Dance and Doctrine: Shaker and Mormon Dancing as a Manifestation of Doctrinal Views of the Physical Body

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DANCE AND DOCTRINE: SHAKER AND MORMON DANCING AS A
MANIFESTATION OF DOCTRINAL VIEWS OF THE PHYSICAL BODY

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Dance
Brigham Young University
December 2000
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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

DANCE AND DOCTRINE: SHAKER AND MORMON DANCING AS A MANIFESTATION OF DOCTRINAL VIEWS OF THE PHYSICAL BODY

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This thesis compares the dancing of the Shakers (The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearance) and the Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or LDS Church) during the nineteenth century, as it was influenced by their doctrinal beliefs about the human body. Specifically, it examines how the role of the physical body in achieving mortal happiness and immortal salvation was viewed by each group and how these beliefs were reflected in their dancing. It describes the different forms of dancing performed by each religious group and how dance functioned as worship and recreation for the members of each religion during the nineteenth century.

Research for this study was taken from primary and secondary sources, including a large number of Shaker and Mormon journals, diaries, and autobiographies. Major
doctrinal works from each religion were also consulted to compile a summary of doctrinal beliefs about the physical body for each religion.

This study found that the dancing of the Shakers reflected doctrinal beliefs of the need to be freed from the corrupt human body. In contrast, the dancing of the Mormons exhibited the Latter-day Saint belief in celebrating the body. The doctrines of each religion about the role of the body in attaining mortal joy and immortal salvation were easily recognizable in the dances that the two groups performed. Although beliefs about the body cannot be considered in isolation of other motivational factors, they can be used as a means of studying how and why particular religious or cultural groups dance. This method of evaluating dance, as a function of beliefs or ideologies about the human body, is given as a possible method for studying other cultural or societal groups who dance and whose beliefs about the body may be reliably gathered.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Cathy Black, for believing from the beginning that this idea could be brought to life, and for endowing me with insightful support and recommendations along the way. I express my deep appreciation to Pat Debenham for challenging me to dig down to the important issues of both this work and many others throughout the years I have known him. I would also like to thank Sara Lee Gibb for her help in my graduate work, both as past chair of the dance department, and also as a member of my committee. I express a special thank you to Pam Musil for setting my feet on this pathway many years ago, and another to Dean Jessee for giving me the privilege of learning from him about historical research. Finally, I would like to tell my family how grateful I am for their support. Thank you to my mother and father, and also Colin, Aaron and Olivia, for so enthusiastically lending me their priceless time and support; to Joseph, for so patiently, and unknowingly, sharing his life up to this point with the creation of this thesis; and lastly, to Joshua, for continually filling in all of the gaps that no one else could fill. Thank you to my husband for helping me see this challenging and beautiful process to its finish.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The century after the Revolutionary War marked a new era of social change for the United States. As the colonies settled into their place as a sovereign nation, Americans grappled with their relationship to Europe, to God, and to each other.

Americans hungered for the etiquette and societal amusements of Europe that included theater and dancing (Aldrich 9), but often lacked the established social ranks of the Old World (Aldrich 3) needed to carry out these amusements with the same piety. Social roles in general were changing as industrialization allowed more time for leisure (Aldrich 6). More than ever before, the average middle-class American was able to turn his or her time to leisurely pursuits.

At the same time, religious revivals brought a heightened interest in religion in the United States. Different denominations contended for membership. Competitive religious revivals spread westward through the ever-expanding territories (Smith, Handy, and Loetscher 3). Americans were asked to examine their religious beliefs.

Religious leaders spoke out against a deteriorating moral background. The opposition of many clergy to seemingly superficial amusements such as “theater, cards, novels, horse racing, the circus, and dancing” (Wagner 141) reflected a concern with larger moral problems such as prostitution and divorce. The same advances that gave the population of the 1800s more time for leisure also brought an increased focus on the physical and erotic aspects of life (Kern 40). Dance was especially susceptible to religious attacks in the name of morality because it involved the physical body in a very
direct way. "Because dancing is a carnal activity and because carnal activities are proscribed by the Bible under Paul's exhortation to avoid all 'works of flesh,' including 'revellings and such like' (Gal. 5:16-25), dancing [was] therefore prohibited by the Bible" (Wagner 113). Some religious leaders spoke out resoundingly against dancing.

Despite general religious opposition to dancing because of its carnal nature, two American religious groups supported dancing. For The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearance (or "Shakers," as they were commonly known), dancing was a part of worship services; it also functioned as recreation for the group. For The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the LDS Church, or "Mormons"), dancing was primarily an important recreational activity. In addition, although it was never included as a formal part of Mormon worship services, dancing also functioned as a form of worship at various times in Latter-day Saint history. While their actual doctrinal beliefs about the physical body were different, the Shakers and Mormons were similar in that both held religious views toward the body that allowed dancing to be done under the sanction of the church. In these respects, these groups were unusual for the time period.

Statement of Purpose

This thesis will compare and contrast how dancing performed among the Shakers and Mormons manifested doctrinal views of each religious group toward the role of the physical body in attaining mortal joy and immortal salvation.

Delimitations

This thesis will focus on the dance activities and religious doctrines of the Shakers and Mormons in America up until the 1880s. The Shakers were somewhat loosely
organized as a group in England as early as the late 1760s, but detailed accounts of their worship and beliefs are only available beginning in 1779 in America (Stein 8). Dancing was included as part of their worship service from the beginning and continued until the 1880s when it was almost completely removed from their worship service (Brewer 195). This thesis will examine the Shakers from 1779 until the decline of their dancing in the 1880s.

The Mormon Church was organized several decades after the Shakers, in New York in 1830. Dancing began to appear among the Mormons within the first decade after their organization and has continued to exist in various forms up until the present. This thesis will cover only dances of recreation and worship among the Mormons. As with the Shakers, the 1880s are also a fitting place to conclude this study of Mormon dancing. After the 1880s, the square and line dances performed by the Mormons were largely replaced in Mormon society with round dances, such as the waltz. This time period signaled a major shift in dance practices among the Latter-day Saints. Accordingly, this thesis will cover Mormon dances of recreation and worship from the 1830s until the 1880s. Latter-day Saint dancing that falls under the category of theatrical dance, dance festivals, and educational dance will not be included in this thesis.

Justification

Two historians have published historical works noting similarities between the Shakers and Mormons. Louis J. Kern and Lawrence Foster have both focused on sexual and gender roles and views of sexuality that developed among the Shakers and Mormons. Except on a nominal level, no one has taken an in-depth look at why both religious
groups performed dancing when, with very few exceptions, other Christian religions in the United States at that time did not. Kern and Foster address dancing as a minor point in the study of Shaker sexuality, but no one has studied the relationship of dancing to religious views, especially those concerning the physical body. In-depth analysis of Shaker and Mormon dancing in general is lacking. Because dance is so integrally tied to the physical body, understanding the correlation between religious beliefs about the body and dancing for the Shakers and Mormons will yield valuable insights into why these two groups were distinct in their attitudes and practices toward dance.

In addition, this type of analysis of dance, as a function of beliefs about the body, can be a valuable tool for evaluating any group who dances. By understanding foundational ideologies about the body, the specific form and function of dance may be more readily understood. This method of understanding dance may be used on a broader scope than just the Shakers and Mormons, to study other groups and communities of any time period and origin who dance.

Definition of Terms

**America** - in this study, the United States of America

**Believers** - members of The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearance

**Doctrine** - system of beliefs that are taught or advocated by a religion

**LDS** - Latter-day Saint

**Mormons** - members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Primary source - “firsthand source of data in historical research in which there is only one person between the event and the researcher” (Thomas and Nelson 523)

Recreation - play, amusement, or diversion

Saints - members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Shakers - members of The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearance

Worship - to pay honor and homage to God or to feel reverence or great respect for God

Worship Service - religious rite or ceremony in honor of God
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the historical works that compare Shakerism and Mormonism. It will give a brief historical background on the Shakers then summarize the research that has been published concerning Shaker doctrines of the physical body and Shaker dance. It will then do the same for Mormonism—give a brief historical background on the religious group and an overview of research in Mormon doctrines of the physical body and Mormon dance.

The Shakers and Mormons: Comparative Works

There are three parallel historical/sociological works that compare the Shakers and Mormons as well as another religious group called the Oneida Community. An Ordered Love, by Louis J. Kern, and Religion and Sexuality and Women, Family, and Utopia, both by Lawrence Foster, examine the sexual and gender role issues that developed among the Shakers and Mormons. The most valuable insights that Kern and Foster give relative to this study are the similarities that existed between the Shakers and Mormons. Although doctrinally the two were very different, there were some notable similarities. Foster, especially, clearly outlines the ways in which these two religious groups were alike.

Both groups were founded by prophet-leaders who received divine inspiration to organize their respective churches (Foster, Religion and Sexuality 5). The Shakers and
Mormons both believed in a need to restore the church of ancient Christianity. They each worked to establish millennial communities associated with the second coming of Christ (Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* 6). Both religions worked for a common, group good and both sought to develop new solutions to the social problems they perceived around them (Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* 227).

