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Mormonism as a world religion and Joseph Smith as its originating prophet furnish the subject of this paper. A brief theoretical reflection on approaching The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides both an opening context for the quantitatively focused debate on Mormonism's potential for growth into world religion status and an introduction for a more extensive consideration of several factors of a more qualitative kind that may foster or inhibit that development. The paper then ponders the issue of identity in relation to Joseph Smith.

Approaching Mormon Religion

In his essay "The Concept of Scientific History," Sir Isaiah Berlin distinguished between "thin" and "thick" forms of information within different disciplines. "Thin" material, often single stranded, is relatively open to sociological, psychological, economic, or even medical research. "Thick" materials, by contrast, present the scholar, most especially the historian, with a "texture constituted by the interwoven strands." How to approach such "thick" material was, for him, a fundamental means of distinguishing between the natural and the human sciences.[1] In particular, history demands an active

participation in the past lives of people with the common sense knowledge of our own life, age, and culture playing its part in our approach to the past. That very sense of "knowing oneself" provides the basis for knowing one another and constitutes Berlin's version of "nothing human being alien to me." This frames his appreciation of Max Weber's sociological theme of "understanding," or *Verstehen,* in approaching social life.[2] One intriguing mid-twentieth-century debate in British social anthropology reflected these issues when Evans-Pritchard, Berlin's Oxford contemporary, just a year after Berlin's essay linked history and anthropology as modes of engagement with humanity.[3] I invoke these intellectual visions both to curb oversimplification of Mormonism's numerical future and world-religion status and to prompt openness in pondering aspects of the life of its founder, Joseph Smith.

Another matter dealing with any approach to the subject lies in the vested interest of many Mormon commentators. It is important to appreciate and evaluate our bias: indeed, this is part of the calling of the scholar who sees study as part of the pursuit of the way things are—a phrase that, for me, represents "the truth" within one's intellectual endeavors. Church leaders see themselves charged with the preservation and expansion of the church and of dealing with those who would attack or undermine it. Apologists of other religious traditions often wish to devalue their attackers in order to assert their own confession of faith. Indeed, both protagonists and antagonists tend to create, emphasize, or ignore historical, organizational, and ideological-theological ideas each in their own distinctive fashion. This treatment is understandable but is also at times sad because of the conflict-grounded issues of identity, fear, and love that are involved. I acknowledge that perhaps my own vested interest as a scholar of Mormonism tends to stress positive aspects of its genius, life, and growth. I turn first to its growth.

Numbers

For some twenty years or so, Rodney Stark's statistical prediction of Mormonism's growth into a new world religion has prompted

discussion.[4] His low and high profile predictions suggest that, for example, by 2020 the low membership would be thirteen million and the high, twenty-three million. By 2050 the low membership would be twenty-nine million and the high seventy-nine million. Further extrapolation, on the basis of growth from 1930 to 1980, led him to a figure of approximately 265 million by 2080.[5]

As I have argued elsewhere, and bearing the strong anachronism in mind, this would, in today's terms, make Mormonism nearly 75 percent the size of Buddhism and constitute some 13 percent of the total Christian world.[6] But those statistics do not consider the growth of mainstream Christianity and other religions by 2080, itself no small factor, even when compared to Mormonism's recent growth, especially in South America. Mormonism's growth parallels an explosive growth of numerous Protestant, Evangelical, and charismatic groups that are related to the offer of a faith that frames a purposeful and stable individual and family life, alongside a work ethic conducive to economic success.[7]

Be that as it may, the main point is that some church leaders have taken up Stark's projections as points of encouragement.[8] I have my doubts about his "thin" interpretation because of some of the "thick" factors of religious and cultural life. My interest today lies with some of the dynamics of this growth and the potential constraints inherent in its future.

A separate issue of a more technical kind in the history of religions concerns the meaning of a "world religion." I have discussed this elsewhere and argued, for example, that Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam constitute world religions while Sikhism and Judaism do not, with Hinduism being largely in the latter group.[9] This appraisal is based on a definition of world religion as involving a distinctive process of the conquest of death, a conquest rooted in ritual practice, explanatory doctrine, and an ethical pattern of life involving the generation of merit for soteriological ends. Crucially, it is also required that the movement develop from its original cultural source by engaging creatively with the cultures into which it expands and, in the process, generate diversifying textual, symbolic, and historic traditions.

