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Love Your Enemy Evangelical Opposition to Mormonism and Its Effect upon Mormon Identity

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ABSTRACT

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Evangelical Protestant Christians have been one of the primary groups opposing Mormons since the beginnings of Mormonism in the 1820s. This thesis is an examination of the historical basis for Evangelical opposition to Mormonism and the impact of that opposition on Mormon identity. This study is divided into three chronological chapters representing the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries in America.

Evangelical animosity towards Mormonism was grounded in the Christian heretical tradition begun in the second century AD. Because of this tradition, Evangelicals were inherently afraid of heresy for two main reasons: temporal treason and eternal damnation. Due to the heterodox claims of a new prophet and new scripture, Mormonism was quickly labeled as dangerous, not only to Christianity, but to America as a whole. This perceived danger only grew as Mormonism continued to differentiate itself further with the practices of polygamy, communalism, and theocracy. In the nineteenth century, Mormon assimilation of Evangelicalism primarily affected the social structures of marriage, economics, and politics. In the twentieth century, Mormon assimilation of Evangelical identity would focus more on the incorporation of Evangelical ideology and theology. As Fundamentalism and Neo-Evangelicalism protested Mormonism as a cult, Mormonism became more Fundamentalist and Evangelical by nature, especially as the Church of Jesus Christ of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recognized how such opposition negatively impacted American public perceptions. Such changes included the development of Mormon neo-orthodoxy with its emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the depravity of man, and salvation by grace. In the twenty-first century, a group of Mormon and Evangelical scholars engaged in the practice of interfaith dialogue developed by Liberal Protestants and Catholics. As part of their dialogue, Evangelicals retained the purposes of evangelism and apologetics thereby qualifying the dialogue as a new more subtle form of Evangelical opposition to Mormonism in the twenty first century.

As Evangelicals continuously opposed Mormonism as a Christian heresy, such opposition effected changes within Mormonism, changes that have led to some degree of assimilation and even adoption of several elements of Evangelicalism. The most recent part of this assimilation process has been the development of Mormon progressive orthodoxy that emphasizes anti-sectarianism, anti-liberalism, and revised supernaturalism.

Keywords: Protestant, Protestantism, Evangelical, Evangelicalism, Mormon, Mormonism, anti-Mormonism, heresy, heresiology, cult, countercult, fundamentalist, fundamentalism, interfaith dialogue, Mormon/Evangelical dialogue, Mormon neo-orthodoxy, Mormon progressive orthodoxy

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I express gratitude to my mother, Kayla, who has always been my rock-solid example of faithfulness in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I also thank my in-laws, Wayne and Shauna Braunberger, for their countless sacrifices on the behalf of myself and my family. I would like to thank my wife, Trisha, who has sacrificed the most to permit me to earn this Masters Degree. I can only hope that this work and the work of my life make it all worth it. And to Faith, Skye, and Star—may my work inspire each of you to one day make your own dreams come true.

Lastly, I thank my Heavenly Father and my Savior Jesus Christ. It is only by their grace that I am enabled to fully experience the plan of salvation as revealed through their servant, the Prophet Joseph Smith.

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Who Is A Mormon?

Mormonism can be seen as a religious movement that involves various bodies of followers who share a common belief in the Book of Mormon or who trace their origins to Joseph Smith, Jr.[1] For the purpose of this thesis the term "Mormon" will apply exclusively to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ were first called "Mormonites" or "Mormons" by those outside the movement seeking to identify the new religious organization that was formally established in New York in the year 1830.[2] Creation of this new religious movement centered on the experiences of a young man named Joseph Smith, Jr. In 1820, Smith claimed to have been visited by God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ as a fourteen-year-old boy. This vision was preceded by Smith earnestly seeking to know which Christian denomination he should join. Unsure, he asked the Lord to enlighten him. He was told to "join none of them, for they were all wrong . . . that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: 'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof'" (Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

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[1] The definition of Mormonism as a movement of those who believe in the Book of Mormon is taught by Philip Barlow. Although Barlow teaches this definition, he has yet to print it anywhere. Phil Barlow to Derek Bowen, email, Aug. 1, 2011. For a brief yet credible introduction to Mormonism, see Richard L. Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[2] Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 73.

Three years later, Smith was visited by an angel named Moroni (a prophet in the Book of Mormon). Besides communicating various important messages, Moroni eventually led him to an ancient record written upon gold plates that had been buried for over 1400 years. These plates contained stories of various Israelite groups who traveled from the Old World to the New during Old Testament times. Despite keeping the Law of Moses, they believed, taught, and prophesied about Jesus Christ. After his death and resurrection in Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to this ancient American people where he further taught his gospel and established his Church. Eventually the story ends with all of the Nephites (the believers) being killed by the Lamanites (the unbelievers) around A.D. 421. Mormons believe that the descendants of these groups are among the Native American populations today (see Title Page and Introduction of The Book of Mormon).

In the midst of translating the Book of Mormon into English, Smith received further revelations that were compiled into another volume of scripture now known as the Doctrine and Covenants. These revelations record other significant moments in the prophet's career such as receiving the holy priesthood by the ancient apostles: John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John the Beloved. All of these events, representing the reestablishment of New Testament Christianity, are referred to as the restoration of all things or the dispensation of the fullness of times. Although this restoration began with a New Testament focus, it gradually expanded to include Old Testament aspects and even doctrines and practices that were said to have existed anciently, but had since been lost.[3] Smith also translated additional items that make up the fourth book of LDS scripture: The Pearl of Great Price. Besides several scriptural translations, priesthood authority, and revelations to a living prophet of God, other restored items included the gifts of the Spirit, ordinances (sacraments) like baptism (for both the living and the dead), the

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[3] For an excellent explanation of the various stages of the LDS restoration, see Jan Shipps, "Joseph Smith and the Creation of LDS Theology," *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 289-301.

construction of temples, and plural marriage (although no longer currently practiced among living members of the Church). Nevertheless, the Church of Jesus Christ continues to place heavy emphasis on the family due to its belief that the family unit can continue for all eternity. One of the best introductions to Mormon beliefs is found in a letter written by Joseph Smith in 1842. A portion of this letter is known as the Articles of Faith. Although it was never intended to be a complete summary of Mormon doctrine, it gives a brief overview of some of the most important principles of Mormonism (see The Pearl of Great Price, 60).

Although the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints currently prefers its members to be called "Latter-day Saints" or simply "Saints," I will primarily use the term "Mormon" because it is also acceptable to the Church, more familiar to those who are not members of the faith, and because it is the name used most consistently throughout history by both member and nonmember alike.[4] I will use the term "Mormonism" as it is "acceptable in describing the combination of doctrine, culture and lifestyle unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."[5] In addition, I will employ terms such as "Mormon Church" and "LDS Church" alongside the full title and other encouraged abbreviations such as "the Church of Jesus Christ" or simply "the Church" because they are, once again, the most common titles the Saints themselves and others have used as a means of identification throughout history.[6]

Who Is An Evangelical?

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[4] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Style Guide – The Name of the Church," Newsroom, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/style-guide (accessed 2/20/2012).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

Unlike Mormons, Evangelicals are much more difficult to identify because they do not belong to a single church or denomination; instead, they make up a transdenominational movement. Although they are mainly Protestant, some Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox also claim to be Evangelical (notwithstanding Protestant objections over various historical and theological disagreements).[7] These organizational differences cause confusion among many Mormons and others over the precise nature of Evangelicalism. What makes matters worse is Evangelicals often disagree among themselves on any set definition. There is even disagreement over whether or not Evangelicalism should be written with an uppercase "E" or a lowercase "e." Some of the question rests on whether or not "Evangelical" is its own proper noun identifying a group of people, or merely an adjective describing a group of people.[8] After a review of Evangelical literature and consultation with a few Evangelical scholars regarding the proper usage, I have chosen to always capitalize "Evangelical" and "Evangelicalism."[9] My primary reason for this decision rests in the nature of this thesis as a work of relationship between two main groups of people.

Even though there is no definitional consensus of "Evangelical" or "Evangelicalism" among its own adherents, it is not due to a lack of effort. In his history of Evangelicalism in America, Professor Douglas Sweeney spends an entire chapter surveying the various proposed definitions. He mentions two main sets of criteria that scholars generally use. One is favored by

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[7] See Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), Preface and Chapter One.

[8] For a perspective on using "evangelical" as an adjective, see Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys*, A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements, and Ideas in the English-Speaking World, Vol. 1 (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 21.

[9] James Bradley, interview by author, Claremont, CA, December 28, 2010. For some of the most influential Evangelicals insisting that the word "Evangelical" always be capitalized, see The Evangelical Manifesto Steering Committee, "An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment" Washington, D. C., May 7, 2008, http://www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com/docs/Evangelical_Manifesto.pdf (accessed April 23, 2012).

theologians, the other by historians. The first definition was given by Alister McGrath, who

defined Evangelicalism as "six fundamental convictions . . .

1) *The supreme authority of Scripture* [Bible] as a source of knowledge of God and a guide to Christian living.
2) *The majesty of Jesus Christ*, both as incarnate God and Lord and as the Savior of sinful humanity.
3) *The lordship of the Holy Spirit.*
4) *The need for personal conversion.*
5) *The priority of evangelism* for both individual Christians and the church as a whole.
6) *The importance of the Christian community* for spiritual nourishment, fellowship and growth.[10]

The second definition was given by David Bebbington, and reduces the qualifications from six to

four. Omitting the lordship of the Holy Spirit and the importance of Christian community,

Bebbington believes "There are four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical

religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the

gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and *crucicentrism*, a stress on the

sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together," explains Bebbington, "they form a quadrilateral of

priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism."[11] Like the four points of the cross, he believes

these four priorities define the movement.[12]

Sweeney also presents the opposing arguments against any true definition of

Evangelicalism. Some scholars believe there are too many differences among Evangelicals to

possibly define the group in any coherent way. One even goes so far as to call for "a

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[10] Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 55-56.

[11] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 2-3.

[12] With the great emphasis that Evangelicals often place on salvation by grace, it is surprising that neither definition made special mention of it. For another important definition of Evangelicalism, especially how it relates to Fundamentalism, see George M. Marsden, "Introduction: Defining Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism," *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991). Marsden particularly adds to the discussion by pointing out that Evangelicalism is defined by style as well as by belief.

'moratorium' on the word 'evangelical,' which he rejects as 'theologically incoherent, sociologically confusing, and ecumenically harmful.'"[13] Nevertheless, Sweeney defends the Evangelical classification by giving his own definition: "Evangelicals comprise a movement that is rooted in classical Christian orthodoxy, shaped by a largely Protestant understanding of the gospel, and distinguished from other such movements by an eighteenth-century twist."[14] Further elaborating upon this definition, Sweeney shares that Evangelicals "are descendants of the Protestant Reformation with a commitment to orthodoxy expressed in the ancient Christian creeds and promoted further by . . . . the Reformation doctrine that we are saved by grace alone (*sola gratia*) through faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ alone (*solus Christus*). All agree that right doctrine comes from the canon of Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). In sum, evangelicals cling to the gospel message as spelled out in the Bible and seek to spread it as far and wide as limited resources allow."[15]

Sweeney's identification of Evangelicalism with the Protestant Reformation would exclude Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy from the group. Also his reference to an "eighteenth-century twist" is simply his way of saying that modern Evangelicals "are heirs of the Great Awakening" in order to distinguish them from any prior or posterior group who also refer to themselves or to their church as "Evangelical."[16] Sweeney thereby delineates a combined theological and historical definition that permits us to more clearly identify Evangelicals.

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[13] Donald W. Dayton, "Some Doubts about the Usefulness of the Category 'Evangelical,'" in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds.(Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 251.

[14] Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 23-24.

[15] Ibid., 24-25.

[16] Ibid., 25.

It is important to note that Evangelicalism dominated the Protestantism, Christianity, religion, and culture of the United States of America in the nineteenth century. So complete was this domination that one historian calls this time period "the evangelical 'righteous empire.'"[17] Therefore, any and all opposition against Mormonism in the nineteenth century could be considered generally as Evangelical opposition to Mormonism. In contrast, opposition in the twenty and twenty first centuries became much more diverse, although I will continue to focus on the Evangelical component of such opposition. This greater diversification was due to massive waves of immigration and the attraction of modern philosophies near the end of the nineteenth century. As a result of these changes in America, Evangelical Protestantism was minimized and then divided between Liberals and Fundamentalists, thereby losing its dominating cultural status in America. Liberals embraced modern theories and kept control over the existing mainline churches. Fundamentalists retreated from society for a time, to further entrench themselves in the basic tenets of their faith. It is important to make this distinction because any discussion of Evangelicalism needs to be understood as a series of phases that the movement passed through. Hence, the Evangelicalism of the nineteenth century became the Fundamentalism of the early twentieth century. Fundamentalism, in turn, became the Neo-Evangelicalism of the mid-twentieth century. And it is precisely these Neo-Evangelicals who are the Evangelicals of today.[18] However, for the purpose of this thesis, those whom I refer to as "Evangelical" will simply be classified as Protestants who claim such affiliation based upon whichever of the above definitions they choose (including various combinations of each).[19]

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[17] Ibid., 74.

[18] More information will be provided in Chapter Two about the relationship of Evangelicalism to both Liberalism and Fundamentalism.

[19] See Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys*, A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements, and Ideas in the English-Speaking World, vol. 1 (Downer's Grove,

INTRODUCTION:
CURRENT EVANGELICAL OPPOSITION TO MORMONISM

American Opposition to Mormonism

This thesis is an examination of the historical basis for Evangelical opposition to Mormonism and the impact of that opposition on Mormon identity. In 2008, the American election cycle brought Mormonism greater attention than ever before. Two concurrent political campaigns: the presidential bid of Mitt Romney and Proposition 8 in California put The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints front and center in national politics. Almost every day there were news articles on Mormonism and its relation to American culture, politics, and religion.[20] One recent study even suggested that "no other episode in Latter-day Saint history has seen or created such sustained and widespread reporting about Mormon beliefs and practices and culture."[21] But the greater attention and scrutiny brought one discovery Mormons did not expect—a poor public image in America.

A February 2007 Gallup poll painted a dismal picture. Results found a majority of Americans, 46%, had a negative view of the Mormon religion, while 42% claimed a positive

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IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 14-15. I believe there is one other important criterion that is overlooked: flexibility in matters of worship and ecclesiastical structure. Mark Noll does an excellent job discussing this significant characteristic of Evangelicalism. Evangelicalism has generally had a low-church view, or a low regard towards priesthood authority and sacraments. George Whitefield, one of the founding fathers of Evangelicalism, illustrated this point when he said it mattered not to him whether he was giving communion to a Baptist or a Baptist was giving communion to him (an Anglican). He saw it all as equally valid and binding. Without ecclesiastical flexibility, Evangelicalism never would have occurred, for its success was contingent upon denominations not believing they are only true Church. Hence Evangelicalism is very nondenominational. And I would argue that the truest children of Evangelicalism are those that congregate in nondenominational churches. Evangelicalism has caused a lessening in the differences of worship and structure. It matters less than ever if you are a Baptist or a Methodist. Although these groups once fought for supremacy over one another, now few care about any such heritage, since they have become more focused on the central tenets of Evangelicalism. Meanwhile, Mormons and Catholics continue to be strongly committed to their ecclesiastical identity.

[20] Based on a review of daily news articles provided by FAIR's Front Page Newsletter: A free service of the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR), http://www.fairlds.org/ (accessed April 22, 2012).

[21] John Ben Haws, "The Mormon Image in the American Mind: Shaping Public Perception of Latter-day Saints, 1968-2008," (PhD diss., University of Utah, August 2010), 16.

view, and 11% of people were unsure.[22] Based on such numbers, the report concluded: "Something about the Mormon religion apparently disturbs a significant portion of the American population." But, only six months later, a Pew Research poll, conducted in August 2007, claimed a better conclusion. Pew found that only 27% had an unfavorable view of Mormons, whereas 53% had a positive view of Mormons, and 20% had no opinion.[23] Why the difference in findings in so short a time? A few possibilities present themselves. First, Gallup asked for views on "the Mormon religion," while Pew asked for views about "Mormons." This suggests that Americans might have different views of Mormons as people and Mormonism as a church or organization. Subsequent research conducted in focus groups by the LDS Church in November of 2007, affirmed this same conclusion.[24] However, one additional poll conducted in February of 2008 by Lawrence Research raised doubts about the difference of perception concerning the Mormon people and the Mormon Church. In asking for impressions of "Mormons," the polling data was almost exactly the same as the Gallup data collected one year earlier: 49% negative, 37% positive, and 12% none.[25]

Whether or not there really exists a distinct difference in the minds of Americans between the Mormons and Mormonism, the very best polling numbers were still not that good. The most

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[22] Frank Newport, "Americans' Views of the Mormon Religion," Gallup News Service, entry posted March 2, 2007, http://www.gallup.com/poll/26758/Americans-Views-Mormon-Religion.aspx#1 (accessed August 20, 2011).

[23] The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Benedict XVI Viewed Favorably But Faulted on Religious Outreach: Public Expresses Mixed Views of Islam, Mormonism," entry posted Sept. 25, 2007, http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/358.pdf (accessed August 20, 2011).

[24] APCO Worldwide, "Perceptions of Mormons and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," October 2007, 4; in Report to the First Presidency, Public Affairs Committee, 11 November 2007, Public Affairs Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, quoted in Haws, "The Mormon Image," 444.

[25] Gary C. Lawrence, *How Americans View Mormonism: Seven Steps to Improve Our Image* (Orange, CA: Parameter Foundation, 2008), 22.

optimistic poll by Pew showed barely half of Americans held a favorable view of Mormons, falling well below comparable favorability ratings for Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. The only two groups that scored lower than Mormons were Muslims, who were still overcoming the 9/11 stereotype of radical terrorism, and Atheists, who find themselves as a decisive minority in a country where 92% of people believe in God.[26] Therefore no matter how one spins the polling results, Mormons remain one of the most negatively viewed groups in America.

Such negative impressions of Mormonism had an obvious corollary in polling for the Mormon presidential candidate Mitt Romney. In 2006, a *Bloomberg/Los Angeles Times* poll and an *ABC News/Washington Times* poll both found that 35% of Americans would be less likely to vote for a Mormon presidential candidate. Even worse, an *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* survey that same year found "more than half of the respondents—53 percent—said 'they were very uncomfortable or have some reservations about voting for a presidential candidate who is Mormon.'"[27] And like the previous polling on general impressions of Mormons or Mormonism, Americans were only less likely to vote for Muslims and Atheists, both of which as mentioned, suffer from their own public perception problems.[28] As a result of this anti-Mormon sentiment, Romney gave a major address on December 6, 2007 entitled "Faith in America" where he prosecuted the case for religious freedom.[29] Despite such efforts, Romney did not succeed in

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[26] Pew, Sept. 25, 2007; Frank Newport, "More Than 9 in 10 Americans Continue to Believe in God," Gallup News Service, entry posted June 3, 2011, http://www.gallup.com/poll/147887/Americans-Continue-Believe-God.aspx (accessed August 20, 2011).

[27] The *ABC News/Washington Post* and *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* polls are quoted in Haws, 434. The *Bloomberg/Los Angeles Times* poll is quoted in Jonathan D. Salant, "A Third of Voters Have Qualms About Mormon President, Poll Says," Bloomberg, entry posted June 8, 2011, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/print/2011-06-08/a-third-of-voters-have-qualms-about-mormon-president-poll-says.html (accessed August 28, 2011).

[28] Pew, Sept. 25, 2007.

[29] Mitt Romney, "Faith in America," (Speech, George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, College Station, TX, December 6, 2007), full text reprinted in Craig L. Foster, *A Different God? Mitt Romney, the Religious Right, and the Mormon Question* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2008), Appendix A.

securing the Republican nomination for President. Although his Mormonism was not the single deciding factor for his failure, it was clearly a factor that did influence his loss.

Four years later, the situation hadn't improved much. With now two Mormons, Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman, in the 2012 presidential election, a critically acclaimed musical about the Book of Mormon on Broadway, many universities and colleges offering classes on Mormonism, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints launching an aggressive "I'm a Mormon" advertising campaign to improve its image—many began to say it was a "Mormon Moment."[30] Again, almost every day, there were news articles speaking about Mormonism and its relationship to American politics, pop culture, religion, and especially Christianity and Evangelicalism.[31] Nevertheless, a 2011 Quinnipiac poll showed less than half of all Americans, 45%, had a favorable opinion of the Mormon religion, while 32% had an unfavorable opinion, and 23% did not know.[32] To show how little change occurred since the last presidential election cycle, 44% was the average favorability rating of the 2007-2008 polls mentioned earlier—almost the exact same number.

As for the relationship between Mormonism and presidential politics: three separate and independent 2011 polls similarly concluded that around 1-in-4 Americans would be less likely to

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[30] Sally Quinn, "Mormonism's Moment?" On Faith Blog: A Conversation on Religion and Politics, entry posted Feb. 8, 2011, http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/2011/02/mormonisms_moment/all.html (accessed April 22, 2012).

[31] Based on a review of daily news articles for 2011-2012 provided by FAIR's Front Page Newsletter: A free service of the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR), http://www.fairlds.org/ (accessed April 22, 2012).

[32] Quinnipiac University Polling Institute, "Romney Leads GOP Pack, Runs Best Against Obama, Quinnipiac University National Poll Finds; Mormons Near Bottom of Voter Comfort Scale," entry posted June 8, 2011, http://www.quinnipiac.edu/institutes-and-centers/polling-institute/search-releases/search-results/release-detail?ReleaseID=1608&What=&strArea=;&strTime=12 (accessed August 28, 2012).

vote for a Mormon.[33] One of the polls was as high as 36% of respondents who were

uncomfortable with a Mormon candidate. Gallup concluded with a rather startling summary of

the historical significance of these findings: "Americans' reluctance to support a Mormon for

president has held close to the 20% level since Gallup first measured this in 1967, and long after

historical biases against voting for blacks, Catholics, Jews, and women have dwindled."[34] In

other words, voter bias against Mormonism has remained virtually unchanged for over forty

years. A fourth poll was even bleaker. According to a November 2011 survey: "About 4-in-10

(42%) voters say they would be at least somewhat uncomfortable with a Mormon president."[35]

This number could be an outlier due to the survey being conducted only one week after Pastor

Robert Jeffress received a lot of media attention for calling Mormonism a "cult" and Mitt

Romney a non-Christian.[36] Still, all of this evidence makes clear that Mormons still encounter

opposition in America. But why does Mormonism suffer from such a terrible public perception?

A deeper investigation into the polling numbers helps us understand that Evangelicals are one of

the main groups responsible for opposition to Mormonism.

Evangelical Opposition to Mormonism

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[33] Quinnipiac, June 8, 2011; Lydia Saad, "In U.S., 22% Are Hesitant to Support a Mormon in 2012: Anti-Mormon sentiment hasn't eased since it was first measured in 1967," Gallup News Service, entry posted June 20, 2011, http://www.gallup.com/poll/148100/Hesitant-Support-Mormon-2012.aspx?version=print (accessed August 20, 2011); Gary C. Lawrence, *Mormons Believe … What?! Fact and Fiction About a Rising Religion* (Orange, CA: Parameter Foundation, 2011), Amazon Kindle e-book, Locations 2783-2847 of 3532.

[34] Lydia Saad, Gallup News Service, June 20, 2011.

[35] Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, "The 2011 American Values Survey: The Mormon Question, Economic Inequality, and the 2012 Presidential Campaign," Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), entry posted Nov. 8, 2011, http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/PRRI-2011-American-Values-Survey-Web.pdf (accessed April 23, 2012).

[36] See Scott Baker, "Perry 'Tersely' Repudiates Key Backer Who Called Romney a 'Cult' Member," The Blaze, entry posted October 8, 2011, http://www.theblaze.com/stories/perry-tersely-repudiates-key-backer-who-called-romney-a-cult-member/ (accessed December 27, 2011).

In an interview I conducted with Evangelical Pastor Scott McKinney about his views on the Mormon/Evangelical relationship, he posed the following question, "Given the LDS view of the apostasy and restoration, and that I would as a Christian pastor be leading a church that reflects an apostate form of Christianity, *then why would it matter to a Mormon what I think of Mormonism*?"[37] In his mind, Mormons shouldn't worry so much about how Evangelicals view them. Instead they should simply have confidence in their message and go about their work. However, the historical and statistical data make a different case. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, Mormons should care what Evangelicals think of them because their view has largely dominated the American perception of Mormonism from its very beginning. And polling consistently points to Evangelicals as one of two groups who dislike Mormonism the most. The other group is comprised of those who self-identify as political liberals who tend to affiliate with the Democratic Party. Ironically one group is primarily identified politically and the other group is primarily identified religiously, offering two contrasting perspectives.[38] Since this thesis deals primarily with the Mormon/Evangelical relationship, I shall focus on the findings concerning Evangelical Protestants as one of the major sources of opposition to Mormonism.

America is a predominantly Christian nation demographically, with about 78% of all Americans claiming to be Christian. The two large groupings of Christians who make up that 78% are Protestants, who account for about 51%, and Catholics who comprise close to 24%. By

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[37] Scott McKinney, interview by author, Orem, UT, Jan. 4, 2012; the comment was further clarified in: Scott McKinney, e-mail message to author, April 23, 2012, emphasis added.

[38] Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, "The 2011 American Values Survey: The Mormon Question, Economic Inequality, and the 2012 Presidential Campaign," Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), entry posted Nov. 8, 2011, http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/PRRI-2011-American-Values-Survey-Web.pdf (accessed April 23, 2012); Frank Newport, "Americans' Views of the Mormon Religion," Gallup News Service, entry posted March 2, 2007, http://www.gallup.com/poll/26758/Americans-Views-Mormon-Religion.aspx?version=print (accessed August 20, 2011); Craig L. Foster, *A Different God? Mitt Romney, the Religious Right, and the Mormon Question* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2008).

way of comparison, Mormons, who were also included by Pew Research under the category of "Christian," make up a mere 2%.[39] In a 2007 Gallup poll that demonstrated that a majority of Americans had a negative view of Mormonism, Protestants ranked as the number one religious group with only 36% having a positive opinion, and 52% having a negative opinion. Catholics were almost exactly opposite with 56% holding a positive view and 31% holding a negative view of the Mormon religion.[40] When Protestants were further divided into the three main groupings of Evangelical, Mainline, and Historically Black, the source of negativity towards Mormonism became clearer.

Of the 51% of Protestants in America, Evangelicals make up about half that number, being around 26%. The other half of Protestantism is divided between Mainline at 18%, and Historically Black at 7%.[41] Pew Research found that "solid majorities of white mainline Protestants, 62% . . . express favorable opinions of Mormons. But among white evangelical Protestants, just 46% have a positive impression of Mormons, while 39% have an unfavorable opinion."[42] In 2011, the numbers were about half and half with 42% of Evangelicals being favorable towards Mormonism, 40% unfavorable, and 18% undecided.[43] Historically Black Protestants also gave Mormonism low marks with only 42% holding a favorable view and 28% holding an unfavorable view. But unlike their white Evangelical counterparts who had between

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[39] The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "U. S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic, February 2008," Pew Research Center, entry posted Feb. 25, 2008, http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf (accessed 4/20/2012).

[40] Frank Newport, "Americans' Views of the Mormon Religion," Gallup News Service, entry posted March 2, 2007, http://www.gallup.com/poll/26758/Americans-Views-Mormon-Religion.aspx?version=print (accessed August 20, 2011).

[41] Pew, Religious Landscape Survey, 2008.

[42] Pew, Sept. 25, 2007.

[43] Quinnipiac, June 8, 2011.

15% percent reporting to not know much about Mormons, a higher level of Black Protestants, 30%, expressed a significant degree of ignorance concerning Mormonism.[44] Therefore, the negative marks Evangelicals gave Mormonism are more significant, in comparison to Black Protestants, because: (1) they claim to know more about the faith, (2) they make up a larger group than the Historically Black Protestants, (3) they comprise the largest single religious group in America to give Mormons their lowest of all favorability ratings, and (4) white Evangelicals and Mormons both tend to identify with the Republican Party, whereas most historically black Christians typically identify with the Democratic Party. Therefore, there is greater opportunity for white Evangelicals to have conflict with Mormons, and for such conflict to have a more significant effect upon American perceptions—particularly in politics.

A 2008 Harris poll reported that "Among evangelicals, 54 percent said that they would be bothered by a Mormon president, compared to 18 percent of nonevangelicals."[45] Another 2008 poll reported that as many as 36% of white Evangelicals expressed reservations about voting for a Mormon, a number almost identical to an early poll in the 2012 election cycle.[46] Even worse, a November 2011 poll conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute reported that between 47% and 49% of Evangelicals would have concern over voting for a Mormon president. [47] However, this was part of the same survey mentioned earlier that was conducted a week after Pastor Robert Jeffress made his comments about Mormonism; therefore the numbers could again

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[44] Pew, Sept. 25, 2007.

[45] Found in Robert D. Putman and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 502.

[46] Pew, Sept. 25, 2011; The Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, "Candidate Traits: D. C. Experience Viewed Less Positive: Republican Candidates Stir Little Enthusiasm," Pew Research Center, entry posted Thursday, June 2, 2011, http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/06-02-11%202012%20Campaign%20Release.pdf (accessed August 20, 2011).

[47] Jones and Cox, "The 2011 American Values Survey," (PRRI), Nov. 8, 2011.

be abnormally high, especially when voter concern among other groups was also significantly higher than any other comparable polls. Nevertheless, all of these numbers demonstrate a significant amount of Evangelical dislike of Mormonism.

Such high levels of Evangelical opposition towards Mormonism create significant public relations problems for Latter-day Saints. Evangelicals make up between one-fourth to one-third of the American population and the Republican Party—the party whose presidential nomination was sought for by both Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman. By way of illustration, both Iowa and South Carolina, two of the earliest election states have about 60% of Republican voters self-identifying as Evangelicals. In 2008 and 2012, Romney lost both contests.[48] Even more telling is that in 2012, Romney lost every Deep Southern state, and every state that had a 57% or higher Evangelical voting percentage, before his competitors dropped out.[49] Besides statistics, there were also some startling moments during both the 2008 and 2012 campaigns that revealed a clear Evangelical anti-Mormon bias.

In 2007, Pastor Bill Keller made clear how some Evangelicals felt about Mormons when he wrote on his blog: "If you vote for Mitt Romney, you are voting for Satan!"[50] During both the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns, Pastor Robert Jeffress, of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, revived the charge of Mormonism being a cult. He especially received a lot of media attention with his comments in October 2011, at the Values Voters Summit in Washington, D.C. After introducing Texas Governor and presidential candidate Rick Perry, Jeffress was quoted

[48] Carroll Doherty, "Are Republicans Ready Now for a Mormon President? The Polls Show Trouble," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, entry posted July 5, 2011, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2048/polls-are-republicans-ready-for-a-mormon-president-romney-huntsman (accessed Aug. 19, 2011).

[49] Mark Murray and Domenico Montanaro, "First Read Minute: Breaking down the Wisconsin poll," First Read, entry posted March 30, 2012, http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/03/30/10942209-first-read-minute-breaking-down-the-wisconsin-poll (accessed April 1, 2012).

[50] Bill Keller, "If You Vote for Mitt Romney You are Voting for Satan," LivePrayer, entry posted May 11, 2007, http://www.liveprayer.com/ddarchive3.cfm?id=2931 (accessed May 2, 2012).

offstage as saying that Mitt Romney was not a Christian and that Mormonism was not Christianity, but a cult.[51] His words were immediately attacked as religious bigotry, and he went on a series of television news shows to defend himself. In Jeffress's view, Mormonism is a theological cult, meaning that Mormonism broke off of true historic Christianity and became an aberrant new religious movement. He distinguished a theological cult from a sociological cult that involves extreme practices like brainwashing and mass suicide. But his comments brought to the forefront the ongoing debate between Mormons and Evangelicals over the question of whether or not Mormonism is Christianity or a cult. Other Evangelical leaders across the nation weighed in on the debate.

Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary and co-chair of the scholarly Mormon/Evangelical dialogue, said that he believed Mormonism was not a cult.[52] Professor Jean Mark Reynolds, of Biola University, who had previously participated as a speaker in a National Student Dialogue Conference with Mormon and Evangelical college students, said he believed Jeffress's comments to be bigoted.[53] Although neither of them believed Mormonism to be a cult, neither of them was willing to declare Mormonism as Christianity. Richard Land, a leader in the Southern Baptist Convention, sought to classify Mormonism as the fourth Abrahamic religion,

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[51] See Scott Baker, "Perry 'Tersely' Repudiates Key Backer Who Called Romney a 'Cult' Member," The Blaze, entry posted October 8, 2011, http://www.theblaze.com/stories/perry-tersely-repudiates-key-backer-who-called-romney-a-cult-member/ (accessed December 27, 2011).

[52] Richard J. Mouw, "My take: This evangelical says Mormonism isn't a cult," CNN Belief Blog, entry posted October 9, 2011, http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/09/my-take-this-evangelical-says-mormonism-isnt-a-cult/ (accessed Nov. 8, 2011).

[53] John Mark Reynolds, "Why evangelicals must stand up to anti-Mormon bigotry," On Faith, entry posted Oct. 10, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/on-faith/post/why-evangelicals-must-stand-up-to-anti-mormon-bigotry/2011/10/10/gIQA06PqZL_blog.html (accessed Nov. 8, 2011).

alongside Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.[54] Perhaps his categorization was building upon

previous conclusions made by scholars Fawn Brodie, Thomas O'Dea, Jan Shipps, Rodney Stark,

and Harold Bloom—who all spoke of Mormonism as a new world religion.[55] Not surprisingly,

polling indicates that most Evangelicals believe that whatever Mormonism is qualified to be—it

is definitely not Christianity. A majority of white Evangelicals, 45%, say Mormons are not

Christians; as compared to 40% who say they are, and 15% who don't know.[56] This greatly

contrasts with most Christians in America, 52%, who believe Mormons are Christians, 31% who

say no, and 17% who don't know. More significantly, white Evangelicals are the only Christian

group in America who do not have a majority of people accepting Mormons as Christians. White

Mainline Protestants, black Protestants, Catholics, white Catholics, and other unaffiliated

Christians all consider Mormons to be Christians. Even Protestants, when grouped together as a

whole, believe Mormons are Christians. However Evangelicals try to classify Mormons, the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms itself as "a Christian church but is neither

Catholic nor Protestant," nor Orthodox. [57] Based upon this self-definition, Mormonism would be

most properly classified as a fourth Christian tradition.

Despite Evangelical negativity towards Mormonism, Mormons do not reciprocate the

same level of negativity. In fact, Mormons are actually quite positive about Evangelicals. A 2007

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[54] Sally Quinn, "Southern Baptist Convention leader talks Christianity, cults and 2012," On Faith, entry posted Oct. 11, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/on-faith/post/southern-baptist-convention-leader-talks-christianity-cults-and-2012/2011/10/10/gIQAvm0PcL_blog.html (accessed April 23, 2012).

[55] For a good discussion of proposed categorizations of Mormonism, see Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Mormonism*, edited by Reid L. Neilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 5.

[56] For all statistics referenced in this paragraph, see The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Benedict XVI Viewed Favorably But Faulted on Religious Outreach: Public Expresses Mixed Views of Islam, Mormonism," entry posted Sept. 25, 2007, http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/358.pdf (accessed August 20, 2011).

[57] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Mormonism 101: FAQ, 'Are Mormons Christian?'" Newsroom: The Official Resource for News Media, Opinion Leaders, and the Public, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/mormonism-101#C1 (accessed May 2, 2012).

"Faith Matters Survey" published in *American Grace,* included a feelings thermometer, where participants were asked to rate how they felt towards other religions on a scale of 0-100, 0 being the coldest, 100 being the warmest, and 50 being neutral. To fully appreciate the results, the designers of the survey explained that "the mean thermometer rating for all religious groups is 55 degrees. Thus, any thermometer score below 55 means that the group is viewed more negatively than the average. A score below 50 degrees, the neutral point, means that the group in question is viewed *really negatively*."[58] Evangelicals gave Mormons one of their coldest ratings at only 46. According to the survey, this represents a *really negative* view of Mormons. On the other hand, Mormons gave Evangelicals an extremely warm rating of 63, meaning that Mormons view Evangelicals quite *positively*. And according to a 2012 Pew Research Poll, Mormons are well aware of such Evangelical dislike.[59] Authors of *American Grace*, Robert Putnam and David Campbell, observe that the negative feelings one group has for another do not always translate into hateful actions. Unfortunately, the negative number representing Evangelical feelings towards Mormons has translated directly into Evangelical attacks against Mormons that have occurred in the past, and that continue into the present.

Evangelicals have and continue to produce the greatest amounts of anti-Mormon materials.[60] The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* defines anti-Mormonism as "any hostile or polemic opposition to Mormonism or to the Latter-day Saints, such as maligning the founding

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[58] *American Grace*, 503, emphasis added.

[59] The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Mormons in America: Certain in Their Beliefs, Uncertain of Their Place in Society," Pew Research Center, entry posted Thursday, January 12, 2012, http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Christian/Mormon/Mormons%20in%20America.pdf (accessed April 23, 2012), 27.