Although the Shakers began in England, both the Shakers and Mormons trace the early histories of their churches to the so-called “burned-over” district of New York, west of the Catskills and Adirondacks, where the fervor of religious revivals swept through frequently (Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* 11). Members of the two groups, during the first part of the nineteenth century, were similar—people from an Anglo-American ethnic base, primarily native New Englanders and former New Englanders who had moved into New York and the mid-West (Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* 5). And a final similarity that Foster notes is the abundance and range of writings that both groups left about their religious experiences (Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* 6).

Following the format of Kern and Foster, Ann Wagner has also devoted a few pages in her book on American religious opposition to dance, to a short explication of dancing among the Shakers, Mormons, and Oneidans, as it related to their beliefs of sexuality and perfectionism. Wagner discusses dancing in Shaker society as a means of release from their strict religious codes and as an attempt to rid themselves of “lusts of the flesh” (179). For the Mormons, Wagner cites their unorthodox love of recreation as the impetus behind their dancing. She also briefly discusses their attempts to regulate dancing in order to keep it within acceptable religious bounds (182-183). Both the
Shakers and the Mormons, Wagner concludes, were not used by other religious groups as models for promoting dance and religion, because they were schismatic societies that did not represent the Protestant mainstream in nineteenth century America (183).

**Shaker Historical Background**

Although usually associated with the leadership of Ann Lee, the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearance was actually originally formed by a Quaker couple in Manchester, England in the middle of the eighteenth century (Andrews, “Dance in Shaker Ritual” 4). Influenced by a French group, commonly called the “prophets,” who preached an imminent second coming of Christ, James and Jane Wardley gathered seekers together to prepare for his coming (Melcher 6). Their services were marked by mysticism, trances, and bodily agitations (Andrews, *People Called Shakers* 6). Attracted by their enthusiasm, religious tenets, and unusual form of worship, Ann Lee, a blacksmith’s daughter, joined their sect and gradually assumed leadership.

Lee introduced two main ideas to the tenets of the Wardley’s faith: first, that sexual relations were the root and cause of all evil; and second, that God the Father and Jesus Christ existed as a duality of male and female, and that she, Ann Lee, was the female counterpart of Christ (Andrews, *People Called Shakers* 12). These ideologies stemmed from two major groups of events in Lee’s life. The first was her marriage to Abraham Stanley in 1762. Lee had four children in the first four years of their marriage, all of whom died in infancy or early childhood. The deliveries of these children were extremely difficult, bringing her almost to death, and the children’s early deaths only deepened the tragic experiences for Lee. Lee’s mental and physical health deteriorated
after her fourth child's birth and death. Tormented by her experiences, "night after night she walked the floor" wringing her hands, groaning, and crying (Andrews, People Called Shakers 8). Lee realized through her suffering that only in subjecting all the carnal wills of the body, most specifically sexual gratification, could the spirit be saved. She was reborn, declaring that sexual relations were the cardinal sin, and her inner afflictions ceased (Andrews, People Called Shakers 8).

After this revelation, Lee became increasingly involved in the United Society of Believers. She was imprisoned several times for riots and disturbances associated with the increasing intensity of the new religious group (Andrews, People Called Shakers 3, 11). It was during one of these imprisonments that the second of the major events affecting Lee's beliefs occurred. While in prison, Lee beheld in vision Adam and Eve. She saw them commit the original sin–fornication—that resulted in their expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Melcher 10). She also beheld Jesus Christ who appointed her to be the female Christ incarnate, anointed to be his successor (Andrews, People Called Shakers 11). From this point on, the Wardleys accepted her as the messiah they awaited (Melcher 10). Beginning in the late 1760s or early 1770s, Ann Lee's role as leader of the United Society of Believers accelerated.

The fervor and action of the Believers' worship services also increased during this time. At this point, Shakerism, as it was to be commonly known, was born (Melcher 9). Lee encouraged a growing membership to denounce worldliness, especially lust. Meetings became more tempestuous. "Tales of the strange worship, with its shakings, tongue-speaking, and dark prophesies, spread throughout the manor and surrounding
towns” (Andrews, *People Called Shakers* 9). The name “Shakers” was derived, by outsiders, from their shaking movements in worship meetings. Those outside the faith viewed the group with skepticism, even suspicion. Persecution of the group increased. Concurrent with these persecutions came visions among the early Shaker members of a great work to be done in America.

On May 10, 1774, Mother Ann, as she was called, and seven members of the Society sailed for America (Andrews, *People Called Shakers* 13). By 1776 the group had purchased a tract of swampy land at primitive Niskayuna, New York (Melcher 18). Gradually, they carved out a livable settlement for themselves and began to proselytize. Converts came slowly at first. The Shakers faced persecution again for their unusual beliefs and fell under suspicion of being British spies as they refused to take up arms in the Revolutionary War. In spite of these suspicions, curious investigators soon flocked to the Shaker settlement to view their dramatic dancing, singing, and speaking in tongues. “It was the exalted worship of the ‘convulsioners,’ [. . .] more than any other aspect of Shaker faith, that aroused the curiosity of the world” (Andrews, “Dance in Shaker Ritual” 3). Fueled by religious revivals in the surrounding areas, Shaker membership increased as many observers joined themselves to the Believers.

But Ann Lee did not live long enough to witness the growth of her sect. On September 8, 1784, Mother Ann died, her death most likely hastened by four years of sometimes violent persecutions and privations (Andrews, *People Called Shakers* 49). Leadership of the United Society of Believers fell to James Whittaker for a short time and then jointly to Joseph Meacham and Lucy Wright after Whittaker’s death (Andrews,
People Called Shakers 238). Whittaker, Meacham, and Wright led the Society in establishing Shaker communities throughout the Eastern and Southern United States. They established working communal orders with highly structured living arrangements arranged around a segregation of men and women. Strict separation of the sexes allowed followers to be freed from carnal temptations and achieve spiritual purity (Kern 94). Believers developed a reputation for cleanliness and hard work, achieving a high level of skill in gardening and craftsmanship. Membership of the Society decreased after the Civil War, diminishing to just a handful of Believers in the last decades of the twentieth century.

Shaker Doctrine

In her book on Shaker eschatological doctrines (or views of death and final judgement), Kathleen Deighan addresses some Shaker doctrines of the physical body. Deighan surveys significant Shaker primary sources detailing theology and doctrine of the Shakers. From these sources she points out the essential dichotomy that existed among the Shakers—that the body was both the source of sin and salvation (79). By giving into carnal desires of the flesh, humans were lost; but by overcoming these desires they could achieve salvation. Deighan also discusses the relationship of soul and body as it is explained in Shaker theological sources. The soul inhabits the body and while the soul exists for eternity, the body passes away permanently at death (98). Although not directly focused upon Shaker doctrines of the body, Deighan’s work reveals some particulars about the Shakers’ views concerning the role of the physical body.
Shaker Dance

Most of the authors who have written about Shaker dance have focused primarily on descriptions of their dancing. Arthur Todd deals briefly with Shaker dance in the larger context of American folk dance (34). Elizabeth Cross, whose writings about Shaker dance precede most of the scholarly writing done about the group, describes possible forms of Shaker dance ritual inferred from a print depicting a Shaker worship service (581). Dianne Damro gives examples of Shaker marches and accompanying songs (47). Pamela Hurley Diamond describes Shaker dancing and concludes that one of its legacies is current liturgical dance (45). Marilyn Daniels gives a short discourse on Shaker dancing in her book The Dance in Christianity. Daniels describes some of the religious meaning attached to movements that the Shakers used in their worship services (64-65). She also cites quotations from famous observers of the Shakers (66). All five of these authors have written primarily about Shaker dancing on a brief, descriptive level.

John Gordon Davies, an advocate of liturgical dance, has written about Shaker dancing as a source of ideas for worship services involving dance. In his handbook on liturgical dance, Davies gives three justifications that the Shakers had for dancing: that dancing was a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, that the Old Testament encouraged dancing before God, and that worship service should involve the entire body (Liturgical Dance 67). He also gives some description of Shaker dancing (Liturgical Dance 69).

Davies has also published a more concentrated work on Shaker dancing and worship service. A Shaker Dance Service Reconstructed explains in more detail the three justifications that the Shakers had for dancing. It then goes on to outline possible order
and content of dancing in a Shaker worship service. Davies describes dances interspersed with song, sermon, prayer, and scripture reading. He details how the steps may have been executed by the Shakers in their dancing (Shaker Dance Service 4), and then provides a score of music, narration, and dancing which may be used by congregations to enact a worship service similar to those performed by the Shakers (Shaker Dance Service 6). Davies uses the Shakers as a pattern from which present-day congregations can gain inspiration for using dance in their worship services.

The writings of Edward D. Andrews on Shaker dancing are more historically focused. Informed by years of historical research, Andrews outlines the evolution of Shaker dancing as it moved from being highly individual and improvisational to highly ordered and structured. He also discusses how the fervor of a large religious revival in Kentucky affected Shaker dancing. The structured forms of worship had already been well established, but the revival reignited some of the early forms of what the Shakers called “promiscuous” dancing, where individuals would engage in improvisational movements (Gift to be Simple 148). Andrews details formations of dances (“Dance in Shaker Ritual” 149-154), and also gives notes on the settings for Shaker dancing and types of costumes the Shakers wore (“Dance in Shaker Ritual” 13-14).

