George and Kanab where her father served for more than two decades as president of the Kanab Stake. As a single woman, at age twenty-six, she was elected the first female county clerk in Utah. In 1900 she married Thomas Chamberlain, the last of his six wives, and had two sons. In 1911, she and five other women were put on the ballot for the town council as a joke; but since they ran unopposed, the five women became the Kanab all-woman town council, serving for two years and accomplishing much good for their town.

Another less well-known but amazing woman was Lorena Eugenia Washburn Larsen. She was born in Sanpete County, married Bent Larsen as a second wife (she and his first wife were good friends), and lived in both Utah and Colorado. She had nine children and worked hard to support her children by sewing, raising a large garden, and knitting stockings on a machine she purchased. Her oldest son tells how she suffered from fatigue, heartaches, and loneliness. But as her daughter says, she persevered: “No matter what the problem she always seemed to find a way. Many times she seemed to accomplish the impossible by sheer force of will. But always with love and compassion and fasting and prayer” (92).

Although most of the women are white Americans, some ethnic diversity is provided by sketches of Mere Mete Whaanga (1848–1944), a Maori of New Zealand; Tsune Nachie (1856–1938), who
joined the Church in Japan in 1905, was the cook and housekeeper at the Tokyo Mission Home and a worker at the Tokyo Temple; Cohn Zundel, a Shoshone from Utah's Bear River region; and Anna Widtsoe, a widow from the island of Froya, Norway, who was converted by missionary tracts that her shoemaker tucked into her mended shoes. After baptism, she and her two children, one of whom was John A. Widtsoe, immigrated to Utah where John became a college president and an apostle.

This anthology, and the larger series of which it is part, joins an impressive collection of biographical sketches of Mormon women, including Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), Augusta Crocheron, *Representative Women of Deseret* (Salt Lake City: Printed by J. C. Graham & Co., 1884), Vicky Burgess-Olson, ed., *Sister Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), Barbara B. Smith and Blythe Darlyn Thatcher, eds., *Heroines of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), two collections edited by Colleen Whitley, *Worth Their Salt: Notable but Often Unnoted Women of Utah* (Logan: Utah State University, 1996) and *Worth Their Salt Too* (Logan: Utah State University, 2000), and Leonard J. Arrington, Susan Arrington Madsen, and Emily Madsen Jones, eds., *Mothers of the Prophets*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009). The *Women of Faith in the Latter Days* series, like the others, give voice to additional women and increased awareness of women's contributions to LDS history. Common to all of these women are their membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the dedication with which they lived their commitment. From my perspective, each shows her faith in her own way according to her life situation—and each is a unique and inspiring story.

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Jed Rogers has produced an important, well-done volume that includes all the relevant, available documents having to do with the elusive, but critically significant, “Council of Fifty.”

William Clayton made note of an April 7, 1842, revelation directing Joseph Smith to establish a quorum to be named “the Kingdom of God and his Laws, with the Keys and power thereof, and judgment in the hands of the servants, Ahman Christ” (29). Later that week, Joseph Smith became the prophet, priest, and king of the organization. The entry for that day includes five accounts of that meeting, which give a sense how different attendees reported the meeting:

Masonic Hall, Nauvoo | Thursday, April 11, 1844

In General council in the Masonic Hall, morning and afternoon. Had a very interesting time, the Spirit of the Lord was with us, and we closed the Council with loud shouts of Hosanna! —Historian’s Office history

Afterwards in the Council. We had a glorious interview. President Joseph [Smith] was voted our P[rophet] P[riest] & K[ing] with loud Hosannas. —William Clayton journal, 129

Spent the day in the Council of Fifty, we had an interesting time, & closed the Council with shouts of Hosannah. —Brigham Young history

I spent the day in council. Some remarks were made upon the principle of toleration. —Wilford Woodruff diary, 2:391

I was also witness of the introduction (secretly,) of a kingly form of government, in which Joseph [Smith] suffered himself to be ordained a king, to reign over the house of Israel forever; which I could not conceive to be in accordance with the laws of the church, but I did not oppose this move, thinking it none of my business. —William Marks epistle, Zion’s Harbinger and Baneemey’s Organ, July 1853, 53 (44–45)

fifty princes of the kingdom” (130), “Council of Elders” (251), “Council of L” (260), “Council of the Priesthood” (260), and other titles. The lengthy revealed name was too long for practical use, leading to a multitude of nicknames, giving a sense of how members of the council perceived themselves.

Rogers notes that virtually the entire First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric were inducted into the council when it was first organized in 1844. Three-fourths of the male members of the Quorum of Anointed were also invited to become members. Perhaps most distinctively, three non-Mormons were also invited to join the council (5–6), making it clear that Joseph envisioned the council not as part of the Church, but as an independent, male organization expanding beyond the Church. New members were anointed and taught a “Charge,” “The name,” & “Key word,” and the “Constitution,” and “Penalty” in a temple-like ritual (264, 269; emphasis in original). Members were considered the council’s “living constitution” (87), transcending the U.S. Constitution (6). Despite its conspicuous overlap of highly placed members from other governing groups in the Church, it was considered distinct from the Church per se. Council member Joseph Fielding considered it “a Shield round about the Church” (172).

Statements from quorum members give us insight into how Joseph and other quorum members viewed the role of the council:

- Clayton felt they replicated “the Grand Council amongst the Gods when the organization of this world was contemplated” (88).
- Benjamin F. Johnson thought it would be the “the embryo kingdom of God . . . an organization distinct from the Church . . . formed of representatives from every nation . . . which will continue through the millennial period as the outer wall or government around the inner temple” (32–33).
- George Miller believed that if voters could be converted, and if they “elected Joseph President . . . the dominion of the kingdom would be forever established in the United States. And if not successful, we could but fall back on Texas, and be a kingdom notwithstanding” (49–50).
- Lyman Wight believed that the Fifty were “organized to bear off the kingdom triumphantly over the head of every opposition,
and to establish Zion no more to be thrown down forever” (57).

- Orson Pratt considered the council as “the only legal government that can exist in any part of the universe” with all other governments “illegal and unauthorized” (8).

- Rogers summarizes that they were “to establish a worldly kingdom that would usurp all others and receive Jesus at His Second Coming” (2).

Joseph Smith made plans to send council members to California, Oregon, Vancouver, Wisconsin, and Texas where they hoped to “amend that constitution & make it the voice of Jehovah and shame the U. S.” (20). Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt carried a memorial to Washington, D.C., seeking congressional authorization to “raise a Company of one hundred thousand armed volunteers in the United States and Territories” (37). Other members embarked on missions to campaign for Smith’s presidential bid. Available documentation indicates there were about twenty meetings of the council during Joseph Smith’s lifetime.

Brigham Young had begun consolidating power in himself and the Twelve after Joseph Smith’s death in 1844. He noted: “If you throw the K[ingdom] of God into the Quo[rum] of 50[,] they cant manage it” (9). In 1849, he brought members Peter Haws and Lucien Woodworth to trial for asserting that the council was superior to the Twelve, to which one complained: “The Twelve had swallowed up thirty eight” (188).

Brigham Young was “apparently anointed king and priest over the entire world, although the time and place are unknown” (10). Rogers references Michael Quinn who believes it was before February 12, 1849. During 1845–46 in Nauvoo, Brigham held nearly two dozen meetings discussing such matters as the completion of the temple, scouting for a place to settle, and preparations to head west. During 1846–47, the council met about five times on the trail as a complete body, with about five other smaller meetings with available council members. They were in charge of the wagon trains and discussed matters such as route finding and logistics.

