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CHAPTER 8

Latter-day Saint Marriage and Family Life in Modern America

DAVID C. DOLLAHITE

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS, Mormon) is considered by its adherents to embody all the doctrines and authority that were present in the church that Christ established (Matthew 16:18–19) but that subsequently were lost through an apostasy that took hold after the original apostles were martyred. Latter-day Saints consider their faith to be a modern restoration of ancient truths and practices accomplished through modern revelation given by the Lord to modern prophets.

While in some ways Mormonism appears to be an exceedingly modern American faith that adopts the latest technologies to assist in its efforts, in other ways it evokes religious institutions of the Old and New Testaments. In fact, Mormonism is among the few faiths with a strong combination of the paradoxical features of firm adherence to traditional doctrinal understandings and moral standards *and* extensive and enthusiastic adoption of modern technologies and organizational ideas to further its work.

In many ways Mormonism thrives and grows *because* of the social, emotional, geographical, and familial confusions and dislocations caused by modernization and globalization; in other ways modern and postmodern culture presents the church with significant challenges to its core values and practices. Although U.S. Latter-day Saints tend to be patriotic Americans who are disproportionately involved at high levels in a variety of American institutions (education, business, government, military), in other ways some core features of modern American culture are antithetical to Mormonism.

In this chapter I will discuss some major ways that modernization in America interacts with and affects LDS family life, how the LDS Church and its members cope with the negative aspects of modernization, and how it and they thrive despite or even because of modernization. I begin with a demographic view of the LDS Church in America and then discuss LDS thought about America and about how the Saints view the modern era. The bulk of the chapter focuses on core LDS doctrines and practices regarding children, marriage, and family life, along with discussion of a number of ways that American-style modernization conflicts with LDS doctrine and practice on marriage and family life.

I am a qualitative scholar who believes in giving people their own say to the fullest extent possible. Latter-day Saints greatly value and rely on the teachings of their leaders, whom they sustain as modern prophets and apostles. Therefore I quote LDS scriptures and leaders extensively in order to provide the reader with an in-depth inside look at how Latter-day Saints frame Mormonism, marriage, and family in the modern era.¹

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Founded by Joseph Smith in 1830 in upstate New York with six original members, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now has more than twelve million members in 165 nations.² More than half of current church members are converts from other faiths (or no faith).³ With about 5.5 million American members, the LDS Church is now the fourth-largest and the fastest-growing major religious denomination in the United States.⁴ Maps of the distribution of religious adherents in the United States in 2000 show that in addition to being the dominant faith in Utah (70 percent), Latter-day Saints constitute a significant minority of religious adherents in parts of several states in the intermountain West.⁵ And while LDS members represent a much smaller percentage of the religious population in the rest of the country, continual growth is occurring in these regions as well.⁶

The sociologist of religion Rodney Stark drew on demographic analyses of the rapid and accelerating worldwide growth of the church during its first 150 years and declared that, based on growth patterns and on its unique doctrine and practice, Mormonism was a “new world faith.” Stark projected a worldwide LDS Church membership of more than fifty million by the year 2040 and perhaps as many as 265 million members by 2080.⁷ Indeed, although often referred to by non-LDS scholars as an “American church” in fact less than half of the LDS Church’s members live in the United States and more Latter-day Saints speak Spanish than English (Portuguese is the third language of the church). The church is growing fastest in Latin America, the Philippines, and Africa. And while most American Latter-day Saints are white, middle class, and

live in suburban areas, the church is experiencing rapid growth among ethnic minorities and urban populations as well.

MORMONISM, AMERICA, AND THE WORLD

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of America to Mormons. Latter-day Saints believe that nineteenth-century upstate New York was the birthplace of a religious movement that will spread across the earth and have profound influence for good throughout the world and throughout eternity. The church was founded on American soil by an American prophet, in the generation after the American Revolution. Former church president (and U.S. secretary of agriculture during the Eisenhower administration) Ezra Taft Benson stated: “I love this nation of which we are a part. To me it is not just another nation, not just a member of a family of nations. It is a great and glorious nation with a divine mission and it has been brought into being under the inspiration of heaven. It is truly a land choice above all others. I thank God for the knowledge which we have regarding the prophetic history and the prophetic future of this great land of America.”⁸

From the beginning the Latter-day Saints have had a complex relationship with America. Although Mormonism has been called “quintessentially American” by various scholars of religion, early LDS people rejected core aspects of American life (e.g., rugged individualism and unrestrained capitalism), and the Mormons were rejected by one set of Americans after another—often violently.

Joseph Smith taught that the U.S. Constitution was an inspired document; in LDS revelation the Lord declares that “for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood (D&C 101:80).⁹ An LDS Article of Faith states, “We believe . . . that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent.” So America (past, present, and future) is sacred soil to Latter-day Saints.

Yet in the early years of the church’s existence, America was a hostile environment. After reviewing—and finding wanting—arguments made by various scholars of religion about how much Mormonism was supposedly derivative of American culture, the LDS historian Richard Bushman stated:

The problem is further complicated by Mormonism’s estrangement from American society. For a movement that purportedly incorporated so many elements from the surrounding culture, Mormonism found itself at odds with that culture over and over again. I don’t mean arguments, I mean violence. None of the Saints’ American neighbors accepted them for very long. Wherever the Saints settled in the nineteenth century, they were rejected like a failed kidney trans-

plant. In New York, Missouri, Illinois, and even Utah, the Saints were attacked by force and compelled to change or die. Far from being fundamentally American, something about Mormonism repulsed large numbers of Americans.

Every attempt to assimilate the Restoration into some [American] schema has to face the possibility that Mormonism was more un-American than American. There is more evidence of Mormonism's alienation from the nineteenth-century United States than of its being a natural outgrowth of American culture. The American connection grows ever more tenuous as Mormonism is increasingly viewed as a world religion. If Mormonism is so American, why the immediate success in nineteenth-century Europe and the rapid twentieth-century growth in Latin America and the Philippines?¹⁰

Thus, while much of their early history is centered in America, Latter-day Saints believe their church is not "an American church" and that it is the destiny of the church to continue to move far beyond American borders and culture to ultimately spread throughout the earth and prepare the inhabitants of the earth for the return of Jesus Christ.

Latter-day Saints consider their church to be the kingdom of God on Earth and believe it will fulfill the scriptural prophecy as the "stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands [that] shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (see Daniel 2:34, 45; D&C 65:2). About the ultimate destiny of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith stated: "The standard of truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done."¹¹

When Joseph Smith made this statement, the church had only a few thousand members in a few scattered communities. The Saints consider this statement a prophecy of a glorious future, and it helps them look beyond the fact that most Latter-day Saints throughout the earth live in areas where they find themselves members of a misunderstood minority faith.