[60] Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 3-4.

prophet [Joseph Smith], his successors, or the doctrines or practices of the [LDS] Church."[61]

Those who engage in such activities are referred to as anti-Mormons, and the *Encyclopedia*

article characterizes their work as "sometimes well intended . . . [but] often tak[ing] the form of

invective, falsehood, demeaning caricature, prejudice, and legal harassment, leading to both

verbal and physical assault."[62] In seeking to document the number of anti-Mormon materials

existent up till 1990, the article provided the following statistics:

> From the organization of the Church in 1830 to 1989, at least 1,931 anti-Mormon books, novels, pamphlets, tracts, and flyers have been published in English. Numerous other newsletters, articles, and letters have been circulated. . . .
> [With] the advent of the motion picture . . . at least twenty-one anti-Mormon films were produced [between 1905 and 1936 alone]. . . .
> Instead of decreasing over time, the attacks, and the organizations that support them, have actually increased dramatically.
> Anti-Mormon writers were most prolific during . . . [1946-1990]. . . [O]f all anti-Mormon books, novels, pamphlets, tracts, and flyers published in English before 1990, more than half were published between 1960 and 1990 and a third of them between 1970 and 1990.
> Networks of anti-Mormon organizations operate in the United States. The 1987 Directory of Cult Research Organizations contains more than a hundred anti-Mormon listings. These networks distribute anti-Mormon literature, provide lectures that attack the Church publicly, and proselytize Mormons. Pacific Publishing House in California lists more than a hundred anti-Mormon publications.[63]

Although these numbers would be even higher today (2012), they still provide a good

indication of the vast library of anti-Mormon materials and plethora of anti-Mormon

organizations that have existed over the years. With the invention of the internet, the anti-

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[61] William O Nelson, "Anti-Mormon Publications," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 45-52. Today, the term anti-Mormon can be highly resented by Evangelical critics of the LDS religion and people. Some insist that they are only against the Mormon religion, not the Mormon people. They are more comfortable with the term anti-Mormonism. However, throughout history, sometimes the attacks are against both the people and the religion. Since this thesis is an historical overview that includes attacks on both, the terms anti-Mormon and anti-Mormonism will be used interchangeably without any effort to distinguish between them.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

Mormon influence might be more pervasive than ever before.[64] But even more significant is the

fact that Evangelicals have been and continue to be the primary party responsible for the bulk of

these anti-Mormon organizations and materials. Evangelicals have thereby been and are among

the principle producers of a poor public image of Mormonism within their own community,

among Americans, and beyond.[65] As such, they qualify as one of the greatest, if not the greatest,

forces of opposition to Mormonism throughout history.

Objective of Thesis

As stated in the introduction, this thesis is an examination of the historical basis for

Evangelical opposition to Mormonism and the impact of that opposition on Mormon identity. I

will undertake a historical review of Mormon/Evangelical relationships, focusing on some of the

most salient factors underlying that opposition. This study will be divided into three chapters

chronologically, representing the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries in America.

Within the nineteenth century, I will pay particular attention to the very first Evangelical

denunciations of Mormonism, inasmuch as subsequent Evangelical arguments frequently

followed similar patterns of thought. Other significant moments of conflict between Mormons

and Evangelicals will then be examined, to demonstrate a continuous and consistent antagonism.

Within the twentieth century, I will first examine the Protestant division into Liberalism and

Fundamentalism, and how both movements have influenced Evangelical opposition to

Mormonism. Similarly, I will study the development of Neo-Evangelicalism, which grew out of

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[64] Douglas Cowan calls this "an explosion of interrelated countercult sites," Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 115.

[65] See Cowan, *Bearing False Witness*, 3-4; See also Massimo Introvigne, "The Devil Makers: Contemporary Evangelical Fundamentalist Anti-Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 1 (1994): 153-69. As a Mormon missionary in Mexico from 1998-2000, I observed anti-Mormon literature produced in the U.S.A., translated into Spanish, and for sale in a remote Christian bookstore.

Fundamentalism, with its intensification of the Countercult approach to Mormonism. The final chapter is an examination of the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue as a case study of a subtle but more recent form of Evangelical opposition. At the end of each chapter, I will draw conclusions about why Evangelicals opposed Mormonism and the effect such opposition had on Mormon identity. Central to this thesis will be the Evangelical heritage of orthodoxy and heresy, basically devised in the second century AD, continued throughout Christian history, and repeatedly applied to Mormonism. Ultimately, I argue that as Evangelicals continuously opposed Mormonism as a Christian heresy, such opposition effected changes within Mormonism, changes that have led to some degree of assimilation and even adoption of several elements of Evangelicalism.

To be sure, Mormonism has retained and will continue to retain a history, doctrine, and culture that are decidedly distinct from Evangelicalism, including the need for living prophets and modern revelation, an open canon of scripture, the purpose and place of temples, and the necessity of ordinances (sacraments). In addition, although Evangelicals are one of the oldest and largest adversarial groups, theirs has not been the only opposition to Mormonism to have a marked influence on Mormonism's identity. Throughout its history, Mormons have witnessed the malcontent of politicians and the protest of civil rights leaders; the common hardships of war and economic depression; and the philosophical challenges of secularism and pluralism. With the international expansion of the Church, Latter-day Saints have wrestled with contextualization and cultural adaptation. These and many more factors have collided with Mormonism and had a hand in shaping the current face and thrust of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Critical observers contend that the Church's response to such influences has resulted in a different brand of Mormonism. Faithful Mormons are persuaded that such opposition and

refinement are all part of the development of the "true and living church" (D&C 1:30), and are eager to remind the world that despite the inevitable "opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11), God "will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

CHAPTER ONE:
EVANGELICAL OPPOSITION TO MORMONISM IN
NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA

Introduction to the American Evangelical Heritage of Orthodoxy and Heresy

The origination of Evangelical opposition to Mormonism predates the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830. The Mormon/Evangelical divide in America was actually just one more battlefront in the very old war of orthodoxy and heresy begun by Christians in the second century AD. In fact, it was because of debates among early Christians that the terms "orthodoxy" and "heresy" (in their modern usage) were invented.

Current scholarship demonstrates "orthodoxy [as] an *emergent phenomenon*. It was not delivered as a ready-made package" with the writings of the New Testament.[66] Evangelical Christian theologian and historian, Alister McGrath, describes early Christianity as "a set of orthodoxies . . . [that began] to emerge . . . . possess[ing] a fundamental theological unity based on its worship of Christ as the risen Lord . . . [but] expressed and enacted . . . in a diversity of manners."[67] McGrath asserts that there were five main reasons for the tremendous diversity found in early Christianity:

1) Early uncertainty over which resources [possible New Testament texts] were to be regarded as authoritative by all Christian communities.
2) Diversity concerning aspects of the Christian faith within the documents that would later be gathered together as the New Testament.
3) Divergent interpretations of these documents, leading to different ways of thinking emerging within the Christian church.
4) Diversity of patterns within early Christian worship . . .
5) An inability to enforce uniformity . . .[68]

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[66] Alister McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 79.

[67] Ibid., 43, 45.

[68] Ibid., 46.

In the midst of such diversity, "the historical evidence suggests that both the New Testament and early Christian writers tended to emphasize the center of the Christian faith [the worship of the resurrected Christ] rather than focusing on policing its periphery."[69] Early Christianity was initially a big-tent religion that included considerable diversity. The unifying emphasis on the resurrected Christ remained "well into the second century… Yet from the middle of the second century onward, the policing of the perimeter appears to have been regarded as increasingly important if the identity and authenticity of the Christian faith were to be maintained."[70] As a result of these policing efforts, Christianity is credited with inventing the concepts of "orthodoxy," meaning right belief, and "heresy" (or "heterodoxy"), meaning wrong belief.

The earliest Church Fathers, beginning with Irenaeus of Lyons of the second century, deserve credit for recasting and emphasizing the term "heresy" into a negative derogatory term. Before these Church Fathers redefined the term, the Greek word "heresy" originally meant an "act of choosing," and then later referred to "choice," "a preferred course of action," "a school of thought," and "a philosophical or religious sect."[71] Josephus and New Testament writers used "the Greek term *hairesis* . . . [as] a neutral, nonpejorative term, implying neither praise nor criticism, referring to a group of people who have common views. The term [was] descriptive, not evaluative."[72] Around 180 AD, Irenaeus wrote *Against Heresies*. In this work, he sought to discredit the beliefs and practices of Gnosticism. In his attack, Irenaeus laid out the framework

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[69] Ibid., 90.

[70] Ibid., 91.

[71] Ibid., 37.

[72] Ibid.

from which all subsequent Christian battles over orthodoxy would be fought until some of his

assumptions began to be challenged in the early nineteenth century.[73] Irenaeus

> argued that *heretics were imposters, wolves in sheep's clothing, who pretended to be members of the church yet were ultimately bent on its destruction.* Where the heretics based their views on a reading of scripture, it was argued that their exegesis was merely a pretext for developing views that had their origin outside the tradition of Christ and his apostles and were intended to subvert the church. . . . Irenaeus wanted to convert differences into exclusion, as a means of both isolating heretics from the community of faith and of maintaining the idea that *heresy was a contaminant of faith that had its origins outside the church, being smuggled in by imposters or traitors.*[74]

McGrath explains the divisive long-term impact of this new application by Irenaeus and

others:

> *Heresy* rapidly came to be a pejorative, not a descriptive, term. Sociologists have often noted how certain sets of "binary oppositions"—such as "male-female" and "white-black"—play a key role in the social construction of the category of "the other." The notion of "the other," regularly used in the rhetoric of exclusion or denigration, is essentially the devalued or stigmatized half of a binary opposition, and it is chiefly used to refer to groups of people who are seen as inferior or who are believed to constitute a threat. Group identity is often fostered by defining "the other"—as, for example, in Nazi Germany, with its controlling binary opposition "Aryan-Jew." . . .

In the second century, the binary opposition "heresy-orthodoxy" began to emerge as a way of

excluding certain groups and individuals from the Christian church. *Hairesis* now meant a school

of thought that developed ideas that were subversive of the Christian faith, which was to be

opposed to *orthodoxia*—an authentic and normative version of the Christian faith.[75]

Ever after, Christians have battled over the precise parameters of orthodoxy and heresy.

By the fourth century, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. In the

uniting of secular and spiritual power, an ecclesiastical infrastructure was put in place whereby

orthodoxy was defined through the vote of councils and enforced by law. This consolidation was

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[73] Ibid., 65.

[74] Ibid., 58-59, some emphasis added.

[75] Ibid., 39.

further strengthened through the eventual ascendency of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, who controlled orthodoxy with the ability to spiritually excommunicate and physically punish heretics with government assistance and approval. As a result of these developments, heresy was no longer tolerated as a mere difference of opinion but as a treasonous act against the church, the government, and society deserving of serious punishment.

Like other state churches or religions before it, Christianity was infused into all other parts of the culture. During the Middle Ages, this combination was only strengthened so that "the medieval church stood at the heart of the social, spiritual, and intellectual life of western Europe."[76] Catholic historian Brad Gregory explains that medieval Christians "did not separate religion from their political engagements, familial relationships, attitudes toward education, and conceptions of order . . . [Religion was] inseparable from its rootedness in the social relationships, institutions, and cultural expectations of real life."[77] Therefore heresy was now viewed not simply as theological deviance but as societal, spiritual, intellectual, ecclesiastical, and political deviance as well. This greatly expanded view of heresy caused dissension and disagreement to be viewed as more dangerous than ever before. Heresy no longer meant just bad theology, but the destruction of an entire society, nation, culture, even civilization. It was now linked to sedition, violence, and lawlessness. Even worse, it meant the literal eternal damnation of souls.[78] Gregory observes that "Because heresy was worse than murder, theft, or rape, its eradication was imperative."[79] In fact, heresy was so awful a crime that not even the death penalty was believed to be too strict a punishment.

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[76] Ibid., 205.

[77] Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 13.

[78] Ibid., 85

Although viewed today as religious persecution, putting heretics to death was believed to be not only lawful but necessary for the safety and protection of society. Those willing to kill heretics, honestly and sincerely believed they were preserving people from terrible harm. The purpose of punishing heretics was not to kill them but to save them by eliciting a recantation of false ideas that would harm the individual and the people at large. Gregory explains that persecution and prosecution were differentiated by cause, not actions: "Only *true* religion was legitimately defensible. Indeed, without this qualification, complaints about persecution would have been groundless. Just as Augustine's dictum 'not the punishment, but the cause, makes a martyr' separated true from false martyrs on the basis of doctrine across confessional divides, its mirror image distinguished lawful prosecution from unjust persecution. . . . True doctrine legitimized prosecution, indeed made it prosecution rather than persecution."[80] The prosecution of heresy led to martyrdom and religious war throughout Europe, especially during the Protestant Reformation.

The Christian war of orthodoxy was a physical as well as a spiritual matter. Christians entered into a common social pattern found among many groups throughout history. This pattern builds on the binary opposition discussed earlier by McGrath, taking societal division to its logical conclusion of mass violence. One scholar explains: "Episodes of violence often begin when one people classify another as 'the other,' stripping them of any humanity and mentally transforming them into enemies. Once this process of devaluing and demonizing occurs, stereotypes take over, rumors circulate, and pressure builds to conform to group action against the perceived threat. Those classified as the enemy are often seen as the transgressors, even as

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 87-88, emphasis added.

steps are being taken against them."[81] During the Protestant Reformation, generally dated from 1517 with the initial protest of Martin Luther, Christian violence would reach pandemic proportions through the instigation of inquisitions and religious wars between Catholics and Protestants. One ironic note is that although Catholics used the death penalty to prosecute Protestant heretics, Protestants were just as willing to use the death penalty to prosecute Catholic heretics. Even the most famous of Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, endorsed the death penalty for the crime of heresy. Therefore, despite doctrinal disagreement between them, Catholics and Protestants were united in their agreement that the end justified the means, or that the danger of heresy justified the killing of heretics.

The Protestant Reformers greatly challenged the unity of the Roman Catholic Church. As a result of these challenges, Catholics witnessed numerous confirmations for their many spiritual and temporal warnings about heresy. In a review of the historical development of heresy throughout the Reformation, Gregory notes a series of key events that forever forged a connection of heresy and religious diversity with violent rebellion:

> Associating heresy with the Peasants' Revolt of 1524-1525 was no polemicist's fancy. Nor was it far-fetched to link Luther to the fissiparous spread of the early evangelical movement, despite the Wittenberger's contempt for many of the movement's strands. In 1534-1535, the Anabaptist Kingdom of Munster evoked near-universal horror and *cemented the association of heresy with sedition.* . . . Fundamentally, the Peace of Augsburg (1555) institutionalized the view that *intraterritorial religious pluralism was unworkable.* . . . In 1543, the Edict of Paris described heretics as "seditious and disturbers of the peace and tranquility of our republic and subjects, and secret conspirators against the prosperity of our state, which depends chiefly and in large measure on the preservation of the integrity of the Catholic faith in our kingdom." The Lutheran Justus Menius, writing in 1538, and the Catholic Antoine Du Val, writing in 1559, argued that combining different religious communities was a sure recipe for violence.[82]

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[81] See Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, Jr., and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), xiv.

[82] Gregory, 88-89, emphasis added.

Heretics were often condemned and sentenced to death as traitors, not simply guilty of heresy but of treason. Through such actions, Gregory observes the development of "an early modern tough love, enacted for the sake of others and the common good."[83] This tough love continued later with American Evangelicals who often invoked the motive of love in opposition to Mormonism.

One important question regarding heresy made during the Reformation was: who has the power to define orthodoxy? Protestant Reformers challenged the institutional power of the Roman Catholic Church to regulate orthodoxy, but in so doing Protestantism was left without any organizational head or body capable of universally declaring orthodoxy. Instead they made the claim of *sola Scriptura*, Scripture or Bible alone, as the means for deciding orthodoxy. Even this arbitrator of orthodoxy did not settle disputes among Protestants. Protestantism's very nature of *protest* encourages the perpetual act of heresy, as the denominational and congregational divisions continue to grow even today. There would be no end to the Christian protests, schisms, and heresies in the Western world. Protestants were the heretics of Catholics, Catholics were the heretics of Protestants, and within Protestantism—different denominations would develop who considered each other heretics as well. For this reason, orthodoxy and heresy would forever suffer from a lack of empirical criteria, making the controversy one of subjective, rather than objective, qualifications dependent on the exact context in understanding who the terms are referring to and why. Nevertheless, the ideas of orthodoxy and heresy continue to be invoked in order to decide upon the true body of Christ.

The American Evangelical Protestant Christian heritage of orthodoxy and heresy helps explain why doctrinal disagreements can easily lead to hatred, violence, and murder. It also helps us better understand the attacks Evangelicals made upon Mormons in America, since the very same connections between heresy and a whole host of societal problems would again be invoked.

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[83] Ibid.

Although the American Constitution theoretically guaranteed the freedom of religion, the dominate Evangelical majority was less than respectful of religious diversity due to the inherited worldview that religious pluralism was really not possible, and worse—that such plurality was even harmful to the nation. It is possible that many American Evangelicals were not fully aware of how old world influences were working upon their new worldview. Although some Evangelicals consciously spoke of religious freedom in America, they inherited a European religious tradition that subconsciously screamed against its very existence. Evangelicals thereby felt justified in their persecution of Mormons because in their minds the prosecution of error was actually showing forth a tough kind of love or charity in the fulfillment of Jesus Christ's command to "Love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44).

The First Mormon/Evangelical Conflicts

The First Vision. Evangelicals, and even some Mormons, often begin a discussion of the historical Mormon/Evangelical conflict with a recital of the first vision of Joseph Smith in 1820, and the problems created by its various claims.[84] Besides objecting to Smith actually seeing God the Father and Jesus Christ, Evangelicals take issue with Jesus denouncing all Christian churches as "wrong" and "all their creeds . . . an abomination," as well as condemning all clergy as "corrupt" (Joseph Smith—History 1:19-20, The Pearl of Great Price). Today, both Mormons and Evangelicals view this event as a clear repudiation of historic, traditional, creedal Christianity— the difference is that Evangelicals denounce it emphatically, whereas Mormons proclaim it

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[84] See Richard Ostler, "A Most Improbable Dialogue," *Christianity Today*, November 2009; *The Frank Pastore Show*, KKLA, Oct. 10, 2011; Walter Martin, "Mormonism: Jesus—Who is He?" Mp3 Download, http://users.datarealm.com/rini/cart/perlshop.cgi (accessed Sept. 1, 2012); Robert L. Millet, Gregory C.V. Johnson, *Bridging the Divide: The Continuing Conversation between a Mormon and an Evangelical* (New York: Monkfish Book Publishing Company, 2007), 10, 33.

triumphantly. Although some on both sides of the divide have viewed the first vision as the first declaration of war between Mormons and Evangelicals, the historical record does not support this conclusion.

Even if it is agreed upon that the first vision took place in 1820, the earliest known publication of the event by Mormons wasn't until 1840. And the earliest published Evangelical attack of it came in 1843. According to a study of the first vision accounts by Mormon historian James Allen:

> It seems apparent that if Joseph Smith told the story to friends and neighbors in 1820, he stopped telling it widely by 1830. At least it can be demonstrated that the public image of Joseph Smith and his spiritual experiences did not include the story of the first vision. Throughout most of the 1830's the story was not circulated, either in church periodicals or missionary literature. About 1833, however, Joseph Smith apparently made a preliminary attempt to write the story, but this account was never published. In 1835 he was willing to tell the story to a visitor. There is further evidence, based on reminiscences, to suggest that the story was known on a limited basis in the 1830's, but it is clear that it was not widely circulated. Non-Mormon accounts of the rise of the Church written in the 1830's made no mention of the story of the vision. It is apparent, furthermore, that belief in the vision was not essential for conversion to the Church, for there is no evidence that the story was told to prospective converts of the early 1830's.[85]

In other words, the first vision cannot be historically established as the first point of conflict between Mormons and Evangelicals. As mentioned, there could have been some private conversations or recitals of the first vision, but it was not a widely known event among Mormons or Evangelicals. It was much later that the first vision was factored into the religious war that had already begun.

Even if the first vision had been widely known, it would not have been as controversial as it is viewed today. Mormonism was born in the midst of a religious revolution known as the Second Great Awakening that unleashed "a firestorm of evangelical enthusiasm" that resulted in

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[85] James B. Allen, "The Significance of Joseph Smith's 'First Vision' in Mormon Thought," *Dialogue* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1966): 40.

"multitudes of dreams and visions by seekers."[86] During this period of Evangelical radicalism, it

was not uncommon for people to claim to see God or experience various miracles and gifts of the

spirit as part of their conversion to Christ. Smith records that when he first tried to share his

vision with a Methodist minister, he received a strong negative reaction. Historian Richard

Bushman suggests that the sharp reaction of the minister was "not because of the strangeness of

Joseph's story but because of its familiarity. Subjects of revivals all too often claimed to have

seen visions."[87] To prove his point, Bushman cites a few contemporary examples that show

strong similarities to the first vision of Joseph Smith:

> In 1826 a teacher in the Palmyra Academy said he saw Christ descend "in a glare of brightness, exceeding tenfold the brilliancy of the meridian Sun." The Wayne Sentinel in 1823 reported Asa Wild's vision of Christ in Amsterdam, New York, telling him that all denominations were corrupt. At various other times and places, beginning early in the Protestant era, religious eccentrics claimed visits from divinity. Norris Stearns published an account in 1815 of two beings who appeared to him: "One was God, my Maker, almost in bodily shape like a man. His face was, as it were a flame of Fire, and his body, as it had been a Pillar and a Cloud. Below him stood Jesus Christ my Redeemer, in perfect shape like a man."[88]

Bushman continues, "The visions themselves did not disturb the established clergy so much as

the messages that the visionaries claimed to receive. Too often the visions justified a breach with

the moral code or a sharp departure in doctrine. By Joseph's day, any vision was automatically

suspect, whatever its content . . . The only acceptable message was assurance of forgiveness and

a promise of grace."[89] Although troubling to established clergy, the more populist Evangelicals

of the day were more embracing of radical messages along with radical experiences.

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[86] Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History* 61, no. 4 (October, 1980): 360-362.

[87] Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (*New* York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 41. For many more examples see Trevan G. Hatch, *Visions, Manifestations, and Miracles of the Restoration* (Orem, UT: Granite Publishing and Distribution, 2008), 1-40.

[88] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 58.

When the 1839 first vision account of Joseph Smith is compared with all other personal accounts of the experience, the strong language of the 1839 version, that today's Evangelicals find objectionable, is either softer in tone or completely missing altogether. Instead of all churches being "wrong" and all creeds "an abomination" and all clergy "corrupt," it was simply stressed that all churches possessed a degree of "incorrect doctrine" and that none of the denominations were recognized as God's official "church and kingdom."[90] The different language places more stress on the lack of priesthood authority and a lack of true doctrine existing in its fullness among other Christian denominations. Therefore, less condemnation is served while important differences are preserved.

One possible explanation for the harsh 1839 account is that Smith was dictating the experience at the height of the Missouri conflicts and the feelings of persecution caused him to emphasize in stronger words what God had communicated to him nineteen years earlier. Also, the fact that the first written account of the vision isn't recorded until 1832 should cause additional pause at scrutinizing too closely every word in the accounts, since it was unlikely that any of them recall the full experience word for word. Mormons have no official position on scriptural inerrancy and so even the official 1839 account is not claiming to be a perfect account as, for example, the dictation theory of scriptural inerrancy would suggest.[91] Smith even concedes that there were many things from the vision he left unrecorded (see Joseph Smith—History 1:20).

[89] Ibid., 59.

[90] See a good table comparison of first vision accounts at: http://eldenwatson.net/harmony.htm (accessed Feb. 3, 2012).

[91] For a good discussion of the nature of scripture, especially in the Mormon/Evangelical context, see Robert M. Sivulka, "Similar yet Different," review of How Wide the Divide?, by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *Dialogue* 31, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 196-99.

One other point to consider is that later in his life Smith often mentioned how there was much truth to be admired and embraced from other Christian denominations and their creeds. In one 1843 discourse he said, "I cannot believe in any of the creeds of the different denominations, because they all have some things in them I cannot subscribe to, though *all of them have some truth*."[92] To say that all of the Christian creeds have some truth is a far cry from saying they are all abominable. In an encounter with Methodist preacher Peter Cartwright, Smith was quite complimentary towards Methodism saying "among all the Churches in the world the Methodist was the nearest right, and that, as far as they went, they were right. But they had stopped short by not claiming the gift of tongues, of prophecy, and of miracles . . . if the Methodists would only advance a step or two further, they would take the world. We Latter-day Saints are Methodists, as far as they have gone, only we have advanced further. . ."[93] Admitting that other churches were right to a degree is very different from denouncing them as being completely and totally wrong.

But if the wording of the 1839 version is precisely correct, its strong language that Evangelicals find controversial *now*, was not so troubling *then*. In fact, the objectionable language of the first vision was actually very Evangelical in its day. Gordon Wood points out that Evangelical churches and individuals of the early nineteenth century were often: 1) anti-clerical, 2) anti-creedal, and 3) very exclusive in their claims and efforts to be the one true church of Christ, as the above visionary experiences provided by Richard Bushman also illustrate.[94] The first vision's Evangelical nature is more fully demonstrated when one considers

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[92] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 264.

[93] Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright*, Introduction by Charles L. Wallis (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 225.

[94] See Wood, "Evangelical America," 374-375.

that Smith's prayer came as a result of revivalism, and that he was seeking both a forgiveness of

sins and a church to join—very common Evangelical desires for an early nineteenth-century

American Protestant Christian. Stressing this quality of commonality for its historical time and

place, historian D. Michael Quinn suggests that the first vision is perhaps even less important

than previously thought:

> . . . nothing about his [Smith's] account was unusual for his time and place. Smith's story was even more believable because his first theophany neither transformed his life nor sent him on a quest to form a church. He had sought forgiveness for youthful sins and received absolution. . . . That it contained no command to preach repentance or tell anyone of the experience is extraordinary within the context of his later career. His vision implied no religious mission, no church, no community, and certainly no ecclesiastical hierarchy. . . . Joseph Smith's first vision became a missionary tool for his followers only after Americans grew to regard converse with God unusual.[95]

The first vision was not the first declaration of war between Mormons and Evangelicals

because: (1) it was not a well-known event, (2) questions exist as to the precise wording of the

experience, and (3) it was neither a moment nor a message that was un-Evangelical in nature nor

uncommon for that particular time and place. Even though the first vision is a big issue for

Mormons and Evangelicals today, it was a complete *non*-issue for the first Mormons and their

Evangelical counterparts. Therefore, the first vision cannot be established, and subsequently

studied, as the first cause of Evangelical opposition to Mormonism.

This is a significant issue for two reasons. First, modern Evangelicals, and some

Mormons, have begun treating the first vision as the first historical conflict between Mormons

and Evangelicals. As has been shown, it clearly was not. Second, Evangelicals cite the first

vision to justify their opposition to Mormonism. In response to a recitation of past difficulties

between Mormons and Evangelicals, Frank Pastore, a prominent Evangelical talk show host

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[95] D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 3.

declared, "Who drew first blood here? And it would be 1820."[96] Since Mormons started the

conflict, Evangelicals apparently had to fight back. But as will be seen, it was actually

Evangelicals who began the fight.

The First Evangelical attacks on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. The first

historical Mormon/Evangelical conflict came over Evangelical attacks on Joseph Smith's claim

to prophetic authority and his production of the Book of Mormon; and then later expanded into

attacks against Mormonism as a whole. In fact, the Church of Jesus Christ had not even been

organized and the Book of Mormon hadn't even been published before the attacks came.[97] But

these initial Mormon/Evangelical conflicts were not simply a religious debate, but part and

parcel of a much larger cultural war underway in the aftermath of the American Revolution.

Historian Gordon Wood provides a vivid description of the cultural chaos that was unleashed

across a young American nation:

> . . . the Second Great Awakening—was itself the expression of something bigger and more powerful than even religion. Evangelical revivalism, utopian communitarianism, millennial thinking, multitudes of dreams and visions by seekers, and the birth of new religions were in fact all responses to the great democratic changes taking place in America. . . .The remains of older eighteenth-century hierarchies fell away, and hundreds of thousands of common people were cut loose from all sorts of traditional bonds and found themselves freer, more independent, more unconstrained than ever before in their history. . . .
> This Second Great Awakening . . . was not just a continuation of the first Awakening . . . It was more popular, more evangelical, more ecstatic, more personal, more secular, and more optimistic. It combined the past and present, communalism and individualism, folkways and enlightenment in odd and confusing ways. The sovereignty of Christ was reaffirmed, but people were given personal responsibility for their salvation as never before. Nearly everyone yearned for Christian unity, but never before or since was American Christendom so divided. For many the world was coming to an end, but at the same time everything in the here and now seemed possible.[98]

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[96] *The Frank Pastore Show*, KKLA, Oct. 10, 2011.

[97] See David J. Whittaker, *Early Mormon Pamphleteering,* Dissertations in Latter-day Saint History (Provo: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History and BYU Studies, 2003), 3.

[98] Wood, "Evangelical America," 360-362.

Two outgrowths of this cultural chaos of early nineteenth century America were the dominance of an Evangelical majority and the birth of a Mormon minority. These simultaneous and overlapping occurrences virtually ensured that Evangelicals and Mormons would experience instant and continual conflict from the very beginning; for majorities and minorities naturally seek out one another in order define themselves and their surrounding culture through contrasting what both view as their superiority to the other's inferiority. In the words of Edward Said, "self-confirmation [is] based on a constantly practiced differentiation of itself from what it believes to be not itself. And this differentiation is frequently performed by setting the valorized culture above the Other."[99] Mormonism became one of the "Others" from whom Evangelicalism sought to differentiate itself. But Evangelicalism likewise became the "Other" for Mormons. The only difference was that Evangelicals were the majority, giving them both the power and means to nearly destroy Mormonism. Despite the best efforts of Mormons to challenge the Evangelical status quo, their minority status did not permit them to be fully successful.

As Evangelicals and Mormons sought to define themselves in contrast to one another, the conflict only added to the significance and meaning of the American cultural war described above. Professor Laurence Moore suggests that these conflicts are the very means by which societal norms come to live and die: "Religious struggles engage people in elaborate strategies that on each side entail affirmation and denial, advancement and repression, of a set of cultural options. Some groups champion themselves as upholders of norms, others as challengers of those norms. Despite the apparent claims being made by the antagonists, American religious culture never belonged exclusively to any side. National culture cannot be defined by reference to a set of Platonic ideals. It is created by contests between groups who revere different cultural symbols

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[99] Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983) 12, as found in Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormon Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1997) 4.

and who have different perspectives on shared cultural symbols."[100] Viewed in this light, Evangelical/Mormon conflict was both a religious matter and a more encompassing cultural matter. As the newly formed majority, Evangelicalism was in the midst of defining its set of standards for America. Some of those standards are explained by Professor Spencer Fluhman who wrote, "True religion was vital to the health of the young republic and should be tolerated and encouraged in its variety, but what appeared to be religion in other cultures—or unpopular movements at home—was not real religion at all and thus worthless or even harmful."[101]

And what was true religion exactly? True religion was Christianity, and true Christianity was Protestantism, and true Protestantism was Evangelicalism, and true Evangelicalism was traditional biblical and creedal orthodoxy. In the eyes of Evangelicals, Mormonism fell way beneath the mark. In 1844, religious historian Robert Baird stated what he believed to be obvious to all: "[I]t is not difficult to draw a line between the various unevangelical sects on the one hand, and those that may be classed together as evangelical denominations on the other. The chief of the former, as we have said, are the Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Christians, Universalists, Hicksite Quakers, Swedenborgians, Tunkers or Dunkers, Jews, Shakers, and so on down to the Mormons, beginning with the sect that has buried the truth amid a heap of corruptions of heathenish origin, and *ending with the grossest of all the delusions that Satanic malignity or human ambition ever sought to propagate*."[102]

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[100] R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), xiii.

[101] J. Spencer Fluhman, "Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Antebellum America," (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2006), 26-27.

[102] Robert Baird, *Religion in America: Or An Account of the Origin, Progress, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical in the United States; With Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 288, emphasis added.

Worse than all other groups listed, Mormonism was perceived by some to be a system that served as the ultimate antithesis to all that America, Evangelical Protestant Christianity, and Western Civilization stood for. Mormonism broke all the rules. According to Gordon Wood, it came to embody all of the "odd and confusing" combinations resulting from the societal chaos of the Second Great Awakening, making Mormonism

> undeniably the most original . . . religion of this period or of any period in American history. It defied as no other religion did both the orthodox culture and the evangelical counter-culture. Yet at the same time it drew heavily on both these cultures. It combined within itself different tendencies of thought. From the outset it was a religion in tension, poised like a steel spring by the contradictory forces pulling within it.
> Mormonism was both mystical and secular; restorationist and progressive; communitarian and individualistic; hierarchical and congregational; authoritarian and democratic; antinomian and arminian; anti-clerical and priestly; revelatory and empirical; utopian and practical; ecumenical and nationalist. . . .
> Mormonism offered people the best of both the popular world of millenarian evangelicalism and the respectable world of priestly churches.[103]

From its very beginning, Mormons were "a people of paradox" as Terryl Givens puts it, and Mormonism was "a system in which Joseph Smith collapsed sacred distance to bring a whole series of opposites into radical juxtaposition . . . rife with paradox—or tensions that only appear to be logical contradictions."[104] Such complexity caused Mormonism to be misunderstood and greatly feared. Spencer Fluhman observes: "Given the attachments many antebellum Americans felt to a *Christian* republic, Mormonism's allegedly fraudulent Christianity (as opposed to the purportedly corrupted Christianity of Catholicism) crossed too many cultural and religious norms for comfort."[105] As a result of such misunderstanding, Mormonism became a symbol for all that was unorthodox, unbiblical, un-Evangelical, un-

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[103] Wood, 379-380.

[104] Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xiv.

[105] Fluhman, 2.

Protestant, un-Christian, un-religion, un-Godly, un-American, un-republican, un-democratic, un-capitalistic, un-Anglo Saxon, unenlightened, un-moral, and ultimately uncivilized.[106]

But why would a large Evangelical majority even bother attacking a small Mormon minority? Lawrence Moore insightfully concludes that, "In a telling manner, insiders spend the most time asserting their dominance precisely when the values they uphold enjoy the least popular respect."[107] Evangelicals had come to power in America through the cultural chaos unleashed by the American Revolution. The radicalism of the American Revolution caused a complete break with old European structures thereby redefining society, politics, economics, and religion. Although Evangelicals became a commanding majority as a result, the Revolution taught them that empires come and go rather quickly. This inherent American insecurity, born by the revolutionary spirit, caused the new majority to be on guard for any group that could disturb its power and prove to be a potential revolutionary to its kingdom. Not only were Evangelicals the self-appointed watch-dogs of theological orthodoxy, but of additional values and assumptions that they defined as American orthodoxy.

These Evangelical assumptions played themselves out in the first onslaughts upon Mormonism. The first two published attacks, in pamphlet or book form, laid the foundation for all subsequent anti-Mormonism: *Delusions* by Alexander Campbell published in 1832 and *Mormonism Unvailed* (sic) by E. D. Howe published in 1835.[108] Campbell was a founder and

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[106] See Fluhman, 5.

[107] Moore, xiv.

[108] See Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon; with an Examination of Its Internal and External Evidences, and a Refutation of Its Pretences to Divine Authority* (Boston: Benjamin H. Green, 1832); Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed: Or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time. With Sketches of the Characters and its Propagators, And a Full Detail of the Manner in which the Famous Golden Bible was brought before the World. To Which are Added, Inquiries into the Probability that the Historical Part of the Said Bible was Written by One Solomon Spaulding, more than Twenty Years Ago, and by Him Intended to have been Published as a Romance* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834).

minister of the Disciples of Christ movement, and Howe was a newspaper editor who relied

heavily on the work of Campbell, as well as the assistance of two Methodist ministers who had

briefly converted to Mormonism: Ezra Booth and Doctor Philastus Hurlbut. Campbell's response

came when about a hundred souls from his church converted to Mormonism in Ohio, in the fall

of 1831, including the prominent preacher Sidney Rigdon. Howe's reaction came out of the

conversion of his wife, sister, and niece to Mormonism. Both Booth and Hurlbut were

disaffected Mormons who had been members for only a few short months.[109]

Alexander Campbell, leader of the Disciples of Christ movement, was particularly well

qualified to demonstrate how Mormonism had strayed from the bounds of Evangelical and even

Enlightenment normality. Like Joseph Smith, Campbell was a seeker—one who sought to bring

about the restoration of the ancient order of things based on the New Testament. He denounced

all of the churches as wrong in their sectarian squabbles, spoke of the abolishment of all creeds

but Christ, and the corruption of various clergymen. But unlike Smith, Campbell promoted a

return to the Bible alone in deciding all doctrinal matters. One historian aptly distinguished the

difference between Smith from Campbell: "Joseph Smith went too far when he sought to restore

not just the teachings but the *methods* of the New Testament. Campbell believed Christians were

to follow the apostles and prophets, not to be apostles and prophets. He put a distance between

himself and the Bible."[110] Also, Campbell, along with E. D. Howe, embraced and employed

Enlightenment skepticism, along with more secularly minded newspaper editors, in order to

argue the central thesis of early anti-Mormonism: fraud.

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[109] See Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 293..

[110] Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 183, emphasis added.

To prove that Joseph Smith was an imposter, *Delusions* and *Mormonism Unvailed* both begin with a roster of religious frauds (Howe borrowing mostly from Campbell's work). Included in this vast chronological list that spanned the history of the Bible and beyond were: Jannes and Jambers who rebelled against Moses, Pharaoh and his priests, the false prophets of the Jewish age, diviners, soothsayers, magicians, and idols of the Gentiles, numerous false Messiahs, Munzer, Stubner, and Stork of the sixteenth-century, Ann Lee of the Shakers, the Richard Brothers, Joanna Southcott, Miss Campbell of Scotland, Jemima Wilkinson, along with the Barkers, Jumpers, and Mutterers of their own time. The fact that so many people had claimed to be prophet-figures since the New Testament, and the fact that all had been proven to be false prophets caused the vast majority of Christians to completely rule out even the possibility of true prophets ever again appearing on the earth. Therefore, Joseph Smith was easily identified as but another false prophet among many.[111]

The Book of Mormon was provided as the main piece of evidence that Joseph Smith was a fraud.[112] Both Campbell and Howe spent ample time discrediting the Book of Mormon, providing internal and external evidences to disprove any divinity associated with the new book of scripture. The internal evidences were comprised largely of theological and historical inconsistencies with the Holy Bible; particularly items that resembled nineteenth-century America, not first-century Israel. In addition, the language of the book was criticized, especially since it invoked the same English style of words found in the King James Bible. In Campbell's estimation, Joseph Smith was clearly the sole author of the work, because he believed Joseph to be a "very *ignorant* man," and that Book of Mormon bore witness of such ignorance as "the meanest book in the English language. . . It has not one good sentence in it, save the profanation

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[111] See Campbell, 5-6; Howe, vi-ix; Fluhman, 16.