Dynamics of Growth

Numerous scholars of Mormonism and commentators on American cultural life have, of course, seen in Mormonism a distinctive religious movement, even a distinctive American religion, and I do not wish to rehearse those well-known ideas here. Rather, I now turn to consider germane dynamics of and constraints upon growth in the Latter-day Saint world, factors that belong to the thickly complex nature of religion.

Death Conquest. From my perspective, a major feature in Mormonism's success to date lies in its extensive process of death conquest.[10] Its ritual provision, from genealogy to the temple and to eternity, furnishes a more extensive eternal soteriology than most religions, with the possible exception of medieval Catholicism. This is likely to be a major advantage for converts from contemporary cultural Catholicism or some traditional societies, such as New Zealand Maoris,[11] but a major disadvantage in Western Europe and other contexts where life after death is decreasingly a majority concern. An interesting paradox in secular Europe is that many are interested in genealogy for genealogy's sake but not for reasons of religious salvation—for the past and present and not for the future.

Migrant Commitment. For nineteenth-century European converts, however, death conquest was an attraction, especially in its early form of millenarianism. The inward and onward migration of converts during the first fifty or so years of the church's life, in particular the commitment expressed by many thousands of European Saints who abandoned their homeland, which they had come to define as "evil Babylon," for the New Jerusalem across the Atlantic, contributed a fundamental form of spiritual capital to the new development.[12]

Never had the classification of the "Old World and the New World" carried such a theological significance. Theologically speaking, the faith dynamic pervading their migration lay in eschatological hope. They were crossing the sea and, subsequently, would cross half of North America to prepare a place for the coming of Jesus Christ. They would be party to and celebrate in his joyous advent. Not that Christ had not already made his presence felt in North America. And

here I do not refer to the well-rehearsed spiritual presence of Christ in and through waves of Protestant revivalism, but to the double belief that one of Christ's post-resurrection appearances had been in the New World (3 Nephi 11–27) and that he, along with his heavenly Father, had appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in the process of divine restoration of religious truth and authority. Indeed, in 1830, a book—the Book of Mormon—and a church had appeared as official expressions of these beliefs. Here, then, we see a variety of factors that express the overall Christological dynamic of earliest Mormonism.

Joseph Smith's Death. The murder of Joseph Smith in 1844, with all its potential for theological, social, and political interpretations as sacrificial martyrdom, lynch-mob rabble rousing, or Masonic vengeance, precipitated a critical reappraisal of leadership and divine intention. It marks a crucial dynamic in Mormonism's survival. The value of the spiritual capital brought by migrant converts was now tested, and while not all of it remained creditable, sufficient did for firm continued investment in the church's westward future under Brigham Young. The critical separations that occurred firmed those who remained, and it was with a quite different dynamic already reorienting itself upon the death of Joseph that devotees migrated further to a destination that would, under Brigham Young, become their proper place, for a century at least. Recognizing the mainstream of followers who went west, I do not wish to overlook the contributions made by other Mormon groups, for example, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—the Community of Christ—as it came to call itself in 2001, which was led initially by the martyred prophet's son, Joseph Smith III.

In mentioning spiritual capital, one is almost tempted into a further serious theoretical aside concerning rational-choice theory, favored by some sociologists of religion—that "religion supplies compensators for rewards that are scarce or unavailable" and that people make religious choices by "weighing the anticipated costs and benefits of actions and then seeking to act so as to maximize net benefits"[13]—and accordingly to explore the options available to those European migrants who were now without their "prophet dear." I resist that temptation, but only after highlighting the problem of

rationality over faith, for while I am slightly unsure how to change the coinage of eschatological hope into that of rational choice, I am very unclear indeed how pragmatic rationality relates to the sense of truth and wonder inherent in some early Mormon spirituality. I fear that someone may lose out in the exchange. Indeed, this doubt is of some significance in relation to the death of Joseph Smith because it raises the issue of "understanding," of that *Verstehen* to which I alluded more theoretically in my introduction. If I may say so, the temptation of rational choice theory is to engage in too simplistic an appraisal of cost and value, and this will not do, I think, when one seeks to grasp something of the "thick" materials, of the complex yearnings of faith.