MORMONISM AND MODERNIZATION

Latter-day Saints believe that the current era represents the "last days" preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Saints believe they are called to build Zion—a holy society that will prepare the world for the return of Jesus. They believe that, as Jesus said, no man knows "the day or the hour" of his coming but that many of the biblical "signs of the times" have been and are being

fulfilled and so that event can happen soon.¹² Thus Latter-day Saints have a clear and strong—indeed, unabashedly triumphalist—sense that the time in which they live will be momentous and troubling for individuals, families, and nations and yet ultimately glorious and triumphant for the Latter-day Saints and all those who honestly serve God and strive to prepare themselves for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Latter-day Saints believe that the founding of America was guided by divine providence in order to establish a fit nation in which to restore the Church of Jesus Christ—a nation with religious freedom (absence of a state church), with openness to new ideas, and with abundant human and natural resources from which to develop the wealth needed to support the spread of the restored gospel throughout the earth. Commenting on the way historians have viewed Mormonism in the context of American historical forces, the LDS historian Richard Bushman stated: “In fact, Latter-day Saints are inclined to reverse the order and place American history in the history of the gospel. We think that Western civilization has been shaped in preparation for the Restoration. The breakup of the medieval church, the rise of learning and free inquiry, the separation of church and state, even a technology like printing are seen as providential preparation for the Restoration. The United States, in the Mormon view, was founded to make a home for the Church.”¹³

Unlike other “high tension” religious communities that reject nearly all aspects of modern technology and culture (e.g., the Amish, Hasidic Judaism), Latter-day Saints, while maintaining significant boundaries with certain aspects of modernism, are not only quite comfortable with many aspects of modern life but consider modern technology to be divinely inspired.¹⁴

Latter-day Saints consider modern technologies to be gifts from God to help them spread the gospel and allow the leaders of the church to communicate with and travel to the millions of members spread across the earth, thus allowing the church to remain pure in doctrine and practice and not fall away, as did the “primitive church” established by the original apostles. In his concluding remarks at the LDS General Conference in April 2005, church president Gordon B. Hinckley stated, “Through the miracle—and it is a miracle—of modern technology, these proceedings have been broadcast worldwide. Ninety-five percent of the membership of the Church in all the world could have participated with us.”¹⁵ In commenting on this statement, the *LDS Church News* opined, “Indeed, it is amazing to witness how the Lord has made technologies available to govern and unify His Church in this last dispensation, revealing them as quickly as Church growth makes them necessary.”¹⁶ So what other religionists may see as a dizzying, almost out-of-control, technological revolution spurred only by human creativity and greed, Latter-day Saints typically see as a divinely inspired and guided process designed to aid the spread of Mormonism (and other good works and worthy influences) throughout the earth.

The ecological, political, economic, and social upheavals of contemporary

life, while to some extent troubling to Latter-day Saints, do not surprise them and in some respects provide faith-validating evidence of the truthfulness of prophecies of great tribulations in the last days found in the Bible (e.g., Matt. 24; 2 Tim. 3:2) and in modern LDS scripture (e.g., D&C 45:26–75; Moses 7:61–66). Indeed, Mormonism appears not merely to survive but to thrive under the kinds of challenging conditions brought about by modernization and globalization. The sociologist John Jarvis concluded in regard to Mormon success in France, “My findings suggest that rather than succeeding in France *despite* the stresses of globalization, Mormonism’s success there is *due* to these stresses and to the reassuring answers the Church provides to them.”¹⁷

MODERN PROPHETS FOR MODERN TIMES

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). The highest leaders of the church (First Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles) are considered as having literally the same calling and authority as the ancient prophets and apostles. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of how Latter-day Saints cope with and thrive under the challenges to family life stemming from modernization is the overall sense that God continues to speak through prophets to give divine guidance in troubled times.

Latter-day Saint leaders and families are well aware of the social forces weakening marriage and family ties and have taken significant steps to try to stem this tide. In 1981 then-LDS church president Spencer W. Kimball predicted that “many of the social restraints which in the past have helped to reinforce and to shore up the family are dissolving and disappearing. The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us.”¹⁸ Latter-day Saints consider this statement a modern prophecy that is being literally fulfilled. The belief in modern prophets and apostles brings great comfort and confidence to Latter-day Saints, who believe that their leaders provide access to God’s will in today’s challenging and changing times, times in which marriage and family bonds have been increasingly loosened and threatened.

One important example of this is that church leaders first initiated the now well-known LDS Family Home Evening program in 1918 and encouraged families to set aside an evening each week and reserve it for family religious devotion and family recreational activity. The church began to strongly reemphasize this program in the 1960s, and it is now fully enshrined as an important LDS religious practice. Latter-day Saints consider this program, which was revealed by modern prophets long before the crisis of family that has gripped America since the 1960s, to be one of many clear evidences of the reality and blessing of divinely inspired prophetic counsel for current needs, and they believe that those families who faithfully practice home evenings will be much

better prepared to fend off the various forces that have wreaked havoc on contemporary families.¹⁹

PROPHETIC PROCLAMATION ON FAMILY

Although LDS prophets and apostles have spoken frequently about the eternal importance of marriage and family from the beginning of the church, teaching about family life has increased dramatically since the mid-1970s and was highlighted by the issuance in 1995 of the authoritative proclamation called “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”²⁰ Church president Gordon B. Hinckley stated: “Why do we have this proclamation on the family now? Because the family is under attack. All across the world families are falling apart. The place to begin to improve society is in the home. Children do, for the most part, what they are taught. We are trying to make the world better by making the family stronger.”²¹

This 604-word proclamation clearly and concisely sets forth fundamental LDS doctrine on marriage and family life.²² This document approaches the status of scripture for Latter-day Saints, who believe that “whatsoever [church leaders] shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:4). Every LDS chapel and temple and many LDS homes display framed copies of the “family proclamation.” While the thrust of the family proclamation is an affirmative moral call to strengthen marriage and family life through revealed doctrine and practice, a concluding paragraph states, “We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”

REJECTING RELATIVISM

Latter-day Saints accept a set of highly distinctive doctrines and live a unique set of practices relating to marriage and family life. In so doing they face numerous challenges to those beliefs and practices from a modern American culture steeped in moral relativism, since church doctrine makes no concessions to changing morals and cultural values when it comes to core doctrines, practices, and standards of conduct. Indeed, most American Latter-day Saints likely would agree with Pope Benedict XVI when (just before his election as pope in April 2005), he warned that “we are moving toward a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one’s own ego and one’s own desires.”²³ In 1995 LDS apostle Neal A.

Maxwell stated that “Heavenly Father loves his children perfectly, but he knows our tendencies perfectly, too. To lie, steal, murder, envy, to be sexually immoral, neglect parents, break the Sabbath, and to bear false witness—all occur because one mistakenly seeks to please himself for the moment regardless of divine standards or human consequences. As prophesied, ethical relativism is now in steep crescendo: ‘Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world’” (D&C 1:16).²⁴ The modern American cultural climate encourages all citizens to create and practice their own personal religion—what Robert Bellah and his colleagues called “Sheilaism,” or what can be called a “denomination of one” approach to religion.²⁵ One way that unchanging beliefs and high standards of personal and family morality help LDS couples and families avoid the relativistic character of modern America is by providing a sense of stability and moral clarity.