[112] See Fluhman, 32.

of those sentences quoted from the [Bible]." He concluded his critique of the Book of Mormon metaphorically: "I would as soon compare a bat to the American eagle, a mouse to a mammoth, or the deformities of a spectre to the beauty of Him whom John saw in Patmos, as to contrast it with a single chapter in all the writings of the Jewish or Christian prophets. It is as certainly Smith's fabrication as Satan is the father of lies, or darkness the offspring of night."[113]

Howe believed differently concerning the authorship of the Book of Mormon. He thought Joseph was also ignorant, but *too* ignorant to have been able to write the Book of Mormon, despite all of its apparent weaknesses. In the final portion of *Mormonism Unvailed*, Howe puts forth what has come to be known as the "Spalding-Rigdon Theory," or simply the "Spalding Theory." This theory suggests that the Book of Mormon originated with an incomplete piece of writing produced by a man named Solomon Spalding. This partial work, that was entitled "Manuscript Found," was later discovered by Sidney Rigdon in Pennsylvania, who refined and finished the rough draft and then gave it to Joseph. Rigdon then pretended to know nothing about it until the Mormon missionaries later contacted him in Ohio. Based upon all of this circumstantial evidence Howe concludes: "We therefore, must hold out Sidney Rigdon to the world as being the original 'author and proprietor' of the whole Mormon conspiracy."[114]

Besides the Book of Mormon, other actions of Joseph Smith were scrutinized by Evangelicals to prove the prophet was an impostor. Fluhman explains:

> . . . three aspects of his [Smith's] career deserve special notice as anti-Mormons considered each incontrovertible proof that Smith was using religion, as Muhammad had done, to cloak other ambitions. *First* was Smith's involvement in "moneydigging" and the "magical" practices associated with it; *second* was the cooperative economics attending the prophet's communitarian vision; *third* was Smith's political activity in Missouri and Illinois. Importantly, each of these most controversial elements of Smith's career pressed

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[113] Campbell, 15.

[114] Howe, 290.

on apparently precarious cultural boundaries, between religion and magic in the first instance and between religion and the market or politics in the case of the latter two.[115]

Howe in particular is credited for giving an account, based on affidavits collected, of Smith's adventures in treasure seeking through the use of magical stones and divining rods before his claims of finding gold plates. This became a critical piece of evidence in proving that Joseph Smith was a deceiver because it was assumed that "false religions, even those that claimed miracles, began with a hope for gain and then later assumed a more religious demeanor."[116] This hope for gain included not only obtaining power through money but through other means as well.

As for the mixing of religion with politics and economics, Campbell and Howe make particular mention of what the imposters Munzer, Stubner, and Stork of the sixteenth century accomplished in order to display their similarities to Joseph Smith:

> These men taught that among Christians, who had the precepts of the Gospel to guide them, and the spirit of God to direct them, civil offices and laws were not only unnecessary, but an unlawful encroachment upon their spiritual liberty; that all Christians should put their possessions into common stock; and that polygamy was not incompatible with either the Old or New Testaments. They related many visions and revelations which they had from above, but failing to propagate their doctrines by these means, they attempted to enforce them by arms. Many Catholics joined them, and in the various insurrections which they effected, one hundred thousand souls are said to have been sacrificed.[117]

Compare the above description with the following account given by Howe of Joseph Smith and Mormonism:

> Some among them frequently boast of their increasing strength [through the arrival of more members and the practice of common stock], and that consequently they will soon be enabled to possess themselves of all the secular power of the country, as they already have of the spiritual. This they calculate to accomplish by concentrating their forces in particular neighborhoods. . . They say that when they get the secular power

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[115] Fluhman, 58.

[116] Ibid., 123.

[117] Howe, vii.

into their hands, everything will be performed by immediate revelations from God. We shall then have Pope Joseph the First, and his hierarchy. . . .

One of their leading articles of faith is, that the Indians of North America, in a very few years, will be converted to Mormonism, and through rivers of blood will again take possession of their ancient "inheritance."[118]

Ezra Booth reported that one means of forging a Mormon/Indian alliance was through marriage (perhaps hinting at the possibility of polygamy—which would later become part of Mormonism). Therefore, like Munzer, Stubner, and Stork—Joseph Smith sought to combine, not divide the spiritual and the secular. Unlike Thomas Jefferson who sought to build a wall of separation between church and state, Smith sought to tear down that wall—brick by brick. This seemingly un-American proposition made Smith, and anyone else, an impostor who dared employ the four tactics of: 1) theocracy, 2) communalism, 3) military coercion, and 4) polygamy.

The perceived commonality of theocracy and military caused Howe to compare Smith with the Catholic Pope. As a consequence, pre-established anti-Catholic arguments were merely transferred and recast as anti-Mormon arguments, and Smith was seen as attempting to reestablish a kind of Christendom in America.[119] The same method was also employed with anti-Islamic polemics. Smith was compared with Mohammad—a comparison that only grew stronger over time among other anti-Mormon writers.[120] The comparison was a natural one because of the commonalities of: 1) a prophet, 2) a new book of scripture, and 3) the theocratic blending of the spiritual and secular. The marital practice of polygamy would eventually become a fourth similarity among the two religions. Besides these, there was also the superficial resemblance of similar names beginning with the letter "M." Since the Pope and Mohammed were the two most despised individuals in all of Protestantism, Smith now became the third most despised figure

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[118] Howe, 145.

[119] Fluhman, 31.

[120] Ibid.

through comparisons made with both individuals. Mormonism was placed alongside Catholicism and Islam as a fraudulent scheme through which their leaders were able to enrich themselves through money and power. The final result would be an empire established in Missouri, the New Zion or New Jerusalem, from which Smith would form an alliance with the Indians and seek to conquer the United States and beyond through deception and military might.[121]

As for Smith's followers, Howe and Campbell sought to assassinate the character of the Smith family and other prominent leaders, such as Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer—the three witnesses of the gold plates. In *Mormonism Unvailed*, Howe included a collection of twenty-two affidavits that ex-Mormon Philastus Hurlbut had gathered from people in New York and Pennsylvania who claimed to be familiar with the Smith family and other prominent leaders in Mormonism. Since it was accepted that "superstition flourished in ignorance," Campbell and Howe sought to prove the ignorance of Joseph Smith, his family, and companions.[122] Such testimony not only created doubt on the character of Joseph Smith and his associates but also upon any claim of miraculous visions, healings, or workings of spiritual gifts. Ultimately, Mormons came to be viewed as ignorant "dupes" who were deceived not only by their own stupidity but also in a mistaken trust in "what they supposed to be the *Spirit*" which Howe was certain in his Enlightenment perspective to be misguided.[123]

Evangelicals argued that Joseph was a fraud, and his claim of a new Bible only proved he was a fraud. Other damning pieces of evidence included his involvement in magic, or the seeking of riches through the use of peep stones and divining rods. Smith also mixed the sacred

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[121] For some of Howe's references to the Pope and Mohammad, see pages 103, 112, 131, 138, 145.

[122] Bushman, *Beginnings*, 122.

[123] Howe, 125, 128, 130. Howe uses the word repeatedly throughout his work to describe Mormons; also see Fluhman, 76.

boundaries of religion and magic, religion and economics, and religion and politics, including the military. But all early attacks dealt primarily on form and not theology because Mormonism was treated as a fraud, not as a religion.[124] Mormonism was a fraudulent system because it was designed to get power and gain. Christianity was founded on the basis of the miracles of Jesus. Hence any true religion also had to be founded upon the same basis. According to Evangelicals, Joseph Smith was easy to denounce because he started out as a money digger and glass looker, not a miracle maker.[125] And his followers were deluded fanatics who were too stupid to avoid deception until it was too late. Since Mormonism was a fraudulent system disguised as religion, it wasn't really religious persecution that Evangelicals were practicing, but more of a police action to save the country. Mormonism was clearly against everything Evangelical Protestantism, Evangelical America, and Evangelical civilization stood for and as a result all opposition to Smith and his followers became justified, as was all the harsh opposition to heresy enacted throughout the history of Christianity.[126]

The First Mormon Responses. According to David Whittaker, "In the early 1830s [Mormons] experienced the devastating effect of the tracts and books written against them, but their initial reaction had been to ignore them or to send missionaries as a 'living word' to counter these attacks."[127] In specific response to the first two major anti-Mormon attacks from Alexander Campbell and E. D. Howe, the Mormon rebuttal was rather delayed. Whittaker shares, "Given all this potentially damaging material, it was surprising that the Mormons hardly noticed it—at least they did not produce any published replies at the time. Certainly the missionaries were

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[124] See Fluhman, 3-4.

[125] Bushman, *Beginnings*, 122-123.

[126] See Fluhman, 17; Gregory, 87-88.

[127] Whittaker, xi.

occasionally forced to publicly respond to its evidence and charges, but it was not until the end

of the decade [1830s], as the missionaries were moving into the larger cities of the United States

and Britain, that written replies to material began to appear."[128] Once again, this underlies the

point that it was the Evangelicals, not the Mormons, who had started the war.

When Mormons finally began publishing, their approach was very similar to that of their

enemies. Parley P. Pratt was the first to publish literature defending Mormonism with his 1837

tract, *A Voice of Warning*.[129] Later, in 1838, he wrote *Mormonism Unveiled*, the first direct

written response to an anti-Mormon article by L. R. Sunderland, editor of the Methodist paper

Zion's Watchman, who followed in the similar style and substance of Alexander Campbell and

E. D. Howe.[130] Pratt addressed the concerns raised by these anti-Mormons about Joseph Smith,

the Book of Mormon, spiritual gifts, and miracles. Pratt made clear that Mormonism represented

the only true Church of Christ with the authority and blessing of God, and that it was the means

by which to heal the divided body of Christ. Pratt's polemical tone and tactics were very much

like those of his adversaries. For example, in *Mormonism Unveiled* he had no qualms with

attacking the character of Mr. Sunderland and his followers, much like Evangelical authors had

attacked Joseph Smith and his fellow Mormons. Pratt writes that Sunderland "is justly ranked

among dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, and idolaters; and no longer fit to fill any

place in civilized society; much less to stand at the head of a paper, under the sacred title of

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[128] Whittaker, 4.

[129] See Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to all People, Containing a Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, Commonly Called Mormons* (New York: Printed by W. Sandford, 1837).

[130] See Parley P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled: Zion's Watchman Unmasked, and Its Editor, Mr. L. R. Sunderland, Exposed, "Truth Vindicated," The Devil Mad, and Priestcraft in Danger* (New York: Printed for the Publisher, 1838).

'Zion's Watchman.'"[131] Pratt then warns Sunderland's readers, that if they did not repudiate their editor, they would be no better off than he.

In his earlier *Voice of Warning*, Pratt was equally as harsh in condemning all other Christian churches in comparison to the true Church of Christ:

> . . . instead of apostles and prophets, we should see *false teachers*, whom men had heaped to themselves, and instead of the gifts of the Spirit, we should see the *wisdom of men*; and instead of the Holy Ghost, *many false false spirits*; instead of the ordinances of God, *commandments of men*; instead of knowledge, *opinion; guess work*, instead of Revelation; *division*, instead of union; *doubt*, instead of faith; *despair*, instead of hope; *hatred*, instead of charity; *a physician*, instead of the laying on of hands for the healing of the sick; *fables*, instead of truth; *evil for good, good for evil*; *darkness for light, light for darkness*; and in a word, *antichrist* instead of Christ; *the powers of earth*, having made war with the saints and overcome them, until the word of God should be fulfilled. O my God, shut up the vision, for *my heart sickens* while I gaze; and let the day hasten on when the earth shall be cleansed by fire, from such *awful pollutions*.[132]

Therefore, Pratt incorporated the very same arguments made against Mormonism and simply turned them around on his detractors. Those who wrote against Mormonism were now the imposters who lied and deceived people. Those who believed such lies were dupes and part of a false Christian Church or religion.[133]

Since Sunderland was a Methodist, Pratt even took the time to formally denounce Methodism in stronger language than he used in the general condemnation of all Christian churches. Pratt critiqued five doctrines of Methodism: the nature of God, priesthood, ordinances, spiritual gifts, and priestcraft. Pratt declared "the Methodist God . . . without body or parts . . . a bundle of nonsense, contradiction and absurdity, thrown together."[134] The Methodist priesthood was pronounced as illegitimate because "they received their Priesthood from the Church of Rome, (the mother of harlots,) then is the English Church, a legitimate daughter of the old lady,

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[131] Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 3-4.

[132] Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, 119-120, emphasis added.

[134] Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 42-45.

and Methodism the *grand daughter*; consequently, Methodism is a harlot."[135] As for their ordinances, Pratt found them offering various forms of baptism, when there should be just one. Methodism also lacked the gifts of the Spirit. As for priestcraft, he blasted the denomination for paying their clergy. Pratt concluded, "Having now proved that Methodism is a system of idolatry; a false and perverted Gospel: a daughter of the great mother of harlots—having a form of godliness, denying the power, as well as a system of priestcraft of the deepest dye. . . I now call upon every honest Methodist, to come out from such abominations, and receive the TRUTH; for her sins have reached unto Heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities, and her judgements slumber not. Amen!"[136] Pratt made it perfectly clear through his writings that people should shun all other Christian churches, and that the only pathway to salvation was through Mormonism.

Just like Alexander Campbell and E. D. Howe laid out the general pattern for subsequent Evangelicals to follow in their anti-Mormon writings, Pratt "erected a standard for all future Mormon [writers] by setting down a formula for describing Mormonism's basic doctrines and listing biblical prooftexts, arguments, examples, and expressions which would be used by others for another century . . . . balancing a defense of Mormonism's sacred books and its doctrines with an unrelenting assault on the religion of the attacker."[137] And so the religious war between Mormons and Evangelicals began and would continue to rage upon various battlefields and with various weaponry that unfortunately included more than mere words.

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Peter L. Crawley, foreword to *The Essential Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), xvii.

Other Nineteenth Century Mormon/Evangelical Conflicts

Since the beginning of the Mormon/Evangelical relationship, there has not only been a war of words but a war of violence. Joseph Smith was continuously pursued with legal charges, arrested, and imprisoned on multiple occasions. In one instance, he spent over four months in a dungeon cell under the poorest of conditions. He and others were brutally beaten, tarred and feathered. Eventually Joseph and his brother Hyrum were shot to death by an angry mob. Upon his death, one Evangelical minister declared: "Some of the public Journals of the country, we are sorry to see, regret the death of that blasphemous wretch Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet. Our deliberate judgement is, that he ought to have been dead ten years ago, and that those who at length have deprived him of his life, have done the cause of God, and of country, good service. Smith was killed, as he should have been. THREE CHEERS to the brave company who shot him to pieces!"[138]

The Mormons, as a group, were forced from their homes and property on more than one occasion both in Missouri and Illinois, to receive little if any compensation for their privations and losses. Some, in the case of Haun's Mill were massacred. Despite efforts to fight back, even violently at times, the Mormon people were forced to give up. As coerced vagabonds, they journeyed into Mexican territory, arriving in present-day Utah in hopes of peacefully worshipping God after their own manner. But the modern-day exodus took its toll. Over one thousand Saints are estimated to have lost their lives over the course of the next several years during the journey to their promised land.[139] Like the Native Americans, Mormons experienced

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[138] Reverend William G. Brownlow, *Jonesborough Whig*, 24 July 1844; reprinted in *Warsaw Signal*, 19 February 1845, as found in Heidi Swinton, *American Prophet: The Story of Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 1999), 18.

[139] For the estimate of lives lost, see James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. 2nd ed. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 248.

their own trail of tears as they were forced to leave behind property and possessions in the dead of winter, and at last forced to leave the United States altogether for the Mexican Territory of the Great Basin. Not only was this departure from the United States a geographical exodus—but a theological, spiritual, social, cultural, political and economic exodus that would keep Mormons fairly separated in one form or another from American Evangelicalism for many years to come. In fact, it was during this extreme period of separation that Mormonism would achieve its height of differentiation from Evangelicalism. Ever after, Mormonism would follow a path of assimilation of Evangelical identity.

After about ten years of settling present-day Utah and surrounding territories, Mormons became targets of renewed antagonism by publicly declaring their practice of polygamy. Suddenly, Mormonism became more menacing than ever to American civilization. Evangelicals' worst nightmare appeared to be coming true—a new Islamic-like empire in the West that would eventually destroy the country. The subject of polygamy thereby dominated most anti-Mormon literature and efforts during the second half of the nineteenth century.[140] The newly formed Republican Party placed in its 1856 platform the policy to eradicate polygamy alongside slavery as the "twin relics of barbarism" in the United States.[141] In addition to reports of polygamy, additional reports of lawlessness were sent to President James Buchannan. At the insistence of lawmakers and the preaching of Evangelical ministers, the President ordered the march of over 10,000 troops to Salt Lake City to reestablish order. Although the army entered the Salt Lake valley peacefully, the action had another deadly impact, this time from the Mormons. War-time hysteria created conditions that contributed to the instigation of the Mountain Meadows

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[140] See Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 66.

[141] See Fluhman, 272.

Massacre, where some local Mormon leaders and followers in southern Utah, along with a few Indian tribes (at the request of Mormon leadership) participated in the killing of around 120 innocent men, women, and children who were members of a wagon train and of an Evangelical background.[142]

Although the Civil War diverted attention away from the Mormon problem for a time, the cessation of war brought on a renewal of resolve by the federal government, supported by various groups, to end polygamy and Mormonism once and for all. As Patrick Mason explains: "A vast national campaign featuring politicians, church leaders, social reformers, the press, women's organizations, businessmen, and ordinary citizens sought to end the distinctive Latter-day Saint practice of plural marriage, *and to extinguish the entire religion if need be*."[143] Spencer Fluhman summarizes the severe punishments inflicted upon the Mormon Church during this anti-polygamy crusade:

> The 1862 Morrill Law [prohibiting the practice of polygamy] proved virtually unenforceable because prosecutors found polygamous marriages difficult to document, but it served as a harbinger of later efforts to curtail the Church's power by disincorporating the church and limiting the amount of property it could own. The Poland Law, passed in 1874, obliterated Utah's judiciary by granting exclusive civil and criminal jurisdiction to the U.S. district courts (controlled by non-Mormon judges) and ensuring that non-Mormons played a larger role in the selection of juries. The *Reynolds* case paved the way for the Edmunds Act of 1882, which significantly lowered the threshold of proof in polygamy cases by redefining the crime as "unlawful cohabitation"—the support or care (not necessarily marriage) of a man to more than one woman. Additionally, the law disenfranchised polygamists, barred them from public office, and stipulated that "belief" in polygamy would disqualify one from jury service [the first time in United States history that religious belief, not just action, was restricted] . . . The Edmunds-Tucker Act, which followed in 1887, meant to dry up what Mormon will remained for polygamy and to devastate church power. It dissolved the church as a legal entity and demanded the forfeiture of all church property in excess of $50,000. Lacking the means to fulfill its

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[142] The new most definitive source providing a fair and balanced approach on the Mountain Meadows Massacre is Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, Jr., and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[143] Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), book flap, 193, emphasis added; see Shipps, *Promised Land*, 318.

self-proclaimed mission [with over one thousand members sent to prison[144]], and with the Supreme Court upholding the law by a 5-4 majority in early 1890, Church President Wilford Woodruff announced his intention "to submit to those laws" and use his "influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to ... do likewise."[145]

Among other repercussions, the anti-polygamy crusade seriously affected Mormon/Evangelical relations in the Southern United States. Patrick Mason shares that Southerners "claimed that Mormonism's unholy trinity of polygamy, heterodoxy, and theocracy threatened the very foundations of Christian society in the South, and in the nation at large."[146] In fact, the anti-polygamy crusade helped unify a nation that had been greatly divided as a result of the disastrous destruction of the Civil War.[147] Mason argues that "opposition to Mormon doctrine and politics, while not directly leading to violence, helped southerners justify behaviors that were primarily construed as a defense against Mormon licentiousness. By highlighting the dangerously heterodox nature of Mormon theology and politics, anti-Mormons further marginalized the religion and its members to the point at which violence and coercive legislation against it became not only tolerated but virtually mandated."[148] Once again, religious persecution was justified as the prosecution of a larger societal threat.[149] In this case, the result was at least 336 cases of anti-Mormon violence that were documented between the years 1876-1900, including cases of "whipping, beating, tarring and feathering" and the deaths of eight missionaries and members.[150]

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[144] See Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5.

[145] Fluhman, 285-286.

[146] Mason, 19.

[147] Ibid., 14.

[148] Ibid.

[149] See Fluhman 17; Gregory 87-88.

Mormonism's polygamous past also affected their participation in the 1893 World's

Parliament of Religions held in conjunction with the Chicago's World Fair. The Parliament

convened on September 11th and concluded on September 27th. Although Christianity largely

dominated the conference, nine other religions were represented: Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism,

Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto. Other religious traditions like

those of Native Americans were noticeably absent.[151] Mormons were also among those missing,

and it wasn't by accident.[152] In fact, polygamy was cited by Charles Carrol Bonney, one of the

event's organizers, as the main reason Mormon representation at the Parliament was avoided.[153]

Despite this religious prejudice, LDS leader B. H. Roberts continuously lobbied for the

Mormon cause, and his dogged determination eventually paid off. The Parliament permitted him

to present a paper on Mormonism, on condition that polygamy would not be discussed. Roberts

was first promised to present in the main hall where the most important proceedings of the

Parliament occurred. Unfortunately, Roberts was later sidelined to a lesser hall. The change was

called for by event organizers Charles Bonney and John Henry Barrows, as a result of a Muslim

presentation on polygamy that sparked a fire of controversy. Although Roberts had already given

his assurance that he would not speak of polygamy in his address, the Muslim/Mormon

connection was too much to overcome. Mormon historian Reid Neilson suggests that John Henry

Barrows might have intentionally prodded the Muslim presentation of polygamy in order to

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[150] Mason, 129, 134, 9, 15, 129, 134, 165-166, 186, 190.

[151] M. Darrol Bryant, as quoted in *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East*, eds.
Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Amal I. Khoury, and Emily Welty (Washington, D. C.: United States Institute of Peace
Press, 2007), 11.

[152] See Reid L. Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism: The Latter-day Saints and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair*
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also Davis Bitton, "B.H. Roberts at the Parliament of World
Religion, 1893, Chicago," *Sunstone 7,* no. 1 (January-February, 1982): 46-51.

[153] Ibid.

create a reason to disqualify Mormons. In response, Roberts refused any and all participation in protest of the discrimination. But before he left Chicago, Roberts did all he could to apprise the press of the true reason for his failure. Therefore, Mormonism was absent at the Parliament, not so much for a lack of preparation and planning by LDS leadership, but as a result of the intentional discrimination and discouragement of Charles Bonney and John Barrows, Protestant leaders of the World's Parliament of Religions. [154]

Tensions over polygamy also reignited in 1903 over the seating of newly-elected Senator Reed Smoot of Utah. When Smoot traveled to Washington, D.C. to be sworn in, he was initially denied membership due to reports of the continued performance of plural marriage by Church leaders. Smoot, who was also an apostle and leader in the Mormon Church, became extremely suspect. One of the largest United States Congressional trials and investigations in history was thereby launched with the fervent support of Evangelical constituencies who hoped not only to end polygamy once and for all but to also bring a final end to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. [155] After a second manifesto again declaring the end of polygamy by the Church, and with the support of President Theodore Roosevelt, Reed Smoot was able to take his Senate seat and Mormonism—now deemed American enough by the Evangelical dominated society—lived to see another day. [156]

Conclusion

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[154] Ibid.

[155] See Flake, 2, 160; Shipps, Promised Land, 318; Thomas Alexander argues that the strongest opposition to the seating of Reed Smoot, and also of B. H. Roberts on an earlier occasion, came from Evangelicals in *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 262.

[156] See Flake, "Introduction."

In summary of the treatment Mormons received during the first century of the United States, particularly at the hands of Evangelicals, Patrick Mason states that "Mormonism was America's most vilified homegrown faith."[157] And Martin E. Marty, the distinguished professor of Christian History at the University of Chicago, likewise concluded that Mormons were "the most despised large group as of 1893."[158] Evangelical animosity towards Mormonism was grounded in the Christian heretical tradition from the second century AD. Because of this tradition, Evangelicals were inherently afraid of heresy for two main reasons: temporal treason and eternal damnation. In the newly formed United States of America, social instability caused great paranoia for potential risks to the new nation. Due to heterodox claims of a new prophet and new scripture, Mormonism was quickly labeled as dangerous, not only to Christianity, but to America as a whole. This perceived danger only grew as Mormonism continued to differentiate itself further through the practices of polygamy, communalism, and theocracy. Mormons thereby joined Muslims and Catholics as potential threats to the overthrow of American Protestant civilization.

Although Mormon conflict with Evangelicals could be characterized by sharp disagreement; Evangelical conflict with Mormons was characterized by coercive suppression. Mormonism condemned Evangelicalism as apostate or heretical; but Evangelicalism sought the complete destruction of Mormonism altogether. Mormons sought to resist such change until finally acquiescing to Evangelical demands. Although Mormonism was dragged kicking and screaming into Protestant America, it soon personified in many ways the very culture it sought to resist. In fact, Mormonism not only became American, but Evangelically American. As Kathleen

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[157] Mason, book flap.

[158] Martin E. Marty, *The Irony of It All, 1893-1919,* Vol. 1 of *Modern American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 301.

Flake pointed out: "It is as if there were two Latter-day Saint churches, not one."[159] She explains, "Defined by polygamous family structure, utopian communal economy, and rebellious theocratic government, nineteenth-century Mormonism seems to have little relation, except by contrast, to the twenty-first-century Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . Indeed, the church's present reputation, for good or ill, appears to be based on a reverse set of identity markers: idealization of the nuclear family, unapologetic capitalism, and patriotic republicanism."[160]

It is historically apparent, that without the Evangelical persecution brought to bear on Mormons (physically, politically, and culturally), Mormonism would not have changed. Whether one is in favor or not of such changes within Mormonism, the extinction of a unique American religious culture should at least cause one to pause over the justice of such actions. In addition, these changes were a result of interpreting the Constitution of the United States in a way that significantly limited religious freedom. It is worth considering whether or not this limitation of freedom was in the best interest of the American people. As for the Mormon/Evangelical relationship, the first century of association concludes with a general pattern that has held true of Mormon/Evangelical relations ever since: Evangelical opposition to Mormonism resulting in greater Mormon assimilation of Evangelical identity. In the nineteenth century, Mormon assimilation of Evangelicalism primarily affected the social structures of marriage, politics, and economics. In the twentieth century, Mormon assimilation of Evangelical identity would focus more on the incorporation of Evangelical ideology and theology.

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[159] Flake, 1-2.

[160] Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO:
EVANGELICAL OPPOSITION TO MORMONISM IN
TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

Introduction

The start of the twentieth century witnessed the division of Protestantism into Modernist and Fundamentalist branches, with Evangelicals of the nineteenth century generally joining the Fundamentalist movement. Both Modernism and Fundamentalism influenced and challenged Mormonism in various ways. Although Modernist Protestants permitted a greater openness and acceptance of Mormonism, the philosophies and methods that caused it to part ways with Fundamentalism were highly debated among Mormons. Fundamentalist Protestants became the new guardians of Christian orthodoxy attacking both liberal philosophies and smaller heretical groups now labeled "cults." Yet it was the Fundamentalist, not Liberal, theology that Mormonism ultimately embraced. Fundamentalism caused Mormonism to become more Fundamentalist by nature, although Fundamentalism was the primary driving force of opposition to Mormonism in the twentieth century. In essence, Mormons became more Evangelical than ever before, and as a result, more threatening to Evangelicals than ever before.

The Modernist/Fundamentalist Division

Today "Americans are…arguably the most religious people on earth, as measured by both institutional affiliation and self-description."[161] America is also one of the most Christian of nations. A Gallup poll conducted near Christmas day 2009 found that 78% of Americans identified themselves as Christian. America is also predominately Protestant. The description of America as predominately white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant or WASP has been a very accurate

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[161] Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-first Century*, 3rd ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 2.

one throughout the nation's history.[162] In a 2009 Gallup poll, 56% identified themselves as

Protestant, 22% as Catholic, 9% claimed a religious identity other than Christian, and 13%

claimed no religious identity at all.[163] Gallup has conducted the same poll for over sixty years.

When compared to previous years, there is a noticeable trend downward in Christian identity and

Protestant identity in particular. When first conducted in 1948, 91% of Americans identified

themselves as Christian. That makes for an overall loss of 13% for Christianity. As for

Protestants, the 1948 number was 69%, indicating a loss of 13% overall. Catholics began at 22%,

climbed to a high of 29% in 1978, and then sank back to their 1948 level of 22%. Therefore, the

overall losses to Christianity have come at the expense of the Protestant majority. The Protestant

loss has been even more devastating to the Evangelical/Fundamentalist brand of Protestantism,

considering Evangelicals now only make up around 26% of the American population, and

roughly half of all Protestants in the nation.[164] This is a very different picture from a century ago.

Evangelicalism was the dominant form of American Protestantism throughout the 1800s.

This is why nineteenth century America was and continues to be referred to with phrases like

"Christian America," "Christian civilization," "Protestant America," "Protestant Century,"

"Protestant empire," "Righteous Empire," as well as "Evangelical America" or "Evangelical

civilization."[165] Evangelical Protestantism was also called the "unofficial religious

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[162] William R. Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 2-3.

[163] Frank Newport, "This Christmas, 78% of Americans Identify as Christian," Gallup Wellbeing, entry posted Dec. 24, 2009, http://www.gallup.com/poll/124793/This-Christmas-78-Americans-Identify-Christian.aspx (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

[164] The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "U. S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic, February 2008," Pew Research Center, entry posted Feb. 25, 2008, http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf (accessed 4/20/2012).

[165] Robert Baird, *Religion in America: Or An Account of the Origin, Progress, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical in the United States; With Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 16; Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand

establishment."[166] "As a result of the revivals [of the Second Great Awakening in the early part of the 1800s] . . . evangelical institutions moved to the center of American culture. By the 1830s, evangelical churches occupied the 'mainline,' of American Christianity. . . . By 1850 . . . evangelical communities predominated the landscape. Baptists and Methodists alone comprised over half of the nation's attenders."[167] But the rapidity of Evangelical increase before the Civil War was almost equaled by the swift decline of Evangelicalism after the Civil War.

Several factors led to the demise of the Evangelical majority within Protestantism and within America as a whole. Two main reasons were immigration and modern philosophies. Evangelicalism continued to grow in post-bellum America, but it couldn't keep pace with the massive waves of immigrants (from different Christian and religious persuasions) pouring into the country. Between the years 1860 and 1926, the population of the United States grew from 31.5 million to over 117 million. During this same time (by way of comparison) the combined number of "white Protestants of British background—Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Disciples, and the like—grew over threefold [about the same rate as the American population] . . . from over 8,000,000 to nearly 30,000,000."[168] Nevertheless, "their proportion in the churchgoing population declined from nearly 70 percent to considerably under 50 percent during this period."[169] The loss to Protestantism was the result of gains for Catholicism and Judaism. Roman Catholicism grew from about 3.5 million in 1870 to

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Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 192, 222, 243, 286; George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13; Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 66.

[166] George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 4.

[167] Sweeney, 74, 62.

[168] Noll, *United States and Canada*, 361.

[169] Ibid, 362.

over 15 million by 1910.[170] "The number of Jews in the United States went from an estimated

700,000 in 1906 to over 4,100,000 in 1926."[171] In both cases the dramatic rise in numbers

occurred in about 20 years. By 1890, Roman Catholicism surpassed Methodism as the single

largest Christian denomination in America, and has remained so ever since.[172] Larger numbers of

Asians also came pouring into the United States along with their native religions of Buddhism

and Hinduism, among others. Further immigration caused American cities to swell creating new

demographics and thereby weakening the previous rural Evangelical Protestant stranglehold on

the nation.

Perhaps more significant than immigration, Evangelical Protestantism underwent a

division into Conservative and Liberal factions due to disagreement over the application of

modern philosophies within their denominations, institutions, and schools. Darwinism and higher

criticism caused many to question the reliability of the Bible, the creation of the world, and the

miracles, sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many also began to emphasize a social

gospel over traditional doctrine, or in other words Christian service was given preeminence over

Christian theology. Although both sides initially hung on to the "Evangelical" label, those who

embraced the new ideas began to be referred to as Liberal, Progressive, Modernist or Mainline

Protestants, while those who maintained the traditional Protestant Evangelical viewpoint began

to call themselves Conservatives or Fundamentalists.

The "Fundamentalist" brand originated from the title of a twelve book series written in

defense of the fundamentals of Christianity. Through the financing of Lyman and Milton

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[170] Ibid., 348.

[171] Ibid., 361.

[172] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 121.

Stewart, two wealthy big oil tycoons, *The Fundamentals* were published between 1910 and 1915,

and distributed for free to "every pastor, missionary, theological professor, Sunday school

superintendent, and religious editor in the English-speaking world . . . some three million

individual volumes in all."[173] Although their immediate impact was minimal, Evangelical

historian George Marsden argues that "it became a symbolic point of reference for identifying a

'fundamentalist' movement."[174] In 1918, the World's Christian Fundamentals Association was

formed, and began holding a series of conferences in 1919 that really launched the

Fundamentalist name and movement. Marsden observes,

> Whereas a few years earlier the vast publication campaign of *The Fundamentals* had produced little perceptible effect, now the Fundamentals conference was the spark that helped to generate a national movement. . . . .
> One result of the rapid spread of this type of thinking among conservative Protestants was the formal organization of an anti-modernist protest in the Northern Baptist Convention. This was the actual occasion of the invention of the term 'fundamentalist.' Curtis Lee Laws, editor of a prominent Baptist paper, the Watchman Examiner, coined the word, and defined 'fundamentalists' as those ready 'to do battle royal for the Fundamentals . . . As the term 'fundamentalist' suggests, Law's primary concern, as well as of the organizers of parallel fundamentalist movements at the time, was doctrinal.[175]

Many Fundamentalists organized their doctrinal defense around five issues that were first

suggested by the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1910: "(1) the inerrancy of Scripture, (2) the

Virgin Birth of Christ, (3) his substitutionary atonement, (4) his bodily resurrection, and (5) the

authenticity of miracles."[176] These five "essential" doctrines came to be known as the "five

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[173] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 119.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid., 158-160.

[176] Ibid., 117.

points of fundamentalism."[177] Armed with these spiritual weapons of war, Fundamentalists fought for control of Protestant denominations, schools, and other institutions—but lost.

The symbolic final battle came in the 1925 "Scopes Monkey Trial." Like many other Southern states, Tennessee passed an anti-evolution law that prohibited teaching Darwinism in the schools. John Scopes, a biology teacher in Dayton, challenged the law. For his defense, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) supplied Clarence Darrow. For the prosecution, former presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan volunteered. Although Fundamentalists saw the trial primarily as a defense of truth, Modernists saw it as a demonstration of the uneducated, irrational, and stubborn nature of Fundamentalism. Hence, the trial became more than a fight over evolution—it became part of a much larger cultural war within the United States. Like the social upheavals unleashed by the American Revolution, once again cultural chaos descended upon the American nation. The radicalism of the American Revolution created conditions that catapulted Evangelical Protestantism into a century of dominance. But the crisis of the Civil War, the tension of Southern Reconstruction, the import of modern educational ideas, the vast numbers of new immigrants that supplied different Christian and religious affiliations and fueled large city growth, along with the carnage of over a million deaths in World War I—created a new century dominated by religious pluralism. As Robert Baird had divided America in 1844 into the simple religious categories of Evangelical and Unevanglical, America was now becoming religiously divided along the lines of Fundamentalist and Modernist (with economic, social, geographical, and political implications). Such divisions even spanned beyond Protestant lines into other faiths including Catholics, Jews, and Mormons.

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[177] Ibid.

The Scopes Monkey Trial symbolized this new found divide as "the clash of two worlds, the rural and the urban. In the popular imagination, there were on the one side the small town, the backwoods, half-educated yokels, obscurantism, crackpot hawkers of religion, fundamentalism, the South, and the personification of the agrarian myth himself, William Jennings Bryan. Opposed to these were the city, the clique of New York-Chicago lawyers, intellectuals, journalists, wits, sophisticates, modernists, and the cynical agnostic Clarence Darrow."[178] In fact, Evangelicals once again saw themselves as defending the American civilization they had begun to define back amidst their first conflicts with Mormonism. With the same zeal they had fought against false religions, false beliefs, and false practices that included false prophets, additional scripture, communalism, polygamy, and theocracy—Evangelicals now fought against false secular ideas that were infiltrating their churches and places of learning and destroying American civilization and culture. As they had succeeded in defeating slavery and polygamy, "the twin relics of barbarism," as well as defeating alcoholism through prohibition, Evangelicals were confident they could now win the war on modernism as well.

It was only after WWI that Fundamentalism cemented itself into a solid movement not only to save Christianity but America as a whole. The false secular ideas like higher criticism of the Bible and Darwinism were believed to have created a liberal German theology that thereby lead to a survival of the fittest militarism that threatened the world. "As in conservative-evangelical anti-German war-time rhetoric, evolution and modernism were tied together and seen as a cultural as well as a specifically religious threat. Out of these concerns, to which anti-communism was soon added, fundamentalist super-patriotism began to grow."[179] The only cure

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[178] Ibid., 185.

[179] Ibid., 152.

therefore was to defeat these false liberal ideas before they had the same devastating effect in America.

Although John Scopes was found guilty in the "Monkey Trial" (with the ruling being later overturned on a technicality), "in the trial by public opinion and the press, it was clear that the twentieth century, the cities, and the universities had won a resounding victory, and that the country, the South, and the fundamentalists were guilty as charged."[180] Marsden argues that as a result of the Scopes Monkey Trial, "'Fundamentalism' now applied to almost every aspect of American rural or small-town Protestantism," and "the obscurantist label . . . would ever after stick to fundamentalists."[181] In addition to the public relations disaster of the Scopes Monkey Trial, the public defeat of Fundamentalism was sealed with the passing of William Jennings Bryan, the humiliated prosecuting attorney, just five days later.[182]

As in the schools so in the churches, the battle cry of "tolerance" by liberal and moderate individuals won the day.[183] Fundamentalists thereby faded into one of three positions: (1) those who made peace with Liberals and continued in the Mainline churches, (2) those who joined smaller charismatic denominations originally unaffiliated with the Fundamentalist cause, and (3) those who were "the most extreme fundamentalists separated into their own denominations or into independent churches . . . for whom strict separation was an article of faith. By about 1960, this wing of the movement was the only one that still chose to wear the badge of

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[180] Ibid., 186.

[181] Ibid., 188.