Two short observations on Shaker dancing, already briefly mentioned but worth highlighting, come in the works of Lawrence Foster and Louis J. Kern. Both Foster and Kern relate the theory that in restricted Shaker life, dancing was the only acceptable mode of sexual expression. Kern ascribes the prevalence of dance to pent-up sexual frustrations (100), and Foster notes that women were the most common participants in the dancing.
He suggests that this may have made up for the mostly sedentary workload that women were assigned in Shaker communities. Whereas men were often able to release sexual frustration in physical work, women had to rely on the activity of dancing to do the same (Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* 234).

The most valuable source for studying Shaker dancing comes from Daniel Patterson. Patterson documents Shaker dancing in the context of his large work on Shaker music, entitled *The Shaker Spiritual*. His research was extensive, covering over 800 Shaker manuscripts, and his book presents thorough and well-documented analysis and description of Shaker music and dancing. The only hindrance for dance scholars in his work is that the dance description comes as a secondary and subservient part of his research on music. Overall, Patterson provides the most detailed descriptions of Shaker dancing available.

Mormon Historical Background

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized on April 6, 1830 in Fayette, New York (Allen and Leonard 47). The Latter-day Saint leader, Joseph Smith Jr., established basic tenets of this new faith through visions and divine manifestations. As a teenage boy growing up in the area of Palmyra, New York, Smith encountered the religious revivals that periodically spread through upstate New York. In the spring of 1820, the Joseph Smith family was caught up in the religious fervor of the latest revival with different denominations competing for their membership (Arrington and Bitton 4). Smith was confused and struggled to decide which church to join. Turning to the Bible he encountered James 1:5: “If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of
God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.”

Taking the scripture to heart, he retired to the woods near his home to pray and ask God, as the verse instructed, which of the churches were true. Smith’s prayer was answered by a vision of both God the Father and Jesus Christ who instructed Smith to join none of the churches as none of them were true (Allen and Leonard 29). Met with skepticism and even persecution by most but his family, Smith continued in his seeking until September 21, 1823, when he again saw a heavenly being (Allen and Leonard 31). This time an angel named Moroni appeared to Smith. Moroni instructed Smith about the existence of ancient records, upon which was written the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Arrington and Bitton 8). These records had been engraved on sheets of gold. After several years and other angelic ministrations, they were entrusted to the care of Joseph Smith on September 22, 1827 (Arrington and Bitton 9). With divine help, Smith translated the ancient records into The Book of Mormon, an account of ancient inhabitants of the Americas including the ministration of the resurrected Jesus Christ to these inhabitants (Allen and Leonard 39). The name “Mormons” originated from the title of their new book of scripture.

Mormonism steadily gained followers who read The Book of Mormon and were baptized into the Church. Through extensive missionary efforts the Latter-day Saint religion grew tremendously throughout the 1830s (Allen and Leonard 48-50). Large establishments of Latter-day Saints were created in Kirtland, Ohio; Jackson County, Missouri; and Nauvoo, Illinois. The settlements at Kirtland and Nauvoo included large places of worship called temples, constructed by the Latter-day Saints for housing some
of their most sacred worship services. The Mormons faced heavy persecutions and were eventually violently driven out of all three communities in which they had established themselves. Joseph Smith suffered often at the hands of persecutors, finally being murdered by a mob at Carthage, Illinois, on June 27, 1844 (Arrington and Bitton 81). Brigham Young succeeded Joseph Smith in leadership of the Latter-day Saints after Smith’s death (Arrington and Bitton 84). Young organized the Saints and led them west from Illinois to the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1847. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has continued to grow since that time, with membership currently reaching over ten million (Watson 22).

Mormon Doctrine

Although brief, the most inclusive survey of Latter-day Saint beliefs concerning the physical body comes in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism. Kent Van de Graaff discusses the Mormon view of the need for both body and spirit to comprise the soul. He covers the Mormon belief in the importance of caring for the physical body and the eventual physical resurrection of the body. He also outlines the Mormon doctrine that having a body is a privilege and a source of happiness.

Relatively few other Mormon authors have dealt with the subject of the doctrine of the physical body. Stephen L. Richards devotes some short passages in his book Where is Wisdom? to a discussion of the importance of caring for the physical body as a gift from God (35). Richards explains the importance of caring for the body as a sign of reverence and devotion to God (150).
On a more academic level, Truman Madsen and Barbara Lockhart examine Mormon doctrines of the physical body in the context of philosophical theory. Madsen presents six common positions on the mind and body taken by immaterialists and physicalists, and compares these positions to statements made by Mormon founder Joseph Smith to show how Mormon doctrine differs from the other two ideologies (45-48). Similarly, Lockhart compares Mormon doctrine to immaterialism and existentialism (57-58). She points out the contrast between Latter-day Saint beliefs and these philosophical theories and describes how Latter-day Saints should understand the importance of both spirit and body in achieving happiness.

Mormon Dance

Many writers have noted an abundance of dancing within the LDS religion. Although it covers a larger time period than relates to this thesis, Karl E. Wesson’s thesis, Dance in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1830-1940, is the most significant survey of dance among the Mormons in the nineteenth century. Wesson outlines a history of dancing among the Mormons. He discusses the types of dances that were most common among the Latter-day Saints including contra dances, the Virginia Reel, and the quadrille (64-68). He also gives examples of music and clothing that accompanied the dancing (78-90). Michael Hicks deals very briefly with nineteenth century Mormon dancing, mostly outlining articles that have been written on the subject, in an article on the performing arts and Mormonism written for the book Mormon Americana (546). Phyllis Jacobson’s contribution to the Encyclopedia of Mormonism under the subject of “Dance” is the only piece on Mormon dance to even briefly mention
Latter-day Saint doctrines of the physical body. Jacobson notes that the Mormon definition of the soul as being comprised of both spirit and body “tends to encourage physical activity” (354).

Other authors who have written about Mormon dancing have connected the abundance of dancing to the Latter-day Saint love of recreation. Georganne Ballif Arrington credits the value Mormons place on education and recreation as the impetus for Mormon dancing (31). Leona Holbrook discusses factors such as a focus on temporal welfare, isolation from other religious ideas, a need for release from suffering, and a mingling of various cultures as impetuses that allowed the LDS Church to accept play and dancing when other religions of the time period did not (121). Davis Bitton uses dance as an example of a means through which The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reconciled popular culture and religious standards of conduct (17). A recent article by Larry V. Shumway gives a substantial view of dancing among the Mormons in what Shumway calls the “pioneer period” beginning early in LDS history and ending right after the turn of the century (43). Shumway discusses Brigham Young’s contributions to Mormon dancing and identifies justifications given by Mormon church leaders for dancing. These justifications include the promotion of good health and exercise for the body, the development of grace and good manners, and the cultivation of sociality and good will among the Saints (Shumway 14-15). Shumway describes common musical arrangements used for Mormon dancing and the buildings that were constructed for the purpose of holding dances in Mormon communities (27). He also addresses the types of music that commonly accompanied pioneer dancing among the Latter-day Saints (37).
Comparative research has shown parallels between aspects of Shakerism and Mormonism such as similarities in their memberships and founding by prophet-leaders. The distinct doctrinal views of each group towards the physical body have been briefly noted and the dancing of each religion has been presented on a largely brief and descriptive level in previous writing. Chapter 4 of this thesis will present more detailed research concerning Shaker and Mormon doctrines of the human body and the dancing of each of these religious groups.
Chapter 3

Procedures

For this thesis I accessed CD databases, Internet websites, microfilm collections, and book compilations that contained primary and secondary source documents for the Shakers and Mormons. Primary sources were the central focus of the research and writing, although certain secondary sources were used to gather needed information. For the primary source materials, I also searched archive collections. The Library of the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio, houses the largest collection of Shaker manuscripts. These manuscripts were available on microfilm for use in my research.

For primary sources relating to the Mormons, Brigham Young University owns the 19th Century Western and Mormon Americana Collection located at the Harold B. Lee Library in Provo, Utah. Included in this collection are many original journals and autobiographies of early members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that I was able to access for my research.

The first step in my research was to use primary sources to identify religious doctrines concerning the physical body for each religion. These doctrines were taken from official church publications and statements made by presiding leaders of the Shakers and Mormons during the time period. I used these statements and publications to determine and outline how each religion viewed the role of the physical body in attaining mortal joy and immortal salvation. I then compared and contrasted these doctrines between the Shakers and Mormons.
The next step was to present descriptions of Shaker and Mormon dancing gathered from scholarly works on the subject, as well as from my own research in journals, travel records, and dance manuals. I also used primary source accounts to show how dance functioned as worship (or worship service) and recreation among the two religions. I then made comparisons of how dancing was used similarly and differently between the Shakers and Mormons. Finally, I discussed how doctrine influenced dancing and dancing reflected doctrine among the Shakers and Mormons, comparing and contrasting the relationship between dance and doctrine in the two religions.
Chapter 4

Analysis of Doctrine and Dancing

Shaker Doctrines of the Physical Body

There was a hesitancy on the part of early Shaker leaders to record Shaker doctrine in written form. Perhaps due to the fact that Ann Lee was illiterate, or possibly out of fear of persecution for their divergent religious ideas, the Society produced no written creed of their doctrines for the first few decades of their existence. In 1790, this theological silence was broken, although briefly, by Father Joseph Meacham. Meacham was Ann Lee’s successor as presiding leader of the Shakers. His ten-page explanation of the most basic aspects of Shaker theology, *A Concise Statement of the Principles of the Only True Church*, avoided detailed explications of Shaker beliefs and offered general overviews of Shaker thought.