One element of Joseph Smith's dynamic contribution to Mormonism—his martyrdom—may be usefully isolated through the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner's interesting account of Christian martyrdom in general. In a direct and obvious way Rahner describes martyrdom as the uniting of "testimony" and "death" in the faithful decease of the believer. That would easily echo within Mormonism, given the primacy of place it affords to testimony as such, but Rahner also addresses the more nuanced way in which believers come to understand and grasp the inner dynamism of their faith.[14] Speaking specifically of Catholic spirituality with its stress both on Christ as the prime "faithful witness" and on the believer called to "follow in the bloody footsteps of his master and share the fate of the Word Incarnate unto death" and also on the "Spirit from above, the Holy Spirit of grace and strength," he adds that "anyone who really understands what is meant by these traditional expressions, has probably understood everything, for then his faith, his love, his fidelity comprehend more than words actually explicitly express."[15]

Moving from Catholicism to Mormon life, that kind of "understanding" (the epic *Verstehen* of the devotee) is also what binds believer to believer and, in all probability, bound many 1844 Saints to Joseph and to the ongoing mission assumed by Brigham Young. Of course not all were so bound, as the formation of other restoration groups attested, yet this martyr complex embracing testimony and death was

of positive import in earliest Mormonism because of the death-conquest rites into which the prophet had already initiated some core-leadership families.

Vicarious Rites and Personal Endeavor. This brings me to the positive dynamic associated with vicarious ritual and personal endeavor in relation to death conquest, in particular the rites of baptism for the dead and of endowments that would become the charter forces of temple building and temple work. Theology and ritual combined in the church's desire that individuals should so enact their agency that, obediently, they might fulfill their covenants and obligations to the church and to God and attain their justly rewarded degree of celestial glory in the worlds to come.[16] In nineteenth-century Mormon life, with its strenuous endeavor to survive and to make the desert blossom as the rose, Latter-day Saints worked hard. And, developing this Mormon version of the Protestant ethic, there was also a parallel exertion in terms of eternal survival and flourishing. Doctrinally speaking, divine grace, focused on the atonement of Jesus Christ, would guarantee that every human being would attain resurrection. What followed the resurrection, however, would depend upon the life lived on earth. And since the degree of glory, the precise level of attainment achieved in the heavenly realms, was the crucially significant factor, it is perfectly understandable that Mormons should become an achievement-focused people.

Here was a powerful motivational dynamic fostering the very notion of "activity," with a desire to have as many as possible "active" in church and temple life.[17] This encouraged and motivated missionary work as it did leadership activity in a developing and expanding institution. Celestial glory and eternal progression were close partners of earthly activity and church expansion, not least in the second half of the twentieth century. In this sense a deeper insight lies in describing Mormonism as an exaltation religion rather than simply as a salvation religion, itself a term too often synonymous with "world religion."

Church and Sect. I take this Latter-day Saint theological distinction between exaltation and salvation and relate it to the organizational complement between temple and chapel as a further

feature of dynamics and growth.[18] This distinction is helpful for the growth of the church in two ways. First, the ward, mission, and stake form of organization serves the missionary life of the church. In this form, missionaries and church members contact millions of people and can introduce them to a local form of congregational and community life. If successfully accomplished, the mission task results in the personal baptism of a new believer, repentance of sin, and the promise of divine grace to ensure a resurrection after death. But church membership does not end in and with local congregational life. Ideally, increasing involvement should lead to a reorganization of family life and, critically, to ritual action at the temple. So to practice the faith is to set upon the path of ultimate exaltation in the realms above, moving beyond the point of resurrection, provided by grace, into the domains of exaltation achieved by personal endeavor. One positive effect of the chapel-temple divide is to ensure a kind of church within a church or, in older sociological terms, a kind of sect within a church, fostering the intense levels of involvement required for an essentially voluntary organization.

Constraints

As is often the case, many a positive dynamic entails a negative constraint. Here I will consider three areas of such constraint.