[182] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 164. Noll says that the death of Bryan was a more significant marking point than the Scopes Monkey Trial for the death of Fundamentalism.

[183] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 171.

'fundamentalist.'"[184] For some Fundamentalists, the separation from Liberal Protestants became so complete that they no longer considered them to be of the same religion. For example, Professor Machen of Princeton University wrote in his book *Christianity and Liberalism*, "despite the liberal use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions."[185] Today, many religiously conservative Americans continue to vilify liberal Protestantism, including 2012 Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum, who strongly relates to Evangelicals as a conservative Catholic.[186]

The Modernist/Fundamentalist Influence on Mormonism

Like in Protestantism, Modernism and Fundamentalism created divisions within Mormonism.[187] But unlike in Protestantism, the divisions within Mormonism were not as destructive to ecclesiastical and educational structures for three reasons that remain true today. First, all local governance of the LDS Church is accomplished by lay leaders who receive no formal academic theological training and subsequently pay little attention to larger intellectual trends and debates. Instead, a study of the scriptures—aided by Church produced materials,

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[184] Ibid., 195.
[185] Sweeney, 168.

[186] See Ed Kilgore, "Santorum to Mainline Protestants: You Are Satan's Spawn," Political Animal Blog, http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/political-animal-a/2012_02/santorum_to_mainline_protestan035489.php (accessed April 26, 2012).

[187] For various accounts on the Modernist/Fundamentalist controversy within Mormonism see Gary James Bergera, Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985); Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); O. Kendall White, Jr., *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987); Ernest Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 Vols. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1976); Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

along with the teachings of LDS prophets and apostles—comprise the primary religious education of most Church leaders and members. Second, the Mormon Church and its schools are under the supervision of the First Presidency of the Church and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, thereby maintaining control over any intellectual disputes arising among local congregations, as well as in educational institutions such as Brigham Young University. In contrast with Mormonism, Protestantism has no authority figure like a prophet to prevent the ultimate division of its denominations and schools when controversy erupts. Finally, Mormonism had a theological tradition laid out by Joseph Smith that was less confrontational with Modernist ideas. For example, the Mormon emphasis on a finite God, an optimistic view of human nature, and salvation by works—was very compatible with theories of evolution and the perfectibility of man. In fact, some scholars have argued that Liberal Mormonism was really Traditional Mormonism.[188] Some of the Church's most prolific theologians: B. H. Roberts, John A. Widstoe, and James E. Talmage—where all noticeably influenced in their works by Modernism. Therefore, the first response of Mormons to the Modernist/Fundamentalist division was the assimilation of Modernism. But, as will be seen, it was a short-lived position.

Despite the lack of any lasting organizational division within Mormonism, the Modernist/Fundamentalist controversy did cause division among individual Mormons, especially among leaders and educators. The General Authorities of the Church differed among themselves in respect to the theories of evolution and higher criticism of the Bible. [189] Some chose an either/or approach to secular studies and the study of religion, while others sought for their

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[188] See O. Kendall White, Jr. *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), xiv, xxii.

[189] General authorities are those whose office has jurisdiction over the general Church, as opposed to the local denominations. These include (in ascending order): the Seventy, the Apostles, and the Prophet or President of the Church.

reconciliation and harmony. For example, despite the opposition of apostle Joseph Fielding Smith to evolution, the apostles James E. Talmage and John A. Widstoe had favorable views concerning the scientific theory.[190] The First Presidency of the Church, under the leadership of Joseph F. Smith (father of the apostle Joseph Fielding Smith), issued a declaration on the "Origin of Man" in 1909 stating that Adam was the first man and the father of the human race, but otherwise did not directly address the issue of evolution.[191] All other official pronouncements of the First Presidency reechoed this same position. In 1910, the First Presidency specifically called for the tolerance of a "diversity of opinion" in regards to matters of science.[192] With a moratorium on publically discussing evolution issued by the administration of President Heber J. Grant, The Church of Jesus Christ thereby followed the example of many Liberal Protestant denominations who advocated tolerance for both Modernist and Fundamentalist members within their congregations.[193] But this uneasy truce would continue to be challenged ever after.

Disagreements among top leaders over evolution received renewed attention in the mid-twentieth century, when Church President David O. McKay disagreed with Joseph Fielding Smith, who was by then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In 1954, Smith published the book *Man: His Origin and Destiny* that strongly condemned evolution. It was soon used to train religious educators. Asked about the text, President McKay made it clear that the Church had no official position on evolution, and that the book represented the thoughts of only one man.[194] When David O. McKay died in 1970, Joseph Fielding Smith succeeded him as the

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[190] Givens, *Paradox*, 199-206.
[191] Bergera and Priddis, 136.

[192] Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund, "Words in Season from the First Presidency", *Deseret Evening News*, 1910-12-17, sec. 1, p. 3.

[193] Bergera and Priddis, 151.

[194] Ibid., 152-154.

tenth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and as a result, Smith's

Fundamentalist anti-evolutionary view succeeded to dominate Mormonism for the rest of the

century. This position was strengthened by the apostles Bruce R. McConkie and Boyd K. Packer,

and eventual Church President Ezra Taft Benson—all strong vocal critics of evolution.[195] This

anti-evolutionary position, along with other Fundamentalist positions, came to be reflected in

both the Church manuals and the Church's corps of religious educators.[196]

In the late 1800s, the Church encouraged the construction of local educational academies.

Not many years passed when many of these academies were either abandoned or turned over to

the government due to financial difficulties. Brigham Young University (BYU) began as one of

these many academies. From early on, BYU was challenged with balancing secular and religious

education, especially as the Modernist/Fundamentalist controversy intensified. The initial

approach of the Church could be characterized as toleration for different points of view in

regards to religion and science.[197] But within the Church's educational system, and especially at

BYU, toleration soon wore out its welcome. At the beginning of the twentieth century, BYU was

on the path of becoming a highly respectable university with the recruitment of LDS professors,

who had been trained in some of the most prestigious universities in the eastern United States.

But complaints began to be sent to Church headquarters over particular teachings from some of

these new professors. Especially troublesome were reports of students losing their faith over such

instruction. In 1911, after an investigation of the matter, some of the professors were forced to

resign.[198] Ever after, there has been a tension within Mormonism between faith and intellect,

[195] Ibid., 171
[196] Mauss, 95-99.

[197] Wilkinson, 1:411-412.

[198] Ibid., 1:426.

particularly as it related to any of the Church-owned educational institutions. Hardly a decade would pass without additional flare-ups over evolution and other sensitive subjects like Mormon history—and additional faculty purging was undertaken.[199]

If there was one figure more responsible for the Conservative Fundamentalist nature of Mormonism, it was J. Reuben Clark, Jr, who served as a counselor in the First Presidency for over twenty eight years.[200] Having personally experienced a crisis of faith, Clark intentionally decided that the only way to remain faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ was to largely ignore rational inquiry when it came to religion.[201] His own chosen course eventually became the "Charted Course in Church Education," an address he delivered in 1938. His speech has subsequently become the constitution of religious education in the Church. All potential harmonizing of religion and science, or any other subject, in religious education was dismissed in favor of a simple focus on doctrinal basics, as found in the scriptures and the words of LDS prophets and apostles.[202]

Successive Church leaders followed the Fundamentalist path of intellectual insularity for religious education as outlined by President Clark. The pursuit of higher degrees of education, especially in fields related to religion, was no longer encouraged. Religion courses were streamlined into basic scriptural and LDS history classes. Greater focus was given on personal application. The use of related religious or secular scholarship was discouraged. In general, religion teachers were professionally developed in-house and primarily published, if at all, by

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[199] See Givens, *Paradox*, Chapter 11.
[200] This claim seems to be universally echoed in various studies; see Mauss, 80; Bergera and Priddis, 60; such conclusions generally credit D. Michael Quinn, *Elder Statesman: A Biography of J. Rueben Clark* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002).

[201] Quinn, 27.

[202] Mauss, 95-99.

their own presses. And scriptural literalism became the dominate method of interpreting scripture.[203]

Mormonism reflected Fundamentalist values in joining the fight against alcohol during the Prohibition movement. A result of which was to enshrine the Word of Wisdom health code—with its restrictions on alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea—as a mandatory requirement for entrance into Mormon temples.[204] Mormonism also began to stress an anti-communist super-patriotism, that was championed by leaders like David O. McKay and Ezra Taft Benson. For example, Benson thought that the civil rights movement was a conspiracy for communists to take over the country.[205] Mormonism also reflected Fundamentalist values in its views on strict Sabbath day observance, dress codes, and moral standards.

Mormonism reaffirmed core beliefs like the divinity, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the divine inspiration of the Bible and other scripture, and the authenticity of miracles. Beginning around the mid-century point, there was a greater emphasis placed on an infinite God, the depravity of man, and salvation by grace. Sociologist Kendall White called this movement Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy. White argues that Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy, like Protestant Neo-Orthodoxy, was a "crisis theology," in that both movements developed out of a response to the crisis of modernity.[206] The two central features of crisis theologies were anti-intellectualism and greater submission to authority. Yet, Mormonism and Protestantism enacted these two concepts so differently that White's argument is problematic. Nevertheless, White provided great

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[203] Ibid.
[204] See Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), Chapter 13.

[205] See Gregory A. Prince, William Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), Chapter 12.

[206] White, xi.

insight into the changes in Mormon doctrinal interpretation. He explains that "Mormons have traditionally believed in a finite God, an optimistic assessment of human nature, and a doctrine of salvation by merit. In contrast, most Mormon neo-orthodox theologians have tended to embrace the concept of an absolute God, a pessimistic assessment of human nature, and a doctrine of salvation by grace."[207] In other words, Traditional Mormonism that was more compatible to Modernism, now gave way to Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy that was more compatible with Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism.

Greater religious pluralism, ushered in by the Modernist/Fundamentalist split, caused Evangelical Protestantism to lose its dominating power in America. This loss to Evangelicalism resulted in an overall gain for other religious and non-religious groups in America, as diversity greatly increased. As mentioned earlier, polling throughout the twentieth century clearly indicated that Americans continued to identify less with Christianity, less with Protestantism, less with Evangelicalism, and less with formal religious churches and denominations.[208]

One group that has benefited from the losses of Evangelicalism has been the Mormons. Spencer Fluhman observed, "Even as some [Evangelicals] bemoan the decline of 'Christian' America, there can be no doubt that Mormonism has benefited as religious pluralism has become less a disorienting problem for contemporary Americans and more a valued ideal."[209] The development of Liberal Protestantism helped the United States to become more pluralistic, civil, tolerant, and understanding of other religions, thereby benefiting minority groups like the Mormons enormously. In the twentieth century, Mormons enjoyed greater acceptance and

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[207] White, xvi.

[208] Frank Newport, "In U.S., Increasing Number Have No Religious Identity," Gallup Politics, entry posted May 21, 2012, http://www.gallup.com/poll/128276/increasing-number-no-religious-identity.aspx (accessed on Oct. 28, 2010).

[209] Fluhman, 293.

inclusion into the American mainstream than ever before. Such acceptance of religious plurality

and especially the focus on the importance of social gospel issues caused Mormons not only to

be favorably looked upon but also idealized as quintessential Americans by the middle of the

twentieth century.

In a study of periodical literature about Mormonism written between the years 1860 and

1960, historian Jan Shipps demonstrated that Mormons have almost always suffered from a

terrible public image in the American newspapers, magazines, and journals except for a forty-

year period of about 1920 to 1960.[210] In fact, Shipps concludes that the decade of the mid-

1960's to the early 1970s was the "golden age" of the American Mormon image.[211] In comparing

her study of Mormonism to the history of Conservative Evangelicals or Fundamentalists during

this same period, it interesting to note how the rise in the Mormon image correlates precisely

with the drop in the Fundamentalist image in the 1920s. As noted, the 1920's amounted to the

Fundamentalist's last stand where they eventually suffered a humiliating publicity defeat in the

Scopes Monkey Trial. Meanwhile, Mormons slowly began to be recognized for their good works

and superb patriotism. This positivity was later accentuated through coverage of the Church's

welfare program during the Great Depression and faithful service and aid provided during and

after WWII. Even President John F. Kennedy came to the Mormon Tabernacle to praise the

Mormon story of hard work and perseverance as a great example to all Americans.[212]

Nevertheless, as Liberal Protestants and others became more tolerant of differing religious

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[210] Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 62.

[211] Shipps, *Sojourner*, 62, 110.

[212] See John Ben Haws, "The Mormon Image in the American Mind: Shaping Public Perception ofLatter-day Saints, 1968-2008," (PhD diss., University of Utah, August 2010), 19.

groups, Fundamentalists rearmed themselves for the defense of true Christianity and for war on what they labeled as "Christian cults," including Mormonism.

Fundamentalist Countercultism

Liberal Protestantism and modern ideas such as evolution, higher criticism, and communism were not the only things Fundamentalists were fighting in the early twentieth century. As orthodoxy was ever their first concern, Fundamentalists also continued attacking Mormonism and all of the other threatening "isms." As such, Fundamentalists became the self-appointed doctrinal watchdogs of orthodox Christianity, carrying on the tradition of their heresiologist forbears. In the same way they sought to reform the Liberal Protestant churches of America, their inspection included everyone else deemed as "Other." Hence whether it was Liberal Protestantism, world religions, new religious movements—Fundamentalists were on an attack and destroy mission in order to defeat their doctrinal enemies and protect those in their care. Mormonism happens to be but one among many whom these theological police sought to incriminate. Entire organizations and ministries were founded for the sole purpose of criticizing the religion of others; to the demonstration of its complete "otherness" from the one true religion. In such critiques, the Fundamentalists set the rules and parameters. They were the keepers of the gate. They were the ultimate supreme authority on doctrine, despite claiming to simply be enforcing the Bible. And now, Fundamentalists incorporated a new word to worsen the stigma of those they perceived to be outside the doctrinal norm: "cult."

Overviewing the historical usage of the word "cult," religious scholar, Philip Jenkins, reveals that

> Around 1900…the term "cult" replaced the older polemical language of
> delusions, fanatics, enthusiasts, and imposters, [as well as heterodoxy and heresy]. The

word has several distinct meanings. In its original Latin sense, *cultus* simply implied a religion or a type of religious practice, and this sense was adopted into English to signify a religious denomination or a particular tradition of worship. Scholars still speak of the cult of relics, the cult of the Virgin, and the cult of saints, while modern archaeologists might describe a temple site as cultic in nature, and in none of these phrases is there any suggestion of savagery, fanaticism, or charismatic leadership.

The new more hostile meaning of the word derived from growing Western contact with non-Christian and polytheist religions in [Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and South America] , which were presented . . . in terms of primitive idolatry and ritual violence. . . . [A] racist subtext implied that such practices and superstitions were . . . unfitting for advanced, rational Europeans . . . Cults implied extravagant personal devotion to a leader or spiritual teacher, and it was . . . [even] extended . . . semiseriously to literary fanaticism, in phrases like "the cult of Poe[.]"

These exotic connotations were now attached to innovative domestic sects, implying that these too were bizarre, exotic, and non-Christian and were unfit for intelligent (white) believers.[213]

Therefore, although the term cult was originally a neutral religious term (as was the term "heresy"), it was used negatively to describe Asian and African religious practices perceived as primitive and bizarre. Eventually, this newly and negatively connoted word was transferred to unorthodox and heretical Christian groups by Fundamentalists.

The Fundamentalist incorporation of the word "cult" was never simply a new word for Christian heresy or heterodoxy; it was an intentional attempt to worsen the image of perceived heretical groups by further associating them with what many Americans would consider the most savage, foreign, and exotic religions in the world. The term was never an objective respectful description of unorthodox Christian groups, but a bigoted hateful pejorative aimed at frightening people. Although Jenkins says that the word "cult" "replaced the older polemical language," it is important to understand that the term still *referred* to and *implied* the existence of "delusions, fanatics, enthusiasts . . . imposters," and heretics—now combined with Asian and African savagery. In contrast to the perception that the word "cult" became associated with crazy groups

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[213] Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 48-49.

in the 1960s, Philip Jenkins asserts that the word had already been applied to such groups in the 1920s:

> Although the Christian sects initially attracted most of the furor about cults, by the 1920s this term expanded to take account of other movements even less integrally connected to the Christian mainstream, namely occult and esoteric groups that often drew inspiration from Asian religions. For the popular media, if not for the Christian polemicists, the cult concept largely shifted its meaning to comprise these even more outré movements, which were proliferating so impressively. Already by the 1920s the word "cult" had acquired virtually all its modern freight: it described small religious groups with highly unorthodox ideas, unshakably loyal to a teacher or prophet, who might well bear some Oriental title like "guru" or "swami." And at least in some instances, cults and gurus were associated with corruption, fraud, and sexual license.[214]

Through guilt by association, once Mormonism was labeled a cult, it was connected to every other similarly labeled movement and to all of their attending baggage.

Cults do not represent any new kind of sociological phenomena. On the contrary, cults as defined by Fundamentalists, have always existed but were simply referred to by different words and labels (as has been demonstrated). For example, New Testament and post-New Testament Christianity could easily fit the definition of a cult. As a result of such considerations, the term defies any universal and precise usage. After demonstrating the utter futility of various proposed definitions, Philip Jenkins argues convincingly that the word can only be used subjectively, not objectively. "Cults differ from churches in no particular aspect of behavior or belief, and the very term 'cult' is a strictly subjective one; it tells us as much about the people applying that label as it does about the group that is so described. Briefly, cults are small, unpopular religious bodies, the implication being that much of their cultish quality comes not from any inherent qualities of the groups themselves, but from the public reaction to them." In recognition of these facts, most

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[214] Jenkins, 69.

scholars today have replaced the word "cult" with the more objective phrase of "new religious movement."[215]

In labeling groups as "cults," Fundamentalists became "Anticultists" or "Countercultists." Although the terms have been used synonymously, religious scholar, Douglas Cowan, makes a practical distinction between those with a secular interest as "Anticultists," and those who have a religious interest as "Countercultists."[216] Due to very different purposes and methods of those with a secular or religious interest in cults, I believe such a distinction to be helpful. Hence, Fundamentalists, and their Evangelical descendants, became the Christian Countercultists. Like previous anti-Mormon efforts, the principal fight dealt with orthodoxy, although attacks easily included any and all other areas that would contribute to the destruction of Mormonism. In *The Fundamentals,* a 1910-1915 book series, an entire section was dedicated to dangerous unorthodox groups. A whole chapter was written on Mormonism. This article provides a good example of how the same polemical attacks continued under the more negative label of cult, and how the principal focus was once again on orthodoxy.

Living over thirty years in Utah, hearing several LDS leaders speak in the tabernacle, and extensively reading Mormon scripture and literature, Reverend R. G. McNiece of the Presbyterian Church, felt very qualified to author a critique of Mormonism for the *Fundamentals*. In the oft-repeated reasoning for attacking Mormonism, McNiece claimed to love the Mormon people, just not the Mormon Church. And though he would rather not do it, he felt obligated to do so because Mormonism was a threat that "keeps from 1,500 to 2,000 missionaries scattered up and down the country, propagating this most erroneous and harmful system,

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[215] See John Ben Haws, "The Mormon Image in the American Mind: Shaping Public Perception ofLatter-day Saints, 1968-2008," (PhD diss., University of Utah, August 2010), 221.
[216] See Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003), xi.

organizing Mormon meetings, and separating families, in the Eastern, Middle, Southern, and Northwestern States," therefore, he reasons, "patriotic and Christian people everywhere need to have a clear idea of what Mormonism really is, and the shameful way in which it dishonors the Bible and the Christian religion, so that they can help to protect their own communities from the curse."[217] Like most anti-Mormon literature, McNiece incorporated the same arguments first used back with Campbell and Howe. Mormonism was "*anti-American*" and "*anti-Christian*."[218] It was "*a deliberate counterfeit of the Christian religion*," with "*a counterfeit prophet*," "*a counterfeit Bible*," "*a counterfeit priesthood*," and "*a counterfeit group of apostles*."[219] But worse than all of these, McNiece emphasized that Mormonism was "positively Satanic."[220] Jenkins explains that the charge of "counterfeit Christianity" was taken more seriously by Evangelicals because it was more deceptive by nature than a self-proclaimed non-Christian religion.[221] According to this line of thought, the closer Mormonism came to Evangelicalism, the more dangerous it was, and the more it needed to be attacked.

Fighting the cults was also a great way for Fundamentalists to simultaneously fight Liberal Protestantism:

> Ostensibly attacking cults, conservative polemicists were also confronting their liberal rivals. . . . In 1918, the anti-Christian and diabolical forces at work in the contemporary world included not just the cults, like Christian Science, occultism, and Theosophy, but also modernist German theology. Conservatives were arguing that liberal Christianity had betrayed the religion's vital doctrines, leaving only a vague ecumenism, and thereby opened the door to seductive superstitions. . . .

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[217] R. G. McNiece, "Mormonism: Its Origins, Characteristics, and Doctrines," in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* , eds. R. A. Torrey, A. C. Dixon, and Others (1917; repr., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2003), 4:131-132.

[218] McNiece, 134-135.

[219] Ibid., 135-141.

[220] Ibid., 148.

[221] Jenkins, 50-53.

Against this troubling background, anticult books became a flourishing genre in the new century. . . .

At least until the 1960s, the majority of books concerning cults . . . compris[ed] Christian, and usually evangelical, attacks on other Christian and Christian-derived movements. [222]

Jenkins notes that "the first book title to use the word in its modern sense was the 1898 study of *Anti-Christian Cults* by A. H. Barrington, an Episcopal minister . . . His work was '[a]n attempt to show that Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Christian Science are devoid of supernatural powers and are contrary to the Christian religion.'"[223] Early tracts bore the names of *Christian Science Examined . . . The New Cult* (1906), *The Emmanuel Movement: A Brief History of the New Cult* (1908), and *In the Cult Kingdom: Mormonism, Eddyism, and Russellism* (1918). Later standard books on the subject were J. K. Baalen's *The Chaos of Cults: A Study of Present-Day 'Isms* (1938), and Anthony A. Hoekema's *The Four Major Cults* (1963), identified as Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, and Seventh-Day Adventism. And finally there was Walter Martin (1928-1989). Known as "the father of modern Christian cult apologetics," Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults* (1965) has long been regarded as the standard on the subject.[224]

The Rise of Neo-Evangelicalism

As Protestants split into Fundamentalist and Modernist parties, the "Evangelical" title faded briefly into the background. But it wasn't long before the term was reappropriated by a new post-fundamentalist coalition. The history of Christianity, especially the Protestant brand of

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[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid., 49.

[224] Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, gen. ed. Hank Hanegraaff, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997), 11.

Christianity, can be viewed as a series of reactionary movements or protests against perceived error within the body of Christ. As Liberals had reacted to Evangelicals, and as Fundamentalists had reacted to Liberals, now a new group of Neo-Evangelicals reacted to Fundamentalists. These New Evangelicals rose up in response to Fundamentalist separation and reclusiveness. They made proselytizing a top priority while retaining much of the same doctrinal priorities. They also sought to re-engage American culture as they had done earlier in the nation's history.

Some of these leaders included *"*Harold John Ockenga (1905-85), at various times the president of Fuller and Gordon-Conwell Seminaries, [who] called for a 'new evangelicalism' that would value scholarship and take an active interest in society while maintaining traditional Protestant orthodoxy . . . Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003), who expressed his concern for an intellectually responsible evangelicalism through teaching at Fuller and as the founding editor of *Christianity Today* (1956), called fundamentalists to a new engagement with American society and a new concern for theological reflection."[225] Evangelical historian Mark Noll shares that "Together these and like-minded leaders sought better education, better theology, and better cultural analysis.[226]

They worked hard to gain support for their efforts during the 1930s, and in the 1940s, their efforts began to pay off. The National Association of Evangelicals was formed in 1942. Fuller Theological Seminary was founded in 1947. The Evangelical Theological Society was formed in 1949, with the creation of their scholarly journal in 1958. And in 1956, through the help of Billy Graham, *Christianity Today* was first published.[227] Billy Graham was particularly

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[225] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 213-214.

[226] Ibid.

[227] See Sweeney, 170-178.

instrumental in the Neo-Evangelical movement. He became the public face of Evangelical

Christianity through his widely covered preaching crusades. In fact, George Marsden reports that

"for a time a convenient rule of thumb was that an evangelical was anyone who identified with

Billy Graham."[228] As an increasingly popular preacher, Graham lent great credibility to the Neo-

Evangelical cause.[229]

One result of these efforts was the construction or transformation of seminaries, colleges,

and universities into Neo-Evangelical think tanks. As with other aspects of nineteenth century

American culture, Evangelicals had dominated higher education. For example, "In 1839, fifty-

one of the fifty-four presidents of America's colleges were clergymen, most evangelicals."[230]

But during the same time period that Evangelicals lost control over the mainline denominations,

they also lost control over higher education. As a result, few Conservative Evangelical

institutions survived through the early 1900s, and most of these represented Fundamentalist

Bible Institutes. Neo-Evangelicals wanted to expand the scope of academic study to include

other areas of research beyond the bounds of holy scripture.

More than any other school, Fuller Theological Seminary was the premier intellectual

driving force of Neo-Evangelicalism, with its faculty comprised mostly of the founders and

"deans of neoevangelical thought."[231] Such men included founder Charles E. Fuller, who was

also a radio broadcast preacher, Harold Ockenga, the first president of Fuller, "Everett Harrison

in Bible, Carl Henry in theology, Harold Lindsell in history and missions, and Wilbur Smith in

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[228] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 234.

[229] For a good biography of Graham, see David Aikman, *Billy Graham: His Life and Influence* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

[230] Noll, *Scandal*, 111-112.

[231] Sweeny, 174-175.

apologetics."[232] The New Evangelicalism was so inextricably linked to Fuller Seminary that it is impossible to study the one without the other; so much so that historian George Marsden found he had to tell the stories together in order to make sense of either one. He realized that "In the history of Fuller Theological Seminary, founded in 1947 by such new evangelical reformers, we can trace the renewal of America's nineteenth-century evangelical heritage as it developed from a reform within fundamentalism into a separate movement."[233]

By the 1950s, Evangelicalism had once again successfully re-engaged American culture while simultaneously breaking away from Fundamentalism, and Fuller played a big role in that divide. Ironically, the leaders of Fuller Seminary did not originally intend Neo-Evangelicalism to become its own separate movement. Like so many movements within Protestantism, "the early Fuller was a major part of a concerted attempt . . . not [to] break with fundamentalism, but [to] reform [it] from within. The early Fuller was in striking ways a fundamentalist institution with a thoroughly fundamentalist constitution. Though *evangelical* may have been the more respectable word to use, few would have questioned the fundamentalist identification."[234] But over time the insistence on strict separation, dispensationalism, and extreme biblical inerrancy by more zealous Fundamentalists, made the break inevitable.

Today, there are around 167 institutions of higher learning claiming some sort of Evangelical affiliation in the United States. Although it would be impossible to claim that all of these institutions adhere to the same beliefs, it is interesting to note how some have softened their positions on many of the anti-modernist controversies fought earlier.[235] At least one

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[232] Ibid.
[233] George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 8.

[234] Ibid., 3.

Evangelical scholar claims that "most *evangelical* scientists support a form of theistic evolution and most *evangelical* Bible scholars practice higher criticism."[236] Despite such adaptations by some, Evangelicals claim a continued faithfulness to the most essential fundamentals of orthodox Christianity.

In addition to the intellectual world, Evangelicals eventually re-emerged onto the political scene in the 1970s. Although Billy Graham had become the preferred spiritual advisor to many United States Presidents, it wasn't until the 1970s that Neo-Evangelicalism, as a political movement, began to organize as a reaction to the cultural upheaval of the 1960s. In a nutshell, "distress over rapidly changing public standards regarding sexuality and the family combined with longstanding anti-communist patriotism to make fundamentalistic evangelicals ripe for political mobilization."[237] With the Equal Rights Amendment passed by the United States Senate in 1972, a decade of war was launched in the state ratification process. Proponents of the amendment claimed it was about equality for women. However, opponents of the measure claimed that the amendment was really about "an effort by aggressive feminists to impose their individualistic anti-family agenda on the whole culture."[238] A coalition organized by Catholics enlisted the support of Evangelicals and Mormons to successfully block the ratification process in the Evangelical-dominated Southern states as well as in the heavily populated Mormon states of Idaho, Utah, Arizona, and Nevada. As a result, Marsden believes that the ERA fight was the "the key that unlocked evangelical potential for overt political involvement."[239]

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[235] Estimate is taken from a list found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_evangelical_seminaries_and_theological_colleges (accessed 4/10/2012).

[236] Sweeny, 161, emphasis original.

[237] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 241.

[238] Ibid., 242.

[239] Ibid.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter, a self-proclaimed Evangelical won the Presidency of the United States. This along with the ERA battle caused *Newsweek* magazine to proclaim 1976 the "Year of the Evangelicals."[240] But Carter was not the kind of representative for which many Evangelicals were hoping. As a result, a group called the Moral Majority was founded by Jerry Falwell, a preacher with the Baptist Bible Fellowship. This new Religious Right sought to unite Evangelicals, Catholics, Mormons, and others in a common crusade of similar moral values. This new coalition was credited with helping Ronald Reagan win the Presidency of the United States in 1980 and thereby becoming one of the more powerful constituencies in the Republican Party. Surprisingly, abortion was not a central issue when Roe v. Wade occurred in 1973. But by the time of Reagan, the pro-life position became an important article of faith.[241]

In 1988, televangelist Pat Robertson ran for President, calling for a return to Bible-based civilization. The following year he formed the Christian Coalition that picked up from where the Moral Majority had left off. Unlike the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition did not endorse any candidates. Instead it provided voter information guides detailing the positions of candidates in regards to family values. The Christian Coalition boasted of great success under the management of Ralph Reed. In 1996, Reed wrote *Active Faith*, where he presented Christians, especially Evangelicals, as "the driving force behind nearly every major social reform movement in America."[242] Reed argued that the Christian Coalition was the continuing legacy of this Christian American heritage. In 1994, there occurred a Republican revolution. Republicans took over the House of Representatives for the first time since 1952, along with the Senate. In

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[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid., 243.

[242] Ralph Reed, *Active Faith: How Christians are Changing the Soul of American Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1996), book jacket.

addition, the GOP took control of most state governorships and legislatures. Reed claimed that

this Republican victory was due in large part to the Christian Coalition:

> Religious conservatives accounted for one-third of the entire electorate in 1994, contributing to a staggering 9-million-vote increase in Republican turnout over 1990. About forty-four of the seventy-three freshman Republicans elected to the House of Representatives in 1994 had close ties to the pro-family movement or enjoyed the support of its various organizations. There are twenty to thirty more reliable pro-family votes among the conservative House Democrats. The aggressive freshman class, the most ideologically focused cohort since the "Watergate babies" of 1974, formed the Family Caucus and the Conservative Action Team to advance the family rights message. . . No longer outside looking in, we are now an integral part of American politics. . . .[243]

Ever since, the Religious Right has played a significant role in American politics,

especially in the Republican Party. One example was the taking of credit for the election and re-

election of President George W. Bush. At the state level, many governments have adopted

constitutional amendments against gay marriage. Many more have adopted stringent anti-

abortion measures. In all of these modern political efforts, there is an underlying agenda that has

been with the Evangelicals since the Fundamentalist days: "take back America . . . . [by]

restoring America's original Christian heritage."[244] Many Mormons would identify with the

Christian Right that has been the main driving force for political action in regards to improved

social issues.

The Intensification of the Countercult Movement

The renewed Evangelical movement also renewed the Countercult movement. More than

any other man, Walter Martin deserves credit for cementing the word "cult" as a description of

the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Martin was one of two people who Evangelicals,

in the current scholarly Mormon/Evangelical dialogue, credited for their first perceptions of

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[243] Reed, 154, 186-187.

[244] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 159, 189, 246.

Mormonism.[245] The other person was Ed Decker who produced the 1982 film, *The God Makers*.

Both of these men continued the argument that Mormonism was not Christianity, but a cult

inspired of Satan—an argument that also continues to trouble and perplex many Mormons who

have always considered themselves and their church to be Christian. As has been demonstrated,

these accusations were only *renewed* attacks, not *new* attacks. They grew out of, and thereby

built upon, the greater body of anti-Mormon material, that had existed since the early history of

the Church of Jesus Christ, and that had primarily attacked Mormonism as a heresy. Although

scholarly Evangelical participants in dialogue today have since rejected the presentations of

Martin and Decker as both inaccurate and misleading, they admit that most Evangelicals still

perceive Mormonism as such. Therefore, in order to understand how Mormonism was once

viewed by Evangelicals who currently participate in dialogue, and how Mormonism continues to

be viewed by the majority of Evangelicals, it is necessary to examine the works of Walter Martin

and Ed Decker.

Walter Martin is regarded by many scholars as the greatest Fundamentalist/Evangelical

advocate for the Christian Countercult movement.[246] This is because no one, in post-World War

II America, was more active in warning Christians about dangerous cults. By radio, literature,

and film, Martin rallied Evangelicals to his cause.[247] He even founded the Christian Research

Institute in 1960 that still continues in its apologetic mission to destroy the cults. In defining

cults, Martin borrowed the definition of Dr. Charles Braden who stated: "By the term 'cult' I

mean nothing derogatory to any group so classified. A cult . . . is any religious group which

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[245] Based on interviews I conducted with Evangelical participants in the current Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue. See Bibliography for a listing of interviews.
[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid.

differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief or practice, from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture."[248] Martin then continues saying, "I may add to this that a cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person's interpretation of the Bible."[249] Although Dr. Braden meant nothing derogatory, Martin *did*, by later insinuating that the origins of all cults were from the Devil—hardly a neutral or objective observation.[250]

Mormonism was one of Martin's preferred cults to attack. In his crusade, Martin traveled throughout the country giving lectures on the dangers of the Mormon religion, some of which he recorded and made available for purchase. In addition, Martin published three main works, with periodic updated editions: *Mormonism* in 1957, *The Maze of Mormonism* in 1962, and his encyclopedic *The Kingdom of the Cults* in 1965, which included a large section dedicated to the Latter-day Saints. As a result of his many efforts, Walter Martin not only established himself as the "Father of Modern Counter-Cult Apologetics" but also as the "Father of Modern Anti-Mormonism."

In examining his pamphlet entitled *Mormonism*, as an example of his approach, Martin chose chapter titles that immediately struck at the authenticity of the religion. In his first chapter "The Checkered History of Mormonism," Martin seeks to disprove the Mormon Church through presenting its history as a dark scandal. He completely ignores the perspective of sincere believers in Joseph Smith, and instead relies solely upon the reports and writings of early apostates and enemies of the Church. In such a blatant unbalanced presentation of evidence,

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[248] Walter R. Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults: An Analysis of the Major Cult Systems in the Present Christian Era (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1965), 11.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid., 13

Martin makes Joseph Smith appear to be completely depraved of any moral character. As such, Martin made his negative bias towards Mormonism crystal clear. He saw nothing good in the faith worth complimenting. It was always an "us" versus "them" mentality. Mormonism was always the enemy. And although Martin disclaimed that he was attacking Mormonism, not Mormons, his words and manners often proved otherwise.

Martin did not simply belittle doctrine, he would also demonize people. Besides attacking the personal character of Joseph Smith, he also claimed that the Apostle Richard L. Evans, along with other Church leaders, were involved in deliberate acts of deception in the presentation of Mormon doctrine to other Christians, thus perpetuating the older anti-Mormon attacks of imposter and counterfeit. Martin's apparent lack of love despite his claim to be "speaking the truth in love" was often put on public display.[251] Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary, recounts watching and listening to Martin in person while a teenager. He remembers being "captivated by the way he [Martin] made his case against non-Christian groups. He had a fine one-liner, for example, about Christian Science: just as Grape Nuts are neither grapes nor nuts, Mary Baker Eddy's system of thought is neither Christian nor science."[252] On one particular night in the 1950s, Mouw remembers a contentious moment between Martin and a group of Mormons in attendance:

> During the discussion period, one young man was quite articulate as he argued that Martin misunderstood the Mormon teachings regarding atonement and salvation. Martin was not willing to yield an inch, and what began as a reasoned exchange ended in a shouting match. The young Mormon finally blurted out with deep emotion: "You can come up with all of the clever arguments you want, Dr. Martin. But I know in the depths of my heart that Jesus is my Savior, and it is only through his blood that I can go to heaven!" Martin dismissed him with a knowing smile as he turned to his evangelical audience: "See how they love to distort the meanings of words?"

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[251] Walter R. Martin, *Mormonism* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1957), 31.

[252] Richard J. Mouw, "Can a Real Mormon Believe in Jesus," *Books and Culture* 3, no. 5 (Sep/Oct 1997): 11.

. . . I can still hear in my mind what the Mormon said next, with an anguished tone: "You are not even trying to understand!"[253]

Although Walter Martin acted uncivilly that day, Richard Mouw was motivated to help change the cantankerous debate into convicted civility.[254] As a result, despite Evangelicals today who continue the message and methods of Walter Martin, there are also Evangelicals who not only claim but demonstrate "speaking the truth in love," such as has been shown in works like *How Wide the Divide: A Mormon and Evangelical in Conversation.*[255]

If Walter Martin acted as a lone voice of warning against Mormonism for many years, the production of *The God Makers* was the siren that reawakened many Evangelicals to the Mormon threat.[256] The 1982 film reenergized anti-Mormonism more than any other single event in the latter half of the twentieth century.[257] Shown to at least 1,000 Evangelical audiences a month, no other anti-Mormon production was and is more widely recognized by both Mormons and Evangelicals.[258] Even Mormons who have never seen the film will have at least heard of the title.

Unlike previous anti-Mormon movies, Decker's film was a docudrama; perhaps the first of its kind. It depicted Decker and an associate going to a set of lawyers seeking to sue the LDS Church over sensational charges that were commonly made against contemporary sociological cults, like brainwashing. As Decker made his case, the film would provide video of Mormon temples, chapels, building offices, members, etc., accompanied at times by creepy music. It even

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[253] Ibid.

[254] See Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1992); *Talking to Mormons: An Invitation to Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012).

[255] Craig L. Blomberg, Stephen E. Robinson. *How Wide the Divide?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

[256] *Godmakers*, DVD (Hemet, CA: Jeremiah Films, 2005).

[257] Based on interviews with Evangelicals. See Bibliography.