Upon settlement in the Salt Lake Valley, the council became the political governing body and met more than thirty times between 1848 and 1850. The frequency of these meetings slackened when the federal government bestowed territorial status in 1851. They met just seven
times that year. Rogers argues against the idea that the council acted as a shadow government to the Utah territorial government: “It now appears that it was non-functional; many of its members continued to be involved in territorial and local politics but were otherwise out of the picture” (12–13).

The council reconvened in 1867, fifteen years after their last meeting. In about seven meetings through 1868, they refilled the quorum membership, meeting primarily around conference time. By this time, they no longer exercised any practical leadership role.

John Taylor (Quorum of Twelve president when Young died in 1877, ordained Church president in October 1880) reconstituted the Council of Fifty on April 10, 1880, to help protect the Church from federal attempts to suppress polygamy (13–14). Taylor and fellow council members believed that “God inspired the sentiments of the constitution. . . . Yet he considered our system infinitely superior” (286). On June 27, 1882, a revelation to John Taylor about “the Kingdom” was introduced to the council and “accepted as the word and will of God . . . [T]he Lord has promised to fight our battles for us” (298).

In February 1885, following instructions from a revelation Taylor had “received more than a year ago” he was anointed “King [and] Priest and Ruler over Israel on the Earth, over Zion & the Kingdom under Christ.” Rogers was unable to locate this revelation (352 and note 112) but cites the minutes of the ceremony itself: “Francis M. Lyman motioned that we proceed to obey the requirement of the Revelation, when we clothed in our Priestly attire. Erastus Snow offered prayer, when after the usual ceremony Francis M. Lyman prayed in the circle. Lorenzo Snow consecrated a bottle of oil. Counselor Angus M. Cannon anointed President John Taylor and we all laid hands on the Priest & George Q. Cannon sealed the anointing according to a written form which had been prepared” (352).

The council met about forty-five times under Taylor’s leadership, discussing items such as politics, legal matters, elections, and public schools. The council did not convene after Taylor’s death in 1887. Taylor’s successor as president of the Church, Wilford Woodruff, considered it too dangerous for the council to meet, and other suggestions as late as 1911 to reconvene were not acted on (366 note 134).

Overall, beginning with its inauguration in Nauvoo, the council operated for more than forty years with periods of inactivity. Rogers believes the council became irrelevant as the Church’s “theology
Rogers encountered significant difficulties in access to relevant documents as he prepared the book. He “repeatedly asked to see these documents and was repeatedly denied permission” but says he understood “some of the church’s concerns about confidentiality” (xiv). Rather confusingly, he was denied access to holographs even when he already had typescripts or when the documents had already been published. Items denied include some roll books, Utah Territory minutes, diaries of council members, and meeting minutes. Signature Books editors were also denied access while proofing transcripts because the archives “reserved the first right of publication,” even for documents from the Utah period, although the planned Joseph Smith Papers volume on the Council of Fifty covers only the Nauvoo segment (xiv–xv and note 4). The most important omissions are three small Nauvoo minute books titled “Record of the Council of Fifty or Kingdom of God” (March–May 1844 and February 1845–January 1846), which were housed in the First Presidency Vault until 2010. At that time, they were turned over to the LDS Church History Library (xv) and are scheduled to be published in 2016 as the first “Administrative” volume of the Joseph Smith Papers project.

Rogers notes that much “although not all—of this material is available from other sources such as the transcripts historian D. Michael Quinn prepared in the 1970s” (xiv–xv). A critical consequence of restricted access is that Rogers was unable to check transcripts and notes against the originals to be sure typographical errors and other discrepancies had not entered these downstream documents.

In Rogers’s format, the source of a text is listed at the end of the passage. For example, “Spent the day in the Council of Fifty, we had an interesting time, & closed the Council with shouts of Hosannah. —Brigham Young history.” While this example is clear, when passages of text spanned multiple pages, I found myself wondering what source I was reading and kept looking ahead to see the speaker’s name. I would have preferred having the source listed at the beginning of the passage.

Rogers’s occasional reformating of the text and punctuation (pointed out in the footnotes) made difficult-to-understand text more readable. Informative introductory materials and appendices provide historical background, reference material, and an interpretative frame-
work for the source material. The extensively researched footnotes provide context and biographical background, making the text more accessible. Council of Fifty historian Klaus Hansen (author of *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* [East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967]) comments in the foreword that the annotations “brought the meetings to life” and that others would be “hard pressed to produce anything as thorough and fine as the present volume” (ix).

Rogers’s work illuminates the Council of Fifty, largely forgotten by Mormons today—from Joseph Smith’s sweeping millennial theocratic vision—to Brigham Young’s organization of the exodus and theocratic governance of the Saints in the early Utah period—to John Taylor’s revival of the council to counter federal anti-polygamy pressure. Sprinkled throughout are plenty of unique curiosities of the new religious movement, such as Heber C. Kimball’s 1845 claim that the council’s sealing power would allow them to be “saviours of men as much as J[esus] C[hrist] was” (80) or, on the same day, an announcement that Brigham Young had “found out that . . . the Millennium has now commenced” (83); the council’s 1851 consideration of Uriah Brown’s “liquid fire” weapon that could destroy an army or navy (243–46); an 1849 discussion considering public executions that might cause would-be criminals to “tremble for fear it would be their time next” and then offering two criminals “for Sale to the highest Bidder . . . [who] have both forfeited their h[e]ad[s] & shall loose them” (165); an account of John Taylor’s 1885 anointing as King and Ruler over Israel despite opposition by an apostle (353); Joseph Fielding’s 1849 note regarding the phrase “thy Kingdom Come” from the Lord’s Prayer that “we no longer use [it] . . . it [the Kingdom] is here, and we say let thy Kingdom roll forth” (150); and an 1882 revelation to John Taylor confirming that same interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer (299).

The pages give a sense of Joseph Smith’s vision of setting up a religious political empire, Brigham Young’s governing that empire in the untamed West, and John Taylor’s efforts to save that empire from the federal government. Rogers and the Signature Books team have produced a high-quality volume, providing an important contribution to Mormon studies by assembling a diverse set of sources, with helpful annotations that bring to life the previously elusive Council of Fifty.

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Reviewed by Joseph R. Stuart

In 2010, the Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center and the LDS Church History Department co-sponsored a symposium on the history and development of the administrative structure of the LDS Church. David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr edited twenty-eight of the papers for the publication of the symposium’s proceedings, *A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration*.

*A Firm Foundation* benefits and suffers from the plights of many edited works—the quality of each chapter’s research and writing varies widely. The book is an excellent resource for both academics and armchair historians of Mormonism due to its vast chronological scope and variety of topics. *A Firm Foundation* also demonstrates the complexity of editing and publishing a book whose chapters are written primarily by Latter-day Saint authors and presented at a symposium for an LDS audience.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section consists of a single paper: Richard L. Bushman’s study of Joseph Smith’s ability to synthesize his prophetic gifts with the distribution, or “routinization,” of his charisma and authority for the continuation of his church after his death. The second section addresses the emergence of the contemporary Church’s presiding quorums and priesthood structures. The third, and by far the longest, section examines the various programs and organizations that grew and developed in LDS administration after Joseph Smith’s assassination. The fourth and final section’s authors pay special attention to more recent developments in Mormonism’s expanded seventies quorums and the day-to-day function of the LDS Church’s Missionary Department.
Rather than address each essay individually, I examine several of the chapters for their contributions to this volume which are particularly valuable in the broader subfields of Mormon history and American religious history. While I do not address each chapter individually, each author’s work has strengths and value to historians of Mormonism. *A Firm Foundation* is a valuable contribution to the rising historiography surrounding the Mormon hierarchy, both on a local and global scale.