Sensing Failure. The first constraint concerns Mormonism as an "exaltation religion" with its particular emphasis on grace, a feature noticeably addressed in recent decades within some Mormon circles.[19] This, it would appear, is the outcome as much of pastoral care as of any apologetics with Evangelical or Catholic Christianities over doctrine. Though I cannot explore the point here, "grace" is difficult to translate between traditions because of the difference in ethos of appropriation. I have described something of a similar problem of mutual comprehension elsewhere over the idea of the cross within theology and spirituality. Mormonism presents an interesting paradox when its ethic of achievement motivation encounters a desire to speak the language of grace.[20] This encounter can be perceived as a contradiction. How can one create a sense of the radical divine

resource of love, forgiveness, and encouragement for energetic individuals, raised on an ethic of achievement, who have exhausted their personal resource in seeking to honor covenants and fulfill all family and church duties? It is not a new problem, of course. One manifestation of it lay in the debate between Augustine and Pelagius in the fourth and fifth centuries and, indeed, in later centuries, not least at the time of the Reformation.[21] This issue ever concerns the nature and degree of human and/or divine input into the living of a religious life. History suggests that the greater the hierarchical and ritual basis of a tradition, the greater the stress on human effort. Moreover, the larger the church grows, the more likely it is that an increase in central control will be necessary to maintain its doctrinal and organizational integrity as its particular type of restoration movement. This would imply that the greater the numerical success of the church and the greater the need for organizational control, the greater will be the incidence of this ethical-burnout experience. By contrast, moments of protest against hierarchy and ritualized access to divinity stress the freedom of believers in the reception of a divine outflow of salvation.

In terms of massive church growth, an obvious hypothesis would be that obedience to authority and to prescribed rites would take precedence over the idea of grace, especially when and if that idea is associated, in the minds of church leaders at least, with an individualized freedom easily open to a laissez-faire spirituality. An important issue here is one I outlined in my *Introduction to Mormonism* when comparing Evangelical, Protestant, and Mormon ideas of Jesus and describing how they differ according to the way each group views their church.[22] For many Evangelicals, Christ, and especially Christ in the heart, is more important than the actual denominational organization to which they belong. This is probably not the case for most Latter-day Saints, for whom Jesus is conceived of, and perhaps related to, as the one who frames, inspires, and ultimately leads this particular church rather than as an invited guest of the private heart.

Still it remains that some are exploring these issues and are developing what might be described as a reflexive insight on grace.[23] This reflexivity involves a transformation. It begins in the strenuous

effort of obedience, discipline, and much activity—in family life, in mission, in church and temple work, as well as in career and community activity, and in added family responsibilities for the women. The faithful Saint works himself out and wonders whether he will ever attain an appropriate celestial degree of glory. Into such lives, the idea of divine love and acceptance may come as a force of considerable strength. This could be a breakthrough experience, easily describable as a new birth. It may involve a deeply personal sense of Christ or the Holy Spirit. Might this become a relatively new style of "Mormon conversion"? An intrachurch conversion? If so it might come to serve as a new resource of spiritual capital within the organization itself.

Inner Diversity: Sustaining and Opposing. Another element of constraint to which I wish to draw attention concerns the threefold relation between growth in numbers, the increase of inner diversity of the church, and the nature of centralized control. These I approach through the Mormon practice of the membership "sustaining" their leadership as God's called and appointed ones.[24] This process may be interpreted in terms of what we might call positive and negative forms of testimony. To sustain leaders is to engage in a type of positive, practical testimony. Saints raise the hand just as in the testimony meeting they vocally affirm that this is the true church and its leaders the chosen of God. A literary form of these manual and verbal types of assent appears at the front of the Book of Mormon in "The Testimony of Three Witnesses," "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," and "Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith," himself. But there is another aspect of such testimony, for deep within the theological, historical, and psychological culture of Mormonism lies the phenomenon of negative testimony—of apostasy—which involves both the broad scheme of historical falling away from divine truth, corrected in the Restoration through Joseph Smith, and the more specific cases of individual apostasy.

One factor that might militate against Mormonism being identified as a world religion as defined above lies in the way that a hierarchical and centralized leadership could wish to control any diversity that might be viewed as dissent. Here one crucial issue concerns the

way in which dissent is conceived, whether as faithful creativity or as apostasy. It may be that the pool of potential orientations inherited by the Utah church in relation to groups such as the Community of Christ or some groups self-defining as Latter-day Saint, but often designated as fundamentalist Mormon groups, will incline leaders more in one way than the other.