Eighteen years later, the Society grew bolder in its written presentation of doctrinal ideas. In 1808, The United Society of Believers published *Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing*. This more extensive theological work was written by Benjamin S. Youngs under the supervision of Mother Lucy Wright and the lead Shaker ministry in New Lebanon, New York (Stein 69). *Testimony* was dramatically more explicit in relating the particulars of Shaker doctrine. It was revised three times between 1808 and 1856 to clarify and expound Shaker doctrines, and became a foundational work in Shaker theology. But even this principal work of theology expressed the early misgivings of the Shakers in recording their doctrines in writing. “Nor is this present publication to be considered as any creed to bind or influence the faith or practice of the
Church, to prevent a further increase;” the author explained, “but as the first public testimony in writing, containing a true statement of the fundamental principles and reasons of our faith and practice” (Youngs xii). Youngs also encouraged other Shakers to publish testimonies of the work.

Another Shaker, John Dunlavy, joined his written testimony of Shaker doctrines to the previous ones written by Meacham and Youngs. His book, *The Manifesto, or A Declaration of the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Christ*, presented Shaker theology in the context of other Christian thought (Stein 75). First put forward in 1818, the Manifesto was published with permission from presiding Shaker leaders, but without actual overseeing by anyone in the lead ministry. It was revised and republished in 1847 and was acknowledged by the lead ministry to be a faithful account of Shaker doctrine (Stein 75).

One last major source for Shaker doctrine comes from an historical work, published by the Society in 1823, under the close direction of the church’s lead ministry. *A Summary View of the Millennial Church* was written by Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells under the directive of Lucy Wright. It was largely intended as a work to answer the barrage of negative attacks the church had received from apostates (Stein 86). *Millennial Church* unfolded the history of the Society and then presented some essentials of Shaker theology.

These four Shaker works are the most essential sources of Shaker doctrine for the time period. Shaker writers became proliferate in later years, producing hundreds of works on Shaker ideas and history. Even with the many new works that were written,
these earliest explanations of Shaker theology remained as essential sources for Shaker doctrine. Together they give a thorough explanation of what the Shakers believed about the role of the physical body in attaining mortal joy and immortal salvation.

The Shakers, like most Christian religions, believed the body was inhabited by a spirit or soul. Joseph Meacham’s brief writing does not touch upon the subject of the body and soul directly, but Benjamin Youngs deals rather extensively with the subject in Testimony. He explains that “in the union of soul and body, every part or sensation of the body must be occupied by a corresponding part, or sensation of the soul” (Youngs 6).

But in this pairing of soul and body, the body held a distinctly inferior position in the view of Shaker doctrine. Testimony was the first Shaker theological source to clearly explain this relationship between physical and spiritual bodies. Manifesto and Millennial Church also explain Shaker beliefs about the unequal union between spirit and body.

In Shaker theology, not only was the physical body thought to be inferior to the soul, but, the Society believed, the physical body was the primary source of evil in mortal existence. Testimony explains the reason for this corruption of the physical body:

He [God] created man at the beginning for his own honor and glory; and in his first creation, as he was made in the image and likeness of his Creator, there was nothing in his soul, or body, that was offensive to the pure nature of God [. . .]. But man received, by his disobedience, a foul and rebellious spirit against God, which lusted to envy. (Youngs 104)

Through the fall of Adam, or the disobedience of Adam and Eve in committing sexual sin, the physical bodies of all of God’s children inherited an evil and corrupt nature.
“Through the influence of this foul and rebellious spirit, the natural body, with all its faculties, became polluted” (Youngs 104). Youngs repeatedly emphasizes this idea of the corrupt physical body throughout his writing; it is a central paradigm upon which Testimony presents many of its other theological ideas.

John Dunlavy presents this same idea of the depravity of the physical body in Manifesto. He explains the role of the fall in this depravity. “When man fell from God he fell from the government of the spirit to that of the flesh, from the government of the judgement to that of the passions” (Dunlavy 42). These fleshly passions that rule the physical nature of human beings overcome spiritual judgement and settle the entire human race in sinful bondage to the flesh. Dunlavy testified that the true seed of sin was in the flesh (78).

Millennial Church presents this same doctrine of the body being the ultimate source of evil and depravity in human life, but Green and Wells also present an additional aspect of this doctrine. In the context of their discussions of sin and confession, they describe the sinner whose “carnal nature [...] first led him into sin” (Green 343). The human race is inherently weak to the temptations of sin because of their physical bodies. The carnal tendencies prevalent in the physical body predispose men and women to a sinful life.

This idea in Shaker theology of the inherently corrupt and sinful body is essential to understanding what the Society believed was necessary in order to gain happiness in this life and also in the life to come after death. The Shakers believed that the very nature of the human body left the human race in a state degenerated from what its creator had
intended it to be. Defiled through the sin of Adam and Eve, the physical body inherited a lustful nature that made it incapable of functioning as God had originally intended it to. Placed in a state where passions ruled over the reasonable judgement and intellect of the spirit, men and women were continually being lured to sin by their very own bodies. In this degenerate state of physical bondage, the Shakers offered a pathway to both mortal happiness and immortal salvation through a renunciation of the physical body. As Green and Wells explain, “[...] the natural body is not necessary to complete the happiness of man” (355). In fact, they continue, “In its present state, [the body] is considered as a clog to the soul” (Green 355). By removing this clog, the human race was free to enjoy the life God intended for his children both in mortality and in immortality.

Mortal happiness, in Shaker thought, was only achieved as the power of the physical body to rule over the soul was removed. Testimony proclaimed that the soul suffered in proportion to the degree to which it was connected to the body. There was an inverse relationship between the spiritual and carnal elements of human existence; as one increased, the other diminished (Youngs 551). The goal in life was, therefore, to increase the spiritual and decrease the carnal. By doing so, men and women could enjoy the greatest possible happiness in this life. This process of eliminating the body’s power to rule over the soul involved two primary elements. The first was self-denial of the flesh; the second was mortification of the flesh. The Shaker gospel was most fundamentally “a Gospel of self-denial and mortification to the carnal nature” (Youngs 89).

The Shakers wrote often of taking up the cross and living a life of self-denial. This phrase is repeated frequently in their doctrinal works. Green and Wells remark,
“The follower of Christ is indeed required to deny himself, and take up his cross against every evil propensity that pertains to man’s fallen nature” (324). What this type of admonition almost always refers to in Shaker writing is the practice of celibacy. The ultimate act of self-denial was living an unmarried, virgin life and giving up pleasures and gratification relating to the physical body.

In fact, the only way to achieve the greatest state of happiness and peace in this life was through abstinence. Dunlavy explained that for those who did not take up the cross of the virgin life, “the whole spirit or mind, as it were, [was] absorbed in the pursuit of animal and fleshly pleasures and indulgences” (39). This state of fleshly pursuits left no room for the things of God, and consequently, no room for real happiness. By turning away from all carnal desires, men and women were open to receive the things of God that would ultimately lead them in the true path of mortal happiness and peace. Dunlavy comments that “those only who, walking in the faith of Christ, neither marry nor are given in marriage, but renounce the order of the flesh wholly, are able to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (279). Celibacy freed its followers from unnecessary passions and allowed them the greatest freedom and happiness of spirit.

Testimony also credited the virgin life lived by Shakers for their ability to live in communal settlements and enjoy great happiness. “Hence by the same progressive steps of self-denial and the daily cross, we are progressively divested of all sinister views; of all impure and selfish motives, and become a united and celestial brotherhood [. . .]. And in this state, we experience the celestial enjoyment of peace and acceptance with God our Creator” (Youngs 606). Denying the physical passions of the body through a life of
abstinence was one requisite part in divesting the soul of carnal influences. Through this process, the Shakers believed the soul could obtain the greatest happiness and peace in mortal existence.

The second essential element in achieving mortal happiness was what the Shakers referred to as mortification of the flesh. John Dunlavy explains mortification as he states, “What therefore Christ requires us to hate, is the flesh, which lusteth against the spirit and is contrary to it” (284). Not only were the Shakers required to live a life of abstinence, but they also strove to free themselves from any affections toward their mortal, physical existences. The Shakers believed this principle of mortification was of ancient date. Joseph Meacham, in one of his only references to the physical body, explains in A Concise Statement that “circumcision, though it was a seal of Abram’s faith, yet it was but a sign of the mortification and destruction of the flesh by the gospel in a future day” (6). The Society believed that their practice of mortification or hatred of the flesh was foreshadowed in earlier times.

The purpose of this enmity toward the flesh was to rid Believers of all dependence on their carnal, bodily existences. Instead they were to trust completely in the spiritual aspects of their mortal beings. Manifesto raised harsh criticism against professed Christians of other faiths “whose only dependence is the flesh, who trust in it for their existence and continued succession here” (Dunlavy 319). By practicing a hatred against the flesh, the Shakers hoped to use the inverse relationship between flesh and spirit to their advantage. This hatred was not manifest in physical deprivation or punishment of
the body, but in mental or spiritual release from the human body. Hatred against the flesh was designed to help the spirit flourish and bring individuals greater happiness.