DOCTRINES ON MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND CHILDREN

About the status of marriage and family in LDS doctrine, the sociologist John Jarvis correctly stated, “It is this family focus, a veritable ‘theology of the family,’ that must be understood before one can understand . . . Mormonism.”²⁶ One recent church president stated, “The family is the most important organization in time or in eternity. Our purpose in life is to create for ourselves eternal family units.”²⁷ Another LDS leader taught, “Marriage, the family, and the home are the foundation of the Church. Nothing is more important to the Church and to civilization itself than the family!”²⁸ Indeed, when teachings and practices about the role of marriage and family in this life and beyond are considered, the LDS church has one of the most explicitly and strongly family-oriented doctrine, practice, and culture among religious institutions.²⁹

FAMILY IS CENTRAL IN GOD’S PLAN OF HAPPINESS

The LDS emphasis on marriage and family comes from the central place of the family in the “plan of happiness,” which is a set of core beliefs regarding the underlying divine purposes of life and existence. The Saints believe that before being born, all human beings existed in a “premortal” state as “spirit sons and daughters” of God the Eternal Father and that mortal experience is the next stage in humans’ eternal quest to become more godlike.

LDS children begin singing and memorizing the LDS hymn “I Am a Child of God” when they are very young, and this core identity is a powerful orientation for LDS children, youth, and adults. The family proclamation succinctly summarizes Mormons’ understanding of God’s plan of happiness: “In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eter-

nal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life.” The doctrine of a premortal existence brings comfort and hope to families struggling with problems incident to mortality. Apostle Neal A. Maxwell said:

Without an understanding of premortality, it is no wonder that mortals often fail to take account of what is perhaps mortality’s most prominent feature—its stern proving and tutoring dimensions. Some then use life’s trials as an argument against God, instead of accepting these trials as being something “common to man,” or as the needed tutorials which, though rigorous, last “but for a small moment” (1 Corinthians 10:13; D&C 122:4). Mortality is properly designed to permit us only limited vision. Without the perspective of premortality, instead of understanding that “all these things shall give thee experience” (D&C 122:7), we can become drenched in doubt and be wrenched by adversity and irony, lamenting, “Why me? Why this? Why now?”³⁰

Latter-day Saints believe that the quality of one’s soul and the status of one’s marriage and family after mortal life are influenced by the extent to which one is willing to make sacred covenants and keep them faithfully. For those who have made and kept the sacred covenants of the holy temple, the prospects for their ongoing association in marriage and family relationships are assured. The family proclamation states that “the divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.”

Thus the plan of happiness (a) provides LDS families with a sense that earth life and all its vicissitudes are part of a divine plan; (b) helps them make sense of both personal and global events; (c) brings great comfort in times of death since birth, life, and death are all part of this divine plan; and (d) is the eschatological paradigm or sacred worldview for Latter-day Saints. The family proclamation states: “We . . . solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . . The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan.” So this plan teaches that marriage and family life is ordained of God, central to God’s purposes, and potentially eternal.

DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL MARRIAGE

Among the most important and distinctive LDS doctrines is that the plan of happiness provides that marriage is not intended only for this life but rather was designed to be an eternal relationship.³¹ In a revelation to the Prophet

Joseph Smith (D&C 132:19–20) the Lord declared: “And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood . . . shall be of full force when they are out of the world” (D&C 132:19).

Latter-day Saints who have made the “new and everlasting covenant” of eternal marriage have been “sealed,” or eternally bound, by priesthood power in holy temples and believe they will be married not only until death but throughout eternity. The Apostle Paul taught that “neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:11), and Jesus taught that “what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:9).³² The temple “sealing” that unites couples eternally is conditional on continued worthiness and faithfulness on the part of both spouses.

One unique aspect of LDS temples is the vicarious saving ordinances such as baptism and confirmation, and exalting ordinances such as marriage for a person’s deceased ancestors, that are performed there.³³ After obtaining their own sealings, Latter-day Saints can go to the temple and be sealed “for and in behalf of” their deceased progenitors whom they have known or have discovered through genealogical research (it is believed the deceased person may chose to accept or reject this ordinance). This “temple work” allows a married couple to attend the temple together and remember and renew their own marriage covenants by acting as a proxy for those who did not have a chance to be sealed eternally to their spouse in mortality but have now passed beyond mortal life.

Temples are peaceful and spiritual, and the work done there is deeply meaningful to Latter-day Saints, so this opportunity to periodically be together in this sacred setting helps couples cope with the stresses and strains of modern married life. Church leaders frequently urge the Saints to be involved in temple worship and service both to help fulfill the divine mandate to make these ordinances available to those who have died without receiving them *and* to obtain the spiritual and relational blessings available to those who perform this sacred temple work together. LDS couples who engage in regular temple worship report feeling protected and empowered in the face of the gathering storms of marital failure so prevalent in modern society. President James E. Faust (counselor in the First Presidency) taught: “Those who cherish their family have a compelling reason to claim the transcendent blessing of being sealed for eternity in the temples of God. For all grandparents, parents, husbands, wives, children, and grandchildren, this sealing power and authority is a crowning principle, a pinnacle in the restoration ‘of all things’ through the Prophet Joseph Smith.”³⁴

Other significant resources are made available to assist couples to make their marriage strong, including Sunday school classes, periodic lessons and talks in church meetings, written materials, and counseling from church leaders. LDS

Family Services, a social service agency, provides professional counseling for those who desire it. Divorce is allowed though strongly discouraged, and perhaps it is warranted when the quality of the marriage is “nothing less serious than a prolonged and apparently irredeemable relationship which is destructive of a person’s dignity as a human being.”³⁵

The importance placed on making and keeping the marriage covenant is demonstrated by demographics: LDS men and women typically marry three to four years younger and at a significantly higher rate than the general U.S. population, yet LDS couples experience a very low divorce rate compared with the national average. Scholars working from publicly available data suggest that the divorce rate for LDS “temple marriages” (the type most commonly entered into by two active Saints) may be as low as 10 percent but is likely no higher than 15 percent.³⁶ The divorce rate for nontemple LDS marriages is similar to the national average of 40 to 50 percent, and the divorce rate for LDS/Non-LDS interfaith marriages is even higher.³⁷

So, although Latter-day Saints, like most Americans, are troubled by the very high national divorce rates, and although the rate of LDS divorce has increased since the 1970s, the knowledge that LDS temple divorce rates are relatively low likely helps LDS singles and couples avoid the tendency of many in modern society to possess a deep and often debilitating cynicism about their personal potential to experience marital happiness and permanence. However, LDS leaders and members are deeply concerned about the continuing trend of increasing age at first marriage among LDS couples. Many see this as an indication of increasing individualism and materialism among LDS young adults—or as the influence of “the world” on LDS courtship and marriage behavior.³⁸

DOCTRINE OF CHILDREN

Mormon theology includes the unique doctrine that all human beings are the spiritual offspring of heavenly parents. The family proclamation states, “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.” Therefore Latter-day Saints take quite literally the biblical statement that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:27). Current LDS apostle M. Russell Ballard stated:

In the spring of 1820, a pillar of light illuminated a grove of trees in upstate New York. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith. This experience began the restoration of powerful doctrinal truths that had been lost for centuries. Among those truths that had been dimmed by the darkness of apostasy was the stirring reality that we are all the spirit sons and daughters of a loving God who is our Father.