American Essence. In connection with this, the early Utah period of church life witnessed, quite naturally, a strong bonding between a distinctive type of American ethos and the message itself. This American-Mormon bond raises another vital factor that may constrain the world-religion status of Mormonism in the future, namely, the question of enculturation—itself one of the most powerful notions of Christian religious developments in recent decades.[25] Major world religions, as I define them, have largely broken their bond of origin and become encultured in many differing societies. This is, inevitably, a crucial question for the theme of Mormonism as a world religion. It was with that in mind that I preferred to speak of future Mormonism elsewhere as an "expansion as a denominational sub-culture but not as a world religion."[26] What might contradict that view, however, is the possibility that after its extensive expansion it will experience dissent, rupture, and extensive localization. Varieties of African, Indian, Japanese, Brazilian, or other forms of Mormon life would emerge, and the world religion idea would become a more realistic option.

Here I stress, with some personal fondness and intellectual respect, John Sorenson's interesting anthropological discussions of these significant issues, not least his 1973 essay "Mormon World-view and American Culture." As he put it then: "Broadly speaking, Mormons in the United States consider culture as something that foreigners have, while what they have here in 'Zion' are simply gospel truths."[27] Doubtless much has changed since then, but a genuine world-religion future would involve a great deal more. But to ponder that future is also to ponder the future of the United States of America. Many see the United States as a distinctive form of empire embracing globalizing economics and linguistic factors alongside a strong film and musical culture, not to mention the military engagements that some

would view as invasion. Perhaps many within the United States also see it as a chosen country with a world mission. The twentieth century, especially its second half, was the era of the rise of the United States. Indeed, the early twenty-first century presents a complex picture of strongly mixed opinions of the United States and things American. Speaking as a Briton and Anglican who, even in a relatively short time, has lived through the fragmentation of the British Empire—itself in the nineteenth and early twentieth century one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen—I appreciate that the current status of the United States may not last. Certainly, one lesson of history is that kingdoms and empires rise and fall, and the religions they take with them also benefit and lose from those changing dynamics. One theological response to that is reflected in the final line of the hymn; "The Day Thou Gavest Lord Is Ended," which is much beloved by the Church of England:

> So be it Lord Thy Throne shall never,
> As earth's proud empires, pass away.
> Thy Kingdom stands and grows forever,
> Till all Thy creatures, own Thy sway.[28]

By 2080, for example, the United States might be like the United Kingdom of today: certainly Brazil, India, and China will experience great change by then. It is precisely such a view of the world that any scholar of religious futures needs to ponder, as indeed this view is pondered within contemporary politics and commerce and by the military. Statistical progression—itself a relatively thin form of analysis—may well falter as the cultural carriers of a message change. For all, but especially for religious leaders, such issues themselves demand some form of courage. And to this essentially thick complexity of human life and to the past, I now turn and return, in and through the life of Joseph Smith.

Courage, Identity, and Joseph Smith

Courage, as a theme worthy of religious studies, is of prime importance in the birth and growth of the church: here I raise it speculatively and provisionally because our subject concerns an individual man, a person whose life was, it seems to me, as mysterious to

himself as sometimes our lives are to us. Precisely because church leaders can, perhaps, see Joseph too easily as part of the plan of salvation and church opponents decry him too readily as a misled and misleading individual, it is worth considering him as a man like the rest of us, albeit one who achieved something that the vast majority have not achieved, namely, founding a movement actively followed by millions as a means of living their life and approaching their death.

To focus on courage may seem odd, and the way I do so more curious still—odd, for example, given Fawn Brodie's trenchant assertion of Joseph's lack of courage in some events near the close of his life.[29] And perhaps curious because I am led to the theme of courage, prompted by the theological writing of Paul Tillich (1886–1965), the late-nineteenth- and mid-twentieth-century theologian, German by birth and American by adoption and cultural grace, who died just forty years ago and whose work I wish to note as worthy of solid reconsideration.