Like their view of mortal happiness, the Shaker view of immortal salvation was rooted deeply in their belief in the need to be liberated from the sinful, corrupt nature of the physical body. Millennial Church explains, “And though the body is given as a temporal tabernacle for the soul to act in, and prove its obedience and subjection to the will of God, in a state of humiliation; yet it was intended from the beginning, that the soul, should, in due time, be released from it, and enjoy a state of greater freedom than it was capable of enjoying in it” (Green 355). The body was viewed by the Shakers to be a sinful and degraded entity that merely dragged the human race into sin. As a force which was only to be overcome in mortality, there was certainly no need for a physical body in the eternities. In Shaker theology only the soul was to be resurrected. In this state, freed forever from the hindrances of an inherently evil tabernacle, the soul would be liberated to enjoy the gifts of immortality and salvation.

This ultimate, disembodied salvation was discussed in many of these early Shaker doctrinal works. Millennial Church stated unequivocally that “[No] soul can be completely happy in its immortality, until it is divested of its mortal body” (Green 354). The paramount happiness to be achieved in the eternities came only as the body was finally and permanently stripped away from the immortal soul. The authors of Testimony presented this same idea as they wrote: “[...] it is only the soul of man that is the proper subject of the Resurrection, and is capable of being raised to a higher use, and more noble enjoyments than pertain to the present state” (Youngs 563).
One of the best illustrations of the general attitude of Shakerism toward the final state of the physical body in the hereafter comes in a phrase repeated several times by John Dunlavy. Many times throughout Manifesto, he used the words "cold lump of flesh and bones" (364) to describe the physical body after death. This is the ultimate and final state of the physical body in Shaker doctrine: to die and return to the dust of the earth. In contrast, the soul, released from its fleshly torment, rose to immortality and salvation and all of the enjoyments therein. Shaker views of obtaining happiness in mortality and salvation in immortality were most centrally structured around their belief in escaping the corrupt nature of the physical body.

**Mormon Doctrines of the Physical Body**

Mormon theological sources differ from those of the Shakers. The most significant Shaker theological sources during the first century of the church’s existence did not actually come from the presiding leaders of the church. These doctrinal works were written by Shaker theologians, under the direction or dictates of the lead ministry of the Society. Top Shaker leaders were generally silent in publishing major theological works. Mormon leaders, on the contrary, were proliferate in publishing doctrinal statements. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, two of most influential leaders of the Latter-day Saints, both published much in regard to Mormon doctrine.

Joseph Smith was prophet and leader of the Mormon church from its beginnings until his death in 1844. Brigham Young served in the same position for the church from 1844 until his death in 1877. Both prophets actively wrote and had published their doctrinal views for the benefit and guidance of the members of the LDS Church. Their
writings were published often in Mormon periodicals and have been compiled into books both during the nineteenth century and also more recently in this century. They are considered by the Latter-day Saint Church, even now, to be guiding sources of doctrine for the religion. These doctrinal pronouncements by Smith and Young yield valuable information about Mormon views of the physical body in relation to mortal joy and immortal salvation.

One other doctrinal source for gathering Mormon views about the physical body comes from the unique Latter-day Saint books of scripture. The Book of Mormon and also the Doctrine and Covenants are both considered by Latter-day Saints to be scripture, like the Bible, and foundational sources of doctrine for the religion. These two books are treated singularly in Mormon thought. Although originating from Joseph Smith, Mormons believe these books were received by revelation, not written, by the first Latter-day Saint prophet. According to the Mormon perspective, Smith received the writings in The Book of Mormon by translating them from ancient records. The Doctrine and Covenants is considered to have been received through direct revelation from God to Smith and two other later LDS prophets. These two books also give details about what Latter-day Saints believed about the physical body.

As with the Shakers, the Latter-day Saint view of the body’s role in achieving mortal joy and immortal salvation was centrally based on their view of the nature of the physical body. The Saints had a clear designation of body and spirit in their theology. The Doctrine and Covenants stated that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:17). Although somewhat loosely adhered to at times in their
writing, the word “spirit” was generally understood to be distinct from the word “soul.”
The spirit was that part of an individual that inhabited the body, while the soul was the
entire entity together, spirit and body. This pairing of spirit and body together was seen
in Mormon doctrine as having the potential for ultimate good or ultimate ruin.

Mormons believed that the devil had power only over the part of the soul
comprised of the body. Brigham Young explained to the church that the devil “has
nothing to do with influencing our spirits, only through the flesh” (Journal of Discourses
3:245). In an earlier discourse, delivered to a gathering of church members in Salt Lake
City in 1855, he explained this idea in greater detail. “In the first place the spirit is pure,
and under the special control and influence of the Lord, but the body is of the earth, and is
subject to the power of the devil, and is under mighty influence of the fallen nature that is
of the earth” (Journal of Discourses 2:256). The body was considered by the Latter-day
Saints to be fallen by nature, and under the influence of the adversary.

Latter-day Saint belief about the nature of the body was also centrally based upon
how the physical body was used by individuals. The body was not considered to be
strictly evil or corrupt, but had the potential to become that way if not controlled properly.
Brigham Young elucidated this principle of Mormon doctrine in his writings. “If the
spirit yields to the body, it becomes corrupt; but if the body yields to the spirit it becomes
pure and holy” (Journal of Discourses 11:290). The body and spirit were joined and had
the power to influence each other. If the spirit overcame, the body had the potential for
good, but if the body was allowed to control the union, then it became corrupt and
brought the spirit down to degradation as well. Again, Young addressed this idea when
he stated, “if the flesh overcomes, the spirit is brought into bondage, and if the spirit overcomes, the body is made free” (Journal of Discourses 3:245). Joseph Smith explained the same idea this way: “in saving our spirits we save the body” (Words 346). Although the physical body was corrupt and prone to the enticements of the devil, it could be raised out of corruption into purity and freedom if individuals chose to let their bodies be guided by their spirits. In this state of spiritual control, the body was saved from corruption.

This redeemable body was a vital aspect of Mormon belief in what was required to gain mortal joy and immortal salvation. The role of the physical body in achieving mortal joy was threefold. First, individuals had to receive a body. Secondly, they had to learn to control the passions of the mortal body and, as has been discussed above, bring them to reign under the spirit’s influence. Last of all, the body and spirit together had to be cared for properly to nurture the union between body and spirit. These three principles of doctrine represented what The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believed the role of the body was in gaining mortal happiness.

The first principle in finding happiness was for human beings to receive bodies. Joseph Smith explained this requirement for happiness when he taught, “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the Celestial Kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body” (Words 60). Latter-day Saints viewed the body as being an absolute requirement for happiness because they believed that “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). Bodies made God’s children more like their creator. Receiving a
body in mortality also completed the union of spirit and body necessary for individuals to experience happiness in mortality. “We are in this state of being for the express purpose of obtaining habitations for our spirits to dwell in” (Journal of Discourses 9:286). The simple step of receiving a body was, to the Latter-day Saints, a significant step in completing the human soul, becoming more God-like, and experiencing happiness in this life.

Once they received bodies, men and women then had to master them in order to continue to receive happiness in mortality. This mastery came in learning to control the body by the spirit. Because body and spirit were joined in the soul, there was a balance of power that had to be achieved in the union. One side of Mormon doctrine stated, “the body or flesh, is what the devil has power over” (Journal of Discourses 3:277). The body had the potential to corrupt the entire soul because “the spirit which God places into the body becomes intimately connected with it, and is of course more or less affected by it” (Journal of Discourses 3:277). By choosing to yield to the flesh, the spirit came under the power of the devil, but the Mormons also believed that by allowing the spirit to rule over the body, men and women came closer to God and to the happiness he intended for his children. “[. . .] let the spirit take the lead,” Brigham Young admonished, “and bring the body and its passions into subjection, and you are safe” (Journal of Discourses 2:256).

By letting the balance of power reside in the spirit, individuals opened themselves to greater happiness in mortality. “The spirit which inhabits these tabernacles naturally loves truth, it naturally loves light and intelligence, it naturally loves virtue” (Young 422). These attributes of the spirit were given freely to those who learned to bring their mortal
bodies under the guidance of the spirit. The second role of the body in receiving mortal happiness was to allow the spirit to direct the body and reign in its appetites. By doing so, individuals were freed from the control that Satan held over their bodies and were free to enjoy the enlightening attributes of the spirit.

The last aspect of Mormon doctrine relating to the role of the body in mortal happiness was caring for the body properly. Once the corrupt attributes of the mortal body were overcome by the spirit, the body became good and beneficial to the soul as the body and spirit worked together. Brigham Young taught members of the Church what their attitudes should be towards their physical bodies. “The body is framed for the tabernacle or house in which the spirit has to dwell. This tabernacle is formed expressly to hold its spirit and shield it. Should we love this tabernacle? Yes, enough to nourish it, cherish it, and treat it kindly, and foster and nourish and cherish it by the power of the spirit, and make this body divine” (Journal of Discourses 9:140). The body was to be brought to a spiritual union with the spirit and to be treated with respect so that it could carry out the divine attributes and actions of that union.