We are part of His family. He is not a father in some allegorical or poetic sense. He is literally the Father of our spirits. He cares for each one of us. Though this world has a way of diminishing and demeaning men and women, the reality is we are all of royal, divine lineage. In that unprecedented appearance of the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove, the very first word spoken by the Father of us all was the personal name of Joseph. Such is our Father's personal relationship with each of us. He knows our names and yearns for us to become worthy to return to live with Him.³⁹

Although Latter-day Saints follow the pattern set by Jesus by praying only to their Father in Heaven, the doctrine that all human beings also have a Mother in Heaven occupies a place of honor in LDS belief.⁴⁰ This doctrine gives many LDS women and men the sense of earthly life's being patterned after heavenly life and gives LDS women the sense that their eternal destiny and potential is coequal with men's—to someday become like their heavenly parents. Thus for LDS women the calling of wife and mother, and for LDS men the calling of husband and father, are preparation for a glorious eternal destiny together, doing what the most glorious and powerful beings in the universe do—rather than merely human or earthly social roles.

Mormon families tend to be larger than the national average because Latter-day Saints believe it is part of God's plan that all his spirit children come to Earth to gain a physical body, to experience opposition and thus grow spiritually through making moral choices, and make and keep sacred covenants with God (e.g., baptism and marriage). While many American LDS families have large numbers of children and the relative size of LDS families to the U.S. population historically has remained fairly constant (about two to one), one of the perceived negative consequences of modernization is a reduction in the overall size of LDS families.⁴¹

DOCTRINE OF PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Latter-day Saints believe that their two most important responsibilities are to make and keep the covenant of eternal marriage and to bear children and parent them effectively. The family proclamation states:

The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

The church provides extensive educational programs to help parents teach children the gospel.⁴² LDS parents draw heavily on their beliefs, practices, and faith communities to meet the challenges they face.⁴³ Much teaching by LDS local and general leaders focuses on the ways that parents can best fulfill their important obligations. Often this counsel addresses the mounting challenges of parenting in a culture dominated by strong pulls toward overinvolvement in paid work, media entertainment, personal hobbies, and various other distractions that pull parents away from children (and spouses away from each other).

While many parenting responsibilities outlined in the family proclamation are similar for both parents, Latter-day Saints also believe in some distinction of responsibilities for fathers and mothers. The family proclamation states: “By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”

Contrary to popular perception, the LDS Church teaches complete equality between men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. In LDS parlance “presiding over” involves loving leadership and service, not domination. A church leader taught that “every father is to his family a patriarch and every mother a matriarch as coequals in their distinctive parental roles.”⁴⁴ A group of LDS scholars who carefully analyzed the teachings of LDS scripture and prophetic teaching on the issue stated:

The patriarchal priesthood is not so called to imply a hierarchy between men and women. Instead, as President Ezra Taft Benson taught, it is called patriarchal because in ancient days it was handed down from faithful father to faithful son, and today frequently still is (D&C 107: 40–42). (*Patri* is Latin for father.) President Benson also taught that the patriarchal order is the family order of government, presided over by mothers and fathers. One of the most revolutionary aspects of the restored gospel is its ability to help us envision difference without hierarchy, distinctiveness without inequality. This is what the Proclamation calls upon us to hold as the ideal relationship between husbands and wives.⁴⁵

This clear sense of distinct but equal sacred responsibilities helps LDS women and men avoid the gender role confusion that pervades modern American culture and American marriages and families.

FAMILY WORSHIP

The LDS church constantly stresses the importance of family-based religious activity. Home-based family worship includes practices such as family prayer and father’s blessings, family fasting and giving offerings for the poor, family

scripture study, family musical expression, family Sabbath observance, and family home evening.⁴⁶ Having regular patterns of family religious activity helps many LDS families avoid the increasing levels of family chaos and dysfunction prevalent in modern society. While not all LDS families consistently practice all these family devotions, they typically feel that they ought to. Most try to implement such practices to the best of their ability and according to the family situations they face.

IN MODERN AMERICA, BUT NOT OF MODERN AMERICA

Together these beliefs and practices make Latter-day Saints quite distinct in contemporary America. LDS leaders have expressed that the church and the world are on increasingly divergent paths. In modern America, with the dramatically increasing rates of out-of-wedlock birth and cohabitation, the link between marriage and childbearing has been severely weakened. That link remains strong for LDS culture. The age at first marriage in modern America continues to rise, yet for LDS couples it remains three to four years younger than the national average. The amount of sexual content continues to rise in contemporary media, while LDS leaders increase the frequency and intensity of their pleas to the Saints to avoid pornographic and sexual content in all its manifestations. The culture of divorce continues unabated, while LDS leaders and members increase the church's educational efforts to prepare for and strengthen marriage and counseling services to help troubled couples.⁴⁷

Thus it is accurate to characterize the contemporary American Mormon situation by using the worn but apt phrase "in the world, but not of the world."⁴⁸ This is particularly true of the culture of youth and young adulthood, as LDS youth increasingly find themselves on the front lines of the cultural wars engulfing America. Interestingly, in a recent national study of religiosity in 3,370 youth from various faith communities, the sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton found that Mormon youth reported the highest degree of religious vitality and salience, and they reported that "Mormon teens are the most likely among all U.S. teens to hold religious beliefs similar to their parents'.⁴⁹ Probably partly in response to this study, President Gordon B. Hinckley recently stated: "It is wonderfully refreshing to see the faith and faithfulness of our young people. They live at a time when a great tide of evil is washing over the earth. It seems to be everywhere. Old standards are discarded. Principles of virtue and integrity are cast aside. But we find literally hundreds of thousands of our young people holding to the high standards of the gospel. They find happy and uplifting association with those of their own kind. They are improving their minds with education and their skills with discipline, and their influence for good is felt ever more widely."⁵⁰

On many important issues, particularly those concerning marriage and family matters, there is a great chasm between the powerful and pervasive culture of modern America and the even stronger and deeper culture of Mormonism. The Latter-day Saint counterculture is conscious and passionate. LDS scripture and modern prophets have called the Saints to “go ye out of Babylon” (D&C 133:7) and be a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9). Or, as a current member of the church’s First Presidency, said, “We have always been regarded as a peculiar people. . . . Being spiritually correct is much better than being politically correct. Of course, as individuals and as a people we want to be liked and respected. But we cannot be in the mainstream of society if it means abandoning those righteous principles which thundered down from Sinai, later to be refined by the Savior, and subsequently taught by modern prophets. We should only fear offending God and His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the head of this Church.”⁵¹

CHALLENGES FOR LDS FAMILIES: CONFLICTS WITH MODERNIZATION

Despite the doctrinal clarity of LDS theology regarding marriage and family life, many aspects of modernization and postmodern thought and practice are highly problematic and difficult for LDS families, particularly the changing social norms and practices pertaining to courtship, sexuality, marriage, and family life. To many Saints the social trends in modern culture directly conflict with Latter-day Saint doctrine and practice pertaining to marriage and family life. This brings a sense of confirmation that these are indeed the “great and dreadful” last days, and it also presents serious challenges to LDS families trying to be “in the world but not of the world.” Let me briefly sketch some of the central conflicts.