Bushman’s chapter eloquently diverges from Max Weber’s work on Joseph Smith as a religionist written more than eight decades before the conference. In Weber’s 1922 classic *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, he called Smith a “charismatic,” or one who possesses “a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (Weber, quoted on p. 2). Bushman then summarizes the German sociologist’s view that Brigham Young, not Joseph Smith, routinized Smith’s charismatic, “supernatural powers into customary roles for leaders and followers” (3). Bushman’s examination of Joseph Smith’s distribution of power suggests that Weber’s statements fail to address Smith’s constant distribution of power through priesthood authority, quorums, and auxiliaries.

Bushman’s contribution is particularly valuable for those who engage with religious studies theory and methods. As the study of Mormonism continues to blossom in religious studies departments, Bushman asks (and answers) questions about the formation, maintenance, and growth of Mormonism as a new religion. His work could be used as a blueprint for simple, persuasive uses of religious studies theory in the study of Mormon history.

A. LeGrand Richards and co-author Jessie L. Embry, Roger P. Minert, and Michael Hicks wrote chapters on seemingly unrelated topics which share a common strength: All of these chapters narrate the complicated nature of administration in the LDS Church. Richards and Embry’s chapter presents a microlhistory of a cosmopolitan stake in Utah County, with congregations that sign or speak American Sign Language, Spanish, and English. While their work focuses on one stake, their narration of the difficulties and discoveries of overseeing and belonging to such a multicultural stake could easily be translated to broader topics and trends in Mormonism, especially
the increasingly global nature of the LDS Church. Minert’s writing on leadership succession in the German Mission during World War II breaks with standard accounts of international Mormonism, which often, to its detriment, focus solely on the number of converts, temples, or other measurable statistics in a given locale. Although Minert addresses the number of missionaries and converts, his story illuminates the complicated nature of administration when Mormons are not able to communicate with General Authorities. Last, but certainly not least, Hicks’s lively chapter narrates the creation of the 1985 hymnbook, offering a glimpse into the world of decision-making in the LDS Church’s correlation activities. Such views into how correlation works in a churning sea of changing leadership assignments and committee members are rare. These chapters’ nuance, detail, and excellent writing are needed as historians seek to weave Mormonism into a broader tapestry accessible and useful to broader academic and popular audiences.

Kenneth L. Alford, and co-authors Sherry Pack Baker and Elizabeth Mott, tap into broader conversations about American religious history. Alford’s chapter on Mormon catechisms ties Mormonism to broader nineteenth-century religions such as “Roman Catholics, Lutherans Episcopalians, and Methodists” (225). While the chapter focuses on the development and implementation of Mormon catechisms, Alford’s findings show how Mormonism took the religious tools of other religious groups and incorporated their successful trends into its own administrative structure. Baker and Mott’s chapter brings in suggestions for theoretical approaches to media and religion, as they narrate how the LDS Church has used mass media from the rise of radio to the dawn of the internet age. Because both chapters are directed to LDS audiences, rather than broader United States history, they do not contextualize Mormon history into the broader arc of American religious history as fully as might be done. However, their work shows the importance of understanding how Mormonism adapted to and interacted with the religious ecology of the United States.

While each chapter in this book is useful in its own way, I have some general criticisms about the book as a whole. First, essays engage with relatively few primary sources, a factor that limits their usefulness for historians. Although the bulk and wealth of material available through the Joseph Smith Papers project had not been published before the book came to press, several volumes had been released. I look
forward to future Religious Studies Center publications that incorporate both scriptural citations and the primary Joseph Smith sources. (Whittaker’s extremely useful bibliographic essay in the fourth section bears witness to the amount of new material made available to historians just four years after A Firm Foundation’s publication.)

As a second problematic characteristic, several chapters use similar writing styles and teleological narrations in sharing the histories of their topics, which could alienate non-Mormon readers. While it is not surprising that a book from these two publishers assumes an audience of active Latter-day Saints, the authors of A Firm Foundation could have been written to a more general historical audience and used more neutral language rather than insider jargon or assuming that readers are believing Latter-day Saints. These statements, like addressing Joseph Smith as a “true” prophet, could be easily rewritten to reflect a more neutral tone that would be less likely to alienate readers who know little or nothing about the LDS Church’s beliefs, terminology, and culture.

These issues aside, Garr, Whittaker, and the authors in A Firm Foundation should be commended for their work. A Firm Foundation will be a go-to book, paired with the primary documents and documentary editing of the Joseph Smith Papers Project, for historians interested in the development of the LDS Church’s hierarchy for many years to come.

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Reviewed by Susanna Morrill

Karen Lynn Davidson and Jill Mulvay Derr offer to the faithful an engaging, important portrayal of Eliza R. Snow, the most influential women’s leader of the early Mormon Church. Along the way, they ef-
effectively make the (perhaps unintentional) case that Snow is one of the most important leaders in the entire history of the Church, male or female. She was a leading force in establishing the Relief Society, the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association (now the Young Women), and the Primary Association; she oversaw women’s temple work for more than thirty years; she wrote poems and hymns that form the liturgical backbone of today’s Church; and, more intangibly, she inspired “in women of all ages a sense of their own worth and divinity” (150).

This biography is an accessible distillation from the authors’ edited volume of Snow’s poems. The book is well documented historically but it is principally an inspiring story of faith, not an in-depth historical analysis of Snow’s life and impact. Reflecting on how Snow’s childhood and family life prepared her for Church leadership roles, the authors observe: “As we look back in time, it seems that the Lord in his wisdom often provided the home, the family, and the opportunities that prepared individuals to assume their future roles in the restoration and growth of the Church” (1). The authors accomplish well their purpose. They write in lucid and readable style with many excerpts from Snow’s poems. The book is also a visual treat, pairing with these poems illustrations, photographs, and objects relating to Snow and her family. We see, for instance, her bonnet, purse, and gloves, along with a gold watch given to her by Joseph Smith and treasured by Snow for the rest of her life. The stories the authors tell about Snow are poignant, touching, and inspiring. They write of her life’s work: “With unflagging determination, she devoted herself to the building of Zion—a pure, unified people—and she constantly testified to the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith and the truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ” (134).

By following Snow’s life from her birth in Massachusetts to her death in Utah in 1887, the authors draw readers into an eyewitness history of the first half-century of the LDS Church. Snow’s excerpted poems reflect on everything from the trials of the Missouri persecutions to the conflict with the U.S. government over the practice of polygamy. The authors effectively use poetic excerpts to bring these

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events to life and to show their effect on Church members. Snow was especially sensitive to how deaths devastated family and friends and she often wrote encouraging, memorial poetry for her loved ones. The authors also delve into these memorial poems and, in this way, illuminate the pervasive, personal influence that Snow exercised within the Church among both men and women. As speakers testified at her funeral, leaders and members alike saw her as the “mother” of their community, someone who cared for them, inspired them, and expected only the best from them. The authors leave us with the portrait of a humble, hardworking, sharply intelligent, talented, and unrelentingly faithful woman who helped to shape the direction of the Church at important, transitional moments in its early history.