Care for the body included specific health considerations that the Mormons adopted. “The Word of Wisdom” was a code for health that included refraining from alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, and large quantities of meat (Doctrine and Covenants 89). Latter-day Saints were told in the Doctrine and Covenants that the things of the earth were made for the benefit of man, not to be used to excess, but “to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:19). Brigham Young encouraged LDS members to improve their minds, to learn and grow intellectually, “to beautify both
the body and mind” (Journal of Discourses 8:295). Latter-day Saints were encouraged to pursue a path of constant improvement and care for their bodies.

This care for the body also included a strong belief in the value of activity and recreation for the body. Joseph Smith was well-known for his love of recreation. Brigham Young also spoke often on the value of recreation.

There are many of our aged brothers and sisters, who, through the traditions of their fathers and the requirements of a false religion, were never inside a ball-room or a theater until they became Latter-day Saints, and now they seem more anxious for this kind of amusement than are our children. This arises from the fact they have been starved for many years for that amusement which is designed to buoy up their spirits and make their bodies vigorous and strong, and tens of thousands have sunk into untimely graves for want of such exercises to the body and mind. (Journal of Discourses 9:244-45)

Physical activity invigorated the body and strengthened the spirit. In Mormon doctrine it was considered an important way of caring for the physical body and promoting a spiritual union between body and spirit. The physical body played a critical role for Latter-day Saints in achieving happiness in this life.

With this doctrinal view of the significance of the physical body in mortality, it is not surprising to find that the Latter-day Saints also viewed the body as being a significant part of future immortality. “Our mortal bodies are all important to us,” Brigham Young told a gathering of Saints, “without them we never can be glorified in the
eternities that will be” (Journal of Discourses 9:286). All four of these uniquely Mormon doctrinal sources, the teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, The Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, clearly point to a strong Mormon belief in the physical resurrection and immortality of the body. The Latter-day Saints believed that after death the separating of body and spirit was a hindrance to the soul, but when human beings were resurrected, they would rise again to take up their bodies in a perfected, immortal state. This reuniting of perfected body and spirit prepared individuals for eternal salvation with God.

Just as the receiving of a body was considered to be a great blessing, so the separation of the spirit from its physical tabernacle was seen in Mormon theology as a great loss. This division left the soul incomplete. The Doctrine and Covenants explained the privation experienced through this separation. “For the dead [have] looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:50). Without bodies, the spirits of the dead were unable to experience the completeness of having body and spirit joined together in the soul. As Joseph Smith commented, “All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not” (Scriptural Teachings 206). Removed from their physical bodies, individuals were incomplete and unable to experience the joy of immortality and salvation.

This temporary bondage, experienced by spirits after death, was remedied by the resurrection where spirits were to be reunited with their bodies. Unlike the mortal joining of body and spirit, however, this second pairing involved not a mortal, corrupt body, but an immortal, perfected physical body. The Book of Mormon focuses many verses on this
doctrine of the perfected, resurrected body. “The spirit and body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper form” (Alma 11:43). It goes on to say that “this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death [...] unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption” (Alma 11:45).

The resurrection joined body and spirit again permanently, never to be separated again. It also brought back a changed, perfected body. Brigham Young explained this change that was to take place in the body during the resurrection. “The particles of this earth that now compose this body will be re-arranged, and the spirit will be clothed with an immortal tabernacle” (Journal of Discourses 8:43). In the resurrection, the Latter-day Saints believed the body would be changed so that it was perfected from the corruptions of mortal existence. The body’s new form would then surpass its former, mortal existence. “When the body comes forth again, it will be divine, God-like according to the capacity and ordinations of the Lord” (Young 375). The resurrection restored the union of body and spirit that made individuals complete; it also brought back to the spirit a perfected, immortal body from which it would never again be separated.

In this complete, perfected bond of body and spirit, the Mormons believed individuals were prepared to inherit the blessings of immortality and salvation with God. By proving faithful to the commandments of God, and receiving perfected bodies, they were prepared to return to the presence of God. Brigham Young told the Latter-day Saints, “When they [the children the God] have proved themselves faithful in all things,
and worthy before him, they can then have the privilege of returning again to his presence, with their bodies, to dwell in the abodes of the blessed” (Young 58). In fact, receiving a resurrected body was considered to be an absolute requirement in order to return to God and receive salvation with him. “No man can enter the celestial kingdom and be crowned with a celestial glory,” they believed, “until he gets his resurrected body” (Journal of Discourses 3:371).

The Mormon view of the importance of the body both in mortality and in the world to come is essentialized in a verse of Latter-day Saint scripture. The Doctrine and Covenants says of those who have died: “Their sleeping dust [is] to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:17). A “fulness of joy” could be experienced both in mortality and in the eternities only with a body.

Comparison of Shaker and Mormon Doctrines

The Shakers and Mormons held very similar beliefs about the relationship of the body and soul to each other and also about the basic nature of the physical body. In spite of these similarities, they developed opposing views of what the role of the body was in attaining mortal happiness and immortal salvation. Their doctrines agreed that the carnal nature of the body had to be overcome by the spirit in order to enjoy the blessings of peace and happiness in this life and the life to come, but their approaches to gaining this victory were very different.
On the most basic level, both the Shakers and the Mormons believed that human beings were made up of a body that was inhabited by a spirit or soul. In this connection of the physical and spiritual, both groups believed that the body could influence the spirit and the spirit could influence the body. There was an inverse relationship between the body and spirit that both religions recognized in their theologies. As one side increased, the other declined and vice versa.

The two religions also held similar views of the very nature of the physical body. They both believed that the body was inherently fallen or corrupt and could lead the spirit into sin. The only way to find real happiness in mortality, for both religious groups, was to overcome the influence of the corrupt body and bring it into subjugation to the spirit. The Shakers and Mormons were in agreement in their beliefs that by allowing the spirit to reign, evil could be overcome and the blessings of purity and freedom from sin could be enjoyed in this life. This state of mastering the body by the spirit also prepared faithful members of both religions to inherit the blessings of salvation in the life to come.

We can see how their theologies begin to diverge, however, as we examine how they believed this mastery over the physical body could be achieved. For the Shakers, it was a twofold process of self-denial and mortification of the flesh. They stripped themselves of carnal pleasures and lived lives of strict celibacy. The process of subjugating the body to the will of the spirit continued for the Shakers as they strove to learn a hatred toward the flesh. They spoke often of mortification of the flesh and sought to continually rid themselves of any attachments or affections toward the body that might hinder their total reliance upon the spirit.
For the Mormons, gaining victory over the body was a different process. Although carnal appetites of the body had to be overcome by the spirit, Latter-day Saints believed that receiving a body was necessary to achieve completeness of soul. The body and spirit together formed the entire soul. The body had to be controlled by the spirit, but it was not to be hated. By allowing spiritual desires to supercede carnal ones, the body could be transformed with the spirit into a good and complete soul. The body was to be cared for and respected so that it could carry out the purposes of the soul in mortality.

Beyond mortality, the Shakers and Mormons also had different views of the role of the physical body in attaining immortal salvation. The Shakers believed the body had to be subdued, overcome, and even hated in mortality. After death, when this process of escaping the hindrances of the flesh was complete, there was no longer any need for the physical body. The resurrection, for the Shakers, was only spiritual and did not actually involve the physical body. The Society taught that faithful Believers would live forever in a perfected, spiritual state, without bodies.

Latter-day Saints saw the resurrection and final state of the soul from an exactly opposite point of view. If the body and spirit were both needed to complete the soul, then removing the body from the spirit through death only rendered men and women incomplete. The Mormons believed that the separation of body and spirit was a type of bondage that would be remedied through a physical resurrection of the body. Reunited with a perfected, immortal tabernacle, the spirit would inherit salvation in a completely embodied state. This final union of body and spirit, in Mormon theology, prepared individuals to receive a fulness of joy in the eternities.
The divergence is striking between Shaker and Mormon theology on the subject of the role of the physical body in attaining mortal joy and immortal salvation. In spite of the strong commonalities between some of their most basic tenets, other ideologies of the Shakers and Mormons about the body were contrary to each other. Their common belief that the body was inhabited by the spirit and that the carnal nature of the body had to be overcome actually took the two groups down completely diverging theological paths. For the Shakers, these fundamental doctrines encouraged a strict asceticism among faithful Believers. It also brought an ultimate longing to be freed from the sin and bondage of physical bodies in the next life. For the Mormons, these same ideas inspired an attitude of respect and care for the physical body. It also gave them hope in a permanent reunion of their spirits with perfected, immortal bodies. These opposing paradigms about the physical body, stemming from underlying beliefs that were actually very similar, manifest themselves in the dances of the Shakers and Mormons.

**Shaker and Mormon Dances of Worship and Recreation**

To preface the discussion of Shaker and Mormon dancing, it is interesting to note what these two religions wrote and taught, themselves, about their dancing. The fact that both groups danced in a time when a vast majority of American Christian religions did not, was not unnoticed by leaders and theologians of the Shakers and Mormons. The writings of the Shakers and Mormons on the subject of their dancing shows them defending their dance practices against the attacks of other denominations. The strongest line of Shaker defense for their dancing, was the citation of scriptural precedent. Believers presented evidences from the Bible of prophets and devout worshipers, paying
devotion to God through dancing (Youngs 585-587). After this recitation of Biblical authority, the Shakers responded to the familiar attack against the carnal nature of dance with a final statement: “This manner of worship to the people of God, is not empty, nor carnal; but mighty through God, joyful as heaven, and solemn as eternity” (Youngs 588).