SEXUAL ISSUES

The sexual revolution of modern Western cultures radically conflicts with LDS teaching on complete chastity before marriage and complete fidelity in marriage. The family proclamation states: “God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. . . . Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.” LDS leaders and parents work hard to teach their children and youth about the importance of remaining sexually chaste before marriage (no sexual relations of any kind) and maintaining “complete fidelity” in marriage. Chastity and fidelity are requirements to receive the weekly Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, to serve a mission, to be married in

the temple, hold a “church calling” in the congregation, and to hold a “temple recommend,” which allows a person to participate in sacred temple ordinances.

Of course, not all LDS youth or adults are chaste before marriage or faithful in marriage, and church leaders both teach preventative measures and counsel with those who have not lived up to these standards. The standard for sexual purity is the same for men and women and is a requirement of full church participation, which sends a very clear message that, despite what is allowed or encouraged in modern society, male and female Latter-day Saints are equally expected to keep themselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

While church doctrine rejects homosexual conduct (and all other sexual relationships outside marriage), President Gordon B. Hinckley has repeatedly taught that there must be respect and love shown for those who “struggle with same-sex attraction.” These Latter-day Saints often feel that they are faced with having to deny either their religious beliefs or their sexual orientation. Many struggle valiantly and need and desire the love, understanding, and respect of other Latter-day Saints—particularly their parents and other family members. The church provides support groups and trained professionals for Saints striving to live an LDS life despite same-sex attraction, and bishops (pastors of local congregations) are also often involved in trying to help.

GENDER FEMINISM

An important strain in modern gender feminism posits few innate distinctions between men and women, places the source of observed gender variation on culture and upbringing, and suggests that most gender differences can and should be minimized or even eliminated. These ideas conflict with LDS teaching that “gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose” (family proclamation). Latter-day Saints believe the human spirit (what many refer to as the soul) is gendered, that some divinely mandated core gender distinctions influence earth life, and that our resurrected bodies will be gendered—just as God’s is.⁵²

These views do affect gender roles both in the church and in the family. Indeed, some view LDS women as “oppressed” because they do not hold the priesthood, are more likely to marry and have children than non-LDS women, and are more likely to defer education and career for family reasons. Conversely, most Latter-day Saints think that LDS women are fortunate or “blessed” because they are considered equal partners with LDS men, with equal earthly and eternal potential; LDS theology includes belief in a Heavenly Mother; the highest (temple) covenants and ordinances of the LDS Church (marriage sealing) can be received only by a woman and man together; LDS doctrine considers marriage and parenthood the highest and holiest callings that women *and* men will ever have; and LDS men and women labor together in families, local congregations, and holy temples.

Latter-day Saints value what occurs in homes and temples more than what occurs in chapels (i.e., formal ecclesiastical structure). Husband and father or wife and mother are considered completely equal roles and eternally meaningful responsibilities. Because Latter-day Saints do not reveal the specific nature of temple work publicly, those who have not participated in temple ordinances are not aware of the extent to which men and women work side by side, doing the same essential exalting priesthood work in the holy temple. Thus the fact that LDS women are not ordained to the priesthood and serve as bishops or as apostles does not detract from the sense of empowerment from God, the church, and the family that most LDS women experience in their most highly valued religious responsibilities and activities. Of course, some LDS women and men struggle with these “traditional” gender expectations and some leave the church over this issue.

SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

Modern culture and media tend to normalize and even glorify alcohol and drug consumption. Such portrayals and promotions are unfortunate because these images sharply conflict with data that link alcohol and drug abuse with higher rates of disease, criminality, death, and family abuse and dysfunction. Indeed, most family violence involves substance abuse. Use of alcohol and recreational drugs conflicts with LDS belief and practice. In 1833 Latter-day Saints were given a revelation known as “the Word of Wisdom,” which proscribed the use of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea. Among other things, it said: “Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of the evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation—That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father” (D&C 89:4–5).

In the same way that keeping kosher distinguishes observant Jewish families from their nonobservant or non-Jewish friends and associates, observing the Word of Wisdom has served to distinguish active LDS families from their non-LDS friends and family members. This provides a sense of family identity and unity, as LDS youth and families often are singled out for their unique habits. At the end of the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom is a promise: “And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in the navel and marrow to their bones; and shall find great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint, And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them” (D&C 89:18–21).

An abundance of modern scientific evidence demonstrates the health haz-

ards of smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug use. Research has shown that Latter-day Saints enjoy lower rates of cancer and significantly longer life and better physical health than their non-LDS counterparts.⁵³ These health and longevity benefits contribute to LDS grandparents' being much more likely to see their grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow up and to be there to support them. In this respect the Word of Wisdom is a law of marriage and family well-being in addition to a law of physical and spiritual well-being. Thus adherence to the Word of Wisdom helps LDS families avoid one aspect of modern life that is very damaging to healthy marriages and families—the widespread use and abuse of harmful addictive substances.

INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY

While the Saints consider the invention of the computer and the Internet to be part of the ongoing technological inspiration needed to preach the gospel to every person in every land on Earth, fulfill the divine mandate to search out their ancestors, and allow church leaders to quickly and easily communicate with the Saints throughout the earth, the Internet also poses tremendous challenges to LDS families, particularly in easy access to pornography. Apostle M. Russell Ballard said: “We see a rapid increase in cyberporn, involving sexual addiction over the Internet. Some become so addicted to viewing Internet pornography and participating in dangerous online chat rooms that they ignore their marriage covenants and family obligations and often put their employment at risk. Many run afoul of the law. Others develop a tolerance to their perverted behavior, taking ever more risks to feed their immoral addiction. Marriages crumble and relationships fail, as addicts often lose everything of real, eternal value.”⁵⁴ LDS leaders repeatedly warn adults and youth about the dangers to personal purity and marital fidelity that are lurking only a mouse-click away. LDS bishops counsel with those who have become involved with or addicted to pornography, and the church provides other resources such as professional counselors trained to help people overcome this malady. Usually, in the twice-yearly General Conference at least one speaker will address this issue and urge the Saints to avoid “the plague” of pornography.

POPULAR CULTURE

Jesus taught his disciples to “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33), but modern secular, materialistic, and hedonistic culture urges adults and children, men and women to have it all right now. So LDS parents face an uphill battle to choose spiritual things and help their children to do so as well, when all are enticed with an ever-growing cornucopia of material wonders. So LDS parents try to teach their children to “choose the right,” reject the enticements of the world, and make the sacrifices their faith

invites them to make. Recent research suggests that they are being quite successful—American LDS teens tend to be more involved in and more committed to their faith than teens from most other faiths and more likely to make personal sacrifices for religious reasons.⁵⁵

MEDICAL ISSUES AND FAMILY MATTERS

The Saints view modern medicine in the same way as other technological advances—as divinely inspired blessings for humanity. Those holding the higher (Melchizedek) priesthood can anoint the sick with oil and bless them by the laying on of hands to be healed (see James 5:14–15), and the Saints do believe that divine intervention can bring healing. However, use of medical care is also enjoined, and there is no sense that using modern medicine is incompatible with faith in the divine power to heal.