By focusing on Snow’s life, the authors also highlight and quietly explore qualities, values, and issues that are part of today’s LDS community. A prominent, religious figure becomes an instrument for finding meaning in the present—as has always been the case in the LDS community. The authors demonstrate Snow’s hard work, her initiative, and her obedience to priesthood directives. They note Snow’s encouragement to single women to be important contributors to the community and fully engaged workers in the plan of salvation. Although the twice-married Snow was denied the expected role of mother, the authors emphasize how Snow crafted for herself religiously significant roles in her community of faith. They present her as a woman whose life—even though it diverged from the norms for women in the historical and contemporary Church—can inspire the faithful today.

Thus, we can also read the book as a primary source on the state of present-day Mormon culture. Read in this light, it is interesting to note what is left out of the narrative. While the biography explicitly addresses two of Snow’s titles, “presidentess” (in her role as leader of the Relief Society) and “poetess” (a title bestowed on her by Joseph Smith), the authors are less explicit in exploring the two other titles that were applied to her by Mormon men and women of her era: “priestess” and “prophetess.” The title “priestess” was bestowed on Snow for her work in the temple, a function that Derr and Davidson address in some depth, though never noting this title. Given the recent and contentious debates within the LDS community about women

and the priesthood, this exclusion is perhaps not surprising, since the purpose of the book is to inspire, not generate further discussion on this topic. Nor is it surprising that they do not directly address Snow’s title of “prophetess.” Snow’s poem/hymn, now known as “O My Father,” was commonly considered to be a prophetic expression in the early Church—a revelation. It was also called “The Grand Invocation” and was sung at the openings and closings of gatherings from local get-togethers among friends to general conference sessions.

Snow’s contemporaries perceived her as possessing charismatic, prophetic authority. No doubt some of this authority was derived from her close relationship with Joseph Smith (whom she credited with teaching her the doctrine of the Heavenly Mother) and Brigham Young. But with her continuing production of poems and, especially, hymns that have become well-loved standards (including “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” “Behold the Great Redeemer Die,” and “Again We Meet around the Board”), she also earned this title by her own merits. Her poetic gift is an essential part of Snow’s influence that is today largely forgotten by contemporary Church members. The authors acknowledge this aspect of Snow’s leadership indirectly as they point out the inspirational power of Snow’s hymns and poems and how these creative, revelatory expressions increased the faith of those who read or sang them.

In this biography, Snow’s life is presented in service to the modern Church and to modern members. It helps to recover for today’s faithful the Church-building work of an amazing woman. Perhaps it will help to make her, in the public discourse and memory of today’s Church, one of the founding parents of the community. Perhaps members will more often add her name to those of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young as one of the leading, inspired lights of the early Church—one of many models to admire and follow. The way the authors tell Snow’s life is a fascinating window into the issues current within the LDS Church. This biography is illuminating not only of an admirable woman who deserves consideration in the Mormon narrative of faith, but it is also a telling cultural document in its own right. Two talented, intelligent spiritual descendants of Snow follow her example and, as they tell their foremother’s story, put their own mark on the Mormon community.
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Reviewed by Gary James Bergera

Karl G. Maeser (1828–1901) casts a long, broad shadow over BYU and LDS education. Brigham Young’s reported comment to Maeser as he headed to Provo, Utah, to take up the reins of Brigham Young Academy (forerunner of BYU)—that all teaching, including the multiplication tables, should be undertaken only with God’s spirit—has become the stuff of LDS legend. Maeser rises impressively above BYU—literally, his bronze statue guards the entrance of the Maeser Building on the southwestern edge of campus—like an archetypal *Vater*, distant, stern, discreetly affectionate. While Maeser’s contributions to LDS pedagogy have waned, his legend survives as a kind of shibboleth denoting the promise and challenge of attempts at LDS-infused education.

Author A. LeGrand Richards teaches educational leadership and foundations at BYU and approaches Maeser’s life as a dedicated educator. He is interested in Maeser as grand object lesson and portrays him as master teacher and exemplary human being. As Richards explains:

> It has been one of the greatest blessings of my life to study [Maeser’s] life in minute detail. . . . Were he here today, he would perhaps protest against a book such as this, but such a life of truth seeking, faith, sacrifice, dedication, loyalty, and leadership should not be overlooked. Though he was the founder of a number of universities in the West, Maeser is rarely mentioned by educational historians. But his impact was profound. Few outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints even know his name, but it would be difficult to find an educator in the western United States that had as great of an impact.

By carefully examining the choices he made, the experiences from
which he learned, and the attitudes he developed, we can gain profound insights into the ways we might face the challenges of our own lives. Educators especially have much to gain from a careful observation of his life. His theories of learning will never be outdated, his remarkable energy, sacrifice, and loyalty deserve careful observation and emulation. (xxxviii–xxxix)

Richards’s treatment of Maeser is adulatory and thus situates his book somewhat closer to hagiography (note the subtitle “Legacy”) than to strict biography (though it definitely partakes of the latter). Richards greatly admires Maeser, has only praise for him, and tends to dismiss criticism—or what he interprets as criticism—as condemnation. In fact, Richards’s affection for Maeser risks transforming his study into a one-dimensional caricature, albeit a very positive one. I realize this evaluation may not concern Richards, as he has other goals than appealing to the “secular” worldview of contemporary biography. Even so, I cannot help thinking about the extent to which such an approach may misrepresent a life as well as celebrate it.

On the other hand, Richards has done considerable legwork in retrieving the Saxony-born and -trained Maeser from history’s midden. Richards is a conscientious, thorough sleuth who goes beyond the research-related efforts of many writers in tracking down as many biographical leads as he can. In Richards’s case, this included field trips to Germany, where, as a German language-speaker, he accessed information others might have missed. Richards has a good grasp of the basic written sources and of nineteenth-century LDS history, especially early BYU history. (I kept having to remind myself that Brigham Young Academy under Maeser was basically a K–12 school, with a Normal, or Teacher Training, Department added later.) Richards is also conversant with national and international educational history. Richards does a very good job of placing Maeser in the context of his times and especially of tracing Maeser’s educational influences and philosophy. (See Chapters 2 and 8.)

Maeser, according to Richards, was a Pestalozzian educator (after Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi [1746–1827]), who “provok[ed] questions, refin[ed] capacities to observe phenomena, and inspir[ed] a sense of wonderment, curiosity, and attention [in students]. Textbooks are secondary to the book of nature, and the teacher’s role is to coach the students while they construct meaning through their own personal
observations and experiences. Maeser became master of this approach” (216). Maeser understood LDS doctrine, Richards continues, not to differentiate between “spiritual” and “secular” knowledge, but to view all true knowledge as “spiritual” (391). To treat them as separate was to misunderstand and devalue each. Maeser also was unquestioningly loyal to LDS Church authority. This meant that what counted as “official” LDS knowledge—a category that can be defined very broadly—always trumped “secular” knowledge. Maeser’s goal as informed and mediated by Pestalozzian principles and LDS teachings was to help students realize their divine potential as God’s children. (See Chapter 13.)

Richards presents Maeser as the ideal LDS educator: an integrationist uniting secular and spiritual knowledge, then transmitting that knowledge to students in ways that transform them into divinely actualized creatures. Precisely how a teacher achieves this transformation of students in the classroom is difficult to convey, however; and I left Richards’s book not really knowing how Maeser’s instructional philosophy functioned as daily pedagogy. Nor did I understand as I think Richards intended the nuances and ramifications of the spiritual-versus-secular-education dichotomy. Perhaps Maeser’s practice is unrecoverable, and the most we can expect are fragmentary class notes and remembered aphorisms.