The Mormons faced similar attacks for the preponderance of dancing among their people. Brigham Young boldly defended the LDS Church’s allowance of dancing with a little bit of humor:

> Brethren and sisters, we enjoy music, singing, good society, the ordinances of the House of God, and everything that the earth produces; and all the blessings that God has given we can enjoy, and not sin. The world do[es] not know how to do this. Were they to meet together to dance and have a social party they would sin. I have heard many a minister say that there were no fiddles in heaven. At that time I did not understand as I do now, for I now know that there are no fiddles in hell. There may be many fiddlers there, but no fiddles. (Journal of Discourses 10:313)

The writings of the Shakers and Mormons on the subject of their dancing, show their attempts to defend their dance practices against accusations of carnality and sin from other Christian denominations.

Shaker and Mormon writings also show an interesting dichotomy that developed in the two groups. Among the Shakers, the subject of dancing was almost always discussed as it was associated with their worship services. Up until the last three or four decades of the nineteenth century, recreation was largely avoided, and sometimes even
decried, in Shakerism (Stein 203). Shaker life was largely regimented upon theories of work and worship. Recreation was often seen as unnecessary and undesirable in the strictness of the Shaker way. Calvin Green and Seth Wells, in *Millennial Church*, renounce the way in which dance outside of the Society had been degraded to the point where it was considered by most to be merely a “vain recreation” (90). Shaker dancing was to be used for a higher purpose—in worship services. In spite of this prevailing attitude against recreation, Shaker dances often functioned as recreational activities for those that performed them.

On an exactly opposite but parallel framework were the Mormons. Mormon leaders declared repeatedly that dancing was exclusively for the purpose of recreation in Latter-day Saint life. “I want it distinctly understood,” Brigham Young declared, “that fiddling and dancing are no part of our worship” (*Journal of Discourses* 1:30). Yet in the journals of early LDS members, dance is time and time again associated with feelings of worship, praise, reverence, and devotion to God. This dualism in the dancing of the Shakers and Mormons makes it difficult at times to determine the exact function of the dances they performed. Were they merely enjoying a diversion from the routines and tasks of nineteenth century life or were they worshiping God? Often the answer is both. Dances served as both recreation and worship for these two religions, sometimes simultaneously.

**Description of Shaker Dance**

Shaker dances may be grouped into four major categories. The first two categories, “motioning” dances and marches, were the more minimalistic forms of Shaker
moving. The last two forms, improvisational or "promiscuous" dances and dances with set steps and figures called "laboring," were the more full-bodied forms of dancing performed by the Shakers.

**Motioning**

The Shaker practice of "motioning" was first introduced by Mother Lucy Wright in 1815, and usually accompanied the singing in Shaker meetings. Arm and head gestures were performed that corresponded to the words being sung. For example, one former member of the Society, during the first part of the nineteenth century, described the Shakers putting their hands up to their foreheads as they sung:

But now from my forehead I'll quickly erase

The stamp of the devil's great I (Haskett 186)

Believers then performed the action described in the hymn by pulling their hands away from their foreheads quickly with a plucking motion. Other examples of actions used to accompany songs were pulling or pushing with the hands, pointing to the ears or eyes, clasping the hands over the heart, or bowing the head.

Motioning was used to help Believers more fully understand and internalize the meaning of the words they sung in their hymns. According to Patterson, this practice of acting out the words of the songs was probably quite common among the Shakers between 1820 and 1870 (27-28). Motioning was generally not a regular part of most meetings after the 1870s, but it was still taught, sometimes informally, to younger Shakers after that time.
Marching

During the 1820s a new trend in Shaker membership spurred the creation of a new form of dance among the group. A large proportion of Believers at that time (and actually in times to come) were elderly and could no longer perform the more energetic "promiscuous" or laboring dances that will be discussed later. In order to allow these older members an opportunity to continue to be involved, marches were developed that were more in keeping with their physical abilities. Although originally designed specifically with the elderly members of the group in mind, marches were performed by members of all ages. The basic footwork of the marches was a walk with a bounding or elastic step (Andrews, "Dance in Shaker Ritual" 9). Different Shaker communities developed variations of this walk, keeping the knees straight or bending them more, but no other steps were developed. Some elaborations of marching that came and went at various times were bowing, clapping, and arm gestures similar to those used in motioning. The biggest variations between different marches were their spatial floor patterns.

The marches underwent a progression of increasing complexity in floor patterns. The first and most common march performed among the Shakers was the Circular March. Laborers (this term was applied to marchers as well as more rigorous dancers) formed a circle around the singers in the center of the room. With the brothers in one half of the circle and the sisters in the other, they would march around the singers. A lead singer would pound his foot on the floor in time to the tune being sung so that the group could stay in step together (Patterson 266).
One British army officer, E.T. Coke wrote after watching their marching: “I scarcely ever saw so difficult or so well-performed a field day. They had been evidently well drilled, or they could not have acquired such skill in maneuvering” (199). The Shakers marched in lines, in squares, in open rings, and in complex maze-like patterns. They diagramed and rehearsed figures of rotating circles, lines, and squares. Officer Coke also declared that he witnessed “such a series of marching and countermarching, slow step, quick step, and double quick step, advancing and retiring, forming open column and close column, perpendicular lines and oblique lines, that it was sufficient to puzzle and confound the clearest head of the lookers on” (199). Their figures were intricately planned out and well-rehearsed.

Between the 1850s and 1880s marches and most other forms of dance began to be eliminated from Shaker worship service. Although the marches remained longer than the other dances, they were used sparsely after the 1880s and were completely gone by 1930 at the latest. In the 1870s and 1880s they underwent a process of extreme simplification as the Society strove for more cultivation and refinement in their attitudes and activities. Daniel Patterson relates the recollections of one man who lived in the North Union village in the 1880s. “[...] the worshipers ‘just walked up and down’ with their hands out, palms up. He saw no one ‘twirling about.’ It was slow and dignified, he said: ‘they were in no hurry.’” (Patterson 388). Marching arose as an innovation for accommodating an aging Shaker population, but slowly faded to an artifact of Shaker dancing.
Improvisational Dance

The earliest and most charismatic Shaker dancing burst forth as energetically as the relics of Shaker dancing faded slowly. The first form of dancing among the Shakers was improvisational or “promiscuous” dancing (as the Shakers referred to it). It was present from the beginning of the religious group and existed in many different forms because this dancing was done exclusively on an individual level. Isaac N. Youngs, a member of the United Society of Believers from early childhood and a local leader in the group for many years, described the earliest Shaker dancing as “shaking, turning, bowing, rolling on the floor” (qtd. in Patterson 74). Another member, Valentine Rathbun, who later left the Shakers and published an account of his time among them, described the promiscuous dancing in more detail:

[E]veryone acts for himself, and almost everyone different from the other; one will stand with his arms extended, acting over odd postures, which they call signs; another will be dancing, and sometimes hopping on one leg about the floor; another will fall to turning around, so swift, that if it be a woman, her clothes will be filled with the wind, as though they were kept out by a hoop; another will be prostrate on the floor [. . .] some trembling extremely; others acting as tho’ all their nerves were convuls’d; others swinging their arms, with all vigor, as though they were turning a wheel. (Rathbun 7)

It was this type of unpredictable improvisation that first gained the United Society of Believers the title of “Shakers” from those who observed its dancing. Patterson notes
that the name “Shaker” was originally intended as an insult to mock the Believers’
dancing, but the group treated the name more as a distinction of their singular gift for
dance (85). In fact, the Shakers considered the ability to dance this way as a literal gift
from God or “operation of the spirit.” Many who engaged in promiscuous dancing often
described a feeling of being acted upon by an outside power. Calvin Green, a prominent
Believer who was known for his gifts of inspiration, described his experiences in dancing
as having a power come over him “with great force & run all over & thro [his] whole
system” (qtd. in Patterson 86). These gifts and operations were generally highly prized
and respected among the Society.

Promiscuous dancing faded in Shaker worship service about the turn of the
eighteenth century, but it reappeared again during several nineteenth century revivals in
Shaker communities. During these revivals, gifts of dancing were poured out upon
Believers along with heavenly visions and gifts of music and art. The longest of these
revivals, referred to most commonly as Mother Ann’s Work, began in 1837 and lasted in
Shaker settlements at least a decade (Patterson 316). Russel Haskell, a Believer at
Enfield, Connecticut, recorded the events of Christmas Day 1837:

The meeting commenced a little past two o’clock, P.M. And was attended
with divine manifestations and great power of God, such as shaking,
whirling, clapping of hands, speaking in unknown tongue, kneeling with
their faces to the floor [. . . ] some rolling; some turning, down on the
floor, while some had new songs given them, with some beautiful words,
which were sung for an hour or more. The meeting continued over seven hours. (qtd. In Patterson 323)

Once again, the trademark dancing of Shakerism had returned to Shaker meetings.