The Saints strongly oppose elective abortion except when the woman's life is in danger or when the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest. Church policy is that these are not necessarily automatic reasons to abort, but the woman should prayerfully decide what to do. While the church encourages couples not to avoid having children or limit family size for purely selfish reasons, birth control is allowed, and decisions about when to conceive and how many children to have are left to each couple to prayerfully decide. Church policy allows fertility treatments and discourages permanent sterilization. The church is opposed to euthanasia (mercy killing), but decisions about whether to remove life-sustaining medical treatment are left to individuals and families. Thus while the church is clearly pro-life and pro-natal, it places a strong emphasis on the prayerful exercise of individual moral agency in these difficult and personal matters of life and death.

MORMONISM AND TECHNICAL RATIONALITY

As this collection makes clear, technical rationality is a major feature of modernization that can influence faith communities in negative ways, especially when fueled by the cultural values of individualism. Like all contemporary faiths, Mormonism is forced to deal with one especially challenging aspect of technical rationality: the one that entices individuals to make personal choices based mainly on a rational calculation of (often immediate) personal satisfaction in the context of meanings influenced by an overwhelming culture. And that culture is characterized by increasingly radical secularism, hedonism, individualism, materialism, and sexuality. Decisions based in such meanings often lead to actions that harm both faith and family life and include pre- and extramarital sexual activity, abortion, divorce, abuse, substance abuse, careerism, and limiting family size based on selfish motivations.

A science-dominated and education-oriented culture can be considered an-

other aspect of technical rationality that can be threatening to religious groups and individuals. Religious individuals and groups with a traditional, orthodox, or fundamentalist approach may find some aspects of a science-oriented culture (e.g., rational explanations of miracles, evolution versus creation) that challenge or contradict a religiously oriented worldview.

Because Latter-day Saint theology requires the search for all truth, Latter-day Saints have an expansive approach to education and to scientific knowledge. Indeed, American Latter-day Saints obtain more education than the national average, and the most highly educated Latter-day Saints are also the most religiously devout and active.⁵⁶ And Latter-day Saints are not bothered by some of the scientific issues that concern other highly religious groups. For example, they believe that the creation of the earth was accomplished in six “creative periods” of indeterminate length (called “days” in Genesis), so scientific evidence of the great age of the earth does not call into question LDS theology.⁵⁷

In the area of marriage and family relations, rather than relying exclusively on sacred texts to help couples and families, the church maintains an extensive church-based higher-education system (including Brigham Young University, with campuses in Provo, Idaho, and Hawaii) with scientific/professionally oriented books and classes as well as the LDS Family Services organization, which provides professional counseling on a range of relationship issues. This approach helps Latter-day Saints respond to modernization by knowing that they have the power of scripture, the timely help from the teachings of modern living prophets, and the best that science and professional practice have to offer that is consistent with sacred sources.

MORMONISM AND AMERICAN-STYLE DEMOCRACY

Mormonism has flourished in the American political system and most American Latter-day Saints are patriotic, freedom-loving citizens. Although the majority of contemporary American Saints live outside Utah and Idaho and thus constitute a political minority, the gathering of the Saints, practiced from the beginning of Mormonism, has had the practical result that the Saints have often held political influence where they have had numerical concentrations.⁵⁸ Thus American-style democracy has allowed the Saints to have a great deal of influence over their political destiny.

Church leaders repeatedly encourage the Saints to be involved in the political process, and data show that Latter-day Saints are highly involved, including disproportionate representation in Congress. A political profile of American Latter-day Saints suggests that the Saints have been largely ignored by scholars as a political force, even though their high concentration of members in several states, their cohesive nature, their political distinctiveness, and their willingness

to mobilize for causes articulated by their leaders make them a political force to be reckoned with.⁵⁹

For example, recent social and political efforts to legitimize homosexual behavior and orientation by changing the definition of marriage to include homosexual couples conflicts sharply with LDS teaching, that heterosexual marriage is the only divinely legitimate expression of sexuality. Indeed, since LDS doctrine explicitly outlines marriage as ordained by God, the church clearly rejects the modern idea of marriage as a malleable social institution that should be adapted to fit changing human cultures. The church has officially declared that it is in favor of a constitutional amendment explicitly defining marriage as a relationship only between a man and a woman,⁶⁰ and the church has been in the forefront of legal and political efforts to preserve the definition of marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman.

MORMONISM AND OTHER FAITHS

Mormonism has some interesting similarities with and differences from other faiths that influence matters of marriage and family. I briefly mention a few.

Like Catholicism, Mormonism is hierarchical in structure and culture; the authority to declare doctrine and policy clearly resides in church leaders. Thus, for the word of the Lord on matters of marriage and family life, the Saints look to the prophets and apostles in Salt Lake City, just as their more traditional Catholic friends look to the pope in Rome.

Like evangelical Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-day Saints believe strongly in the written word of God and in the importance of expending significant effort studying and sharing the word with others near and far. Thus Latter-day Saints are likely to search the scriptures for personal answers to family challenges and are likely to invite their friends and neighbors to find answers to their family struggles in Mormonism.

Like Catholics, Orthodox Christians (i.e., Eastern Orthodox), and Anglicans, Latter-day Saints believe they are the possessors of an essential and unbroken line of ecclesiastical authority and power (in the case of Latter-day Saints, priesthood authority restored by angelic visitations of the resurrected ancient apostles Peter, James, and John to the Prophet Joseph Smith). Thus Latter-day Saints grant those who hold this priesthood and lead their congregation unique spiritual authority to assist them in dealing with the challenges of contemporary marriage and family life.

Like Orthodox Jews and Seventh-day Adventists, Latter-day Saints believe strongly in the sanctity of the Sabbath day, and generally choose not to work, make purchases, or seek entertainment on Sunday. Thus active Latter-day Saints typically spend the entire Sabbath day involved in personal and family activities of a religious character.

Like Muslims, Latter-day Saints believe God revealed many great and important things to a prophet hundreds of years after Christ and believe that the scripture revealed to that prophet joins the canon of holy writ. Thus, as Muslims look to the Qur'an and the Hadith (sayings) of the Prophet Mohammed, Latter-day Saints look to revelations received by Joseph Smith and to his successors for teachings on marriage and family.

INTERNAL CRITICISM AND MORMONISM

Since Latter-day Saints believe their prophets and apostles have the same religious authority as, for example, Moses or Peter, Mormonism has no long-standing culture of internal criticism. In fact, while it is understood that the highest leaders of the church may have varying perspectives on a variety of non doctrinal issues, because LDS revelations stress the importance of unity in decision making and following the living prophet, LDS leaders act only in concert and usually after much deliberation. The Saints are encouraged to seek personal spiritual confirmation of prophetic counsel and not to practice blind obedience. There is no tradition of public criticism, lobbying, politicking, or other approaches similar to the decision making or influencing of church policy that is seen in many other American churches.