As Richards outlines Maeser’s educational philosophy, the tensions inherent in any religion-based instruction are apparent. Richards acknowledges this dilemma when he observes toward the conclusion of his book:

How much should a Church school conform to the academic standards of the larger society? What is the proper balance between resisting the influences of the world and seeking to impress it? What is the proper relationship between academic expertise and priesthood authority? If Church leaders are seen as spiritual stewards over the school, what does it mean to speak of academic freedom? How should disagreements in polices or academic theories be resolved at a Church school? How can a compartmentalized position that divides the secular and religious be reconciled with an integrationist position that recognizes no such division? How should integrationist educators be properly prepared to serve in a secular educational system? On the other hand, how can integrationist educators be properly prepared by compartmentalist academic programs outside of the Church educational system? How can an education built
on the belief in continuous revelation avoid the temptation to reduce its teachings to rigid dogmas? What is the proper course of action when a faculty member loses faith in the sponsoring Church? What place is there at a Church school for faculty members who are academically competent but not members of the sponsoring Church? (560)

Richards—wisely, I believe—leaves these questions unanswered.

Despite my concerns about Richards’s adulatory approach (which may be a distraction only to readers like me), I find much to recommend in his study. I particularly liked the comparison between Maeser and Benjamin Cluff Jr. (1858–1948), Maeser’s successor as president of Brigham Young Academy and the first president of BYU. Richards carefully lays out the differences in personality and style in ways that help to illuminate the dynamics of their relationship. (See Chapter 17.) Not surprisingly, Richards seems invariably to come down on Maeser’s side, attributing any conflict to Cluff’s youth, eastern education (University of Michigan), temperament, impetuosity, anti-authoritarian orientation, etc. Perhaps. But reading between the lines, I suspect that Maeser was not always easy to get along with and was not always willing to let go of the reins of leadership following Cluff’s ascension.

A less partial approach to Maeser would tackle fully and head-on the “difficult” aspects of his personality. Based on the information Richards provides, it is apparent—to me, at least—that Maeser was a workaholic (sometimes to the detriment of his responsibilities as husband and father), somewhat oblivious to the financial needs of his family, dogmatic in his religious convictions and own interpretations of LDS doctrine, eager to please (primarily Church leaders), suspicious of non-LDS schools (especially of the eastern variety), as well as stubborn, anxiety-prone, and sometimes overly sensitive to criticism.

Perhaps because of his defense of Maeser, Richards takes issue with some comments in the thirty-year-old topical history of BYU, *A House of Faith* that Ron Priddis and I published (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985). Richards may have a point or two. But a careful reading clarifies that some of Richards’s argument is actually with Ernest Wilkinson’s official history of BYU, which reports of Maeser (and which *House of Faith* merely paraphrased): “To Maeser, ‘evolution was taboo,’ and psychology was ‘the chimera of the human mind’” (Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 2007).
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4 vols. [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975], 1:218; Richards, Called to Teach, 456 note 41, 544).

Finally, some readers may notice a production-related glitch in the book’s front matter. The recto running heads in the preface (v–xxii) are actually the recto running heads for Chapter 6 and contain as well two sets of recto page numbers—the numbers for the preface and the numbers for Chapter 6. Also, at the end of the front matter is a two-page “About the Author” spread (xlv–xliv), which is usually found in a book’s back matter. In the case of the misplaced running heads, I wonder if the preface was a last-minute addition. As for the curiously placed “About the Author” note, I am at a loss to account for its presence in the front matter.

While I wish Richards’s work exhibited greater scrutiny and critique, he seems not to have been interested in such an approach. Called to Teach is a worthy contribution to the history of LDS education and a competent, serviceable study of Maeser.

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Reviewed by Richard G. Moore

Those who are familiar with Mormon history typically know of Frederick G. Williams; however, it is rare to find someone who knows more than a handful of details—that Williams was a counselor to Joseph Smith in the First Presidency and that, through a disciplinary action, his Church membership was taken from him. Even well-versed historians might assume that we know little more about this early Latter-day Saint leader. I was among the group that possessed this small handful of facts, so I was surprised when I discovered that a book of 800+ pages had been written on his life. Was there really that much information available about this early General Authority’s life? The
author, the namesake great-great-grandson of Dr. Frederick G. Williams, acknowledges in the preface that Williams “left no known diary, biography, memoir, or history” and that his extant personal writings “consist of a dozen notes on scraps of paper and one brief letter” (5). How is it possible to write a book of this length from so little personal material?

In a letter to Ezra Henry Granger Williams, the grandson of Dr. Frederick G. Williams, the subject of this biography, B. H. Roberts wrote that he had hoped to rescue Frederick G. Williams from “the oblivion to which his memory had fallen.” Roberts added: “I think that it devolves upon you to earnestly carry that forth to completion, removing obstacles that may have arisen concerning it so that justice may be secured for this veteran in the work of the Lord, for I am one who believes that the little weaknesses and misfortunes that baffle men ought not to stand in the way of those who were undoubtedly chosen of the Lord to assist in bringing forth this work” (8–9). This book attempts to fulfill B. H. Roberts’s hopes.

To write this documentary history, the author sought out and quoted what contemporaries had written about Williams in their journals, newspaper articles that mention Williams, revelations that Joseph Smith received about Williams, letters that refer to Williams, biographies or autobiographical sketches written by other family members, land, court, and medical records, and every receipt, ledger entry, or fragment of paper with his signature on it. In short, if there was a scrap of evidence that he could locate, the author has included it. This book represents a monumental research effort and years of painstaking searching through every record imaginable. Author Williams has also posted these documents at http://byustudies.byu.edu/FGW.aspx.

The book is arranged generally in chronological order, with some overlapping topical sections and chapters, such as Williams’s practice of medicine, as justice of the peace, and as a member of the First Presidency. Also included are some geographical sections (e.g., Kirtland, Missouri, and Nauvoo). There is little information about Williams’s ancestry and dealing with his early years, beyond establishing that, as a young man, he piloted a boat on Lake Erie during the War of 1812. Also, in his early adult life Williams became a medical doctor, practicing the Thompsonian system of medicine which was based on the concept that disease was caused by an imbalance in the body of the four basic elements: fire, earth, air, and water. The imbalance could be
corrected and the patient’s health restored through the use of herbal teas, steam baths, and vegetable pills. This was in contrast to the medical practice at the time or “heroic” measures that included bleeding (with leeches) and violent emetics.

Williams converted to Mormonism in the fall of 1830 in Kirtland, Ohio, when he heard the preaching of the four missionaries to the Lamanites: Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer Jr., Ziba Peterson, and Parley P. Pratt. He almost immediately left the state, accompanying them to Missouri where he was present at Joseph Smith’s dedication of the temple site in Independence in August 1831. He then returned to Kirtland, consecrated his property to the Church, became a scribe for Joseph Smith, served as paymaster for Zion’s Camp, was chosen as the second counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, sat on the stand at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, served a number of short-term missions, and was elected as justice of the peace in Kirtland. He established a printing firm (F. G. Williams & Co.), which published the first LDS hymnal and also an early Church newspaper. Williams was also an officer of the Kirtland Safety Society.

He and his family traveled to Missouri when Church members left Kirtland. He associated with men who became apostates and, ultimately, was removed from his position in the Church presidency and excommunicated in absentia in March 1839. The author conjectures that the actions taken against Williams resulted in his experiencing “not only a great void in his life but a sick feeling that he was no longer worthy of Joseph’s trust.” Perhaps, he writes, Williams might “have become deeply depressed” (596). Nevertheless, in April 1840 Williams was restored to fellowship in Nauvoo and remained a faithful Latter-day Saint until his death on October 10, 1842. He died in Quincy, Illinois, eighteen days prior to his fifty-fifth birthday (638).