[258] Haws, 250.

included a cartoon, in order to depict some of the cosmological and historical beliefs as strange and alien as possible. In fact, even one individual in the film referred to Mormonism as "science fiction."[259] *God Makers* provides interviews with supposed experts on Mormonism who point out flaws in its doctrines and history. It presents several so-called "victims" who share how Mormonism ruined their life. Mormonism is blamed for breaking up families and destroying lives. Somehow it was the cause of divorce, depression, suicide, and every other major societal ill. The film appeared obsessed with tying Mormonism to polygamy and sex, repeating and emphasizing the themes over and over again. The Church was also explained to be very wealthy, thereby insinuated the motivation of financial fraud. Perhaps most disturbing to Mormons, was the reenactment of their private temple ceremonies that had never been seen before in public. Decker even puts on display holy garments Mormons wear underneath their clothing as a reminder of their temple covenants. Decker focuses on every sensational story told about the garments, and claims it acts as some sort of talisman. All of this was to tie Mormonism to the occult and Satanism. Decker suggested that Mormons were Satan worshipers, not just a little bit off in doctrine. Members were depicted as good people who were seriously and deliberately deceived by Church leaders. Not surprisingly, the film was endorsed by Walter Martin as "A factual, accurate analysis of the fastest growing cult in the world," and then concluded that the project would be "devastating" to Mormonism.[260]

Not only Mormons, but also several Jews and other Christians were deeply offended by the presentation of *God Makers*. Two independent and non-LDS organizations, the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, strongly

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[259] *Godmakers*, DVD (Hemet, CA: Jeremiah Films, 2005).

[260] Ibid., back cover of DVD case.

condemned the film.[261] They and others saw a motive of hate behind the work. The film focused

on the peripheral rather than on the central doctrines of Mormonism. It presented that which was

unofficial as the official teachings of the Church. *The God Makers* was thereby seen as

portraying a completely one-sided negative view of Mormonism. Nevertheless, Decker

continued his work producing additional films and companion books. But such materials only

continued to become more sensational and scandalous, resulting in the loss of credibility, even

among Evangelicals.[262]

The Neo-Evangelical Anti-Mormon Impact on Mormonism

The work of Ed Decker, along with Walter Martin and others, caused the most severe

degree of opposition to Mormonism since the Evangelical crusade against polygamy in the mid

to late 1800's.[263] Hence, the resurgence of Neo-Evangelicalism with its accompanying anti-cult

and anti-Mormon campaigns caused serious problems for Mormons. Pastor Gregory Johnson

observed that "While animosity between Evangelicals and Mormons has been the name of the

game throughout the existence of Mormonism, it could be said that hostilities and tensions

between the two faith communities found new life during the latter part of the 20th century."[264]

This new life represented a renewed intensification in the production of anti-Mormon materials:

"Of all anti-Mormon books, novels, pamphlets, tracts, and flyers published in English before

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[261] Robert L. and Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive: A Study of Anti-Mormon Deception* (Mesa, AZ: Brownsworth Publishing, 1995), 4:44.

[262] Haws, 271. Decker produced follow-up films including *God Makers II* in 1993. In addition he published two companion books to his films: Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, *The God Makers: A Shocking Expose of What the Mormon Church REALLY Believes* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1984); Ed Decker and Caryl Matrisciana, *The God Makers II* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993).

[263] Haws, 263.

[264] Robert L. Millet and Gregory C.V. Johnson, *Bridging the Divide: The Continuing Conversation Between a Mormon and An Evangelical* (Rhinebeck, New York: Monkfish Book Publishing Company, 2007), 154.

1990, more than half were published between 1960 and 1990 and a third of them between 1970 and 1990. Networks of anti-Mormon organizations operate in the United States. The 1987 Directory of Cult Research Organizations contains more than a hundred anti-Mormon listings. These networks distribute anti-Mormon literature, provide lectures that attack the Church publicly, and proselytize Mormons. Pacific Publishing House in California lists more than a hundred anti-Mormon publications."[265]

During the so-called "Golden Era of Mormonism," 1920-1970, Mormons received very positive press coverage in America.[266] Despite the efforts of Countercultists like Walter Martin, "in 1979, a Gallup poll found that only 11 percent of respondents classified Mormonism as a cult."[267] The other possible category was a "Church or Religion" so the term "cult" didn't even mean something non-Christian, but non-religious altogether at the time. But the 1980s changed all of that. Besides the 1982 release of *The God Makers*, Evangelical Countercultists got more collaboration from an increasingly liberal media that was often hostile to all things religious, and who particularly despised the Church's position and influence on social issues like the ERA movement and the priesthood ban on black LDS members.[268] One particular story more than any other cast a dark shadow over the Church.

In 1985, three bombs exploded killing two people and injuring a third. Upon further investigation, it was ascertained that the third victim Mark Hoffman was also the perpetrator of these crimes. The violent act was intended to be a cover-up of historical documents forged by Hofmann and later sold and donated to the LDS Church. Before the truth of the murder and

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[265] William O. Nelson, "Anti-Mormon Publications" in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 50-51.

[266] Haws, 67.

[267] Ibid., 243.

[268] Ibid., 219-220.

forgeries was made known, the story generated a lot of speculation among reporters and news

agencies. As a result, LDS leaders appeared culpable for a perceived cover-up of possible

damaging information associated with the crime. Church leaders also looked suspicious as it was

made known that they granted only limited access to the historical archives. Hence the Hofmann

murders, as reported on by the media, was one major event that seemed to confirm the darker

side of Mormonism that was presented in *The God Makers*.[269] It made the Mormon leadership

seem controlling and power hungry.[270] And before being declared fraudulent, the Hoffman

documents added credence to the idea that Joseph was occultic and Satanic.[271] Reporters also

focused more than ever on the corporate nature of the LDS Church, and its secrecy over finances

as suggested in *The God Makers*.[272] To make matters worse, Church leaders were not able to

respond to all of the wild speculations because of the pending investigation. Such silence

permitted various stories to be told without immediate correction, and hence the lie became the

story until the truth was finally revealed.[273]

Mormonism also took a public relations beating with additional negative incidents that

occurred during the 1980s and 1990s. Mormon Fundamentalist polygamists had gained notoriety

for various murders committed, and the media made much of their connection to the Church of

Jesus Christ, although they were a radical splinter group.[274] The Hofmann case also created

greater curiosity into the tension between Mormon academic and ecclesiastical leaders,

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[269] Ibid., 272.

[270] Ibid., 316.

[271] Ibid., 304.

[272] Ibid., 280.

[273] Ibid., 257, 309.

[274] Ibid., 319.

especially in the field of history. Several Church leaders did not appreciate the efforts of some

Mormon historians who pursued history from a naturalistic versus supernaturalistic perspective,

especially when it highlighted weaknesses in past leaders. The tension climaxed in September

1993 when six Mormon scholars were excommunicated or disfellowshipped. Although LDS

leaders do not make public the proceedings of Church disciplinary councils, the scholars claim

they were disciplined for controversial studies.

Therefore, the Hoffman forgeries and bombings, Mormon fundamentalist polygamy and

murder, secular-focused media reporting, and the excommunication of intellectuals all seemingly

confirmed the allegations of *The God Makers*. As a result of these and other incidents, the

Mormon image was thoroughly tarnished, causing the 1980s and 1990s to be the two worst

decades for public perception of Mormonism since the nineteenth century.[275] Doctoral student J.

B. Haws reported how

> apostle Dallin Oaks called [it] "some of the most sustained and intense Latter-day
> Saint Church-bashing since the turn of the century." The negative effect was measurable.
> A 1991 study by the Barna Group suggested that *just 6 percent of Americans viewed
> Mormons "very favorably."* Three times as many respondents had given Mormons that
> rating in a poll only fourteen years earlier. . . .[276]
> "In its [same] 1991 survey about American attitudes toward various churches, the
> Barna Research Group noted that "the only denomination in the survey"—which also
> included questions about Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran
> churches—"for which more Americans had a negative impression than a positive
> impression was the Mormon church . . ."; 37 percent ranked Mormons unfavorably in
> 1991, while only 18 percent gave Mormons an unfavorable rating in 1977. When those
> who expressed no opinion were removed from the study, the results were even more
> dramatic: "Nearly six out of ten people who had an opinion of the Mormon Church said
> their impression was a negative one."[277]

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[275] Ibid., 275.

[276] Ibid., 329.

[277] Ibid., 339, emphasis added.

As the Evangelical Countercultists were one of the most active groups, if not the most active group, in opposing Mormonism, it would seem that they deserve a great deal of credit for sinking the Mormon public image to such dismal lows. Lower favorability numbers thereby appeared to correspond with higher levels of anti-Mormon activity. Such associations seemed to confirm that Evangelicals had a strong influence on the American perception of Mormonism. Not surprisingly, the Mormon Church was then seen making changes that were more favorable to Evangelicals. Perhaps this was a direct effort to appease Evangelical concerns in order to thereby improve the Church's overall public image.

Building off of the prior Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy movement (explained earlier), Mormon leaders began to emphasize more strongly the centrality of Jesus Christ. This emphasis began in 1985 with newly-called Church President Ezra Taft Benson; only three years after *God Makers* first appeared. As part of his ministry, President Benson repeatedly encouraged Church members to study and share the Book of Mormon. In an address in 1994, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said he believed that President Benson wanted Church members to better understand "the Book of Mormon's witness of the divinity and mission of Jesus Christ and our covenant relationship to him."[278] Elder Oaks admitted, "In too many of our classes, in too many of our worship services, we are not teaching of Christ and testifying of Christ in the way we should."[279] Citing a study of "Church periodicals published in a 23-year period ending in 1983," as well as his own review of "the subjects of general conference addresses during the decade ending in the mid-1980s," Elder Oaks concluded that "for a time and until recently our public talks and our literature were

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[278] Dallin H. Oaks, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," *Ensign* (March 1994), 60.

[279] Ibid.

deficient in the frequency and depth with which they explained and rejoiced in those doctrinal

subjects most closely related to the atonement of the Savior."[280]

There was also a change in public relations strategy. Previously, the LDS Church

operated on a policy not to respond to individual attacks. Their silence damned the Church's

image immeasurably. It permitted someone else to tell their story without correction.[281] When

Gordon B. Hinckley became President of the Church in 1995, he changed the public relations

strategy. President Hinckley hired a professional public relations firm. He also brought in a new

director with instructions to be more aggressive in promoting a positive image of the Church as

well as responding more quickly to negative attacks.[282] One particular innovation was the many

press interviews and appearances President Hinckley was willing to do. In addition, the Church

conducted large scale events like the 1997 Mormon Trial reenactment, as well as take advantage

of the attention brought to Salt Lake City as part of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. The

Church also did a better job of publicly detailing its large contributions to humanitarian projects.

Results of this new PR strategy were encouraging: "A Frank Magid study in the late 1970s

demonstrated that 'roughly 32 percent of the country would say that Mormons believed in Jesus

Christ. . . . By 1998 . . . 78 to 80 percent of people said that Mormons believed in Jesus

Christ.'"[283] Likewise an internal poll conducted by the Church's Public Affairs Department

revealed significant increases in the number of those who: (1) felt more positively towards the

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[280] Ibid.
[281] Haws, 257, 315.

[282] Ibid., 340.

[283] Ibid., 354.

Church, (2) believed Mormons were Christians, (3) believed the Church discouraged polygamy, and (4) believed they knew more about Mormonism.[284]

Conclusion

In the twentieth century, an overall pattern of Mormon assimilation of Evangelical identity continued. As the nineteenth century primarily witnessed a social assimilation of Evangelicalism with the acceptance of monogamy, capitalism, and democracy, the twentieth century primarily witnessed an ideological and theological assimilation of Evangelicalism. As Fundamentalism and Neo-Evangelicalism protested Mormonism as a cult, Mormonism became more and more Fundamentalist and Evangelical by nature, especially as the Church recognized how such opposition negatively impacted American public perceptions.

Although Mormonism benefitted from the Protestant Modernist/Fundamentalist division, and particularly from the greater acceptance of Modernists, its leadership largely eschewed the Liberal philosophies that many Modern Protestants embraced. Despite disagreement among individual Mormon leaders and educators, the Fundamentalist position was adopted as the general Mormon position on many issues. Although less strict in their interpretation, Mormons would affirm a high regard for the Bible. Mormonism also reaffirmed its belief in the divinity, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as the authenticity of miracles. In contrast, the theories of evolution and higher criticism of the Bible were strongly denounced.

Religious education became a highly narrow and insulated profession in its orientation, forever restricted from the complete exercise of academic freedom. With its main focus placed upon promoting faith, respected religious scholarship was largely lacking. Mormonism ignored

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[284] See Haws, 357-358.

its earlier teachings of reconciling all knowledge, and instead opted for a Fundamentalist anti-intellectualism when it came to matters of faith. Although the curiosity of Joseph Smith knew no bounds, Mormon leaders advised avoidance of any speculation on the mysteries of the kingdom alongside a renewed focus on gospel basics as found in the standard works.

Mormons literally linked arm-in-arm with Fundamentalists in the prohibition of alcohol, and took similar moral stands on Sabbath day observance, dress, and chastity. Mormons came to be known for their strong American patriotism, and Church leaders David O. McKay and Ezra Taft Benson were noted for their continual denunciation of communism. Mormons came to share a similar conservative political agenda with the Religious Right in opposing the ERA movement, abortion, and gay marriage.

The rise of the Religious Right corresponded with the rise in Neo-Evangelicalism, and the renewed determination to attack religious cults like Mormonism. The most viewed and well-known Evangelical attack was the 1982 film, *The God Makers*. In depicting Mormonism as a Satanic cult, who brainwashed its members, and caused suicide, divorce, and abuse, *God Makers* linked Mormonism to some of the most dangerous sociological cults in the country. It also depicted Mormonism as a counterfeit or fraudulent Christianity, as heresiologists had done from its beginning. In response, in 1985, President Ezra Taft Benson stressed more heavily the study of the Book of Mormon whose theology is very Evangelical in nature: a Trinitarian God, the depravity of man, a form of original sin, the sovereignty of God, and salvation by grace alone.[285] Temple ordinances were modified after objectionable content came under Evangelical attack.[286] President Gordon B. Hinckley also revamped the Church's public relations strategy, opting for a

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[285] Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," *Sunstone* (July-August 1980): 24-33.

[286] Ed Decker, "Prologue," *Godmakers*, DVD (Hemet, CA: Jeremiah Films, 2005).

more aggressive Christian portrayal of the Church, and a quicker response to negative attacks against the Church's image. Some have argued that such changes in Mormonism followed the pattern of Protestant Neo-Orthodoxy, while others have said it followed more closely the Fundamentalist mindset. Perhaps Mormonism was actually assimilating back into the Evangelical character and sensibilities of its earliest formative years, although such transformation was clearly aided by Fundamentalist and Neo-Evangelical forces.

CHAPTER THREE:
EVANGELICAL OPPOSITION TO MORMONISM IN
TWENTY FIRST CENTURY AMERICA

Introduction

In the introduction to this thesis, I generally examined Evangelical opposition to

Mormonism in the twenty first century and its impact on the American perception of Mormon

identity. In this final chapter, I shall analyze the recent development of the Mormon/Evangelical

scholarly dialogue as a new kind of Evangelical opposition in the twenty first century. Although

it has been a positive interaction in many ways, this scholarly dialogue also presents some

challenging dynamics. For example, through interviews and other comments from dialogue

participants, there exists a fairly strong Evangelical desire to either convert Mormons or to

somehow change the nature of Mormonism.[287] In contrast, there has been almost no indication of

a Mormon desire to convert Evangelicals or to change the nature of Evangelicalism. Therefore,

although dialogue is a more subtle form of opposition to Mormonism, it is still a form of

opposition that permits Evangelicals to continue their historical pursuit of Evangelicalizing

Mormon identity. I shall undertake this examination with an analysis of the history, forms, and

purposes of Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue and how they relate to the general practice

of interfaith dialogue.

History of Dialogue

It was the conversation that started it all. The year 1997 marked the advent of

Mormon/Evangelical dialogue with the publication of *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an

Evangelical in Conversation* by Professors Craig L. Blomberg of Denver Seminary and Stephen

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[287] A list of interviews I have conducted with participants in the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue, as well as outside observers, is included in the Bibliography.

E. Robinson of Brigham Young University.[288] With members from both sides of the religious divide calling this book a breakthrough, it became the catalyst for a new Mormon/Evangelical dialogue characterized by greater love, understanding, and civility among university professors, students, church leaders, and lay members.

As the name suggests, *How Wide the Divide* was a scholarly exploration of the theological divide between Mormons and Evangelicals. Together, Blomberg and Robinson examined and cross-examined four fundamental doctrines: 1) the nature and bounds of scripture, 2) the nature of God and deification, 3) the person of Christ and the Trinity, and 4) the essentials of salvation. Together they demonstrated that Mormons and Evangelicals can talk to each other civilly while remaining true to their beliefs—what Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary, calls "convicted civility."[289] At the end of their exchange, they produced the general conclusion that the theological divide between Mormons and Evangelicals was "Not nearly as wide as we once thought, but still wide enough to separate us on significant issues."[290]

Several reviews and replies were written concerning *How Wide the Divide*. Many of these responses were summarized and critiqued in a 1999 article by Matthew Connelly, Stephen Robinson, Craig Blomberg, and the *BYU Studies* staff.[291] Some of this assessment included criticism from Countercultists like James White, Hank Hannegraff, and Phil Roberts. Although strong criticism for *How Wide the Divide* was duly noted, the overall reaction to the book was

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[288] See Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

[289] Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 12.

[290] Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide*, 194.

[291] See Matthew R. Connelly and *BYU Studies* Staff, "Sizing Up the Divide: Reviews and Replies," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 3 (1999): 163-190.

positive—mainly for the courage to converse with one another despite the many barriers that have separated Mormons and Evangelicals over the years.

The single largest collection of individual reviews and replies concerning *How Wide the Divide* was published in a 1999 issue of *FARMS Review*.[292] Mormon writers included Roger Cook, William Hamblin, Daniel Peterson, Blake Ostler, David Paulsen, and R. Dennis Potter. What was particularly innovative was the inclusion of a one hundred page review from two Evangelical scholars, Carl Mosser and Paul Owen. Mosser and Owen first came to the attention of Mormons and Evangelicals with their paper "Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?" It was initially presented before the Evangelical Theological Society and later published in *Trinity Journal*.[293] In their paper, Mosser and Owen called for a greater scholarly critique of Mormonism by Evangelicals. In answer to their own invitation, Mosser and Owen went on to edit *New Mormon Challenge*, a compilation of scholarly articles that address significant issues within the Mormon/Evangelical debate. *New Mormon Challenge* was representative of the new scholarly dialogue between Mormons and Evangelicals. Besides seeking to be more academically responsible, there was also greater respect and civility in their tone.[294]

Besides these written reactions to *How Wide the Divide*, there were also several oral dialogues. One of the key participants and organizers of Mormon/Evangelical dialogue has been Pastor Gregory C. V. Johnson of Standing Together Ministries in Utah, who as a boy joined the LDS Church with his family and later as a teenager converted to Evangelicalism. Johnson has

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[292] See *FARMS Review* 11, no. 2 (1999). The entire issue was dedicated to discussing *HWD*.

[293] See Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, "Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?" *Trinity Journal* 19 (Fall 1998): 179-205.

[294] See Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds. *The New Mormon Challenge* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002). For a good collection of Mormon reviews see *FARMS Review of Books*, vol. 14, no. 1-2 (2002).

been the main catalyst for all of the significant events that have transpired in relation to the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue. He introduced Blomberg and Robinson to one another and encouraged them to write *How Wide the Divide*. He also began public dialogues with BYU Religion Professor Robert L. Millet. Before university student bodies across the nation as well as in various Mormon and Evangelical churches, they modeled the new Mormon/Evangelical dialogue. In 2007, they published *Bridging the Divide: The Continuing Conversation Between a Mormon and an Evangelical*, where one of their dialogues was recorded along with some lessons they had learned from their experience together.[295] It also included a foreword by Blomberg and Robinson who highly praised their effort in keeping the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue going.

Besides his work with Greg Johnson, Robert Millet has been responsible for numerous volumes that have contributed significantly to the Mormon/Evangelical discussion. In fact no one, on either side of the divide, has written or spoken more on the subject. For example, in 2005 he helped edit *Salvation in Christ: Comparative Christian Views*, a publication of papers from a 2002 conference he helped organize at BYU.[296] The speakers represented a wide variety of Christian perspectives, including Evangelical. Such focus on Christ was sharpened in Millet's 2005 publication *A Different Jesus? The Christ of the Latter-day Saints*, with a foreword and afterword by Richard Mouw.[297] In his writing, Millet articulates Mormon Christology, which he further discusses in *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate*, written in 2007 with Evangelical Professor Gerald R. McDermott.[298] That same year, he also wrote *The Vision of*

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[295] See Robert L. Millet and Gregory C.V. Johnson, *Bridging the Divide: The Continuing Conversation between a Mormon and an Evangelical* (New York: Monkfish Book Publishing Company, 2007).

[296] See Roger R. Keller and Robert L. Millet, *Salvation in Christ: Comparative Christian Views* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005).

[297] See Robert L. Millet, *A Different Jesus? The Christ of the Latter-day Saints* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005).

Mormonism: Pressing the Boundaries of Christianity, with a foreword by Richard L. Bushman, the acclaimed Mormon historian and biographer of Joseph Smith.[299] Although he wrote many more books and articles on Mormon/Evangelical topics, these last three books deserve special mention because they were each published by non-Mormon presses. Two of them were even published by Evangelical presses along with his book with Greg Johnson, demonstrating greater Evangelical interest in the dialogue with Mormons.

Besides their own presentations, Millet and Johnson have helped organize various dialogues among university professors and students. They have even organized interfaith gatherings in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. But among all of their efforts, the most significant one has been a semiannual scholarly dialogue that has continued since 2000. In describing the format and structure of this dialogue, Millet shares that the first

> formal gathering took place in the spring of 2000 at Brigham Young University . . . Among the Evangelicals was Greg Johnson; Richard Mouw of Fuller Theological Seminary; Craig Blomberg of Denver Seminary; Craig Hazen of Biola University; David Neff of *Christianity Today*; and Carl Moser, at the time a doctoral student in Scotland. On the LDS side, participants included myself, Stephen Robinson, Roger Keller, David Paulsen, Daniel Judd, and Andrew Skinner, all from BYU. Names and faces have changed somewhat, but the dialogue has continued.
> Over the . . . years we came prepared (through readings of articles and books) to discuss a number of doctrinal subjects, including the Fall, Atonement, Scripture, Revelation, Grace and Works, Trinity/Godhead, the Corporeality of God, Theosis/Deification, Authority, and Joseph Smith's First Vision. We met, not only at BYU and Fuller, but also at Nauvoo, Palmyra, Wheaton College, and at meetings of the AAR/SBL. Scholars who joined us to make presentations on specific topics included Richard Bushman (Columbia University), John Stackhouse (Regent College), and Velli-Matti-Karkaanin (Fuller Seminary).[300]

[298] See Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007).

[299] See Robert L. Millet, *The Vision of Mormonism: Pressing the Boundaries of Christianity*, Visions of Reality: A Series on Religions as Worldviews, ed. Roger Corless (St. Paul. MN: Paragon House, 2007).

[300] Robert L. Millet, "The Mormon/Evangelical Dialogue: Retrospect and Prospect," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Montreal, Canada, November 7, 2009).

As begun by *How Wide the Divide*, this Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue has focused primarily on theological issues. Despite a variety of topics discussed, the underlying central concern has remained whether or not Mormonism qualifies as Christianity. Although much theological agreement has been reached in areas such as grace and works, agreement over Mormonism's true relationship with Christianity has been slow in coming. Perhaps the most significant accomplishment of the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue, thus far, has not been the bridging of any theological divide per se, but of a sociological divide.

The Roman Catholic document "Dialogue and Proclamation" observes that: "Already on a purely human level, it is not easy to practice dialogue. Interreligious dialogue is even more difficult."[301] The proclamation goes on to identify several barriers that make interfaith dialogue especially challenging:

1) Insufficient grounding in one's own faith.
2) Insufficient knowledge and understanding of the belief and practices of other religions, leading to a lack of appreciation for their significance and even at times to misrepresentation.
3) Socio-political factors or some burdens of the past.
4) Wrong understanding of the meaning of terms such as conversion, baptism, dialogue, etc.
5) Self-sufficiency, lack of openness leading to defensive or aggressive attitudes.
6) A lack of conviction with regard to the value of interreligious dialogue, which some may see as a task reserved to specialists, and others as a sign of weakness or even a betrayal of the faith.
7) Suspicion about the other's motives in dialogue.
8) A polemical spirit when expressing religious convictions.
9) Intolerance, which is often aggravated by association with political, economic, racial and ethnic factors, or a lack of reciprocity in dialogue which can lead to frustration.

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[301] Pontifical Council For Inter-Religious Dialogue, "Dialogue And Proclamation: Reflection And Orientations On Interreligious Dialogue And The Proclamation Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ," Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples (Rome, 19 May 1991; OR. 21 June, 1991), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/ rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html (accessed Feb. 20, 2012); for an example of how difficult regular communication can be see Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

10) Certain features of the present religious climate, *e.g.*, growing materialism, religious indifference, and the multiplication of religious sects which creates confusion and raises new problems.[302]

Each of these barriers, to one degree or another has haunted the Mormon/Evangelical relationship from its inception. As has been demonstrated, Mormons and Evangelicals have been enemies for most of their history. Like a severely strained familial relationship, Mormons and Evangelicals have found it difficult to even talk to one another due to numerous barriers that have accumulated over the years.

In their introduction of *How Wide the Divide*, Robinson and Blomberg acknowledge that the Mormon/Evangelical divide is not merely an intellectual one, but also a historical, social, religious, spiritual, and even political one. Stephen Robinson identifies the specific barriers of history, terminology, and imprecise theologies that make communication so difficult. He also identifies some social examples of division. Robinson recounts how he attended a neighborhood meeting to organize opposition to pornography. Some of the Evangelical ministers threatened to walk out of the meeting if the Mormons did not leave. Robinson and his companions did leave, but the experience made it clear that "some Evangelicals oppose Mormons more vehemently than they oppose pornography."[303] Robinson also shares a story about an LDS military family he knew who often befriended Evangelical military families, due to similar standards and values. Unfortunately, he reports, "If they let their Evangelical friends know they were LDS, the Evangelicals frequently would not see them again."[304] Robinson blames Evangelical Countercultists for promulgating lies about Mormons that contribute to these unfortunate social encounters. Robinson also asserts that "most Evangelicals *do* at least passively accept and even

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[302] "Dialogue and Proclamation."

[303] *How Wide the Divide*, 9.

[304] Ibid.

actively disseminate the picture of Latter-day Saints created by rabid anti-Mormons, so they share some responsibility for the continuation of these impressions."[305] Robinson concludes that "the average Latter-day Saint honestly believes the average Evangelical to be mean-spirited and dishonest" or as he later states "the LDS stereotype of Evangelicals [is] people who lie about us."[306]

Craig Blomberg also provides some examples of present-day problems between Mormons and Evangelicals. He shares the story of "when the fortieth LDS temple in the world opened in the Denver area in the late 1980s . . . a handful of Evangelicals protested, picketed and taunted the first Mormon worshipers attending there. Stones flew through the air, and a firebombing scare was reported."[307] On the other hand, Blomberg recounts how "a few Mormons slipped into the library . . . [of Denver Seminary] and stole or damaged numerous books they perceived to be anti-Mormon . . . [N]umerous area libraries had been similarly vandalized."[308]

These examples provide a flavor for the kind of Mormon/Evangelical conflict that continues into the twenty first century. Such barriers as these make the Mormon/Evangelical divide both ironic and tragic since Mormons and Evangelicals share a lot in common by way of political, religious, and moral values. Such conflict testifies of what scholar Catherine Cornille calls "the impossibility of interreligious dialogue" for Mormons and Evangelicals.[309] As a result of such conflict, Mormon/Evangelical dialogue is only a very recent, small, and yet significant development within the much larger history of modern interfaith dialogue. Although the modern

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[305] Ibid., 11.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Ibid., 22.

[308] Ibid., 22-23.

[309] See Catherine Cornille, *The Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008).

practice of interfaith dialogue can trace its beginnings back to the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue can only trace its beginnings back to 1997 (over 100 years later) with the publication of *How Wide the Divide*. The prolonged delay in Mormon/Evangelical dialogue testifies to the seriousness of the division between them. It is worth noting that Robinson and Blomberg's book, the very first respectable modern Mormon/Evangelical dialogue, did not question *if* there was a divide, but only *how wide* the divide was!

Scholar Joel D. Beversluis notes that "interfaith dialogue has evolved out of many factors and experiences," which includes: the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, the study of world religions, the Christian ecumenical movement, the Holocaust, Vatican II, pluralism and globalization, challenges to proselytizing, nuclear weapons and arms proliferation, failures of modern science and worldviews to understand ecological imperatives, ethnic and sectarian conflicts, increased understanding of conflict resolution, and the formation of several interfaith organizations.[310] Beversluis observes that, "Out of these and other factors have come a new desire for understanding of the 'other,' an intensified search for meaning across old boundaries, and the need for respectful conversation between participants who are different or estranged."[311] Although interfaith dialogue is as old as the practice of religion, "It is only in [the twentieth century] that we can speak of a movement of interfaith dialogue that aims at understanding between the different faiths."[312]

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[310] Joel Beversluis, "Interfaith Dialogue: How and Why Do We Speak Together?" in *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, ed. Joel Beversluis, 3rd ed. (Novato, California: New World Library, 2000), 126.

[311] Ibid.

[312] M. Darrol Bryant, as quoted in *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East*, eds. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Amal I. Khoury, and Emily Welty (Washington, D. C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 11.

Most scholars trace the genesis of modern interfaith dialogue to the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions held in conjunction with the Chicago's World Fair. The Parliament convened on September 11th and concluded on September 27th. Although Christianity largely dominated the conference, nine other religions were represented: Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto. Other religious traditions like those of Native Americans were noticeably absent.[313] Mormons and many Evangelicals were also among those missing, and it wasn't by accident.[314]

In a history of the Mormon experience at the Chicago World's Fair and the World's Parliament of Religions, historian Reid Neilson concludes: "Latter-day Saint representation was not wanted nor solicited by the organizers of the 1893 Parliament."[315] Despite being deliberately excluded, B. H. Roberts, a President of the Quorum of Seventy for the LDS Church, sought for Mormon representation at the Parliament.[316] Roberts saw the event as a great opportunity to present Mormonism to the world. Unfortunately, the 1890's were a time when Mormon leaders were seeking greater assimilation into the American secular mainstream in order to achieve statehood. Their concentration was on the Utah exhibit at the main World's Fair and they did not see much importance in the concurrent Parliament of Religions. However, once the Fair convened in the spring, letters from Latter-day Saints who attended began pouring into Mormon headquarters wondering why there would be no Mormon representation at related venues like the

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[313] Ibid.

[314] See Reid L. Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism: The Latter-day Saints and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also Davis Bitton, "B.H. Roberts at the Parliament of World Religion, 1893, Chicago," *Sunstone 7,* no. 1 (January-February, 1982): 46-51.

[315] Neilson, 144.

[316] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is governed by three quorums of general authorities. Ranked highest to lowest these are: The First Presidency, The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and The Quorums of Seventy.

Parliament of Religions. It was only at this point that Church leaders petitioned the Parliament for inclusion, and B. H. Roberts was put in charge of the request.

Roberts continuously sought audience with Parliament leaders. Unfortunately the two main organizers, Charles Carrol Bonney and John Henry Barrows, were largely against the Church. A motive for Bonney's opposition to Mormonism is somewhat difficult to detect. Reid Neilson proposes that Bonney's prejudice could be explained by two possible reasons. First, Bonney was a liberal Swedenborgian—a religious system that some claimed Joseph Smith copied. Maybe Bonney disliked Mormons as a result. Second, some of Bonney's relatives had joined the Mormon Church, and this perhaps caused some familial discord. Despite the speculation, Bonney's true motives may never be known.

On the other hand, John Barrows's bias was clear. As a Presbyterian minister, "John Henry Barrows was an outspoken opponent of the church."[317] Barrows's brother Walter was a Congregational Church pastor and president of the board of trustees for the Salt Lake Academy, an organization strongly opposed to the LDS Church. While visiting his brother, Barrows helped the cause by speaking against Mormonism. He even put some of his arguments into a pamphlet entitled "Christian Education for the Mormons." In it, Barrows says of the Mormons: "Their doctrines are abominable. . . . This system ought to be *wiped out*. We send the gospel to Turkey and India; and we are lacking in our duty to our country if we do nothing to promote Christianity in Utah, and heal this plague spot by touching it with pure gospel instruction."[318] Due to his blatant anti-Mormonism, Neilson believes Barrows "was likely the chief agitator within the organizing committee who lobbied against Latter-day Saint participation in the congress."[319]

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[317] Neilson, 154.

[318] Ibid., 154-155, emphasis added.

Although Church President Wilford Woodruff had just declared the end of polygamy in 1890, the American Protestant outrage was still fresh over the previous forty or so years of fighting to end the practice. In fact, polygamy was cited by Bonney as the main reason LDS representation at the Parliament was avoided. Despite this religious prejudice, B. H. Roberts continuously lobbied for the Mormon cause, and his dogged determination eventually paid off. The Parliament permitted him to present a paper on Mormonism, with reassurances by Roberts that polygamy would not be addressed. Roberts was first promised to present in the main hall where the most important proceedings of the Parliament occurred. Unfortunately, Roberts was later sidelined to a lesser hall. The change was called for by Bonney and Barrows as a result of a Muslim presentation on polygamy that sparked a fire of controversy. Although Roberts had already given his assurance that he would not speak of polygamy, the Muslim/Mormon connection was too much to overcome. Neilson even suggests that Barrows might have intentionally prodded the Muslim presentation of polygamy in order to create a reason to disqualify Mormons. In response, Roberts refused any and all participation in protest of the discrimination. But before he left Chicago, Roberts did all he could to apprise the press of the true reason for his failure. Therefore, Mormonism was absent at the Parliament, not so much for a lack of preparation and planning by LDS leadership, but as a result of the intentional discrimination and discouragement of Charles Bonney and John Barrows, leaders of the World's Parliament of Religions.

As for Evangelicals, it was a mixed picture of representation. By 1893, Evangelical Protestantism was in the midst of a battle for supremacy between Liberal and Conservative factions. Liberal and Conservative Protestants were debating over evolution and higher criticism of the Bible. Liberal or Progressive Protestantism adopted modernist positions like the denial of

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[319] Ibid.

miracles, whereas Conservatives affirmed theological positions such as the divinity of Christ and the inerrancy of scripture. Such debates would eventually separate Protestants into two main categories, Liberal Mainstream and Conservative Fundamentalism. Today, Evangelicals identify themselves with this Fundamentalist heritage. As for Liberal Protestants, their de-emphasis on dogma made them more open to greater understanding and knowledge of other religions. This is why many of the leaders and organizers of the Parliament came from a Liberal Protestant background. In fact, without the development of Liberal Protestantism and its adoption of evolution, the 1893 Parliament may never have happened.[320] In contrast, Conservative Christians like Dwight L. Moody and even the Archbishop of the Church of England boycotted the event, believing the Parliament symbolized the compromise of Christianity.[321]

Therefore, Mormons and Evangelicals did not participate in the beginnings and early practice of interfaith dialogue due to the unfortunate exclusion of Mormons, as opposed to the deliberate avoidance of Evangelicals. Despite their differing reasons for absence, both groups have generally continued to remain aloof from this movement for most of its existence. And yet ironically, two of the most averse groups to interfaith dialogue have among their ranks some of the greatest beneficiaries and practitioners of the enterprise in the present-day Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue.

In a tragic twist of irony, the World's Parliament of Religions—a famous event that represented religious peace and understanding—shares September 11th with two other events known for their religious hatred and hostility. In 1856, the newly formed Republican Party placed in its platform the policy to eradicate polygamy alongside slavery as the "twin relics of

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[320] See John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions, 1851-1893*, (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 129.

[321] Ibid.

barbarism" in the United States.[322] In addition to reports of polygamy, additional reports of lawlessness were sent to President James Buchannan. In 1857, at the insistence of lawmakers and the preaching of Evangelical ministers, the President ordered the march of over 10,000 troops to Salt Lake City to reestablish order. Although the army entered the Salt Lake valley peacefully, the action had another deadly impact. War-time hysteria created conditions that contributed to the instigation of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, where some local Mormon leaders and followers in southern Utah, along with a few Indian tribes (at the request of local Mormon leadership) participated in the killing of around 120 innocent men, women, and children who were members of a wagon train and of an Evangelical background.[323] This massacre occurred on September 11th, a date now shared with the modern massacre of almost 3,000 innocent Americans at the hands of radical fundamentalist Islamic terrorists. Unfortunately, in one of the worst possible ways, Mormons and Muslims were once again negatively connected in the mindset of Evangelicals and of Americans.

In response to such horrific events, some scholars have denounced religion as a cause of conflict. Others have come to the defense of religion by emphasizing the need for greater dialogue, understanding, and peaceful conflict resolution between groups. Therefore, the modern interfaith dialogue movement that began on September 11, 1893 with the World's Parliament of Religions has become more important than ever with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. With greater globalization brought about by advances in transportation, communication, and technology—previously isolated societies, cultures, and religions can no longer ignore those who

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[322] See Fluhman, 272.

[323] The new most definitive source providing a fair and balanced approach on the Mountain Meadows Massacre is Walker, Ronald W., Richard E. Turley, Jr., and Glen M. Leonard. *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

are different from themselves. Interfaith dialogue that was held more out of curiosity and education in 1893 has now become a vital part of society.