However, since the mid-1980s a vocal culture of critical discontent has arisen among some Latter-day Saints and former Latter-day Saints. Articles in two publications (*Dialogue* and *Sunstone*) edited and written by those known variously as "Mormon intellectuals" or "liberal Mormons" are often critical of LDS leaders and policies. These critics usually wish LDS leaders were more progressive or in other ways more in step with the modern or postmodern views held by less orthodox Saints (or former Saints). In the past these publications included a broader array of views and were probably more influential with some LDS leaders than they are today, but since the mid-1980s they have become so strident and critical that they have a much smaller readership and likely little to no influence with church leaders.

Evidence from a variety of sources has led many scholars and commentators to refer to Mormonism as perhaps the greatest modern American religious success story. Data showing dramatic domestic and international numerical growth, astounding economic strength, disproportionate and increasing influence in business and government, cultural influence over large geographic areas, significantly better mental and physical health than other Americans and, most relevant to this essay, higher likelihood of success and happiness in marriage and family life (in terms of lower divorce rates and greater marital and family well-being) seem to support these assessments. This essay suggests some reasons

why Mormonism has been so successful despite—or perhaps even because of—the constellation of forces called modernization.

Latter-day Saint couples and families believe they are living in the final dispensation of time and have a responsibility to strive to perfect their lives, strengthen their marriages and families, teach the gospel to others, and do vicarious ordinances that bind them to their deceased ancestors—all this to help prepare all the children of God for the triumphant return of the Savior of the world. They use whatever modern technologies, ideas, or resources they believe will assist them in this work. They also face significant opposition from a modern culture that undermines many of their core values and purposes. They are able to cope with and even thrive on the challenges of modernization by following the counsel of living prophets and apostles who lead the church; by making and keeping sacred covenants—especially the covenant of eternal marriage; and by exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as they strive to follow God’s plan of happiness for individuals, couples, and families.

NOTES

1. I believe it is important for readers to know something about the perspective that an author has on his or her subject. I am an active Latter-day Saint and so provide a believing insider’s perspective on Mormonism. I was converted to the faith when I was nineteen, then served as a full-time missionary for two years, and married a fifth-generation LDS woman in the Salt Lake Temple; we are raising our seven children in the faith. In sum, I strongly believe in and happily practice Mormonism. I am also a social scientist and honor the scholarly values of evidence, academic honesty, the scientific method, reasoned criticism, and effort at objective treatment of the subject of one’s scholarship. While I am certainly *not* objective about either Mormonism or my fellow Latter-day Saints, I believe I can accurately and honestly report the basic beliefs and practices of LDS families and the ways they compare and contrast with the values and practices of modern America. Of course, the thoughts expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or other Latter-day Saints.

2. First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, November 1995, 76. *Ensign* is the official LDS church magazine.

3. Henry B. Eyring, “Hearts Bound Together,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 77.

4. E. W. Lindner, ed., *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2005).

5. D. E. Jones et al., *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States*, 2000 (Nashville, Tenn.: Glenmary Research Center, 2002). See esp. maps on 547 and 562.

6. Latter-day Saints constitute the majority (more than 50 percent) of adherents in southern Idaho and make up a substantial minority (5 percent to 25 percent) of adherents in northeastern Nevada, northern Arizona, southwestern Wyoming, south-

western Washington, northwestern New Mexico, eastern Colorado, and southwestern Montana, and they have a strong presence in certain parts of southern California.

7. Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26 (1984): 18–27. See also a reprint of this article in J. T. Duke, ed., *Latter-day Saint Social Life: Social Research on the LDS Church and Its Members*, 9–27 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998). This chapter tests Stark's prediction after ten years and finds that in every year actual growth of the LDS church was substantially higher than his predictions. Also see Rodney Stark, "The Basis of Mormon Success" (originally published in 1998) on pages 29–70 of this same book. The historian Jan Shipps refers to Mormonism as a "new religious tradition" (see Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985]).

8. Latter-day Saints use certain titles for church leaders (e.g., elder, president) and formal names (full or middle initial), and I adhere to that practice in this essay. The quote is from Donald B. Cannon, ed., *Latter-day Prophets and the United States Constitution* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1991), 166.

9. In LDS parlance D&C stands for Doctrine and Covenants, a set of revelations given to the prophet Joseph Smith. All citations to the Bible are from the King James Version, the authorized text of the LDS Church. All citations to the Book of Mormon are given, like those for the Bible, with the name of the book, chapter, and verses.

10. Richard L. Bushman, *Believing History: Latter-day Saint essays*, edited by R. L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 272.

11. Quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1754.

12. However, one prophesy of the last days includes Jesus's statement that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14.), so Latter-day Saints believe they have much missionary work yet to do before the restored gospel is preached in all nations.

13. Bushman, *Believing History*, 270.

14. The term *high tension* comes from Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

15. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, May 2005, 102.

16. *LDS Church News*, 9 April 2005, 24. A fundamental doctrine for Latter-day Saints is that God creates and also inspires human beings to create while Satan (Lucifer, the devil) destroys and perverts what God has created or inspired and urges human beings to destroy and pervert. Thus Latter-day Saints consider many aspects of modern life (freedom, technology, democracy, America, abundance) to be inspired by God but acknowledge that all these can be destroyed or perverted by evil influences. Latter-day Saints believe that God inspired the creation of computers to facilitate God's work (for example, genealogical research throughout the earth). But Latter-day Saints also believe that Satan has perverted these technologies to increase, for example, the spread of pornography.

17. Emphasis in original. John Jarvis, "Mormonism in France," in S. K. Houseknecht and J. G. Pankhurst, eds., *Family, Religion, and Social Change in Diverse Societies* (New York: Oxford University, 2000), 239.