My wish to ponder courage is prompted by the opacity of many a great life to its acts and outcomes, and by the sympathy I consider a humane evaluation of each other to demand when seeking to understand others. One of the profounder aspects of Tillich's thought, emerging from his existential yet Protestantly rooted theological concerns, is what he calls the "courage of confidence." This confidence is "rooted in the personal, total, and immediate certainty of divine forgiveness." Tillich presses the point further, under the influence of Lutheranism, to describe the courage of confidence as "accepting acceptance through being unacceptable."[30] In taking this theme from Tillich, I am not simply trying to describe the Protestant form of the doctrine of justification by faith in different terms, nor am I introducing an idea that I think is directly intelligible to Mormonism. Rather, I am highlighting one dramatically important feature of human life: that of a transformation of self-identity in relation to belief in divine activity operative in and through the self. Tillich is very careful to argue that this courage is not simply a kind of psychological self-acceptance. "It is," he says, "not the Existentialist courage to be as oneself." Far from it, "it is the paradoxical act in which one is accepted by that which infinitely transcends one's individual self."[31]

And Tillich emphasizes the personal, and the person-to-person, nature of this relationship.

For the Reformation such a person was the "unacceptable sinner" being accepted into the "judging and transforming communion with God."[32] What was it for the Restoration? What was "the courage of confidence" of Joseph Smith? To answer this is too great a task for this paper, but the question is a worthy one. Part of the answer lies in Joseph's visions. These give a clear sense of an experience understood as a personal encounter within which he felt acceptance by the deity despite personal ideas of unworthiness. We should not simply read these motifs as some obvious framing of some inevitable form of religious experience in the Protestant Burned-over District of the 1820s. That kind of historical-psychological shorthand takes the color from the picture, the inspiration from the heart. It will not do when studying a prophet.

Unfortunately, I can spend no time developing this theme here. I simply enunciate it, for I must pass on to the courage of confidence as important in church growth, an issue that brings life to the missionary situation as to any level of the church as an organization. It may also be the basis of life in the missionary too, for such courage is likely to emerge only from crisis and hardship—it is seldom the product of homegrown simplicity. The mission field is as likely to be creative for the missionary as was the Palmyra grove for Joseph Smith. But there can be no formula for producing such courage. The lack of a formula or structure is, I think, a real problem for the church as an expanding organization, especially one in which central leaders are ever more distant, in personal terms, from the ordinary member. As the church becomes ever larger it increasingly depends upon formal organizational systems for its operation. Any growing church or society experiences this kind of developmental situation.

How do some church members perceive this expansion? For the majority, I suspect, this is deemed a great and good thing, a sign that the plan of salvation embraces the very organization of the church on earth. Attitudes of respect and a commitment to duty become prime, not least as the church is seen to grow in numbers and, as it were, to demonstrate its veracity through its very growth. For a few— perhaps especially for those who were young when the church was

much smaller than it is today—this growth of a managed church can lead to a sense that formulae and a distanced authoritative hierarchy replace personal encounter. Authority, power, and control overwhelm the commitment, thought, and distinctive testimony of specific individuals.

At this point in the argument, I might be expected to express certain negative sentiments over this potential depersonalization of a community or even over the problematic nature of some forms of intellectualism or even dissidence within the church: indeed these are important arguments, but, by contrast, I intend to indicate quite another issue, one reflecting what might be viewed as a grand irony, namely, that such a sense of disquiet towards church leadership may become the arena out of which another kind of "courage of confidence" may, itself, be born. Joseph Smith's own spirituality seemed to have been fostered by his sense of dismay at the churches of his day, a dismay furnishing the seedbed of acceptance of revelation. By a strange analogy this might mean that some of the church's apparently disobedient sons and daughters are the best examples of the spirit of Joseph Smith. How can the church, as it grows, appreciate the resource of faith present in those few, especially when, quite understandably, the leadership is concerned about the lives of millions? That is a challenge for the church leadership bearing responsibility and desirous of directing a world religion. No easy answer can be summoned, certainly not here.