Although there is no known source, according to family lore sometime after Frederick’s death, Brigham Young proposed that Frederick’s wife, Rebecca, become one of his plural wives. When she refused his proposal, Young is reported to have said to her, “Haven’t you forgiven me yet (for not standing up for Frederick; for allowing him to be excommunicated)?” And Rebecca was said to have answered, “Not in this life, Brigham.” Rebecca did become one of Heber C. Kimball’s plural wives (580).

One fascinating item found in the book is the statement written by the historic Frederick G. Williams reporting that the Book of Mor-
mon prophet Lehi and his family “landed on the continent of South America in Chile thirty degrees south Latitude” (437). The statement is typically attributed to Joseph Smith and recorded by Williams. There is another theory that the statement originated with a revelation received by Frederick G. Williams from an angel in the Kirtland Temple. Although research has been done, the actual source of the statement remains a mystery.

The nearly two hundred pages that follow Frederick’s death deal with his family’s trek west and the lives of his descendants, primarily in Utah.

While readers will be impressed by the time, effort, and painstaking research that went into writing this documentary history of Frederick G. Williams, I would consider that it has some weaknesses. First, it is simply too long. Detailed entries of the money spent enroute to Missouri; lists of his patients; records from the ledger of the Firm of F. G. Williams & Co.; tax and land records; promissory notes and accounts owed to Dr. Williams; about five pages listing the property owned by Williams at his death—each of these, and other items, should have been simply omitted, summarized, or placed in an appendix.

The book also needed stronger editorial support. Some quotations and incidents are listed three, four, or more times. It appears that the author, as he labored over this project—obviously the work of years—forgot what he had included in earlier chapters and repeated the information at a point where it also seemed relevant. Of course, that is understandable in a book of this length. However, careful editing would have reduced many of the redundancies.

Because this book was written by a descendant of Frederick G. Williams, it is understandable that the author wanted to portray his ancestor in the best light possible. Williams was excommunicated and perhaps, to his family, that action was undeserved. Because of how Williams is perceived today, or how his descendants think he is perceived, the author sometimes comes off as defensive or apologetic. For example, one section of the book is titled “Irony: Those Who Judged Are Later Judged Themselves.” In dealing with the men who accused Williams of wrongdoing, the author writes: “At the trial held after the conference on March 17, 1839, at Quincy, Illinois, Thomas B. Marsh, who a little more than a year before had objected to President Williams as Second Counselor, was himself excommunicated. . . . Sidney Rigdon, the most active voice against Frederick G. Williams in the
first two forums, was likewise disfellowshiped on August 13, 1843, and
excommunicated on September 8, 1844” (598).

Finally, some of the information the author uses in the book comes
from family lore—stories handed down through the generations, but
without corroborating sources. I am not saying that the information is
false, only that the reader should keep in mind that some of what this
biography offers is conjectural oral tradition and, in the end, may or
may not be factual. The author draws heavily on After 100 Years (In-
dependence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing, 1951), a biography
of Frederick G. Williams written by Nancy Clement Williams, Fred-
erick’s grandson’s wife. After 100 Years is filled with family traditions
and legends. Although the stories might be true, their facticity cannot
be assumed and would require additional documentation to confirm.

The Life of Dr. Frederick G. Williams appears to have been written
primarily for the family as a tribute to their ancestor and progenitor.
This approach contributes to the admiring and possibly over-protective
tone. On occasion, it feels as if the author is saying, “We know what
others believe, but the family knows better.” For example, he writes:

We [the descendants of Frederick G. Williams] all kind of wink in our
retelling of the story found in Doctrine and Covenants 93 (where all
three members of the First Presidency are rebuked by the Lord and told
to teach their children light and truth), for his is the only family of that
eyear First Presidency that came west. The First Presidency had been
chastened by the Lord to do something about their families, and appar-
etly Frederick (now this is where we wink) was the only one who did,
for his was the only family that stayed in the Church and came west.
(656–57)

I stand in awe of the amount of work put into writing this book.
Valuable information and clarifications have come to light. I only wish
it had been edited better and written in a tighter, more concise style.

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ate from the University of the Pacific. He is the author of several books
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Russell W. Stevenson. For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History
Russell Stevenson brings together a wealth of sources to create this ambitious and quick-moving but detailed overview of the intersection of Latter-day Saint and black history, beginning with the story of Mormon origins and ending with the 2013 essay “Race and the Priesthood” with its authoritative yet somewhat ambiguous status at www.lds.org. *For the Cause of Righteousness* is a timely contribution to the literature as the fortieth anniversary of the 1978 revelation extending priesthood ordination to blacks nears and new sources have become available. It was awarded the Mormon History Association’s Best Book Award for 2014, no small token of its importance.

After an introductory essay, Stevenson describes the racial setting of the Church’s early years, tracing the struggles as the larger nineteenth-century American society pressured the Church into addressing the contentious issues involved in slavery, abolition, religion, and race.

Stevenson introduces many early African American Saints, including Elijah Able (or Ables), the subject of an earlier biography by Stevenson, and a subject close to the author’s heart. (See his *Black Mormon: The Story of Elijah Ables* [N.p.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014] and Stevenson, “A Negro Preacher: The Worlds of Elijah Ables,” *Journal of Mormon History* 39, no. 2 [Spring 2013]: 165–254.) The book’s title, *For the Cause of Righteousness*, comes from Ables’s priesthood certificate. Stevenson continues with the brief history of slavery in Utah Territory and the much longer struggle with increasing cultural and doctrinal tensions.

Whether it was Brigham Young addressing the Utah Territorial Legislature or John Taylor listening to the Nauvoo memories of Abraham O. Smoot and Zebedee Coltrin, a number of Church members and leaders worked to craft explanations for racial differences, but the doctrinal solutions were rarely satisfactory and tended to require mental gymnastics. For example, when Heber Meeks, president of the Southern States Mission, visited Cuba in 1947 to assess the opportu-
nities for missionary work (64–66), he wrote to the First Presidency, as summarized and quoted by Stevenson:

“Jonah argued himself out of going to Nineveh because it seemed to him to be a very undiplomatic thing to do, to . . . tell them of their sins.” . . . While he considered that “the sins of the people (mixing white and colored blood through marriage)” had disqualified “them [from] the blessings of the gospel,” Meeks could not “bring myself to recommend . . . that we stay out of Cuba.” The Cubans—black and white alike—“are entitled to the truth.” . . . The Mormon message had “helped the American Negro,” and Meeks felt certain that “many of the [Cuban] negroes would accept the gospel and be happy in the church.” The First Presidency ultimately decided against Meeks’s proposal; as of today, missionaries have still not been assigned to work in Cuba although, for the past forty years, the barrier has been more political than racial. (66)

As missionary efforts spread throughout the world in the twentieth century, racial tensions arose in South Africa and Brazil, and attempts to understand and define racial doctrines became complicated as Church policies conflicted with local needs. “Meanwhile,” Stevenson summarizes, “missionaries in Brazil grappled with racial identities with increasing clumsiness and unease. The urgency of deciding men’s racial status drained missionary resources. William Grant Bangerter, mission president in the Brazilian Northeast from 1958 to 1963, recollected that discerning African skin color constituted ‘one of the major preoccupations of the operation of the Brazilian mission.’ But in most cases, Bangerter believed racial status to be ‘very difficult to determine,’ if not outright impossible” (146).