18. Spencer W. Kimball, "Families Can Be Eternal," *Ensign*, November 1980, 4.
19. About the crucial need for modern revelation, Latter-day Saints like to say that "the Lord didn't command Moses to build an ark," meaning that the Lord gives each prophet counsel and commandments for current circumstances, so a modern prophet will give the Lord's counsel and warnings unique to this age.
20. D. C. Dollahite, "The Proclamation as Prophetic Guidance for Strengthening the Family," in D. C. Dollahite, ed., *Strengthening Our Families: An In-Depth Look at the Proclamation on the Family* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 2000), 1–6; First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102.
21. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1997), 209.
22. C. H. Hart, L. D. Newell, E. Walton, and D. C. Dollahite, eds., *Helping and Healing Our Families: Principles and Practices Inspired by "The Family: A Proclamation to the World"* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2005). See also D. C. Dollahite, "Proclamation as Prophetic Guidance."
23. "Dictatorship of Relativism," Vatican Watch: Latest from Rome and Beyond, MSNBC, 20 April 2005, <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/7516788/page/9>.
24. Neal A. Maxwell, "Deny Yourselves of All Ungodliness," *Ensign*, May 1995, 66.
25. Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
26. Jarvis, "Mormonism in France," 245.
27. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Counsel to the Saints and to the World," *Ensign*, July 1972, 27.
28. Boyd K. Packer, "The Standard of Truth Has Been Erected," *Ensign*, November 2003, 25.
29. Dollahite, *Strengthening Our Families*.
30. Neal A. Maxwell, *A Wonderful Flood of Light* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1990), 38.
31. Orthodox Christians also believe that marriage can endure beyond the grave; Jehovah's Witnesses believe that if a couple is married when Jesus returns, they will stay in that state in the new order of things; and Muslims believe that they will enjoy family relations in the next world. What sets LDS doctrine apart is that the new and everlasting covenant of marriage promises that couples who keep the covenant will together inherit all that God has, become literally like God, and will have eternal offspring, or what LDS scripture calls a "continuation of the seeds forever" (D&C 132:19).
32. Latter-day Saints interpret the words of Jesus in Mark 12:25—"For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven"—to mean that all eternal marriages must be entered into *before* the resurrection since Jesus said that "when [after] they rise from the dead," they will not marry. Thus Saints search out their ancestors to perform eternal marriages (sealings) for couples that had been married on Earth "till death do us part" so they may be vicariously sealed in LDS temples *before* the resurrection.
33. LDS doctrine includes the concept that the atonement of Jesus Christ provides that all human beings will receive a bodily resurrection and, in addition, that all those

baptized by proper authority (either on this earth or by vicarious work done in LDS temples) may be saved and inherit the celestial or highest kingdom of glory but that only those who have been baptized and married for eternity through the sealing powers (available only in LDS temples) will be exalted to the highest degrees of the celestial kingdom and enjoy eternal marriage relationships.

34. James E. Faust, "Lord, I Believe; Help Thou Mine Unbelief," *Ensign*, November 2003, 19.

35. James E. Faust, "Father, Come Home," *Ensign*, May 1993, 36–37.

36. R. J. McClendon and B. A. Chadwick, "Latter-day Saint Families at the Dawn of the 21st Century," in Hart et al., *Helping and Healing Our Families*, 32–43. The LDS church does not release temple divorce statistics, so the percentages cited here are estimates based on the best recent available data.

37. E. L. Lehrer and C. U. Chiswick, "Religion as a Determinant of Marital Stability," *Demography* 30 (1993): 385–403.

38. T. B. Holman, A. Viveiros, and J. S. Carroll, "Progressing toward an Eternal Marriage Relationship," in Hart et al., *Helping and Healing Our Families*, 44–49.

39. M. Russell Ballard, "The Atonement and the Value of One Soul," *Ensign*, May 2004, 86.

40. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign*, November 1991, 97.

41. McClendon and Chadwick, "Latter-day Saint Families."

42. D. C. Dollahite and L. D. Marks, "Teaching Correct Principles: Promoting Spiritual Strength in LDS Young People," in K. M. Yust, A. N. Johnson, S. Eisenberg Sasso, and E. C. Roehlkepartain, eds., *Religious Perspectives on Spirituality in Childhood and Adolescence* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 394–408.

43. D. C. Dollahite, "Fathering for Eternity: Generative Spirituality in Latter-day Saint Fathers of Children with Special Needs," *Review of Religious Research* 44 (2003): 237–51; L. S. Marks and D. C. Dollahite, "Religion, Relationships, and Responsible Fathering in Latter-day Saint Families of Children with Special Needs," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 18, no. 5 (2001): 625–50.

44. James E. Faust, "The Prophetic Voice," *Ensign*, May 1996, 6.

45. A. J. Hawkins et al., "Equal Partnership and the Sacred Responsibilities of Mothers and Fathers," in Dollahite, *Strengthening Our Families*, 66.

46. D. C. Dollahite, "Family Worship at Home" in S. R. Klein and E. J. Hill, eds., *Creating Home as a Sacred Center: Principles for Everyday Living* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 191–202. LDS fathers hold the holy patriarchal priesthood, which allows them to give father's blessings by laying their hands on the heads of their children and speaking inspired words of comfort, counsel, and direction.

47. Hart et al., *Helping and Healing Our Families*.

48. In referring to the relatively more "worldly" or cosmopolitan ski town of Park City, Utah, where Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival is held, some say that Park City is "in Utah but not of Utah."

49. Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35.

50. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Church Grows Stronger," *Ensign*, May 2004, 4.

51. James E. Faust, "Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart," *Ensign*, May 1998, 17.

52. LDS teachings on the nature of God are distinct from the other Abrahamic faiths'. Latter-day Saints view God as having a literal, tangible, gendered body of flesh and bones. They view God the Father and his son, Jesus, as separate and distinct beings, one in purpose and power but distinct in personality and body. The third member of the godhead, the Holy Ghost, is a personage of spirit, also in complete unity with the Father and the Son but distinct in person. All LDS prayers call on the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, most ordinances are done in the name of Jesus Christ, but a few ordinances (baptism, temple sealings) are done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

53. E. Enstrom, "Health Practices and Mortality Rates among Active California Mormons, 1980–1993," in Duke, *Latter-day Saint Social Life*, 461–71; S. R. Simmerman, "The Mormon Health Traditions: An Evolving View of Modern Medicine," *Journal of Religion and Health* 32 (1993): 189–96.

54. M. Russell Ballard, "Let Our Voices Be Heard," *Ensign*, November 2003, 16.

55. Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*.

56. Stan L. Albrecht and Tim B. Heaton, "Secularization, Higher Education, and Religiosity," *Review of Religious Research* 26 (September 1984): 43–58.

57. Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1270.

58. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the Saints to gather in certain parts of America (Kirtland, Ohio; Nauvoo, Illinois) and prophesied that the Saints would later gather at the "everlasting hills" (see Gen. 49:26) or the "tops of the mountains" (see Isa. 2:2), a prediction that Latter-day Saints believe was fulfilled by the settlement along the various mountain ranges of the American West (from Canada to Mexico).

59. On Mormon disproportionate representation in Congress, see Robert Booth Fowler, Allen D. Hertzke, and Laura R. Olson, *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1999), 123–31. The profile is David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson, "Dry Kindling: A Political Profile of American Mormons," in J. Matthew Wilson, ed., *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007).

Eighty-eight percent of Mormons voted for George W. Bush in 2000. In 2005 Senator Harry Reid (D-Nev.), an LDS member, served as the Democratic whip and thus the highest-ranking Democrat; Mitt Romney, governor of Massachusetts, one of the most liberal states in the nation, is also a Latter-day Saint; and Senator Gordon Smith, also a Saint, is a two-term Republican from Oregon, another very liberal state. While the church scrupulously maintains strict political neutrality, church leaders believe it is their right and duty to call on the Saints to become involved in what they consider clearly moral issues (such as the Equal Rights Amendment in the late 1970s and recent battles over gay marriage and gambling).

The political scientists David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson ("Dry Kindling") found that, according to self-reports from the three groups, Mormons were far less likely than Southern Baptists or Catholics to have received any political information or influence at their places of worship.

60. First Presidency Statement issued 7 July 2004. Text available online: www.lds.org/news/article/0,5422,116-19733,00.html.