But the question is related to that characteristic of world religions involving the division into schools of interpretation and practice. Many and various are the reasons for that. One reason lies in the need of some individuals to gain power and influence and to carve a sector within the new world of truth; another lies in a real sense of possessing a more apt grasp of truth than the general truths obtained by all. Division is, historically speaking, not strange to the Restoration movement of the latter days. Its very presence is, however, a potential example of negative possibilities. This, it seems to me, is the profound problem of world-religion status. It could be that, with the centuries, Mormonism may become a deeply encultured faith with regional identity and organization separate from Salt Lake City, or relatively so. That would contradict my own sense of what is likely, but one

cannot predict. It is wise to recall that after two thousand years most Christian traditions still utilize, dwell upon, and interpret not only the Mediterranean culture of the New Testament but also the previous millennium or so of Jewish antecedents. Alongside the challenge inherent in cultural diversity of change into, for example, an African Mormonism, Japanese, Korean, and Brazilian Mormonism, stands the potential for distinctive schools of thought.

But would these factors be totally negative? Not necessarily so. For what of a "courage of confidence" for the prophet, apostles, and key leadership? Such courage must not be ignored or hidden by talking only of hierarchy and formulaic organization. One form of courage of confidence would be to free the child from the parent so that its own form of restoration would be worked out. These great problems are, themselves, forces that prompt reconsideration, self-analysis, and the desire for divine direction. Human life is such that both dissident and apostle have to accept circumstance and in so doing find themselves accepted.

I leave that statement intentionally paradoxical as I come to my final point. It is one that has long intrigued me and lies in those words of Joseph Smith—"no man knows my history"—framed in the death-conquesting King Follett discourse. There are very few religious founders of whom we actually know more than we do of Joseph Smith. His history is exceptionally well known even if, as Brodie sixty years ago emphasized, it "is the antithesis of a confession."[33] But, for the scholar of religion, especially one both anthropologically and phenomenologically inclined, for whom the "thick material" of life with its interwoven strands are of the essence, that utterance is a proclamation of the mystery of self, of one aware of all that has befallen him in a world of extraordinary events. Those who are philosophically, psychologically, and theologically aware can, each in their own way, grasp the sense of the fact that no one knows his or her own personal history—despite extensive knowledge of one's biography. It seems to me that part of Joseph Smith's life lies in courage that is the equivalent of, and a frame for, not knowing "my history."

In concluding, then, it is precisely that courage of mysterious identity that I have wished to link with the status of an expanding movement within a complex world. The kind of organization that

Mormonism now is inevitably breeds a desire to control its growth. Yet it is precisely that desire that sits uneasily alongside the insight of unknowing. If Joseph could proclaim that no man knew his history when looking back over a much-examined life, it is not difficult to feel the hand of caution when pondering the future status of a church and its birthright culture. This contemplation has compelled me to set well-known statistics of group development alongside themes of human self-awareness and courage, and to be cautious of a world of changing empires.[34]

Notes

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5. Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26, no. 1 (1984): 23; Stark, "The Basis of Mormon Success: A Theoretical Application," in *Latter-day Saint Social Life,* ed. James T. Duke (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 66.

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8. *Church Almanac 2001–2002* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2000), 148–52.

9. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation,* 214.

10. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation,* 85–86.

11. Cf. Mette Ramstad, *Conversion in the Pacific: Eastern Polynesian Latter-day Saints' Conversion Accounts and Their Development of a LDS Identity* (Kristiansand, Norway: Norwegian Academic, 2003).

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14. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation,* 20, 128–30, 228–30.

15. Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 83.

16. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 70–72.

17. Davies, *Introduction to Mormonism*, 181.

18. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation,* 152.

19. See Robert L. Millet, *Grace Works* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003).

20. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 54–60.

21. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 497; John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (London: A. & C. Black, 1968).

22. See Davies, *Introduction to Mormonism,* 242.

23. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 56–57.

24. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 130–31.

25. Davies, *Introduction to Mormonism,* 252. See, for example, Phillip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004).

26. Davies, *Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 241.

27. John L. Sorenson, *Mormon Culture: Four Decades of Essays on Mormon Society and Personality* (Salt Lake City: New Sage Books, 1997), 93.

28. Words by John Ellerton, 1870.

29. Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Knopf, 1945; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 377.

30. Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (1952; repr., London: Collins, 1962), 164.

31. Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 165.

32. Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 165.

33. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, vii.

34. Two further sources referenced but not directly cited are: Hans J. Mol, *Identity and the Sacred: A Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976); Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1947).