Forms of Dialogue

At its simplest level, interfaith dialogue is defined as "persons of different faiths meeting to have a conversation."[324] Taken further, interfaith dialogue is defined as "an intentional engagement with those whose religion or faith tradition differs from our own."[325] Leonard Swidler, a pioneer of interfaith studies, goes further to define interfaith dialogue as: "a two-way communication between persons who hold significantly differing views on a subject [*i.e.* religion], with the purpose of learning more truth about the subject from the other."[326] The Roman Catholic Church defines dialogue more broadly to include "'all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment,' in obedience to truth and respect for freedom."[327]

Two main classifications are generally employed concerning religious dialogue. First, "intrafaith" or "intrareligious" dialogue is generally within groups of the same religious tradition, *i.e.* between Orthodox and Reformed Jews, or the Shiites and Sunnis of Islam. Intrafaith or intrareligious dialogue among Christians has been referred to as "ecumenism" (generally employed by Catholics and liberal Protestants); whereas some conservative Christians prefer

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[324] David R. Smock, "Introduction," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, D. C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2002), 6.

[325] Miriam Therese Winter, "Doing Effective Dialogue—and Loving It," in *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*, ed. Rebecca Kratz Mays (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2009), 27.

[326] Leonard Swidler, "Understanding Dialogue," in *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*, ed. Rebecca Kratz Mays, (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2009), 11.

[327] Michael L. Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 27.

terms such as "inter-Christian," since careful distinguishment from Christian Liberalism is an important qualification for them. Second, "interfaith" or "interreligious" dialogue refers to a conversation among two or more different religious traditions like Christianity and Islam.[328] However, as a result of confusion and controversy caused over the official titles of dialogue, some have responded by leaving out all adjectives and calling all communication between any religious or faith group simply "dialogue," "discussion," or "conversation," as well as using more generic adjectives such as "multifaith" or "multireligious."[329]

Within the two main divisions of religious conversation, dialogue can be bilateral (between two groups), trilateral (among three groups), or multilateral (with more than three groups).[330] It can be formal or informal, spontaneous or planned, official or unofficial. It can be held in large or small groups. It can be had among clergy and academics or among laity, neighbors, and friends. It can be modeled in front of a crowd with selected speakers and panels, or extended to the audience. Some even allow for debate, while others view dialogue as completely different from debate. It can be discussion-centered or text-centered by including the study of theological and sacred works.[331] It can cover a variety of different topics.

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[328] For various examples of how the terms are used see the official website of the archdiocese of Chicago: http://www.archchicago.org/departments/ecumenical/eia_relations.shtm. Also see Nicholas Lossky, Jose Miguez Bonino, John Pobee, Tom F. Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright, Pauline Webb, eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2d ed. (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 2002), 310-323. Joel Beversluis, "Interfaith Dialogue: How and Why Do We Speak Together?" in *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, ed. Joel Beversluis, 3d ed. (Novato, California: New World Library, Third Edition, 2000).

[329] See examples of the term "dialogue" or "conversation" used without many adjectives in Rebecca Kratz Mays, ed*., Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots* (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2008). For use of the more generic adjectives see Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995).

[330] Michael L. Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 32.

[331] David R. Smock, "Introduction," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, D. C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2002), 7-8.

There are three different areas of dialogue: dialogue of the hands—the practical or active area; dialogue of the head—the cognitive, intellectual, or theological area; and the dialogue of the heart—manners of worship, religious experience, or the spiritual area.[332] The practical area involves all collaborative efforts aimed at the betterment of society. These efforts can take the form of community service projects and defending moral issues held in common, like traditional marriage. Catholics refer to these joint-collaborations as the dialogue of action. In its simplest form, the practical area includes the basic act of being a good neighbor who is open and loving to those who are different. Catholics refer to these smaller yet significant examples as the dialogue of life. The intellectual area generally involves understanding specific theology and tends to be the prime interest of academics, philosophers, and theologians—the experts. The spiritual area seeks to experience (as far as possible) a religion from within. An example of this enterprise is a group of Christian and Buddhist mystics learning various manners of contemplation and meditation.

Although Mormon/Evangelical dialogue has taken several shapes, the specific Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue has obviously been a dialogue of experts. It is mainly an intellectual dialogue or a dialogue of the head that focuses around theology through the reading of key texts, but it has also included some spiritual experiences of worship as well. It has generally been a privately planned event, with various participants also taking part in more open venues. No joint publications have occurred thus far, but such are planned for and should be forthcoming. Based upon the two general classifications of religious dialogue, the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue has been difficult to properly situate since there is no agreement

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[332] See Leonard Swidler, "Understanding Dialogue," in *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*, ed. Rebecca Kratz Mays, (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2008), 10, 15; David R. Smock, "Introduction," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock, (Washington, D. C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2002), 6; Michael L. Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 28-35.

on whether or not Mormonism is truly part of the Christian tradition. For instance, are Mormons comfortable with having their dialogues with Evangelicals labeled as "interfaith" or "interreligious" since it would imply they are a religious tradition outside of Christianity? Or should Mormons demand that such meetings be called "ecumenism," "inter-Christian," "intrafaith," or "intrareligious," in order to stress to Evangelicals that they are in fact Christian? In one way, the very purpose of the scholarly dialogue could be viewed as an ongoing effort to define itself, as it seeks to further define Mormon identity in particular.

The Roman Catholic Church is a great example of making clear their relationship with Christian and non-Christian groups. In the Vatican II documents, *Nostra Aetate* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Catholic Church formally endorsed ecumenical work with Christians and interfaith work with non-Christians. Additional proclamations have defined the Catholic position further in order to make it clear to both members and non-members alike. Such clarity is harder to come by in the Evangelical world, due to a lack of a unified ecclesiastical structure and the inherent opposition encountered by the Countercult elements of the movement. But the Mormon Church does have a priesthood hierarchy that could help define its dialogical relationship to other Christians and religious traditions more precisely.

However the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue is classified, Mormon and Evangelical dialogists have done an excellent job incorporating three rules for interfaith interaction once given by Krister Stendhal, a Lutheran Bishop and former dean of Harvard Divinity School. He shared: "The first rule was that when you want to learn about a religion you should ask the adherents to that religion and not its enemies . . . The second rule was . . . Don't compare your best with their worst . . . The third rule . . . [was] to leave room for . . . 'holy envy'

[or]. . . looking at . . . something in this other religious tradition that I really envy.[333] On a whole, Mormon and Evangelical dialogists have ignored each other's enemies and have learned directly from one another. They have been fair and respectful in their comparisons and contrasts. Expressions of "holy envy" have also been shared from time to time. For example, Mormon participants often praise the Evangelicals for their spirit of awe over Jesus Christ and his amazing grace. Evangelicals have likewise expressed admiration for the Mormon health code and welfare program.

Risks and Rewards of Dialogue

With the innovation of interfaith dialogue came concerns over the compromise of doctrine or the weakening and/or loss of faith in one's own religious tradition. This helps explain why the Evangelical and Mormon communities have taken so long to participate. Responding to these serious concerns, the Roman Catholic Church issued the following statement based upon its experience with dialogue, whereby it not only admitted to the risks involved, but more importantly, how such risks can actually become very rewarding:

> If Christians cultivate such openness and allow themselves to be tested, they will be able to gather the fruits of dialogue. They will discover with admiration all that God's action through Jesus Christ in his Spirit has accomplished and continues to accomplish in the world and in the whole of humankind. Far from weakening their own faith, true dialogue will deepen it. They will become increasingly aware of their Christian identity and perceive more clearly the distinctive elements of the Christian message. Their faith will gain new dimensions as they discover the active presence of the mystery of Jesus Christ beyond the visible boundaries of the Church and of the Christian fold. . . .
> Moreover the obstacles, though real, should not lead us to underestimate the possibilities of dialogue or to overlook the results already achieved. There has been a growth in mutual understanding, and in active cooperation. Dialogue has had a positive impact on the Church herself. Other religions have also been led through dialogue to renewal and greater openness. Interreligious dialogue has made it possible for the Church

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[333] Daniel Peterson, "Easier than Research, More Inflammatory than Truth." FAIR Conference 2010, http://www.fairlds.org/FAIR_Conferences/2000_Easier_than_Research_More_Inflammatory_than_Truth.html (accessed July 26, 2011).

to share Gospel values with others. So despite the difficulties, the Church's commitment to dialogue remains firm and irreversible.[334]

Instead of running from the risks associated with dialogue, the Catholic Church has maturely embraced them, thereby expressing confidence in itself and its message. In an age of instant internet information about any topic, there is no longer the luxury of social encapsulation to keep people away from ideas that might threaten their worldview. Unless individuals willing choose a path of ignorance to ideas foreign to them—the only alternative is to productively interact with such differing beliefs. With their entrance into dialogue, Mormons and Evangelicals signaled their willingness to assume the risks and rewards involved.

An important realization about dialogue is that it is not an inherently dangerous activity. As interfaith scholar Jon Cobb said, "The issue is not whether dialogue can have destructive effects. The issue is whether it is inherent in dialogue, as it is inherent in confrontation by itself, to have destructive effects. I believe not. I believe that when dialogue functions fully, when it is not distorted, its results are healthy and fulfilling to all involved."[335] What can be dangerous in dialogue is when the activity suffers from a lack of clearly defined objectives and a fully disclosed set of motives. The classifications, formats, and purposes of dialogue can vary so greatly, that it is imperative, in more formal situations, to clearly define what kind of dialogue is taking place, and to provide an honest assessment of the various agendas involved. This is why the lack of definition over the current Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue is disconcerting.

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[334] Pontifical Council For Inter-Religious Dialogue, *Dialogue And Proclamation*, *Reflection And Orientations On Interreligious Dialogue And The Proclamation Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ, Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples* (Rome, 19 May 1991; or. 21 June, 1991), found at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue -and-proclamatio_en.html (accessed 2/20/2012).

[335] John B. Cobb, Jr., "Dialogue," in *Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue*, eds. Leonard Swidler, John B. Cobb, Jr., Paul F. Knitter, Monika K. Hellwig (Philadephia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 2-3.

Despite whatever one or two of the participants believe is taking place, others may have a different idea (and, in fact, some currently do).

Doctrinal Justification for Dialogue

Definitions of religious pluralism range from conservative to liberal. In its conservative form, religious pluralism is simply acknowledging the greater engagement between individuals and groups from differing religious traditions. At the opposite extreme, religious pluralism is espoused as the equality of all truth claims made by differing religious entities. Mormons and Evangelicals would never accept religious pluralism as defined in this latter more radical form.[336] But in an increasingly shrinking world brought about by greater immigration and technological advances—the increased interaction of various religious groups and individuals is inevitable and a calculated response to this new reality is imperative. The Christian theology of religions is a "discipline [that] attempts to account theologically for the meaning and value of other religions, particularly in missionary and other encounter situations. Theology of religions is the Christian Church's reflection on the meaning of living with people of other faiths and the relationship of Christianity to other religions."[337] Scholars divide various theologies of religions into different kinds of theories or models. One of the most basic is the tripartite division of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism (in its more radical form).

Exclusivism claims that one's religion is the sole possessor of truth and that all other religions are imposters. Inclusivism acknowledges truth in other groups although it insists that a fullness of truth is only found within their own tradition. Radical pluralism reacts to the greater

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[336] For a good discussion of definitions of religious pluralism, see Michael L. Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 46.

[337] Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "Theologies of Religions: A Position Paper for Edinburgh 2010," *Evangelical Interfaith Dialogue* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 4.

diversity of religious groups by declaring that none has an advantage over the other, and

therefore all truth claims are of equal validity and importance. Today many Christians have

followed the lead of the Roman Catholic Church, since Vatican II, in taking an inclusivist

position, whereas radical pluralism is more to the liking of liberal organizations.[338] Most

Evangelicals are exclusivist in their point of view, especially the Fundamentalists and

Counterculists of the movement. There also exits moderate Evangelical groups that lean towards

an inclusivist approach, of which the Evangelical dialogists tend to identify.[339] Although

Mormonism has arguably appeared exclusivist for most of its history, it has a foundational

inclusivist position that has become more dominate in recent years.

The inclusivist position is by nature a dialogical one. If others have truth, then dialogue

permits the appreciation and understanding of truth as well as the sharing of truth. On the other

hand, an exclusivist position would typically deny the value of dialogue. Exclusivists prefer

monologue to dialogue. They have nothing to learn from others; theirs is the sole depository and

distributor of truth. Scholar Leonard Swidler rightly juxtaposes these two alternatives not simply

as a choice between monologue and dialogue but as a more serious choice between death and

dialogue.[340] We either continue with monologue in our own little communities or else we enter

into dialogue with the greater world at large. In other words, in our increasingly small world

where we come more into contact with other religions and cultures, we have two main

approaches from which to choose. The first is to do nothing to understand others who are

different than us and therefore ignore them. The second is to do all we can to listen, learn,

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[338] See Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "Theologies of Religions: A Position Paper for Edinburgh 2010," *Evangelical Interfaith Dialogue* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 4.

[339] See Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011).

[340] See Leonard Swidler, John B. Cobb, Jr., Paul F. Knitter, Monika K. Hellwig John B. Cobb, Jr., *Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).

respect, and share with one another. The problem with choosing ignorance is that it breeds misunderstanding, suspicion, alienation, bigotry, discrimination, and even violence. History has regularly witnessed the effects of ignorance or apathy; it has rarely enjoyed the fruits of education, understanding, and dialogue.

Interfaith scholar Catherine Cornille proposes that "if dialogue is to be possible, it must find its deepest reasons and motivations within the self-understanding of religious traditions themselves. Only thus will dialogue become an internal necessity rather than an external obligation."[341] Both the Evangelical and Mormon traditions share a common scriptural heritage in the Bible; and Mormons have additional scriptures and priesthood leaders to lean upon.

Since Evangelicals believe the Bible to be the supreme authority of God, they must find biblical support for dialogue, especially to appease Countercultists who question the validity of the activity. In one article, Craig Blomberg demonstrates through an exegesis of Acts 17:17-18 that the apostle Paul practiced dialogue. As part of his explanation, Blomberg included a swipe at the confrontational methods of Countercultists: "Whenever Christians share their faith in a form that is widely perceived by their audiences to be culturally inappropriate, they are violating fundamental Scriptural principles. Whenever their demeanor does not match the broken and battered, humble form of Paul's understanding of apostolic ministry (1 Cor. 4:8-13), they deny by their actions and their spirit the heart of their message, every bit as much as the frustrated spouse does when shouting in an angry voice, 'But I *do* love you!'"[342]

One of the purposes of Mormon/Evangelical dialogue was to permit both Mormons and Evangelicals the opportunity to discredit Countercultists for the misrepresentation and meanness

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[341] Cornille, 8.

[342] Craig Blomberg, "A Biblical Basis for Interfaith Dialogue," March 2006, Standing Together, http://www.standingtogether.org/Craig%20Blomberg.htm (accessed 6/23/201).

of spirit.[343] For Evangelicals, the constant promotion of civility is a means to accomplish this goal. One of the most oft repeated scriptures by Evangelical dialogists is Ephesians 4:15 wherein Paul counsels Christians about "speaking the truth in love." Ironically, even Walter Martin, the father of Countercultism, quoted the same scripture, but apparently was less proficient at the practice than current Evangelical dialoguers.[344] Another important biblical text is 1 Peter 3:15 that exhorts the sharing of the gospel in "gentleness and reverence." Richard Mouw also speaks of the importance of keeping the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). He believes that when people speak of another religion without talking to people who belong to that particular religion—it borders on bearing false witness.

Richard Mouw has become a great champion for civility, even writing a book on the subject: *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*. It was first published in 1992, long before the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue took place. In his book, Mouw calls for greater kindness and gentleness by Christians in their communications "with people who disagree with [them] on the issues that matter most."[345] He labeled this standard of greater kindness and gentleness as "convicted civility."[346] Mouw defined convicted civility as combining "strong convictions with a civil spirit."[347] Besides providing a biblical foundation for convicted civility, like the fruits of the spirit mentioned in Galatians 5, Mouw also credits the

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[343] See John-Charles Duffy, "Conservative Pluralists: The Cultural Politics of Mormon-Evangelical Dialogue in the United States at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011), 43.

[344] See Walter R. Martin, *Mormonism* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1957), 31.

[345] Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 9 and back cover.

[346] Ibid.

[347] Ibid., 17.

religious scholar Martin E. Marty for the concept.[348] Marty had suggested that "one of the real

problems in modern life is that the people who are good at being civil often lack strong

convictions and people who have strong convictions often lack civility."[349] In assuming the

challenge to coalesce "a civil outlook with a 'passionate intensity' about our convictions," Mouw

encourages members of differing faiths to talk to one another in an honest, yet holier way.[350]

There are many other potentially useful biblical justifications for dialogue that Mormons

and Evangelicals could share. One such is found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Historical,

theological, and sociological evidence demonstrates that Mormons and Evangelicals are enemies.

But Jesus turned reason and natural inclination on its head by commanding: "Love your enemies,

bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully

use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven"

(Matthew 5:44-45; see also John 14:15). Surely one of the ways by which we love one another

and especially our enemy is to become the irenic people Jesus spoke of when he declared

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). It is

interesting to note that in both commandments Jesus declares the obedient as the true children of

God.

In addition, Saint Paul says that the greatest of all godly spiritual gifts is charity—what

the prophet Mormon defines as "the pure love of Christ" (see 1 Cor. 13; Moroni 7:47). Paul

explains that the attainment of charity is an extremely long and difficult pursuit. Not even if "I

speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and . . . I have the gift of prophecy, and understand

all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,

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[348] Ibid., 11.

[349] Ibid., 12.

[350] Ibid.

and . . . though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, *it profiteth me nothing*" (1 Cor 13:1-3, emphasis added). Paul thereby exalts godly love above correct theology.

Paul also hints that charity will not be fully obtained in the presence of one's friends but in relationship with one's enemies, since "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up, doth not behave unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Although charity can be developed with people that are more naturally loveable, it can only be fully developed when tested and challenged by those not easy to love for a variety reasons. It is through disagreement, not agreement; through misunderstanding, not understanding; through discomfort, not comfort where charity has the potential to blossom and bloom to its fullest. Robert Millet once described how the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue had transcended differences in order to achieve a remarkable level of love or charity for one another:

> In the early sessions, it was not uncommon to sense a bit of tension, a subtle uncertainty as to where this was going, a slight uneasiness among the participants. . . . Before too long . . . much of the tension began to dissipate.
> The . . . meetings have been more than conversations. We have visited key historical sites, eaten and socialized, sung hymns and prayed, mourned together over the passing of members of our group, and shared ideas, books, and articles throughout the year. The initial feeling of formality has given way to a sweet informality, a brother-and-sisterhood, a kindness in disagreement, a respect for opposing views, and a feeling of responsibility toward those not of our faith—a responsibility to represent their doctrines and practices accurately. In the words of Richard Mouw, we seem to have maintained a "convicted civility" in the dialogue: no one has compromised or diluted his or her own theological convictions, but everyone has sought to demonstrate the kind of civility that ought to characterize a mature exchange of ideas among a body of believers who have discarded defensiveness. There have been those times, as well, when many of us have felt what Harvard's Krister Stendahl has described as "holy envy"—something stronger and

more satisfying than tolerance, something definitely more heartwarming and even compelling than ideological indifference.[351]

To imagine prominent Mormon and Evangelical leaders, scholars, and laymen having these kinds of loving interactions not so long ago would be unthinkable; not to mention any hope of changing long-held negative perceptions of each other.

Mormons haven't gone to the same lengths that Evangelicals have in biblically justifying their involvement in interfaith dialogue; partly because Mormons aren't under the same kind of pressure to biblically justify their activities. Mormon appeals for dialogue have come more in the form of practical considerations versus doctrinal mandates. Whereas Evangelicals are required by their community to biblically justify their involvement, Mormons simply need the approval of their priesthood leaders.

In March 2011, Mormon apostle Jeffrey R. Holland addressed a board meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals. Although he was quick to say he was not officially representing the Church, Holland expressed his support of the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue as a divinely inspired activity: "I cannot help but believe this to be a part of a divine orchestration of events in these troubled times—LDS and Christian academics and church figures . . . drawn together for a number of years in what I think has become a provocative and constructive theological dialogue. It has been an honest effort to understand and be understood, an endeavor to dispel myths and misrepresentations on both sides, a labor of love in which the participants have felt motivated by and moved upon with a quiet force deeper and more profound than a typical interfaith exchange."[352] In addition to this enthusiastic endorsement, Elder Jeffrey

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[351] Robert L. Millet, "The Mormon/Evangelical Dialogue: Retrospect and Prospect," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Montreal, Canada, November 7, 2009).

[352] Jeffrey R. Holland, "Standing Together for the Cause of Christ," *Religious Educator* 13, no. 1 (2012): 18.

R. Holland and fellow apostle Gene R. Cook had, on an earlier and separate occasion, endorsed

the activity, but made clear it was to remain an academic activity, not an ecclesiastical

enterprise.[353] Such support is in harmony with the teachings of early Mormon Church leaders.

Both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young made comments concerning the existence of

truth among other religious groups, particularly other Christians.[354] For example, Young was

very emphatic that

> It is our duty and calling, as ministers of the same salvation and Gospel, to gather every item of truth and reject every error. Whether a truth be found with professed infidels, or with the Universalists, or the Church of Rome, or the Methodists, the Church of England, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Quakers, the Shakers, or any other of the various and numerous different sects and parties, all of whom have more or less truth, it is the business of the Elders of this Church (Jesus, their Elder Brother, being at their head) to gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, to the Gospel we preach, . . . to the sciences, and to philosophy, wherever it may be found in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people and bring it to Zion.[355]

As recently as Church President Gordon B. Hinckley (President, 1995-2008), the admonition to

people of other faiths was to "bring all that you have of good and truth which you have received

from whatever source, and come and let us see if we may add to it."[356] Each of these statements

obviously entails the act of dialogue.

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[353] Personal notes of Mormon/Evangelical scholarly meeting, Nov. 12, 2010, Provo, UT.

[354] See The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 264-265; and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 16-18.

[355] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 17.

[356] Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith," *Ensign* (November 2002), 81; Duffy believes that this statement originated first with President George Albert Smith, see Duffy, 137.

Purposes of Dialogue

There exist numerous purposes for the practice of interfaith dialogue, some of which have already been touched upon. Perhaps the Roman Catholic Church best summarized the overall purpose of interfaith dialogue as a two-fold activity of: "mutual understanding" and "mutual enrichment."[357] Another commonly circulated set of purposes was compiled by Dr. Leonard Swidler, the founder of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, and published as the "Decalogue of Dialogue" in 1983. One abbreviated format presents these ten purposes, and guidelines, as:

1) Dialogue to learn, to change, and to grow, and act accordingly.
2) Dialogue to share and receive from others.
3) Dialogue with honesty and sincerity.
4) Dialogue comparing ideals with ideals, and practice with practice.
5) Dialogue to define yourself and to learn the self-definition of others.
6) Dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions about someone else's beliefs.
7) Dialogue to share with equals.
8) Dialogue in trust.
9) Dialogue with a willingness to look at your beliefs and traditions critically.
10) Dialogue seeking to understand the other person's beliefs from within.[358]

Although Mormons and Evangelicals would be comfortable with many of the purposes listed, they may have problems with terms such as "equals" if that refers to the pluralist notion that all truth claims are of equal validity. "To change" would also need to be further defined, especially if it could possibly entail compromising doctrine. The ideal of "self-definition" is also not in play in the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue since Mormons are not permitted to define themselves as Christians.

Robert Millet shares how it has been difficult for Mormons and Evangelicals to clearly delineate the purposes of the scholarly dialogue:

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[357] Michael L. Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 28.

[358] Quoted in Joel Beversluis, "Interfaith Dialogue: How and Why Do We Speak Together?" in *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, ed. Joel Beversluis (Novato, California: New World Library, Third Edition, 2000).

As the dialogue began to take shape, it was apparent that we were searching for an identity—was this to be a confrontation? An argument? A debate? Was it to produce a winner and a loser? Just how candid and earnest were we expected to be? Some of the Latter-day Saints wondered: Do the "other guys" see this encounter as a grand effort to "fix" Mormonism, to make it more traditionally Christian, more acceptable to skeptical onlookers? Some of the Evangelicals wondered: Are those "other guys" for real? Is what they are saying an accurate expression of LDS belief? Can a person be a genuine Christian and yet not be a part of the larger body of Christ? A question that continues to come up is, just how much "bad theology" can the grace of God compensate for?

Such questions concerning the nature and purposes of the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue continue to be asked.

At least three reasons account for the lack of a clearly defined identity and purpose in the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue. First, (as discussed earlier) doctrinal disagreements over Mormonism's relationship with Christianity prevent the proper classification of the dialogue. Second, this is a relatively new enterprise, having barely enjoyed a decade of life. Most of the Mormon/Evangelical dialogists are not scholarly experts in the field of dialogue. They began with little if any specific training or practice. Instead, the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue commenced more out of instinct than out of the study. Participants were scholars in their various fields of religion, but their dialogical talents were more of a mixture of interpersonal giftedness and raw experimentation. Finally, Mormons and Evangelicals are experimenting with a new kind of dialogue. Doctoral student John-Charles Duffy observes: "Mormon-evangelical dialogists were consciously developing a different kind of pluralist practice—what I dub a *conservative* pluralism. They were motivated by an anxiety about religious pluralism that many Americans shared at the beginning of the twenty-first century: how to promote interreligious harmony without collapsing into relativism?"[359] There really is no precedent for what Mormons and Evangelicals are trying to do. They are seeking to carve out a new kind of dialogue that avoids the liberal relativism of the left and the harsh confrontational tactics of the Countercultist or

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[359] Duffy, 3.

sectarian right. They are literally blazing a new trail in the history of interfaith interaction. Since the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue is only in its first stages of development, it is simply going to take some time before the activity becomes clearly defined.

Meanwhile there are several different purposes and motives at play in the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue that may appear contradictory to some, especially in how interfaith dialogue has been traditionally understood. In the remaining portion of this chapter, I will explore the purposes that Mormon and Evangelical dialogists have incorporated from the mainstream liberal practice of interfaith dialogue as well as some of their own innovative approaches that represent their experimental "conservative pluralism."[360] I will explore five of the purposes of the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue under the headings of healing, cultural warfare, public relations, evangelism/missionary work, and the promotion of what Duffy calls "Mormon progressive orthodoxy."[361]

Healing. Although the phrase "world peace" is often laughed over as the main answer for every question in a beauty pageant, the attacks of 9/11 by Muslim extremists make the idea more serious and desirable than ever before. Religion has and will always be one of the single greatest motivating forces in peoples' lives. With religion not being taught in American public schools and a plague of religious illiteracy sweeping the world, few understand their own faith—let alone the faith of another.[362] Such illiteracy and ignorance can easily spark a firestorm of misunderstanding and conflict. But on the other hand there has also never been so much pluralism among religions that has resulted in more openness, communication, and cooperation

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[360] Duffy, 30

[361] Ibid., 131.

[362] See Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

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on difficult issues that threaten America and the world. Hans Kung, a professor of ecumenical theology and president of the Foundation for a Global Ethic said: "There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions."[363] Perhaps no greater reason could be stated for the need of interfaith dialogue among religious groups, including for dialogue between Mormons and Evangelicals. And there is no greater place than America, with its freedom of religion, where such experimental conversations could occur more successfully. Although greater communication and understanding between religious groups will not solve every problem, it can build better relationships of trust that could help lesson conflict, hatred, and strife.

Professor Khaleel Mohammed argues that real interfaith dialogue is really yet to take place in the world. He says, "Perhaps we talk of interfaith dialogue in terms of anticipation: We are hoping that one day, with more knowledge and experience, our interfaith encounters will be dialogical. Whatever the case, we are most definitely not having dialogue at this point in time."[364] Mohammed explains why he believes that true dialogue is still missing. Although he is addressing the relationship of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, I believe his words also apply to the Mormon/Evangelical relationship:

> The participants in interfaith dialogue can be likened to the prisoners of Plato's cave. They are still in the dark, seeing shadows and images. Dialogue, you see, gives the impression that the topic of discussion is one that allows rational analysis and will allow for the change of opinion as logic might dictate. . . However, Abrahamic religion transcends rational thinking; after all, the edicts and fatwas of religions do not have to conform to the norms of human logic. How can one have a rational discussion with someone who "knows" that the Qur'an condemns to hellfire those who reject Islam? How does one rationalize with someone who holds that the qur'anic law is permanent and must apply to every time and place?

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[363] David W. Musser and D. Dixon Sutherland, *War or Words: Interreligious Dialogue as an Instrument of Peace* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2005), 1.

[364] Khaleel Mohammed, "The Art of Heeding," in Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots, ed. Rebecca Kratz Mays (Philadelphia, PA: Ecumenical Press, 2008), 77.

We come to the "dialogue" often expecting to find solutions, if not immediately, at least after a few sessions. One of the prerequisites of dialogue is an equality of power among parties, but . . . the Abrahamic religions have created "the other" as the misguided one. If we have rejected the "others" based on the teachings of an almighty God, then, clearly, we are right and they are wrong. There is nothing to discuss except to seek conversion to our way of thought. Our presuppositions, our prejudices, our penchant for not wanting to see things in their true form are our shackles. A study of the situation, in the light of naked truth, without guile or false courtesy, would reveal that the religious practice of "othering" has resulted in the spilling of blood and extirpation of human life. We may delude ourselves into thinking we are having a dialogue, but we ought to recognize that we are seeking conflict resolution.[365]

Observing the imbalance of power that exists among the Abrahamic religions, Mohammed follows the Wilfred Cantwell Smith preference of calling interfaith dialogues: "interfaith discussions."[366] Perhaps the current Mormon/Evangelical dialogue is also in the early discussion phase for at least one main reason: the refusal of Evangelicals to accept the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as part of the Christian religion. No matter how long various theological doctrines are explored, there will be no equality of power at the table until Evangelicals accept the Mormon self-understanding and self-definition of being a legitimate Christian tradition. And perhaps there will not be equality even then. As Mormons and Evangelicals experiment with dialogue, maybe one of the conclusions will be the permanent denial of equality, especially if reference is being made to exclusive claims of truth. Meanwhile, Mormons and Evangelicals continue as unequal partners, and according to Professor Mohammed, they are engaged in a discussion aimed at conflict-resolution rather than the enjoyment true dialogue.

The United States Institute for Peace recognizes the importance of taking sufficient time to resolve conflict and achieve healing between estranged religious communities. It suggests groups "Spend time on healing and acknowledging collective and individual injuries—walking

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[365] Mohammed, 76-77.

[366] Ibid., 77.

through history. Focus on storytelling—giving participants an opportunity to share their suffering and to be assured that their hurts are being taken seriously by those on the other side. Give sensitive and compassionate attention to the emotions of grief, fear, anger, and victimization. . . . Share in the suffering of the other side and recognize the sins and shortcomings of one's own side through apology and forgiveness, thereby helping end cycles of abuse."[367]

As this thesis has demonstrated, there exist many incidents of Evangelical opposition to Mormonism. Although modern Mormon leaders have often encouraged forgiveness for enemies of the Church, it is still a painful exercise for Mormons to retrace a history of consistent and continuous persecution by Evangelicals.[368] Mormons have also perpetrated awful actions upon Evangelicals like the Mountain Meadows Massacre. But on a whole, the Mormon persecution of Evangelicals has paled in comparison to the Evangelical persecution of Mormons, and Evangelicals need to recognize that progression towards a healthy relationship with Mormonism needs to include acknowledgment of the wrongs committed against the Mormon people. Mormons should be likewise eager to apologize for moments of hostility enacted against Evangelicals. Obviously it depends on the circumstance to determine how needful such discussions are. Some may have healed already, whereas others may carry with them a defensiveness born of a collective sense of hurt and pain acquired through either the oral transmission or study of the past.

Such defensiveness was recognized as recently as 2009 by Mormon apostle M. Russell Ballard. He shared how recent research demonstrated that Church members tended to be overly defensive in their interactions with others. Elder Ballard counseled the Saints:

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[367] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, D. C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2002), 129-131.

[368] Flake, 136.

This isn't 1830, and there aren't just six of us anymore. Could part of the defensiveness that others sometimes see in us suggest that we still expect to be treated as a disliked minority, forced to flee to the West? In our interactions with others, are we expecting always to have to defend ourselves? If so, I think we need to make a course correction. Constantly anticipating criticism or objections can lead to an unhealthy self-consciousness and a defensive posture that doesn't resonate well with others. It is inconsistent with where we are today as a Church and as a great body of followers of Jesus Christ.[369]

Fortunately, many who are part of the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue recognize and are in agreement with the importance of offering acts of repentance and forgiveness.[370]

The scholarly dialogue was begun and has continued based primarily on theological, not historical issues. Yet many of their meetings have included field trips to the sacred Mormon sites of Palmyra, New York and Nauvoo, Illinois. Interestingly enough, the single most remembered moment by Evangelical participants came at Nauvoo, where BYU Mormon history professor Richard Bennett told the story of the Mormon pioneer exodus, while all sat on the banks of the Mississippi River imagining what such an experience must have been like.[371] Visits to historical sites, along with the retelling of important historical events, constitute an important act of conflict-resolution and healing. Although it might be unrecognized by dialogue members, such moments may have done more to promote the needed love, healing, and friendship than any discussion of doctrine.

Richard Mouw has expressed to his fellow Evangelicals, "We need to be clear about the harm we have done in the past to people of other faiths. . . . We need to listen in humility to their

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[369] M. Russell Ballard, "Engaging without Being Defensive," *Religious Educator* 13, no. 1 (2012): 1-9.

[370] See the comments of Fuller Theological Seminary President Richard J. Mouw in James White, *Is the Mormon My Brother?: Discerning the Differences Between Mormonism and Christianity*, 2d ed. (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books), 1; Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 11, 25.

[371] Based on interviews with Evangelical dialogists listed in Bibliography.

grievances against us."[372] Taking his own advice, Mouw presented perhaps the most memorable

public apology of the entire dialogue, which in turn drew large amounts of both positive and

negative reaction. In 2004, Mouw spoke in the Mormon Tabernacle in front of a mixed crowd of

7,000 Mormons and Evangelicals (the first time in a hundred years Evangelicals have had such

an opportunity, when Dwight L. Moody spoke). Although Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias

was the main speaker that evening, Mouw's remarks stole the show.

Mouw began his discourse with a brief review of the troubled Mormon/Evangelical past.

He shared how he believed the relationship was changing in ways for the better. Mouw then

explained how he had been participating for six years in dialogues with Mormon scholars. As a

result of such talks, Mouw confessed:

> I am now convinced that we evangelicals have often seriously misrepresented the beliefs and practices of the Mormon community. Indeed, let me state it bluntly to the LDS folks here this evening: *we have sinned against you*. The God of the Scriptures makes it clear that it is a terrible thing to bear false witness against our neighbors, and we have been guilty of that sort of transgression in things we have said about you. We have told you what you believe without making a sincere effort first of all to ask you what you believe. . . .
>
> Indeed, we have even on occasion demonized you, weaving conspiracy theories about what the LDS community is "really" trying to accomplish in the world. And even at our best, we have—and this is true of both of our communities—we have talked past each other, setting forth oversimplified and distorted accounts of what the other group believes.
>
> I have formed some wonderful friendships with Mormons in the past few years. These friends have helped me to see the ways in which I have often misinterpreted Mormon thought. To be sure, as a result of those conversations I also remained convinced that there are very real issues of disagreement between us—and that some of these issues are matters of eternal significance. But we can now discuss these topics as friends. And tonight many more of our friends have come together in this place for a very public and large-scale "Evening of Friendship." God be praised![373]

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[372] Duffy, 244.

[373] Richard J. Mouw, "Understanding and Being Understood," *Religious Educator*, 13, no. 1 (2012), 21-25, emphasis added. Address given at "An Evening of Friendship," Salt Lake Tabernacle, Nov. 14, 2004.

As a result of these comments, Mouw was thoroughly chastised by Countercult members of Evangelicalism because he was primarily addressing their hard-line tactics of opposition to Mormonism. But he took a stand for Mormon/Evangelical friendship, and as a result has endeared himself with great trust to the Mormon people. Mormons finally felt vindication for their victimhood at the hands of Evangelicals. For years, Mormons claimed to be misrepresented by the Countercult groups. Now, finally, Evangelicals were recognizing this pain and thereby projecting a more positive, loving image of themselves to Mormons.

Cultural Warfare. There is a common enemy that has caused greater unity in recent years among differing religions: secularism. This adversary has caused religion to be removed more and more from the public square. This has in turn lessened the power of religions to adequately address perceived social ills. Today, some are seeking to redefine marriage and family. Abortion continues to take the lives of the unborn. Drugs, immorality, and pornography continue to destroy many lives. Several religious groups have recently become nervous over how President Barack Obama and his administration have referred to the First Amendment of the Constitution. Instead of speaking of the freedom of religion, there is now a deliberate and concerted effort to speak of the freedom of worship.[374] Many fear that this action will push religion further from the public sphere of discussion, debate, legislation, and policy. Only time will tell if such fears are justified.

Mormons and Evangelicals politically need each other now more than ever before, since they share so many similar values. Both share a common commitment to traditional marriage. Together they have been able to achieve great political success, such as Proposition 8 in California that defined marriage between a man and a woman. They have played a similar role in

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[374] Ashley Samelson, "Why 'Freedom of Worship' is Not Enough," On The Square Blog, First Things, entry posted Feb. 22, 2010, First Things, http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2010/02/why-ldquofreedom-of-worshiprdquo-is-not-enough (accessed July 1, 2012).

other states where additional constitutional amendments on marriage were passed. As religious freedom and free speech in public come under increasingly harsh attack, Mormons and Evangelicals need the strength that each other provides in defending moral issues. LDS apostles Jeffrey R. Holland, Dallin H. Oaks, and Quentin L. Cook have all spoken on the value and importance of interfaith cooperation on moral issues.[375] Likewise, in recent controversies over contraception, both Catholics and Evangelicals have reacted negatively to the new policies of President Barack Obama as an attack on religious freedom.[376] Mormons, Evangelicals, Catholics, and others thereby have the potential of forming powerful political alliances to champion great moral causes.