Stevenson tells of the beginnings of the Church in Nigeria and Ghana and other mostly Western African nations, highlighting stories like that of Rebecca Ghartney Mould, a Ghanaian prophetess who was ultimately not able to make the transition into the male-dominated Church structure (89–91, 150–51, 161–63), and others like Joseph Dadzie, who succeeded (104). A longer-than-expected section covers the mid-twentieth-century Mormon experience in Africa through the eyes of Americans such as explorer John Goddard, Dr. Virginia Cutler, and Sonia Johnson, later a feminist activist.

The narrative returns to the United States for the complex and sometimes strange story as civil rights organizations and others, including Church members, pressured the Church to end segregated priesthood while some leaders and members sought to explain and
support the ban. Stevenson narrates the story from interviews, news accounts, editorials, published sources, and documentary collections, leading up to June 1978, when LDS President Spencer W. Kimball received the revelation, endorsed by the Quorum of the Twelve, to extend the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church.

Bringing the story up to 2013, Stevenson continues with private and public reactions to the revelation. He tells of efforts by the Church, individuals, and organizations such as the Genesis Group to “repair the breach” (159). He also tells the story of increased missionary efforts in Africa.

The narrative is well organized and moves quickly, but it’s hard not to get hung up on technical details. Some details that could have been caught in editing: the heavy use of quotation marks, occasional missing punctuation, and details like a twice-repeated Brigham Young quote (23, 26), as well as a handful of questionable identifications or interpretations. For example, in telling the story of slavery in Utah Territory, Stevenson misidentifies William Crosby as the owner of Green Flake (22) and puzzlingly links the information to John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 224, which, however, provides the correct identification. Also, in discussing the Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Utah, Stevenson incorrectly leaves the reader with the impression that the Church did not oppose the Klan (40–42); and although he cites Larry Gerlach’s *Blazing Crosses in Zion: The Ku Klux Klan in Utah* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1982), he doesn’t mention if or why he disagrees with Gerlach’s thesis as summarized by Shawn Lay in the introduction to *The Invisible Empire in West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 32: “The Utah Klan was an organization of non-Mormon white Protestants protesting Mormon social, economic, and political domination. . . . [Gerlach] discovered that the Salt Lake Klan leadership was made up of disgruntled non-Mormon businessmen who hoped the secret society could be used as ‘an economic combine to challenge Mormon mercantile power.’ Klan demonstrations became vehicles for the expression of anti-Mormon attitudes.” The narrative would have been stronger had Stevenson mentioned Gerlach’s thesis and spelled out the Church’s disapproval of the Klan.1

1 An example of denunciation from the pulpit was Presiding Bishop
Stevenson relies on scholars of race and Mormonism including Armand Mauss, Newell Bringhurst, and Paul Reeve, but at one point uses a quotation from an unpublished essay that the reader hopes is taken out of context: “[Eugene] England further noted that the Mormon Church had been ‘the only church to formally declare a policy that made a distinction by race and to develop a powerfully influential, though unofficial, racialized theology’” (144–45).

The Southern Baptist Convention is an obvious counterexample. The convention began in 1845 with the express purpose of supporting the American institution of slavery. Over the next century, the SBC developed racial policies including segregation of its seminaries. *Ebony* editor Clotye Murdock Larsson told of visiting a white church in Mississippi in the 1950s: “There is room in Heaven for all people,” said’ [the minister]. ‘There is a place for good white people. And there is a place for colored folks. They have their own separate Heaven, and it is just as good as ours.’ Hearty amens wafted up from the congregation.” A 1995 resolution seeking to repair the Southern Baptist legacy of slavery and racism includes language apologizing for segregation and racialized doctrine and practice.

The quick pace of the book and the occasional puzzling interpretation or provocative statement can leave the reader wishing for more. Due to the comprehensive nature of the topic and the necessary brevity of the stories in this book, many accounts will lend themselves to additional treatment. One is the intriguing story of the Church in South Africa; another is the story of why the Utah State Legislature


repealed its anti-miscegenation law several years before the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated laws prohibiting interracial marriage. I had hoped for more treatment of the latter since the author addresses interracial marriage throughout the book (16–17, 114, 249–51).

Without seeking for a tidy resolution, the narrative concludes with reference to the posting of the 2013 LDS essay “Race and the Priesthood.” Though startling in its suddenness, it’s an effective ending, emphasizing the ongoing nature of the story.

In Section 2: “The Documents,” the author presents each document, whether a letter from Brigham Young offering to buy and free a slave, a description from African American Len Hope of his conversion in the Jim Crow South, or an Ezra Taft Benson speech on civil rights, with an explanation and detailed footnotes about the circumstances and identities of those named in the documents. This documentary collection is valuable, though hampered occasionally by editorial decisions such as the deletion of two brief sections of the Utah Territory Act in Relation to Service (1852).

Two resources of note are Stevenson’s explanation that the 1949 First Presidency statement on race and the priesthood was never published by the Church or distributed to Church units, and his explanation of the additional context provided by the LaJean Purcell Carruth shorthand transcriptions of the 1852 debate about the Act in Relation to Service. The framing of each document chosen for the collection provides complexity often lacking in discussions elsewhere.

*For the Cause of Righteousness* is a worthy recipient of the Mormon History Association Best Book Award for 2014. Hopefully after this notable contribution, Stevenson will continue to develop his voice and authority on this topic and, together with other scholars, will continue to address the pressing concerns and absorbing history covered in the book.

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Danny L. Jorgensen and Joni Wilson, eds. *Herstories: Ten Autobiographies...*
Herstories: Ten Autobiographical Narratives of RLDS Women, as the title suggests, is a collection of autobiographical narratives written by or recorded from oral history interviews of RLDS/Community of Christ women. These narratives are presented independent of scholarly interpretation, with the exception of an insightful introduction by Danny Jorgensen and a concise but helpful “Summary and Conclusion” by Linda King Newell.

Jorgensen’s introduction to Herstories should be required reading for anyone doing work with Mormon women’s narratives. While he draws some conclusions about the significance of the project, he intentionally suspends analytic or theoretical engagement with the narratives in this volume, allowing them to speak for themselves. Additionally, he prepares the reader to listen to the “voices” of these women by modeling his own encounter with “herstories,” a pun on “history” or “his-story,” which is derived from feminist critiques of scholarly perspectives that privilege the male experience over the female. Jorgensen comments that he is “astounded, again and again, at the many ways in which women have been required to negotiate, constantly and creatively, with men to achieve an existentially meaningful existence for themselves and others.” He continues by cautioning that “writing women into their rightful, vital place in the history of the [R]organization, therefore, requires sensitive, empathetic attention to how women have symbolically defined and expressed what their experiences mean to them” (25).

Jorgensen makes important comparisons to what has been done with Mormon women’s history both from an LDS perspective and in terms of his and Wilson’s work in publishing RLDS Herstories. He argues that the Community of Christ “has grown increasingly ambivalent about the uniqueness of Latter Day Saint history for sustaining faith and theology” and has recreated “a Protestant-like theology that requires little to no history” (24). This highlighting is a helpful perspective for scholars more familiar with Utah Mormon history to understand why there has been a greater emphasis on history in the LDS
Church. Jorgensen spells out how even more critical and difficult it is for those in the Community of Christ to justify historical work, let alone work with women's narratives.

Linda King Newell’s “Summary and Conclusion” points to some patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in the narrative collection and suggests implications for further study. She expresses the hope that “the effort to preserve stories in this volume will be the catalyst leading to a new and expanded project of oral histories, using skilled interviewers who are trained to encourage depth and details in the stories they will hear.” This, she suggests will lead to “fuller accounts of women in the Restoration” (328). Newell’s choice of “Restoration” rather than “Reorganization” here is of note to readers of the Journal of Mormon History because it invites not only Community of Christ scholars but Latter-day Saints and others to examine and create “accounts of women in the Restoration” to “help fill in the blanks in the institutional history and inform church members in ways that will enrich their own lives” (328). I agree with Newell that reaching across denominational lines to the literature of RLDS/Community of Christ women can lead to an even richer shared history with distant cousins of the Restoration.

Each of the ten autobiographical narratives, one per chapter, is a unique historical document that encapsulates aspects of the lived religious experience of RLDS/Community of Christ women in the twentieth century. The narratives are arranged chronologically by birthdate beginning with Emma Locine Whiting Anderson (born March 8, 1853, at Silver Creek, Iowa; died June 10, 1922, Independence). She is the eldest sister of Jorgensen’s great-great-grandmother. Next is Elsie Florence Andes Doig Townsend (born October 15, 1908, Far West, Missouri; died April 16, 1994, Missoula, Montana), who published a book about her struggle to support five children after the death of her first husband. Third, Beatrice Noel Deaver Darling (born July 23, 1910, Webb City, Missouri; died November 25, 1991, Independence), introduced her husband to the RLDS Church and then spent most of her life in Church service as he became a Church appointee and a patriarch-evangelist. Fourth is Jane Pinkerton Yasaitis (born May 1, 1912, Belvidere, Illinois; died September 12, 1998, Janesville, Wisconsin), born to and reared by RLDS parents; although she was married to a nonmember husband, she remained a vibrant member her entire life. Dorothy Harriet Elkins Wixom, the fifth woman (born August 2,
1912, Highland, California; died April 27, 1991, Sacramento, California), was an avid genealogist whose candid interview includes colorful stories of her ancestors. Sixth, Enid Irene Stubbart DeBarthe (born October 5, 1912, Missouri; died July 9, 2005, Lamoni, Iowa) recounts in some detail the 1984 general conference when Prophet-President Wallace B. Smith presented the revelation allowing women’s ordination to the priesthood, the general conference’s canonization, and the reactions—both personal and those of others. The seventh oral history narrative is of Jessie Marie Carter Gamet (born April 8, 1914, Little Rock, Arkansas; died July 16, 1994, Independence), who tells of her ministry with children, including among other approaches, her care in producing and using flannel graphs in her teaching. Louise Minor Murdock’s autobiography is the eighth narrative (born September 2, 1916, Heppner, Oregon; died March 26, 2009, Santa Barbara, California), recounting the endeavor to establish a Zionic community in the Ozarks. The ninth woman, Berta Bennett Ruoff Nogel (born June 15, 1920, Manila, Utah; died October 4, 2010, Santa Ana, California) was born and raised as a Mormon in Utah, then joined the RLDS Church in Compton, California. Finally, the tenth woman, African American Margaret Louise Canham (born August 14, 1922 or 1923, St. Davids, Ontario; died March 30, 1995, Niagara Falls, Ontario), was the only woman of the ten to remain unmarried.

Some patterns of note in these autobiographical writings include healings through priesthood administrations; visitations from one or all of the Three Nephites; the importance of personal revelation; RLDS reunions (week-long summer camps for the whole family that include recreation, worship, sermons by leaders, and testimony-sharing; American Indians; the Book of Mormon; and the bestowal of patriarch-evangelist blessings. These narratives give the reader deeper insight into the broader RLDS/Community of Christ experience. They also reveal how women experienced the evolution and modernization from RLDS to Community of Christ including the ordination of women to the priesthood, although none of the women were themselves ordained.

One of the weaknesses of the oral history narratives identified by Jorgensen and Newell is that the interviews were sometimes conducted by inexperienced interviewers who failed to ask the right questions. Rather than being a weakness however, I think this aspect of the narratives makes for an instructive study of the process of collecting oral
histories. These narratives demonstrate that the historical artifact of the interview can be as valuable as the narrative content. The oral histories Jorgensen and Wilson included were selected from a previously unprocessed, three-volume collection of “Oral Histories of Women Serving the RLDS Church in the Twentieth Century,” which resulted from an oral history project sponsored by the RLDS Women’s Commission beginning in the 1980s. “Local women leaders and other branch members identified prospective candidates who were interviewed by women based on guidelines provided by the women’s commission, the principal organization of RLDS women at this time” (14). Jorgensen and Wilson then selected eight of the most descriptive, representative, and multifaceted of the approximately 142 narratives and added the two autobiographies, which were selected because of their “appropriate length and content” (19).

Space prohibits even a brief overview of the ten women’s narratives; however, two noteworthy examples may suffice. Emma Locine Whiting Anderson’s narrative is one of only two in the volume to be excerpted from an autobiography rather than an oral history interview. She is also the only woman in the collection who was born in the nineteenth century. Anderson’s “parents embraced the gospel before the death of the martyrs Joseph and Hyrum” (36) and were some of Alpheus Cutler’s early followers. Her husband, Edwin B. Anderson, encountered missionaries from the Reorganization in 1884 in East Battle Lake, Minnesota. She wrote her autobiography in 1915 at age sixty-two. It is a window into a fascinating period of Restoration history. As her husband was dying, she pled with him: “Ed, don’t go till you bless me, for I do not feel as if I could bear it.” Anderson records, “We knelt in prayer and he then anointed my head with oil and prayed God to bless me. I received a spirit of peace and reconciliation to God’s will and he died the twenty-third of May 1912” (76–77). In some of her final words, she admits, “Well, I thought there would never be anything more worth writing after my husband’s death. But I have found that life goes on. The Lord still has blessings for us and we still have our trials to endure” (77).

Dorothy Jane Pinkerton Yasaitis (1912–98) was interviewed in Wisconsin in 1986. A writer, she was keenly aware of gaps in the narrative of RLDS history. She compiled the stories of women from “the time of the early church through the time of the Reorganization” and
published the biographies of six women’s lives in her *Our Lives to His Service* (a volume I would like to bid on at the next JWHA silent auction). One of these women was the sister of Joseph Smith Jr., Katherine Smith Salisbury, and is a narrative of special interest to scholars in all branches of the Restoration. She made the decision to write in first person, hoping to better convey “their dedication to the church and the hardships which most of these people had to deal with” (171). She did not consider this approach to be writing historical fiction. Instead, in addition to her work with historical records, she would “sit down and pray about the first person and say, ‘Let me understand what some of her experiences were. Let me feel some of the pain’” (171). This sympathetic approach yielded an outpouring of the Spirit: “There were times when I could hardly see to put the words down because the Spirit was so strong.” The stories were also staged and presented at a “district women’s meeting” where even with simple stage settings and costumes “people would say, ‘We felt like we were in these people’s homes’”—which was an answer to Yasaitis’s prayers “that they could somehow feel the same things I had as I wrote about these people who made such a contribution to the church” (171–72).

*Herstories* is an important contribution to the field of Mormon history. I echo the threefold challenge that Jorgensen makes to readers of these RLDS autobiographical narratives, which can be applied to any historical work in Mormon history:

(1) Listen carefully to these voices, empathize with their experiences, feel their joys and sorrows, and hear the definitions and meanings they ascribe to their experiences and activities; (2) use the many methodologies and perspectives available in human studies to analyze, critically consider, and interpret these narratives; (3) take what hopefully will be new interpretative insights into these stories as a basis for building a serious program for further studies of RLDS women’s lives and writing herstories into the history of the Reorganization, the Latter Day Saint religion, the American religious experience, and the history of humanity generally. (26)

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