Evangelicals are also one of the principle power brokers in the Republican Party. Due to similar moral and political values, many Mormons also find themselves aligned with the GOP. The candidacy of Mitt Romney has done more than any other single event to highlight the Evangelical mistrust of Mormons. As a result of Evangelical opposition, Romney was unable to win his party's nomination in 2008, and struggled greatly in 2012. In the end, Romney won the Republican nomination narrowly, despite a serious deficit in the Evangelical vote. In fact, Romney did not win a single Deep South primary state until most of his competition bowed out of the race.[377] Perhaps with a Mormon finally winning the Republican presidential nomination,

[375] See Dallin H. Oaks, "Truth and Tolerance," CES Fireside, September 11, 2011, Newsroom, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/-truth-and-tolerance-elder-dallin-h-oaks (accessed May 4, 2012), "Preserving Religious Freedom," Speech at Chapman University School of Law, February 4, 2011, Newsroom, entry posted February 4, 2011, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/elder-oaks-religious-freedom-Chapman-University; Dallin H. Oaks, "Religious Freedom," Speech at BYU-Idaho, October 13, 2009, Newsroom, entry posted October 13, 2009, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/oaks-religious-freedom (accessed May 4, 2012); see also Jeffrey R. Holland, "Standing Together for the Cause of Christ," *Religious Educator* 13, no. 1 (2012): 10-19; see also Quentin L. Cook, "Let There Be Light!" *Ensign* (October 2010), 27-31.

[376] See National Association of Evangelicals, "FAQs on the Contraception Controversy," http://www.nae.net/component/content/article/5/726-faqs-on-the-contraception-controversy (accessed May 4, 2012).

[377] See Carroll Doherty, "Are Republicans Ready Now for a Mormon President? The Polls Show Trouble," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, entry posted July 5, 2011,

Evangelicals will be more cooperative as has been the case with Catholics since the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960.

Public Relations. In an interview, Kirk Jowers, director of the Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah, "pointed out that election season [2008] polls suggested that evangelicals, ironically, had image problems of their own, and even 'have more people disliking them that are not of their faith than [Mormons] do.'"[378] This comment was in reference to a December 2006 *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* poll stating that although "53 percent of Americans [express] hesitation about voting for a Mormon presidential candidate; fifty *four* percent of respondents in that poll said they would likewise hesitate to vote for an *evangelical* candidate."[379] The 2007 "Faith Matters Survey" published in the book *American Grace* likewise showed that Evangelicals were not very popular in America.[380] This decrease in respect has continued ever since the great schism of Protestantism in the early twentieth century, when Evangelicalism lost its dominating influence over America. Therefore, Evangelicals could use some help from various groups, including Mormons, to help foster a more positive image in the American mainstream—and interfaith dialogue could be a means by which to accomplish this. As mentioned, Evangelical dialogists are eager to demonstrate that they are repudiating the harsh tactics of Countercultists. They are very interested in demonstrating an exemplary Evangelical manner of convicted civility.

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http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2048/polls-are-republicans-ready-for-a-mormon-president-romney-huntsman (accessed Aug. 19, 2011); see also Mark Murray and Domenico Montanaro, "First Read Minute: Breaking down the Wisconsin poll," First Read, entry posted March 30, 2012, http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/03/30/10942209-first-read-minute-breaking-down-the-wisconsin-poll (accessed April 1, 2012).

[378] Haws, 470.

[379] Ibid.

[380] See Robert D. Putman and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 504-508.

As for Mormons, the LDS Public Affairs Department states that it "is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining positive relationships with key individuals. These individuals, commonly referred to as opinion leaders, are those who can affect the public reputation of the Church or who can help or hinder the Church in the achievement of its mission. Building these relationships constitutes the core purpose of public affairs."[381] If this is the case, then Evangelical leaders are among some of the most important opinion leaders with whom Mormons should associate, as Evangelicals roughly comprise about 1 in every 4 Americans.

As has been demonstrated, Evangelicals have largely influenced the American perception of Mormonism over time. In particular, they have been one of the principle perpetuators of a negative Mormon image. As the dominant majority of the nineteenth century, the Evangelical view of Mormonism was one and the same as the American view of Mormonism. This was a view of Mormons as fraudulent, deceptive, immoral, despotic, and lazy. Mormons were branded as un-Christian, un-America, and un-civilized. Even when Evangelicals lost their majority status, they were still influential enough to shape the image of Mormonism in popular culture. One of the most recent examples of this negative influence was the release of *God Makers* in 1982. This anti-Mormon film created suspicion about the secrecy of Mormonism. Later events such as the Mark Hofmann murders of 1985 and the excommunication of Mormon intellectuals in 1993 seemed to confirm such suspicions.

Throughout history, Evangelicals have sent forth negative stereotypes into the public arena that are later collected and appropriated by the media and other opinion leaders for their own purposes. So if Evangelicals have more positive views of Latter-day Saints, a more positive image of Mormonism is likely to be disseminated in public. Polling shows that Americans tend

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[381] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Public Affairs Training Guide* (USA: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 2011), http://publicaffairs.lds.org/eng/public-affairs-training/training-guides (accessed April 20, 2102).

to view the Mormon people more positively than Mormonism in general.[382] In addition, although many Americans know Mormons are friendly people, most have no idea what Mormons actually believe.[383] These facts demonstrate the great need Mormons have of more effectively educating the public about Mormonism in a positive manner. Interfaith dialogue has served as one way that Mormon dialogists have communicated a greater knowledge of Mormonism to Evangelicals and to all Americans.

Evangelism/Missionary Work. There is a debate, especially among Christians, over the precise relationship between interfaith dialogue and evangelism or missionary work. Are mission and interfaith dialogue compatible or incompatible? This is especially an important question for Mormons and Evangelicals, who both pride themselves in active proselytizing efforts.

In stating its position on the controversy, the Roman Catholic Church announces: "Interreligious dialogue and proclamation, though not on the same level, are both authentic elements of the Church's evangelizing mission. Both are legitimate and necessary. They are intimately related, but not interchangeable: true interreligious dialogue on the part of the Christian supposes the desire to make Jesus Christ better known, recognized and loved; proclaiming Jesus Christ is to be carried out in the Gospel spirit of dialogue. The two activities remain distinct but, as experience shows, one and the same local Church, one and the same person, can be diversely engaged in both."[384] The Catholic Church has one overall evangelizing

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[382] Haws, 477.

[383] Ibid.

[384] Pontifical Council For Inter-Religious Dialogue, *Dialogue And Proclamation*, *Reflection And Orientations On Interreligious Dialogue And The Proclamation Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ, Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples* (Rome, 19 May 1991; or. 21 June, 1991), found at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html (accessed 2/20/2012).

mission and sees dialogue and proclamation playing important roles in this mission, with proclamation being the greater of the two steps toward full conversion.

Professor Catherine Cornille calls for an even greater congruence of dialogue and proselytizing, which includes apologetics:

> . . . dialogue tends to be limited to a process of learning about and from the other religion. This certainly constitutes an essential dimension of interreligious dialogue. However, dialogue involves a two-way process in which each partner is engaged in a process of not only informing but also convincing the other of the truth of his or her own beliefs and practices. As such, all authentic dialogue necessarily contains a missionary and apologetic dimension. The fullness of dialogue may be regarded as a form of *mutual proclamation* in which participants alternately adopt the roles of missionary and seeker. While seemingly contradictory, these roles may coexist in a religious attitude capable of balancing humility and conviction.
> . . . Authentic dialogue with other religions may thus require abandoning the traditional distinctions between dialogue and mission or dialogue and apologetics and developing *a more robust understanding of dialogue.*[385]

I agree with Cornille that the debate between dialogue and mission or proclamation and apologetics is futile. The problem with dialogue is more generally one of attitude and demeanor rather than one of motive, subject matter, or sheer disagreement, so long as clarity is sought.

Some Evangelicals involved in the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue are making a strong case for a symbiotic relationship between dialogue and mission. Since Evangelicals generally avoid interfaith dialogue altogether, this may be the only possible approach to muster greater support for the enterprise. A lot of the fear and avoidance for Evangelicals stems from their Fundamentalist days. As Liberal Protestants engaged more and more in ecumenical work, Fundamentalists intentionally avoided the enterprise. Therefore, pro-dialogue Evangelicals have their work cut out for them in changing the Fundamentalist culture that still lingers within Evangelicalism. To this end, Evangelicals, currently involved in the scholarly dialogue, are

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[385] Cornille, 71-72, emphasis added.

seeking to share their perspectives through such outlets like the Fuller Seminary online magazine *Evangelical Interfaith Dialogue*.[386]

Mormons likewise have some challenges in promoting the cause of interfaith dialogue. Despite the existence of a Public Affairs Department at its headquarters, and public affairs councils in its local stakes—there is no mention, instruction, or guidelines about interfaith dialogue, although there is direction given about building good relationships with leaders of other faiths.[387] The statement of purpose for the department reads: "Though public affairs work focuses on those not of our faith, conversion is not its main goal. Public Affairs is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining positive relationships with key individuals."[388] Although conversion is not the principal concern for Public Affairs, it is nevertheless part of the overall program and purpose of the Church. The same might be said for dialogue, but further instruction is needed from LDS leaders as to the role that dialogue has within the Church.

Part of the challenge for Mormons to embrace interfaith dialogue is a perceived contradiction to the general missionary mindset that many young men learn while serving full-time two-year missions. The standard missionary model is a three-step process of finding, teaching, and baptizing. As such, missionaries tend to pursue and speak with those who show interest in quickly converting, not simply in learning—and especially not in those who prove particularly challenging. Missionaries are seeking to preach and convert, not to dialogue and discuss. This same model continues with many Mormons after their missions, and among the general membership of the Church. The main problem with this model is that it can put

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[386] See issues of *Evangelical Interfaith Dialogue* at http://evangelicalinterfaith.blogspot.com/ (accessed May 2, 2012).

[387] See The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Public Affairs Training Guide* (USA: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 2011), 4, http://publicaffairs.lds.org/eng/public-affairs-training/training-guides (accessed April 20, 2102).

[388] Ibid., 4.

conversion not only as the ultimate goal, but also as the sole motivation. Non-members have expressed how after moving into a Utah neighborhood dominated by Mormons, they are at first warmly greeted, but then begin to feel like everyone is trying to convert them instead of sincerely building a friendship.[389] In other words, some Mormons are approaching relationships like full-time missionaries who have the single objective to convert investigators, or else to drop them and seek to find those more interested. I do see the value of a full-time missionary force that has the focus to baptize those who are ready to join the Church. But perhaps regular members of the Church could modify their missionary mindset a little in order to change how they develop relationships with those not of their faith.

Mormon pollster, Gary Lawrence, suggests a series of steps to help people better learn and understand the Mormon message. I believe his model is a great proposal for how to combine missionary work and dialogue. His reasoning is simple, "All of us would like to so improve our image in the minds of our friends that they would enthusiastically investigate the Church and be converted. This natural wish will remain with us as long as we are under the commandment to carry Christ's gospel to the four quarters of the earth. Yet to achieve our immediate image-building goal, the traditional find-teach-baptize model of regular missionary work falls short."[390] Lawrence correctly perceives that image-building and missionary work go together, and if care is not taken to carry out both objectives simultaneously then the message will be damaged in the process. In his model, Lawrence shares seven steps:

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389 See Mori Kessler, "'Fitting in' as a non-Mormon in Utah," *Saint George News*, entry posted October 20, 2011, http://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2011/10/20/%E2%80%98fitting-in%E2%80%99-as-a-non-mormon-in-utah/ (accessed May 5, 2012).

390 Gary C. Lawrence, *How Americans View Mormonism: Seven Steps to Improve Our Image* (Orange, CA: Parameter Foundation, 2008), 95.

Step 1: Think new. We must leave our fears, guilt, and vulnerability to pressure behind, think emphatically, and redefine what we consider success in conversing with those of other faiths.

Step 2: Think simple. A simple model for understanding where people stand, simple speech, and simple Golden Rule behavior give us a game plan to correct distortions and reach the open minded.

Step 3: Prepare the Stage. We . . . must prepare our impromptus in the form of facts we can casually drop into conversations. We further prepare when we thoughtfully observe what's going on in society and become more active in our communities.

Step 4: Have natural conversations. We can do this without leaving our comfort zones. Merely stating a few pertinent facts will change our image, and we will have been successful even if our listeners show no further interest at the time.

Step 5: Expand the vision. As our facts and claims shake people's previous assumptions, we use contrast and reframing techniques to open and broaden their perspectives. People who understand us at a deeper level will be more likely to defend us in conversations where no member is present.

Step 6: Use technology. The written word facilitates comfortable soul-to-soul communication and helps people become not only our personal friends, but also friends of the Church. And we can accomplish this with the click of a mouse from our safe harbors.

Step 7: Guide patiently. If our friends change their image of us and want to learn more, gentle mentoring is the key to fruitful investigation.[391]

"Step 4: Having natural conversations" is just another way of telling Mormons to enter into informal dialogues with people. In connection with "Step 2: Think simple," Lawrence offers a specific six-stage model that corresponds with the natural progression of an individual who begins learning about the Church. Lawrence lists these six stages along with information obtained from a focus group that is broken down into percentages of people at each stage:

Stage 1: Awareness (40%). "Mormons Exist."
Stage 2: Awakening (25%). "Why am I hearing so much about Mormons?"
Stage 3: Curiosity (11%). "I wonder what Mormons believe about . . ."
Stage 4: Interest (9%). "This could be serious. I will listen."
Stage 5: Investigation (5%). "I have to know if this is true. I will study and pray."
Stage 6: Conversion (2%). "I will help build the kingdom."[392]

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[391] Ibid.

[392] Ibid., 97.

Understanding the slow journey most people take in changing their lives will help Mormons

avoid applying undue pressure during the conversion process. Lawrence explains that this

> . . . six-stage model . . . is an easier way to think about image building because it
> divides the education process into smaller steps and focuses on how people think about
> Mormons—their levels of attention—instead of focusing on baptism. As with all models
> of the Church journey, it designates conversion as the ideal end state. We know that we
> will not reach the sixth stage very often, but if we follow this model, and **understand**
> **how people think** in the first four stages, and especially the first three stages in which
> misperceptions flourish, we will become more adept at providing information at the
> appropriate time. We will, therefore, be less likely to rush the curious and the merely
> interested to baptism, thinking it synonymous with conversion, and be more likely to
> effectively change perceptions toward the Church among more people.[393]

Interfaith dialogue becomes a perfect application of Lawrence's model thereby

accomplishing image-building and missionary work simultaneously. Lawrence's model could

represent the Mormon way of implementing interfaith dialogue as a new form of missionary

work, much like Evangelicals are proposing with their "relational evangelism" model. As such,

there needs to be greater efforts to foster dialogue at the grassroots level. For Mormons, the

scaffolding is in place through priesthood leaders in every stake, and LDS apostle Jeffrey R.

Holland along with other Church leaders are giving their approval more and more to the

enterprise.[394]

Promotion of Mormon Progressive Orthodoxy. Perhaps the single greatest reason why

Mormon/Evangelical dialogue has been successful is the common desire on both sides to change

the nature of Mormonism. John-Charles Duffy calls this effort to change the modern identity of

Mormonism: "Mormon progressive orthodoxy."[395] Duffy defines progressive orthodoxy as "the

effort to mitigate Mormon sectarianism, the rejection of Mormon liberalism, and the desire to

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[393] Ibid., 95.

[394] Jeffrey R. Holland, "Standing Together for the Cause of Christ," *Religious Educator* 13, no. 1 (2012): 10-19.

[395] Duffy, 132

make Mormon supernaturalism more intellectually credible."[396] Duffy explains that progressive orthodoxy is progressive in its willingness to be less sectarian or exclusive in its doctrine, and in its willingness to revise supernatural truth claims to make them more intellectually strong. Yet the movement is orthodox in its resistance to the liberal trends of secularization and pluralism, as well as its resistance to liberal Mormonism which some equate with traditional Mormonism.[397] Therefore, says Duffy it is "progressive but orthodox."[398] Most of the Mormon dialogists represent this new intellectual movement, although they have not identified themselves as such. Perhaps this is an intentional omission in order to better present their views as the true normative voice of Mormonism. Whatever their motive, Evangelical counterparts are more than happy to encourage them. From the Evangelical standpoint, progressive orthodoxy appears to represent the greater assimilation of Evangelicalism into Mormon identity.[399] However, such analysis is problematic.

Progressive orthodoxy is anti-sectarian in the sense that it wants to lessen Mormonism's traditionally exclusivist position. Progressive orthodox still believe this is God's "one and only true Church," but they want to avoid an arrogant triumphal attitude about it (D&C 1:30). They want to be inclusivist by recognizing truth in all other religions, yet loyal to the authority of Mormon scriptures and priesthood leadership. Perhaps one of the best symbols of this anti-sectarian stance was the placing out of print *Mormon Doctrine* by the late apostle Bruce R. McConkie. Duffy calls McConkie the "last of the great Mormon sectarians" due to his tendency

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[396] Ibid.

[397] See White, xiv, xvi.

[398] Duffy 197

[399] Ibid., 131.

to offend other Christians, and especially Evangelicals.[400] In its place, progressive orthodox authors Robert L. Millet, Camille Fronk Olsen, Andrew C. Skinner, and Brent L. Top produced *LDS Beliefs: A Doctrinal Reference* in 2011, patterned after the retired *Mormon Doctrine*. As expected, the sectarianism of McConkie is noticeably absent, and a softer tone prevails throughout its pages.

A great example of this difference is found in related entries under the topic of "church." Whereas McConkie includes seven related entries, *LDS Beliefs* includes one single entry authored by Robert Millet. In one of McConkie's entries, he repeatedly uses the word "only" in specific reference to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the "*only* true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30), the *only* organization authorized by the Almighty to preach his gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation, the *only* Church which has power to save and exalt men in the hereafter."[401] Whereas, in the entry authored by Millet, the word "only" is never employed concerning any particular truth claim. Not even D&C 1:30 is quoted, as it was by McConkie, which is one of the Mormon Church's most exclusive truth claims. In fact, Millet's entry is so general in its description that it could easily be used to describe any number of other Christian denominations. In other words, any exclusive claim to truth is completely missing.[402]

Among the various other specific doctrinal and historical revisions of the progressive orthodox were "softening the condemnation of other churches in Joseph Smith's First Vision; affirming the importance of Jesus' crucifixion, not only his suffering in Gethsemane; denying

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[400] Ibid., 173.

[401] Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2 ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 136.

[402] Millet, Robert L., Camille Fronk Olsen, Andrew C. Skinner, Brent L. Top, *LDS Beliefs: A Doctrinal Reference* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), location 2420-2490 of 13187, Kindle e-book.

that the church held that God had sex with Mary; and moving away from literal understandings of the Joseph Smith Translation as a restoration of the original biblical text or of the Book of Abraham as a translation from papyrus," as well as deemphasizing Jesus as the eldest spirit brother.[403] There was even the importation of the Protestant justification model of imputed righteousness as exemplified in BYU Professor Stephen Robinson's now well-known parable of the bicycle.[404]

Progressive orthodoxy seeks to revise supernatural claims in order to make certain miraculous stories and events are more credible. For example, the work of The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), now called the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, revised claims about the Book of Mormon.[405] They now argue for small groups of Israelites that were eventually assimilated into existing Native American populations within a limited amount of geographical land, thereby explaining why it has been impossible to find confirming DNA evidence of ancient Israelites in America. This change was reflected in the 2006 revision of the Book of Mormon "Introduction," where instead of claiming that Book of Mormon peoples were the "principal" ancestors of American Indians, it now reads that they were "among" the ancestors of American Indians.

Since the progressive orthodox represent a class of highly schooled individuals, they ironically incorporate the tools of their liberal education despite pushing back against some of liberalism's secularization of religion.[406] Progressive orthodox thereby revise Mormonism's supernatural, historical, and doctrinal claims while criticizing perceived liberals for also

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[403] Duffy, 204.

[404] See Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992).

[405] See Duffy, 171.

[406] See Duffy, 151.

conducting similar revisions. Although utilizing similar methods, one significant overall difference is that the progressive orthodox attempt to strengthen, not weaken the divinity and veracity of scripture, whereas liberals have been willing to let go of such divine claims. This innovation has permitted a more sophisticated defense to liberal critics and Countercultists alike. Progressive orthodoxy also avoids the pluralist relativism that treats all truth claims as equal, or else completely secularizes the gospel into a system of ethics. It is also anti-liberal in its rejection of Mormon liberalism that some equate with traditional Mormonism.[407]

Duffy presents progressive orthodoxy as building off of what sociologist Kendall White calls "Mormon neo-orthodoxy," another intellectual movement in Mormonism that began in the mid-twentieth century.[408] White argues that Mormon neo-orthodoxy, like Protestant neo-orthodoxy, was a "crisis theology," in that both movements developed out of a response to the crisis of modernity.[409] The two central features of crisis theologies were anti-intellectualism and greater submission to authority. Yet, Mormonism and Protestantism enacted these two concepts so differently that White's argument is problematic. Perhaps the greatest contribution of White is his identification of changes in Mormon doctrinal interpretation. He explains that "Mormons have traditionally believed in a finite God, an optimistic assessment of human nature, and a doctrine of salvation by merit. In contrast, most Mormon neo-orthodox theologians have tended to embrace the concept of an absolute God, a pessimistic assessment of human nature, and a doctrine of salvation by grace."[410] Both Mormon neo-orthodoxy and progressive orthodoxy developed as a result of the anti-intellectual conservatism led by President J. Reuben Clark in the

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[407] See White, xiv, xvi.

[408] White, xi.

[409] Ibid.

[410] White, xvi.

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twentieth century (as explained in Chapter 2). Before this, modern Mormonism sought the reconciliation of all knowledge as best exemplified in the work of Church leaders James E. Talmage, John A. Widtsoe, and B. H. Roberts.

Progressive orthodox continued the emphasis on an infinite God, depraved human nature, and salvation by grace—but strengthened these doctrines through the increased use of the Book of Mormon, as directed by Church President Ezra Taft Benson in 1985. The Book of Mormon contains an Evangelical "revivalist-oriented theology" due to "its talk of sinners being born again, washed in the blood of the Lamb, throwing themselves on the mercy of Jesus, etc,"[411] as is witnessed in the multiple accounts of people passing out unconscious when converted. In the further development of an infinite God, depraved humanity, and salvation by grace, the progressive orthodox downplayed the potential godhood of man, even arguing that man will never become his own heavenly father, who, with his celestial wife or wives, creates worlds without end and populates them with his own spirit children who will thereby worship him.

In relation to this issue, the King Follett Discourse given by Joseph Smith in 1844 has become one of the major issues in the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue.[412] The King Follett Discourse is ground zero for the Mormon concepts concerning the manhood of God and the godhood of man. Most Mormon dialogists are either uncomfortable or neutral in supporting the sermon. The idea has even been expressed that it was a mistake for Joseph Smith to ever teach such a doctrine, and that the Prophet should never have done so. Perhaps the single greatest desire Evangelicals have for changing Mormonism is the discrediting of the King Follett Discourse along with Church President Lorenzo Snow's couplet, "As man now is, God once

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[411] Duffy, 162, 192.

[412] See "The King Follett Sermon (part 1)," *Ensign* (April 1971); "The King Follett Sermon (part 2)," *Ensign* (May 1971).

was: As God now is, man may be."[413] As a result of these concerns, the dialogue is currently studying the doctrinal development of the nature of God or Trinity in order to decide how close Mormons and Evangelicals can agree.

Mormon progressive orthodox use the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue as an opportunity to promote their new position to Evangelicals (especially Countercultists), and to their fellow Mormons. It appears that Church leadership has been generally pleased with their presentation, offering little complaint and much approval. This makes sense, considering most Church leaders also emphasize a progressive orthodoxy in their teachings at General Conference, especially Elder Jeffrey R. Holland.[414] Observing this trend, Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Quorum of the Seventy remarked in 2004, "In recent years, we Latter-day Saints have been teaching, singing, and testifying much more about the Savior Jesus Christ. I rejoice that we are rejoicing more."[415] There was a strong effort to include Mormon apostles in the dialogue in order to grant progressive orthodoxy greater authority. Nothing has formally come of the effort, although Church leaders have made special visits on occasion.

The Evangelical dialogists, who follow after the "Reformed fundamentalist tradition," were more than happy to help promote this new progressive orthodoxy of Mormonism that—with its emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the depravity of man, and salvation by grace—brought Mormonism closer to Evangelicalism than ever before.[416] In fact, when Richard Mouw

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[413] Gerald N. Lund, "I Have a Question: *Is President Lorenzo Snow's oft-repeated statement—"As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be"—accepted as official doctrine by the Church?" Ensign* (February 1982).

[414] For access to all talks given by Jeffrey R. Holland at general conferences of the LDS Church, see http://www.lds.org/search?query=jeffrey+r.+holland&lang=eng&clang=eng&collection=general-conference&name=Jeffrey+R.+Holland.

[415] Bruce C. Hafen, "The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign* (May 2004), 97.

[416] Duffy, 209.

first came across the developments of neo-orthodoxy and progressive orthodoxy, he thought he might be witnessing the birth of an "Evangelical Mormonism."[417] Duffy argues that without the development of progressive orthodoxy, with its emphasis on salvation by grace, the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue would never have happened. In other words, the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue did not occur by chance. It was only until Mormonism had become sufficiently Evangelical in nature that Evangelicals were willing to dialogue with Mormons.

Conclusion

Although Mormon and Evangelical dialogists have borrowed the general concept of interfaith dialogue from the pioneering work of Liberal Protestants and Catholics, they have been creating a new kind of dialogue, especially as they retain the purposes of evangelism and apologetics, alongside the more common purposes like conflict resolution and public relations.[418] Mormon/Evangelical dialogue thereby rejects pluralism in favor of inclusivism, or at least a conservative pluralism. Liberal Christians doubt whether such arrangements can even be included under the rubric of interfaith dialogue.[419] In fact, due to the Liberal Protestant baggage associated with terms like "interfaith" and even "dialogue," along with problems of classification, it may be best to call future dialogical encounters: "Mormon/Evangelical discussions or conversations." Although such considerations may seem trivial, Evangelicals are consistent in their insistence that words matter and that certain terms cause great suspicion.[420]

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[417] Ibid., 131.

[418] Ibid., 7.

[419] See Mohammed, 77.

[420] See Duffy, 251.

But perhaps it isn't so much a new kind of dialogue that Mormons and Evangelicals are creating, but instead a new form of evangelism that is more suitable for a modern pluralist world. In his new book *Talking with Mormons*, Richard Mouw actually refers to the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue as "dialogic evangelism."[421] On a different occasion, Mouw promoted the idea of "interreligious truth-telling" that includes the three purposes of "witnessing to, learning from, and cooperation with."[422] And of course Mouw has coined the phrase "convicted civility," which can be considered code for nice evangelism. Evangelical Professor John Stakehouse, likewise speaks of engaging in "humble apologetics."[423] These ideas are similar to the concept of "relational evangelism" that scholars like John Morehead, Keith Mulholland, and David Rowe advocate in their separate books as well as in their program called *Bridges*, which they developed while working at the Salt Lake Theological Seminary.[424] Other related terms include "lifestyle evangelism" and "friendship evangelism."[425] From his observations of the Mormon/Evangelical dialogues, John-Charles Duffy calls it "low-pressure evangelism."[426] Whatever one calls it, the focus remains on building the relationship into a friendship while letting gospel conversations come naturally. Hence Craig Blomberg claims that every minute of every dialogue has qualified as evangelism.[427]

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[421] Richard Mouw, *Talking to Mormons: An Invitation to Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), vii.

[422] Duffy, 230-234.

[423] Ibid.

[424] Ibid.

[425] Ibid.

[426] Ibid., 254.

[427] Craig Blomberg, "How Wide the Divide? Eleven Years Later: Mormons and Evangelicals in More Conversation," Denver Seminary, 2008 Spring Woman's Forum. 27 February 2008.

It is therefore quite clear that Evangelicals see the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue principally as a means of evangelism. That is not to say there are no other purposes involved. The other part to relational evangelism is the relationship. For this model to work, one must be as sincere in their friendship as they are in their discipleship. The same goes for the model that Gary Lawrence proposes for Mormons (mentioned earlier). The minute one becomes insincere in their friendship, the relationship quickly dissolves. Many Evangelicals freely admit that they want to help Mormonism change—to become Evangelical Protestant orthodox Christianity, just like the Worldwide Church of God did a few years back. To their credit—it is a sincere desire, and the Evangelical dialogists are equally as sincere in their love for their Mormon brothers.

There shouldn't be a problem for Mormons to likewise incorporate relational evangelism, since it can be a very authentic way of doing missionary work—what Catherine Cornille earlier called "mutual proclamation."[428] The problem with evangelism in the scholarly dialogue is that it has not been clearly identified and formally accepted as a group, although it has been discussed. In contrast to the Evangelicals, Mormon participants haven't presented evangelism as one of their main purposes of the dialogue. But if it is going to be one of the Evangelical purposes, then it needs to be one of their purposes as well. Otherwise there will remain a lot of confusion and suspicion in the Mormon community as to the dialogue's true purpose. For example, retired BYU religion professor Joseph Fielding McConkie, son of Mormon apostle Bruce R. McConkie, said, "Why are they there? They are there to get ammunition against us and to convert us, aren't they? I mean, who are we kidding? You don't have to have more than a warm pulse to figure that out."[429] In other words, McConkie believes Mormon dialogists have been attempting to advertise the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue as devoid of evangelism, although Evangelicals have

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[428] Cornille, 71-72.

[429] Joseph Fielding McConkie, interview by author, Orem, UT, December 23, 2011.

continued to evangelize. If Mormons aren't quick to assert their own missionary purpose in the dialogue, the activity will continue to appear as nothing more than a blatant Evangelical indoctrination of Mormonism.

Through interviews and observations, I deduce that the confusion or suspicion over the dialogue is more a result of the newness of the project and the inexperience of the participants. One possible solution to the problem of dialogical identity is to draft a mission statement that outlines, for the dialogists and observers, the true objective and purposes of the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue. This could help bring greater clarity to the issues involved in the complex nature of the activity. Meanwhile, Evangelicals clearly maintain that evangelism and apologetics are part of the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue. Interfaith dialogue thereby qualifies as a new kind of Evangelical opposition to Mormonism in the twenty first century. Although dialogue represents a new gentler form of opposition to Mormonism, it is still Evangelical opposition nonetheless.

CONCLUSION:
QUESTIONS OF MORMON IDENTITY AS
A RESULT OF EVANGELICAL OPPOSITION

Historical and Cultural Questions

In a dissertation on the public perception of Mormon identity, J. B. Haws commented on an article that demonstrated how Evangelical opposition to Mormonism had influenced the American perception of Mormonism. Specifically, the article showed how the Evangelical charge of imposter or counterfeit had created the national belief that there existed "public and private faces" of Mormonism, especially in relation to Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney:

> Harvard University Professor of Law Noah Feldman, writing in the *New York Times Magazine*, saw the church's "public face" represented best by the "pairs of cleancut missionaries in well-pressed white shirts." They personified "the wholesome success of an all-American denomination with an idealistic commitment to clean living." In many ways, Mitt Romney matched that public face of Mormonism. He was repeatedly characterized as "telegenic" and "the most handsome man in the room," and his strong family life and service as a church leader were well known.
> "Yet at the same time," Feldman observed, "secret, sacred temple rites . . . call to mind the church's murky past, including its embrace of polygamy." This made up the church's "private face," the visage that made "outsiders uncomfortable, wondering what Mormonism really is." Early in the campaign season, people suggested that Romney matched that private face of Mormonism, too. During his 1994 campaign for the Senate, Romney had expressed a pro-choice position on the issue of abortion. However, leading up to the presidential race of 2008, he stated that he had changed his mind, and that he thought *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned. In this shift to the political right on abortion, observers questioned his sincerity. Was he "a glossy and robotic candidate who will say anything to get elected?" Like his church, which "some [saw] as overly wholesome and plastic," was he more concerned with perception than with "authenticity?"[430]

Once again Mormonism found its public image mired in the original image of imposter, first created by Evangelicals.[431] The myth of a two-faced or counterfeit Mormonism hidden behind a

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[430] Haws, 436-445.

[431] See Fluhman, 15.

mask of deceit was but the continuation of an image created and propagated by Evangelicals since the early 1800s.

Robert Putman and David Campbell, authors of *American Grace*, believe that "Evangelicals view Mormons so negativity" because of theological differences and missionary competitiveness, demonstrating that Evangelicals are primarily driven by doctrinal concerns since Mormons and Evangelicals have a lot in common socially.[432] Putman and Campbell believe that additional American negativity towards Mormonism is related to the same kind of negativity shown towards both Muslims and Buddhists. All three groups suffer from smallness in size as well as from negative stereotypes produced by extreme groups within their tradition. But above all, Putman and Campbell ". . . suspect . . . something else about Muslims, Buddhists, and Mormons that makes them unpopular, and that apparently lessens any social stigma resulting from openly expressing discomfort with them. These three groups do not have a place in what has come to be called America's Judeo-Christian framework. To recall the tripartite division described by Will Herberg in the 1950's, they are neither Protestants nor Catholics nor Jews."[433]

Protestants have generally made their peace with Catholics and Jews, and are therefore comfortable in speaking about Judeo-Christian values. But Protestants, and especially Evangelicals, are yet to make such peace with Mormons, Muslims, and Buddhists. Mormons, along with other groups, continue to represent the "other" in American culture so characterized from their beginning.[434] To further illustrate the point, Haws shares an example of how this

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[432] See *American Grace*, 502.

[433] Robert D. Putman and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 507.

[434] Ibid.

Evangelical shroud of "otherness" placed upon Mormons had even influenced historian Jon

Butler as reported in the 2007 PBS documentary *The Mormons*. In his interview, Butler shared,

> The hatred of Mormonism is mysterious. It's fascinating. It's perplexing.
> Mormons were plain old white, largely English-descended American farmers who were
> God fearing, lived in agricultural settlements, and wanted the best for their children, for
> their wives, for their families. Why would they be so hated? It has to do with the fear of
> the unknown, fear of power and hierarchy. Did the Mormons really think for themselves,
> or did Joseph Smith think for them? The fear of unknown personal practices, polygamy,
> the fear of unknown beliefs—all of these things made the Mormons feared. It made
> Americans worry about them. And yet underneath, there is still something else that's hard
> to get at. There's still something else about Mormons that seems so odd, so peculiar, and
> yet it's difficult to put a historian's finger on what that is.[435]

In assessing Butler's commentary, Haws rightfully asserts that "his comments seemed as

applicable to the presidential campaign of 2008 as they did to the Haun's Mill Massacre of

1838."[436] Not much has changed in nearly two hundred years of history.

Based on a review of polling data about Mormonism, Great Britain's Economist

concluded: "anti-Mormon feeling is one of the most enduring religious prejudices in

America."[437] Gallup pointed out that the impression of Mormonism in America still continues to

lag.[438] The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* concludes: "Few other religious groups in the United

States have been subjected to such sustained, vitriolic criticism and hostility."[439] Jon Butler

believed Mormonism to be "a prime candidate for the single most persecuted [religious] group in

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[435] American Experience and Frontline, "The Mormons," PBS, Jon Butler, edited transcript of interview on May 16, 2006, http://www.pbs.org/mormons/interviews/butler.html (accessed April 24, 2012).

[436] Haws, 453.

[437] "Mitt Romney's Problem: Religious prejudice may yet undo the Republicans' latest favourite," *The Economist*, Sept. 28, 2006, http://web.ebscohost.com.erl.lib.byu.edu/ehost/external?sid=666cedb9-3af8-4f6e-baaa-3c850530dfbe%40sessionmgr115&vid=12&hid=110 (accessed Oct. 25, 2011).

[438] See Lydia Saad, "In U.S., 22% Are Hesitant to Support a Mormon in 2012: Anti-Mormon sentiment hasn't eased since it was first measured in 1967," Gallup News Service, entry posted June 20, 2011, http://www.gallup.com/poll/148100/Hesitant-Support-Mormon-2012.aspx?version=print (accessed August 20, 2011).

[439] Nelson, "Anti-Mormon Publications," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 45-52.

America."[440] Richard Ostling, author of *Mormon America*, a popular non-Mormon introduction to the LDS Church, stated that "no religion in American history has aroused so much fear and hatred, nor been the object of so much persecution and so much misinformation."[441] And Gordon Wood, Professor of History at Brown University, declared that "Mormonism was undeniably the most . . . persecuted religion . . . of any period of American history."[442] And Evangelicals have been largely responsible for most of this persecution of Mormonism. Although other forces have added fuel to the fire in the condemnation of Mormonism, it was Evangelicals that got the fire started in the first place for the heretical Mormons, and they continue to be the most active in keeping that fire burning bright.

When Mormonism first began in the 1820s, it differed fairly little with its Evangelical neighbors. Mormonism very much appeared like any other Protestant denomination with its relatively orthodox doctrines of Trinity, depravity of man, and salvation by grace through the Arminian concept of free will. For this reason it found a lot of success among Evangelical denominations, especially the Methodists. Yet with its two radical claims of having a new prophet and new scripture, Mormonism differed enough to be declared a heresy by the Evangelical majority.

Mormonism was born into the context of Evangelical America. Evangelicalism dominated the United States during the first century of its existence. Protestant historians have

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[440] American Experience and Frontline, "The Mormons," PBS, Jon Butler, edited transcript of interview on May 16, 2006, http://www.pbs.org/mormons/interviews/butler.html (accessed April 24, 2012).

[441] Richard and Joan Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), XVII.

[442] Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," New York History, October, 1980, 379.

referred to this time of our nation's history as the "righteous empire."[443] Evangelicals were the primary group influencing and directing the religious, political, and social culture of America.[444] The white Evangelicals with British ancestry were the insiders and all else were considered outsiders. In recent years, more attention has been paid to the histories of these outsiders, at times receiving even greater attention than the Protestant majority.[445] These outsiders spanned religious, racial, ethnic, political, and gender lines. Religiously, such groups included Catholics, Jews, Jehovah Witnesses, Muslims, and Mormons.

As the majority in nineteenth century American religion, society, and culture, Evangelicals sensed their closeness to Mormonism and attacked it as a heresy for its attempt to differentiate itself from accepted Christian orthodoxy. Mormonism's first reaction to Evangelical opposition was to differentiate itself more by introducing a priesthood hierarchy with exclusive rights to perform necessary ordinances for salvation, the building of temples, the performance of spiritual gifts and miracles, the implementation of communal living (referred to as the law of consecration), and the emphasis on gathering the tribes of Israel to Zion, the New Jerusalem in Independence, Jackson County Missouri. In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith reached the culmination of his career with the establishment of the literal Kingdom of God upon the Earth with both spiritual and temporal power, the introduction of polygamy among top leaders of the Church, new and necessary secret temple ordinances for the living and the dead, and a doctrinal emphasis on the plurality of gods, including the manhood of God, and the godhood of man. Mormonism achieved its height of differentiation from Evangelicalism during the second half of the

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[443] Martin E. Marty, *Protestantism in the United States: Righteous Empire*, 2nd ed. (New York: Scribner, Simon & Schuster, 1986).

[444] Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicals*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, "Evangelicalism," 206.

[445] William R. Hutchinson, *Religious Pluralism in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 3.

nineteenth century under the leadership of Brigham Young with the public announcement and practice of polygamy, the building of more temples and thus the performance of more secret temple ordinances, experimental economic communal and cooperative enterprises, and a mixing of the ecclesiastical and political leadership. But as a result of relentless Evangelical persecution, Mormons finally abdicated its three most distinctive social practices of polygamy, communal living, and theocracy. In its place Mormons adopted the Evangelical norms of monogamy, capitalism, and democracy (including a super-patriotism). Mormonism thus began a process of assimilating Evangelical identity that continues through today.

At the start of the twentieth century, Evangelicals more heavily emphasized the prohibition of alcohol. Mormonism thereby began to emphasize more heavily the word of wisdom—a revealed health code interpreted as the total abstinence of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea—making it a requirement for temple entrance for the first time in its history. Fundamentalists and Neo-Evangelicals continued their theological criticisms of the Mormon heresy, now calling it a cult to induce greater suspicion and hysteria. They also fought against modern Liberalism, and its dangerous ideas of evolution and higher criticism of the Bible. Mormonism likewise adopted an anti-liberal/anti-intellectual agenda that resulted in Mormon neo-orthodoxy and later progressive orthodoxy. In contrast to traditional Mormonism that emphasized a finite God, the inherent goodness of man, and salvation by works; these new movements emphasized an infinite God, the depravity of man, and salvation by grace. However, as Mormons became more like Evangelicals, this in turn would cause Evangelicals to oppose Mormons even more—and a vicious cycle was thus begun.[446] Evangelical opposition to

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[446] John-Charles Duffy likewise sees this development between Mormons and Evangleicals: "One could describe Mormon Christocentrism and countercult apologetics as emerging simultaneously over the course of the century and feeding off one another in an intensifying cycle: as Mormons came to be widely perceived as one more brand of Protestantism early in the century, countercultists moved to insist otherwise; the more vigorously Mormons

Mormonism caused the continual Mormon capitulation to Evangelicalism throughout history. Hence, Mormonism became more and more like the very culture they had sought to resist.

The divide between Mormons and Evangelicals has been a contest over the true nature of American Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy (right belief and right practice). Mormonism challenged the definition of Christianity and the values of Evangelical America in both word and deed: closed canon vs. open canon; dead prophets vs. living prophets; a trinity of God vs. a plurality of Gods; capitalism vs. communalism; monogamy vs. polygamy; democracy vs. theocracy. All of these issues became so intertwined that they became impossible to separate. In short, Mormonism and Evangelicalism offered worldviews on Christianity and America that contrasted enough to create conflict between them. But the divide has narrowed considerably since the nineteenth century: Mormonism has forsaken polygamy, communalism, and theocracy and thus has conformed in some ways to Evangelical American sensibilities. And despite changes in doctrine, the battle over orthodoxy remains. Orthodoxy is the ultimate test for Evangelicals as to whether or not someone is a genuine Christian, American, and even civilized person; and Mormonism has always fallen short of their criteria—especially as it relates to the question of whether or not Mormonism is part of Christianity.

The Christian question posed by Evangelicals is the central problem in the entire Mormon/Evangelical relationship and dialogue. Before his work on *How Wide the Divide*, Stephen Robinson wrote *Are Mormons Christians?* in response to Evangelical attacks. In his book, Robinson lists six categories by which Evangelicals seek to exclude Mormonism from Christianity: (1) exclusion by definition, (2) exclusion by misrepresentation, (3) exclusion by name-calling, (4) exclusion by history and tradition, (5) exclusion by the bible and the

countered later in the century with assertions of their Christianity, the more fiercely countercultists denounced them as deceivers, and so on," Duffy, 85.

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canonization of scripture, and (6) exclusion by theology or doctrine.[447] Specific points of

doctrinal conflict include the Mormon claims of prophetic or apostolic succession, possessing the

only authorized priesthood power, adding to the Bible other books of scripture, of being the only

true Church of Christ, and having different understandings concerning the nature of God, man,

and the universe. In addition, the Mormon refusal to accept the ecumenical creeds of Christianity

causes Evangelicals to regard them as heretics, or worse—a cult. It appears that Evangelicals

prefer the word "cult" over the word "heresy" for Mormons because "cult" refers more to a

completely unrelated religion rather than to a close Christian cousin. My solution would be for

Mormons and Evangelicals to simply consider each other as a form of unorthodox heretical

Christianity. I believe Mormons would be fine with that arrangement, but some Evangelicals

take the disagreement further by declaring that Mormonism isn't just unorthodox or heretical, it

is not even Christian—but an entirely different religion altogether. This is why some of the

Mormon participants in the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue have felt that the exercise

has mostly been a Mormon try-out for the Christian club.

Mormonism proposes the possible unity of all Christianity—but on its own terms, not

Evangelical terms, or any other terms for that matter. This is why it is easier for Evangelicals to

say Mormons are not Christians, because it doesn't interfere with their efforts of Christian

unification (with themselves as leader dictating the conditions of membership) as is most readily

made manifest in the concept of nondenominational churches. In the nineteenth century,

Evangelicals believed it was possible to unite all Christians theologically as well as morally. At

the start of the twentieth century, Protestants permanently split over Liberal and Conservative

theologies, making theological unification impossible. Despite this setback, there was a lot that

Liberal and Conservative Protestants shared in terms of morals. But with the cultural revolution

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[447] See Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991).

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of the 1960s, moral values and behavior now separated Protestants as well. This raises the question of which of the two standards are a more important source of unity: theology or morality?

Evangelicals have a problem with Mormons because they dare to be different and make a bold point of it with active missionary work through a very well organized and well-funded institution that mainly converts Protestants. Evangelicals had first set about bringing Mormons back in line behaviorally with monogamy replacing polygamy; economically with capitalism replacing communalism; and politically with democracy replacing theocracy. Now Evangelicals are seeking to bring Mormons back in line theologically by presenting two alternatives: (1) either be severed from all Christianity and be declared as a completely different religion (which makes Evangelicals feel safer about Mormonism, since there wouldn't be any more competition over the true form of Christianity), or (2) change and fall in line with the rest of us because we say who is in and who is out; no one is Christian unless we say so. Option number two is much more difficult for Evangelicals because they now lack the cultural hegemony to enforce their edicts. They are so disunited that they can't simply send a memo and have it be universally affirmed. Other Christian groups, besides Evangelicals, join in denouncing Mormons because they feel threatened as well. Therefore it is only those groups who are not threatening that are accepted into the Christian family. As a result of these tensions, the central purpose of the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue for Evangelicals has been the hope that Mormons become more like them. For Mormons, the purpose is to clarify how they are and are not like Evangelicals, and thereby demonstrate that they can be a different kind of Christianity. Hence, Mormons and Evangelicals are each other's worst nightmare. Evangelicals claim to be the one and only true way of Christ. And Mormons claim to be the one and only true Church of Christ.

Each sees in one other the confidence or arrogance of superiority that each desires for themselves.[448]

As a result of this analysis, I believe that a historical pattern emerges within the Mormon/Evangelical relationship: continuous Mormon capitulation to Evangelical opposition. In fact, I argue that Evangelical opposition to Mormonism has been successful in continuously causing Mormonism to become more and more Evangelical in nature over time. Mormonism's greater proximity to Evangelicalism has also reinforced Evangelical opposition towards it. Despite some Evangelicals who applaud the change, such assimilation tends to reinforce the traditional stereotype of Mormonism as a heresy: a counterfeit Christianity designed to deceive the masses and thereby destroy the body of Christ. If the same historical pattern holds, Mormonism is in danger of becoming just another Protestant denomination. While Evangelicalism has not modified itself in any single significant way on account of Mormonism, Mormonism has continuously become more and more Evangelical in its identity and nature. One could point to the fast growth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as evidence that Mormons are winning the war with Evangelicals. But such growth must come with an asterisk indicating the loss of many Mormon distinctives and the assimilation of many Evangelical similarities. If Mormon success thus comes at the price of Evangelical accommodation, is Mormonism really succeeding?

The Mormon/Evangelical relationship has generally been one of monologue, not dialogue, in the sense that Evangelicals have dictated to Mormons how they have to change. Although the Americanization, and even Evangelicalization, of Mormonism has caused the war of violence to now become primarily a war of words, it is still not a true dialogue (from a Liberal Protestant or Liberal point of view) since the primary purpose of Evangelicals is the continued

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[448] See Moore, 31.

agenda of changing Mormonism, not seeking to understand, appreciate, and learn from the unique contributions of Mormonism. But Mormons and Evangelicals may be developing a new kind of dialogue or evangelism that seeks civility and conversion at the same time. Meanwhile, perceptions of the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue continue to follow the general pattern of Mormon/Evangelical relations: Mormon accommodation in exchange for Evangelical acceptance.[449]

Doctrinal Questions

Today, there exists little if any difference in the outward appearance and social norms of Mormons and Evangelicals. Hence the social assimilation could be declared as nearly complete. The only real remaining difference left is one of theology. The assimilation of Evangelicalism into Mormon identity highlights some serious doctrinal questions. In particular, the recent development of Mormon progressive orthodoxy, represented by most LDS participants in the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue, raises concerns over the proper place of Mormon prophets and scripture, and what constitutes the official doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Part of the problem is that Mormonism needs greater clarification of its doctrines if it is going to make any particular claims about what is and what is not official. The recent Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue has highlighted the need for Church leaders to more clearly and authoritatively state what it does and does not accept as official doctrine.

One result of the Mormon progressive orthodox three-fold mission of anti-sectarianism, anti-liberalism, and revised supernaturalism, was the development of the Mormon minimalist

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[449] Even LDS General Authorities recognize this public perception of continuous change and accommodation to Evangelicalism. See Bruce C. Hafen, "The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign* (May 2004).

position of doctrine.[450] John-Charles Duffy explains, "Minimalist strategies included privileging present teachings over past in the name of continuing revelation, subordinating church leaders' interpretations of the scriptures to the scriptures 'themselves,' and limiting official doctrine to the relatively few statements issued over the signatures of the church's highest governing bodies."[451] The purpose of these strategies was to contend with what Robert Millet calls the "unusual doctrines" taught by past presidents and leaders of the Church; in essence, "downplaying the significance or denying the authority of teachings that lent themselves to being sensationalized."[452] Evangelicals and Countercultists in particular loved to use such teachings as "a basis for challenging LDS claims about the prophetic nature of church leaders' teachings."[453]

The effort to minimize what can be construed as official Mormon doctrine, and thereby shield the Church from answering to unusual doctrines taught by past leaders, is illustrated by Robert Millet. In an article entitled "What is Our Doctrine?" Millet states that a doctrine must come from at least one of the following four sources to be considered official: the LDS "standard works" or scriptural canon, consisting of the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price; "official declarations or proclamations" (always signed by the First Presidency and/or Quorum of the Twelve Apostles); current teachings "by living apostles and prophets in general conference or other official gatherings;" "the general handbooks or official curriculum of the Church."[454] Yet even with this criterion, Millet says a doctrine is "*probably* not a part," instead of *definitely* not a part, leaving the door open to other possibilities. Could those

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[450] Duffy, 96-97.

[451] Ibid.

[452] Robert L. Millet, "What is Our Doctrine?" *The Religious Educator* 4 no. 3 (2003): 18; Duffy, 374.

[453] Duffy, 96.

[454] Millet, "Doctrine," 25.

other possibilities include teachings and ordinances found in Mormon temples that Church members covenant to obey, or the past teachings of other LDS leaders, if deemed appropriate?

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has recently taken an even more minimalist position. A recent Church statement entitled, "Approaching Mormon Doctrine," posted on the Church's Newsroom website states, in part:

> With divine inspiration, the First Presidency (the prophet and his two counselors) and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (the second-highest governing body of the Church) counsel together to establish doctrine that is consistently proclaimed in official Church publications. *This doctrine resides in the four "standard works" of scripture (the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price), official declarations and proclamations, and the Articles of Faith.*[455]

According to this statement, official Church doctrine is only found in two main locations: the four standard works or accepted LDS canon of scripture (which includes the Articles of Faith), and the official declarations and proclamations of the First Presidency and/or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. This minimalist statement not only leaves out temple teachings and ordinances, as well as the words of past LDS leaders, but it also discounts official Church handbooks and curriculum, and severely limits the teachings of the living prophets and apostles. As the statement now reads, it would appear as though the living prophet's words do not constitute any official or binding force upon members of the Church unless they are attached to formal declarations or proclamations. But what about the words of the prophet delivered in the annual and semi-annual general conferences of the Church and other official gatherings or interviews, or written in official Church publications? If the above statement continues unmodified or further developed in any way, then it would mean an enormous change in the commonly understood role of living prophets and apostles for the Mormon Church.

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[455] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Approaching Mormon Doctrine," Newsroom Commentary, entry posted May 4, 2007, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/approaching-mormon-doctrine (accessed July 5, 2012).

The general membership of the Church of Jesus Christ has little if any understanding concerning what constitutes official Church doctrine. The average member would most likely believe that official doctrine consists of anything in the standard works of scripture or the words of past and living prophets and apostles of the Church. Most would also understand that the words of the living prophets and apostles take precedence over the scriptures, and over the words of any past prophet. In a study of Mormon doctrinal development, BYU Professor Charles R. Harrell identifies three myths that are generally accepted by most Mormons: the myth of scriptural inerrancy, the myth of doctrinal uniformity, and the myth of prophetic infallibility.[456] The myth of scriptural inerrancy means accepting that "aside from translation and transcription errors, the doctrinal teachings of the scriptures are without error or variation."[457] The myth of doctrinal uniformity entails believing that the scriptures are "uniformly consistent in the doctrine they teach" and with Latter-day revelation.[458] And the myth of prophetic infallibility, like scriptural infallibility, is accepting a prophet's teachings as without error or variation.[459] Although none of these positions theoretically constitutes the official position of the Church, they are generally encouraged and accepted in practice. Mormon scholar Keith Norman articulates this irony in a comparison made with Roman Catholicism: "Roman Catholic doctrine proclaims the pope to be infallible, but most Catholics really don't believe it; whereas Mormon doctrine rejects the idea of infallible leaders, but we Mormons refuse to accept that."[460] Hence,

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[456] See Charles R. Harrell, *"This is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 3-7.

[457] Harrell, 3.

[458] Ibid., 5.

[459] Ibid., 7.

[460] Ibid.

Mormons, in practice, tend to view the scriptures and prophets as inerrant and infallible in regards to their doctrinal messages, and for all doctrine to be perfectly harmonized.[461]

This understanding is the result of at least two reasons. First, the general and local teachings of the Church, as found in the official curriculum and as delivered by teachers and leaders, generally stress obedience to the commandments of God that are found in the scriptures, the words of Church leaders (especially the prophet and apostles), and the directions of the Holy Ghost, without much nuance or qualification. Second, Church leaders do not go to great lengths to explain exactly when their words should be considered official doctrine; and when they do, the instruction is fairly general and vague. There exists a few talks over the years, but there is no official explicit explanation. The Church document above was but an "approach" to Mormon doctrine, not an *explanation* of Mormon doctrine.

Illustrations of both points can be readily found in the Church's 2010 *Teachings of the Living Prophets Student Manual*. One example is the inclusion of a talk entitled "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet" given in 1981, by then apostle Ezra Taft Benson. It has been quoted regularly ever since, including twice in the recent October 2010 general conference. Among principles cited in the talk were: "the prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything;" emphasizing D&C 21:4—we are to follow all of the prophet's "words and commandments;" "the living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works [scriptures];" "the prophet will never lead the Church astray;" the prophet can "speak on any subject, or act on any matter at any time;" our safety "depends upon whether or not we follow" the prophet; we are failing "a test of faithfulness," and forfeiting our "chances for eternal life" if we do not follow the prophet; "the prophet can receive revelation on any matter—temporal or spiritual;" "the prophet may be involved in civic matters;" "we should never discriminate between th[e]

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[461] Ibid., 1-8.

commandments [from the prophet], as to those we should and should not keep." "the living prophet and the First Presidency—follow them and be blessed; reject them and suffer;" "[462] Elder Benson concludes his address, "If we want to know how well we stand with the Lord, then let us ask ourselves how well we stand with His mortal captain. How closely do our lives harmonize with the words of the Lord's anointed—the living prophet . . ."[463] Elder Benson makes clear that "salvation hangs on" how well members of the Church follow these principles. The main message was that a prophet is nearly infallible, if not completely infallible in his teachings. This should leave little doubt whether or not members of the Church should immediately regard any words of the Prophet as official Church doctrine. This talk thereby supports the notion of prophetic infallibility, and raises any of the words of a prophet to a level of official Church doctrine, and thereby creates confusion when compared to statements like "Approaching Mormon Doctrine."

Another section of the *Teachings of the Living Prophets Student Manual* also explains that "The words of the prophets delivered through the Spirit during general conference are latter-day scripture."[464] One problem with this and similar statements is that it does not distinguish between doctrine and scripture. Are they one and the same, or are they different? Assuming they mean the same thing, there is still the qualifier that the words must be "delivered through the Spirit." On this note, former counselor in the First Presidency, President J. Reuben Clark is quoted saying, "The question is, how shall we know when the things they have spoken were said as they were 'moved upon by the Holy Ghost' (D&C 68:3)? I have given some thought to this

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[462] Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, *Teachings of The Living Prophets Student Manual (Religion 333)* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 22-27.

[463] Ibid.

[464] Ibid., 72.

question, and the answer thereto so far as I can determine, is: **We can tell when the speakers are 'moved upon by the Holy Ghost' only when we, ourselves, are 'moved upon by the Holy Ghost.'**"[465] As insightful as is this comment, does it imply that the words of a prophet are restricted by whether or not a certain number of members feel the Spirit? It is left unclear how such counsel could be practically implemented. Church members are thus left confused over how to reconcile counsel that appears to promote prophetic infallibility (which might be called a traditional Mormon position) and the new doctrinal minimalist position that teachers and leaders are beginning to introduce as part of the Mormon progressive orthodox movement.

A common minimalist assertion made by progressive orthodox is: "It should be remembered that not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. It is commonly understood in the Church that a statement made by one leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, not meant to be official or binding for the whole Church."[466] Such statements are generally followed by examples of ill-advised counsel given by prophets, or stories of common mistakes committed by prophets, but not actual doctrinal pronouncements. Many contested doctrines have never been given by a single person on a single occasion; or at least no substantive examples have been pointed out. Millet goes to great lengths to point out the imperfection of prophets; but all of his examples deal with ethical questions, not doctrinal questions. But more importantly, does a teaching become an official doctrine if it is taught by two leaders on two occasions? Where is the limit? Once again, a few basic guidelines are available, but they quickly break down when thoroughly applied to various scenarios. Other related questions include: how much bad theology

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[465] Ibid., 73, emphasis original.

[466] D. Todd Christofferson, "The Doctrine of Christ," *Ensign*, (May 2012): 88; "Approaching Mormon Doctrine;" Millet, 29-30.

can a prophet teach, before being considered a false prophet who is leading the people astray?[467] If the teachings of a past prophet can be wrong, why trust in the current teachings of a prophet? The teachings of living prophets take precedence over the teachings of past prophets, but what if there is no conflict? Do past teachings continue to be doctrine if left uncorrected? Another concern is the inclusion in official manuals of books and articles that are originally published as personal views. The official use of unofficial quotes causes members to view the original sources as authoritative.

Mormon progressive orthodox tend to place the teachings of the New Testament and Book of Mormon above the teachings of other books of scripture and those of the past presidents of the Church. This practice begs the question: is there a hierarchy of scripture? If so, what is it? In relation to this practice, progressive orthodox tend to proof-text the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, largely ignoring the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Proof-texting means to take a scripture passage or quotation and to lift it "out of its original context and given an interpretation other than that which was originally intended—or at least as can be determined by the most reasonable reading of the text."[468] The progressive orthodox tendency to proof-text the Book of Mormon is problematic, since the theology of the Book of Mormon says nothing about godhood, three degrees of heaven, and modern temple ordinances. On the other hand, it presents a very Evangelical theology of Trinity, depravity of man, grace, and revivals. The Book of Mormon was translated in 1829 and published in 1830, before the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. By the time Joseph Smith died in 1844, LDS doctrine was emphasizing a finite God, an optimistic view of mankind, secret temple ordinances, and polygamy. In theory, all of scripture is of equal value, but it appears that the Book of Mormon is

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[467] Duffy, 198.

[468] Harrell, 8.

receiving preferential treatment. Why the preference of the Book of Mormon, and not the

Doctrine and Covenants, or another book of scripture? A related question is in regard to

scriptural infallibility? Do scriptures contain timeless doctrines that are not subject to change and

revision? Or do some teachings trump others? Is it best to proceed chronologically, with the

newest teachings always taking precedence over older teachings, or can certain time periods,

scriptures, and doctrines, be forever privileged over all the rest? Evangelicals clearly view the

New Testament as superior to the Old Testament. Mormons have generally viewed Latter-day

scripture over the Bible.

Progressive orthodox also proof-text past and current Church leaders in order to find

support their views. Ironically, progressive orthodox accuse others of doing the same thing.

John-Charles Duffy observed a pattern of proof-texting in the words and writings of Robert

Millet: "Likewise in keeping with orthodox Mormon conceptions of revelation, Millet never

overtly contradicted church leaders, even when criticizing ideas they had espoused: to do that

would mean contradicting the prophets. Selectively drawing on quotations from past church

leaders, Millet portrayed his grace-centered theology as continuous with the teachings of even

unabashed sectarians like Brigham Young and Bruce R. McConkie without acknowledging

where his teachings differed from theirs."[469]

One of the quotes that progressive orthodox frequently draw upon was given by Joseph

Smith. In answer to the oft asked question about the fundamental principles of the Mormon faith,

Smith recorded: "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles

and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and

ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to

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[469] Duffy, 189

it."[470] Reasons why the use of this quotation qualifies as prooftexting are: (1) it is being used to deliberately counteract Joseph Smith's own more radical doctrines, such as those found in the King Follett Discourse; (2) it was given in 1838, before Joseph Smith introduced his more radical doctrines of the plurality of gods and temple ordinances, among others, in Nauvoo; (3) this quote is being treated as official doctrine although it is not found in the standard works. It begs the question: on what grounds does this quotation receive preferential treatment over other teachings of Joseph Smith. For example, in the 1844 King Follett Discourse, Joseph Smith taught: "It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible."[471] It would appear that the phrase "first principle of the Gospel" sounds just as important as the phrase "fundamental principles."

The *Teachings of the Living Prophets Student Manual* includes a few quotes about practices, procedures, and policies changing—but never doctrine.[472] However, in the Church's Newsroom article, it specifically states: "the Church does not preclude future additions or changes to its teachings or practices."[473] "Teachings" is synonymous with doctrine. If this statement stands as is, then the Church is admitting that it changes its doctrines. President J. Ruben Clark admitted as much when he taught that the President of the Church had the "right" to "change in any way the doctrines of the Church."[474] Charles Harrell suggests that doctrine refers

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[470] Joseph Fielding Smith, ed. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 121.

[471] Ibid., 345.

[472] See *Living Prophets*, 7, 18.

[473] "Approaching Mormon Doctrine."

to "beliefs about ultimate reality and not to ultimate reality itself. Thus it can be said that

doctrines change and evolve, even if truth itself remains constant."[475] When applied to the

scriptures, this would simply indicate that the scriptures are not infallible, but the work of God

through imperfect humans. Therefore scripture is viewed as a "co-creation" between God and

man.[476] Or in the words of LDS historian Grant Underwood, scripture is "both fully divine and

fully human."[477] Harrell provides a significant disclaimer with this approach to scripture: "This

is not to say that scripture is necessarily a heterogeneous mixture of divine and human voices . .

. 'the scriptures are the joint product of divine and human activities, both of which penetrate

them at every point, working harmoniously together to the production of a writing which is at

once divine and human in every part, every word and every particular.'"[478] Faithful LDS

scholars like Grant Underwood, Thomas Alexander, Terryl Givens, Philip Barlowe, and Richard

Bushman all subscribe to some form of this "concursus" scriptural model.[479] Their work asserts

that the "evolution of doctrine wasn't always linear or consistently cumulative, but that

theological change was occasionally disruptive, with previous doctrines being overridden or even

reversed."[480] Harrell concludes:

> Those who view the teachings of scripture as absolute and unchangeable
> undoubtedly find the notion of theological change and discontinuity a bit unsettling.
> Others see changes in theology as the natural consequence of having a living, dynamic
> church guided by continuing revelation. James Faulconer [BYU professor of philosophy]
> notes: "One of the spin-offs in a belief in continuing revelation is an implicit refusal to

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[474] Harrell, 6.

[475] Ibid., viii.

[476] Ibid., 20.

[477] Ibid., 4.

[478] Ibid.

[479] Ibid.

[480] Ibid., 6.

allow theology to be set once and for all." Continuing revelation, therefore, does not just fill in gaps of an incomplete but otherwise perfect theology; it also revises and sometimes even overturns previously held theological beliefs.[481]

This view of scripture can be seen as helping or hurting the progressive orthodox cause. On the one hand, it permits for changes in doctrine including the emphasizing of certain teachings while disregarding others. On the other hand, it warns against raising the value of certain scriptural texts as the final word on the subject. For example, when Stephen Robinson was challenged for asserting that God was infinite in his nature, ignoring Joseph Smith's teachings about God's finite nature, he responded by pointing to a few verses in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants section 20 that speak of God as infinite. He reasoned, "I can find no description of God in the standard works as 'finite.' If some LDS writers want to adopt the philosophical argument that an embodied god can't be infinite (the incarnation of Christ notwithstanding), they are certainly free to do so. But they cannot do so without contradicting the canonical scriptures of the Church, which define LDS doctrine on this point. . . . The doctrine of the Church as stated in its standard works is that God is infinite."[482] What is particularly fascinating is that the Bible only uses the term "infinite" once, and it was only to describe God's "understanding" (Psalms 147:5).[483] In other words, the Book of Mormon and a single section of the Doctrine and Covenants are the main source of this idea, and Robinson is treating them as the final word on the issue.

Robinson actually offers the most conservative definition of official doctrine: "No new doctrine is 'the doctrine of the Church' until it has been so canonized by addition to the standard works. All the rest is homily, interpretation, or application that may be very good and profitable,

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[481] Ibid., 7.

[482] Stephen E. Robinson, "Sizing Up the Divide: Reviews and Replies," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 3 (1999): 176.

[483] Based on a search of the scriptures at lds.org.

but it does not enjoy the same status as the standard works."[484] Would Robinson thus say that

temple ordinances and ceremonies, not specifically written down in the scriptural canon, are not

the official doctrine of the Church? Examples such as these make clear the need for greater

explanation for the proper roles of the scriptures and the living prophet in deciding what is the

official doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The King Follett Discourse

One of the main applications of doctrinal minimalism by the progressive orthodox is the

minimization of the King Follett Funeral Sermon, also known as the King Follett Discourse,

given by Joseph Smith in 1844, just a short time before his martyrdom. There is a serious

theological debate being waged over the King Follett Discourse. With most Mormon dialogists

in the Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue either uncomfortable or neutral towards the

doctrines expounded therein, any foreseeable defense of the sermon is hard to imagine.

In his article "What is Our Doctrine?" Robert Millet specifically addresses the issue of

the King Follett Discourse. His comments come in two parts: how man can become like God,

and how God was once a man. In addressing the first issue, Millet states: "When I open the

discussion to questions before a group of persons not of our faith, I am always asked about our

doctrine of God and the Godhead, particularly concerning the teachings of Joseph Smith and

Lorenzo Snow. I generally do not have too much difficulty explaining our view of how through

the Atonement man can eventually become like God, become more and more Christlike."[485]

Perhaps other Christians have little difficulty with this presentation of deification because it

greatly minimizes what Joseph Smith and Lorenzo Snow originally taught through a significant

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[484] Robinson, "Sizing Up the Divide," 175.

[485] Millet, "Doctrine," 28.

reinterpretation of their words. Smith and Snow were never talking about becoming "more

Christlike" when they spoke of becoming like God. In fact, they never spoke of "becoming like

God." They spoke of becoming Gods, exactly like God. In the words of Joseph Smith, we are "to

inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a

God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before."[486] All of

Joseph Smith's associates understood his teaching of deification as referring to being a God just

like our Heavenly Father is a God.[487] There was no alternative explanation. Such reinterpretation

is a recent development furthered by Mormon progressive orthodoxy and doctrinal minimalism.

On God once being a man, Millet writes:

> The tougher issue for other Christians to deal with is the accompanying doctrine set forth in the King Follett sermon and the Lorenzo Snow couplet—namely, that God was once a man. Latter-day scriptures state unequivocally that God is a man, a Man of Holiness (see Moses 6:57) who possesses a body of flesh and bones (see D&C 130:22). These concepts are clearly a part of the doctrinal restoration. We teach that man is not of a lower order or different species than God. . . . .
> And what do we know beyond the fact that God is an exalted man? What do we know of His mortal existence? What do we know of the time before He became God? Nothing. We really do not know more than what was stated by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that is precious little.[488]

We do know little about God's life before he was God. However, the little we do know

makes a big difference. God doesn't just happen to have a body of flesh and bone. Joseph Smith

made it clear that God's body of flesh and bone was the result of experiencing a resurrection.[489]

God was not always God, he was once a "man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all,

dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did."[490] And how did God become our God?

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[486] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 347.

[487] See Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978).

[488] Millet, "Doctrine," 28-29.

[489] *Teachings*, 347.

Smith explains that it is by the same process we now experience: "Here, then, is eternal life to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power."[491] We do not know the details of God's life on his earth when he was just a human being like us, but we do know that he undertook the same process that we undertake now. It is not everything, but it is quite enough to create a definitive worldview to live by.

Millet continues:

> Insights concerning God's life before Godhood are not found in the standard works, in official declarations or proclamations, in current handbooks, or in curricular materials, nor are doctrinal expositions on the subject delivered in general conference today. This topic is not what we would call a central and saving doctrine, one that must be believed (or understood) to hold a temple recommend or be in good standing in the Church.[492]

Although Millet speaks specifically of "insights concerning God's life before Godhood," it would appear that he would like to forget about God's life before Godhood altogether. Yet the issue has never been about details over God's life on another planet, the issue is whether or not God did have a life, as a regular man, on another planet. Contrary to claims that the King Follett doctrine of God's original manhood are no longer taught, the King Follett Discourse is quoted in two very recent Church manuals: *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007) and *Gospel Principles* (2009). Both specifically speak of God as being a man just like us, and

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[490] *Teachings*, 346.

[491] Ibid.

[492] Millet, "Doctrine," 29.

one includes God being on an earth just like us. In addition, although one is not asked concerning their belief about the true nature of God in a temple recommend interview, a King Follett depiction of God as a man dominates the entire endowment ceremony. Since it is found in the Church's recent curriculum, and is taught in the temple, it would appear that the King Follett Discourse has passed the earlier test of official Church doctrine that Millet proposed. And yet he apparently still considers it irrelevant:

> . . . a teaching may be true and yet not a part of what is taught and emphasized in the Church today. Whether it is true or not may, in fact, be irrelevant, if indeed the Brethren do not teach it today or it is not taught directly in the standard works or found in our approved curriculum. . . . It would be well for us to apply the following lesson from President Harold B. Lee: "With respect to doctrines and meanings of scriptures, let me give you a safe counsel. It is usually not well to use a single passage of scripture [or, I would add, a single sermon] in proof of a point of doctrine unless it is confirmed by modern revelation or by the Book of Mormon. . . . To single out a passage of scripture to prove a point, unless it is [so] confirmed . . . is always a hazardous thing."[493]

The King Follett Discourse is more than a single sermon. Joseph Smith claimed that our salvation, even eternal life, depended on accepting the doctrine he was teaching. He said it was the first principle, not a peripheral principle, to know God's true nature. In addition, Smith staked the entire validity of his prophetic career on the King Follett Discourse:

> My first object is to find out the character of the only wise and true God, and what kind of a being he is; and if I am so fortunate as to be the man to comprehend God, and explain or convey the principles to your hearts, so that the Spirit seals them upon you, then let every man and woman henceforth sit in silence, put their hands on their mouths, and never lift their hands or voices, or say anything against the man of God or the servants of God again. But if I fail to do it, it becomes my duty to renounce all further pretensions to revelations and inspirations, or to be a prophet; and I should be like the rest of the world a false teacher.[494]

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[493] Ibid.

[494] *Teachings*, 344.

Final Thoughts

The downplay of the King Follett Discourse has consequences that might prove more damaging than currently realized. One consideration that must be examined is the LDS theory of scriptural canonization. Joseph Smith never held to any position of scriptural canonization or inerrancy. He added new revelations and translations on a regular basis. He made corrections to the Bible and to his own revelations as needed. Smith was continuously asking God questions that would today be regarded as quite speculative and unessential for salvation. As he studied scripture, he sought for and obtained authoritative interpretations. Smith's revelations were also addressed to practical matters, but they were never restricted to such. Historical studies on the development of Mormon doctrine conclude that such doctrine has changed over time; that even Joseph Smith changed Mormon doctrine over time. If this be the case, then the Mormon Church is left with the following dilemma: how is church doctrine to be fully decided? This is especially troublesome since there is no indication that Church leadership is in any hurry to thoroughly address such issues.

Although some have sought and encouraged the harmonizing of LDS scriptures and the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, there needs to be greater clarification given on how to proceed. For example, do we interpret the Book of Mormon through the perspective of the King Follett Discourse, or do we interpret the King Follett Discourse through the perspective of the Book of Mormon? Although it may appear simple to say that official LDS canonized scripture always takes precedence over outside works, the matter may not be so easy considering that Joseph Smith was the means through which both the Book of Mormon and The King Follett Discourse were given. Smith stands as the head prophet of this last dispensation, admittedly higher than any other prophet who has ever lived, second only to Jesus in terms of his greatness.

The truthfulness of Mormonism lies upon the foundation of whether or not Joseph Smith was a true prophet. It is through Smith that the vast majority of all doctrine was revealed to us. As such, can we in all seriousness discount the King Follett Discourse? Are we prepared to declare that Smith was merely speculating? Are we comfortable with characterizing Smith as overreacting when he declared in the same sermon that his words would forever prove that he was a true prophet of God? It may be easy to dismiss the words of Brigham Young and others who succeeded Smith, since little if any of their teachings actually made it to the scriptural canon. But Smith was the very dispenser of Mormon doctrine.

The King Follett Discourse, once promoted as the best articulation of traditional Mormon doctrine, is now being de-emphasized. The reality of these developments is observable in the present scholarly dialogue between Mormon and Evangelical university professors. Although in theory Mormons reject inerrancy of scripture, in practice Mormons accept it. The LDS scriptural canon has never before held as high a station in determining doctrine. By the end of the twentieth century, Mormonism had assimilated more into Evangelicalism ideologically and theologically with an emphasis of scriptural canon over prophetic teaching, such as placing the redemptive theology of the Book of Mormon over the King Follett Discourse of Joseph Smith. For example, Mormonism stressed more the fall and depravity of man, the sovereignty of God, and the atonement and grace of Jesus Christ more than it's the doctrine of eternal progression encapsulated in the teaching of Church President Lorenzo Snow: "As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may become."[495] Hence, the overall historical pattern of the Mormon/Evangelical relationship is as follows: one continual cycle of Evangelical opposition to Mormonism resulting in the Evangelical assimilation of Mormonism. And despite such

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[495] Gerald N. Lund, "I Have a Question: *Is President Lorenzo Snow's oft-repeated statement—"As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be"—accepted as official doctrine by the Church?" Ensign* (February 1982).

assimilation, Evangelical opposition remains so long as any essential difference in Mormonism remains. One of the last remaining barriers is the traditional Mormon formulations of the nature of God and the nature of man.

But these issues may highlight an even deeper problem for Mormonism: defining the role of the president of the Church or the living prophet. As asked once by J. Rueben Clarke, "When are the words of Church leaders to be accepted as official doctrine of the Church?" It is still a work in progress. Today there appears so many qualifications to a prophet's words becoming official, that one can assume that unless voted into the standard works of the Church, they remain unofficial. This was the argument made back with B. H. Roberts and re-echoed by Stephen Robinson in *How Wide the Divide*. Is that really the line? Are no doctrinal pronouncements to be accepted as normative unless made part of the official standard works of the Church? Are Prophets, especially living prophets to be bound by such a norm? Various proposed parameters become so numerous that they end up creating more confusion than light on the subject.

The Mormon/Evangelical scholarly dialogue represents a nicer form of Evangelical opposition to Mormonism. But could the dialogue actually be a new cooperation between both groups in order to redefine Mormon identity? It is definitely not dialogue seeking to solely understand Mormonism; it is more of an examination and exploration of the parameters of Mormon identity in order to determine how far Mormonism can be assimilated into Evangelical Christianity. Based upon interviews with Evangelical participants, they express the desire for Mormonism to make up its mind on its true doctrinal identity. Will it be pre-1835 Book of Mormon theology or post-1835 King Follett theology? Since the majority of Mormon participants in the dialogue with Evangelicals are not comfortable with the King Follett Discourse, it would appear that the pre-1835 Mormonism shall prevail, at least in that setting.

The greater question of course is which Mormonism shall prevail among the general authorities of the Church and thereby its membership?

Of course the current progressive orthodox have no intention of fully assimilating into Evangelicalism, but the overall historical trend of Mormon assimilation of Evangelical identity is not encouraging. It was not the intention of nineteenth century Mormons to surrender their practices of polygamy, communalism, and theocracy for the Evangelical practices of monogamy, capitalism, and democracy. It was not the intention of twentieth century Mormons to abandon their beliefs in the unique doctrines of God and man as elaborated in The King Follett Discourse and expressed simply in the couplet, "As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may become." Nevertheless, in each case, Mormons acquiesced to Evangelical opposition, which begs the question: At what point, if any, will Mormon assimilation of Evangelical identity stop?

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