One last form of improvisational dancing among the Shakers worth noting is what the Shakers referred to as the practice of the “taking in of native spirits” (Patterson 320). Members of the Society believed that Native American spirits came clamoring to Shaker settlements for a chance at redemption. They possessed the bodies of Believers as an opportunity to learn the saving principles of the Shaker gospel from those who already knew it. Native spirits were markedly different from others the Shakers had received. Their speech, mannerisms, and dancing were foreign and at times outright bizarre to Believers. One Shaker scribe wrote somewhat in dismay that it was “inexpressible to see so many persons possessed of Indian spirits acting out all the Barbarian gestures, & speaking the Indian language with the utmost fluency” (qtd. in Patterson 321). These native visitors often broke up meetings and caused general upheaval in ordinarily calm Shaker meetinghouses, but they were accepted as another means by which Believers could humble themselves to the will of God and unbelievers could be shown the narrow path (Patterson 320).

**Laboring**

In 1788, Father Joseph Meacham, who had succeeded Ann Lee, began teaching ordered and preconstructed dances, different from the improvisational dances practiced in the group up to that point. He received them through revelation and enacted the more organized, unison forms of dancing to promote the unity and solidarity that Shakers
strove for in all other aspects of their lives (Patterson 99). Edward Andrews suggests another possible reason for the change. He concludes that it was likely outside pressures that spurred the transition. Because Believers were thronged by curious spectators who were often dismayed at the disordered dancing they observed, Meacham introduced more regulated dances to stem their astonishment and spare the Shaker’s reputation as being frenzied or out of control (Andrews, “Dance in Shaker Ritual” 7). Both internal concerns for unity and external pressures likely contributed to the replacement of “promiscuous” dancing with more proscribed forms.

Although improvisational dancing resurfaced in Shaker services at various times, pre-choreographed and memorized forms of dancing became the primary form of dancing to be carried out by the Shakers from 1788 until the 1880s. The Shakers adopted a new name for the new dance form Father Meacham introduced: “laboring.” The term was commonly used to refer to dancing in set steps and figures but also later it was used to indicate marching (Patterson 100). The non-marching form of laboring dances had certain universal characteristics, but also changed to have different variations throughout different time periods in Shaker history.

The features that were common to almost all proscribed Shaker dancing were the posture and carriage of the body, the footwork, and a separation of the sexes during the dances. Believers were taught to keep the upper body upright or bent only slightly forward (Patterson 102). Shaker dancing was intended to look and feel natural and not strained. The footwork was fairly simple, using only variations of two basic steps, the “step” and the “shuffle.” The step was used for any figures that traveled across the floor.
Thomas Hammond described it as “a kind of double hop, or a little slip of the foot on the floor” (qtd. in Patterson 102). It was actually a skip and was often accompanied by gestures of the arms to keep time with the music. There are also times in Shaker records when the word “step” seems to describe a literal step or walk performed in the dances. Walking was used in the laboring dances less often than skipping. It will be noted in the descriptions of dancing that follow when the description suggests that the term “step” likely meant a walk and when it meant a skip.

The other footwork used by Believers was the shuffle. It was used for dancing in place. The shuffle was harder to execute and also harder to describe in writing. An anonymous Shaker writer noted it as having “a particular hitch, difficult for some to learn” (qtd. in Patterson 102). To execute a shuffle, one Shaker song instructed “strike the shuffle back, make the solid sound” (qtd. in Andrews, Gift 103). Another description told that the knees were to be bent twice in each shuffle while moving up and down as little as possible. The shuffle was probably some sort of beating or striking of the floor with one foot, followed by a weight change to both feet and a slight bouncing in the knees. It grew to have several variations that involved the direction in which the striking step was executed and also how slow or fast it was completed (Patterson 102).

The final universal aspect of Shaker dancing was a strict separation of the sexes. Although Shaker dances sometimes resembled secular folk dancing practiced commonly outside Shaker settlements, the dancing of the Believers was distinct in its strict separation of the sexes. No male/female partnering was allowed. When dancers formed ranks, they were divided with a rank of brothers on the left and sisters on the right.
(Patterson 102). In other formations, such as circles or squares of dancers, the men and women were always separate.

This practice mirrored other aspects of Shaker life. Believers lived in communal societies and held all things in common. As a strictly celibate society, however, they divided members along gender lines in every aspect of life including sleeping arrangements, eating arrangements, household duties, and worship settings. For many years they carried out strict regulations about all contact between men and women in the society. They forbade males and females from passing each other on the stairs and even built separate doors so that the two would never have to pass through doorways at the same time. Segregating their dancing was an obvious necessity in the context of other Shaker practices.

Although these characteristics were common to almost all Shaker laboring dances, in the course of Shaker history, the Shakers also developed different variations in dances that dealt with dance figures and formations, relationship of dancers to each other, and the representation of doctrinal ideas in their dancing. During the earliest period, from 1788 until 1800, laboring dances were simple in both formation and footwork. Dancers usually stood in separate parallel lines and advanced, retreated, or shuffled in place. Dances from this time period include the Holy Order, the Skipping Manner, the Hollow Square, the Regular Step, the Drumming Manner, the Walking Manner, and the Square Step. All seven were very similar to each other, but some were embellished with clapping, raising of the arms, or turns. The Holy Order was very characteristic of all of the variations of laboring developed during this time period.
The Holy Order was given by revelation to Father Joseph Meacham and introduced to the Church in 1787 or 1788. It continued to be performed among the Shakers for at least 75 years and was described in the Shaker Union Village family journal as the “most solemn and beautiful order of worship” (qtd. in Patterson107). To prepare for the dance, the brothers and sisters formed two separate ranks (or lines) at one end of the meetinghouse, facing the singers on the other end. The dancers advanced three steps (or skips) then turned (brothers to the right and sisters to the left) and shuffled. They then retreated three steps (or skips) and turned and shuffled again. They continued with another advance of three steps, shuffled without the turn, retreated three steps and again shuffled. This entire sequence of advancing and retreating was repeated. The dancers finished the Holy Order with a section of shuffling in place (Patterson 103). With their simple ranks and variations of advancing and retreating, early laboring dances were the simplest forms of organized dancing the Shakers performed.

Laboring of the middle period, lasting approximately from 1822-1832, elaborated upon the simple conventions developed during the early period. The most notable change to occur in Shaker laboring during this time was the addition of more complex and expansive figures to the dancing. Instead of moving in simple lines, laborers began to be organized in circles and squares for the dances. Three primary types of laboring dances (Round, Hollow Square, and Square Step) were created among the Shakers during the middle period.

The Round Dance brought the brothers and sisters of a Shaker community to the center of the meetinghouse floor. There they formed a double circle surrounding the
singers who stood in the very center. The men in the group formed one half of the double circle and the women formed the other half. Each brother stood next to another brother and each sister next to another sister, facing the direction in which the dancing was to proceed. Partners stood with their shoulders touching each other.

The dance was composed of two parts. During the first part of the dance, the laborers skipped around the circle (brothers starting on the left foot and sisters on the right) until the last two beats of the section when they all turned to face the singers in the center. The second part of the dance was simply made up of shuffling in place, facing the center of the room. Each section was repeated twice to complete the dance (Patterson 261). The Round Dance was very simple both in footwork and in floor pattern, but it used the circle, a figure not used in the early period, to move the laborers across the floor. The Hollow Square and Square Step dances also used simple footwork, but brought laborers out of their parallel lines into separate squares instead of a circle.

During the longest of the Shaker revivals, called Mother Ann’s Work, which lasted approximately from 1837 to the late 1840s, a few new forms of ordered laboring were also introduced. These new dances were almost always received by direct revelation, often through dreams in which Shaker members witnessed heavenly beings dancing. These dances were more directly tied to doctrinal ideas than earlier dances. They also continued the pattern of increased complexity in floor patterns.

The Narrow Path was a fairly simple new dance, brought to Believers in 1840 by the spirit of one of the deceased founders of the Society, William Lee (Ann Lee’s brother). It is a good example of the doctrinal themes that began to be expressed in
dances during this time period. Originally introduced as an individual exercise, Believers performed this dance for ten minutes every day in preparation for greater spiritual 
manifestations. A short time later, it was taught as a group dance where worshipers 
formed separate ranks and walked slowly in a very straight line, placing each foot directly 
in front of the other “so that the heel of one foot was placed to the toe of the other” (qtd. 
in Patterson 363). The dance symbolized the actual narrow path that led to salvation 
on which all faithful Believers needed to place themselves. The Narrow Path is one of 
the dances during Mother Ann’s Work that showed an increased focus on doctrinal 
meaning. Other dances that expressed doctrinal themes taught Shakers about cleansing 
themselves to receive spiritual blessings and warring against the enemy of righteousness. 
Mother Ann’s Work tied dancing more directly to doctrinal principles.

The Antediluvian Square Shuffle was another revival dance of this time period.
The footwork of this dance was similar to those dances performed in earlier time periods: 
advancing and retreating skips, turning, shuffling, repeating the sequence, and shuffling 
in place. The innovative feature of the Antediluvian Square Shuffle came in the pattern it 
created on the floor. Dancers formed concentric squares around each other and moved in 
alternating directions. One square would go to the right, the next square out would go to 
the left, and so forth. The mass of dancers filled the meetinghouse as it was performed 
(Patterson 385). The Heavenly March and Square Check were other dances of this 
revival period that introduced direct partnering. Couples of sisters or brothers danced 
faceing each other, or circled in and out of each other in these dances (Patterson 379, 382).
The late laboring period was a time of refining and paring down for Shaker dancing. Many of the dances that had been developed in earlier times had been dropped from use by the time the late period arrived in the late 1850s. Those that remained were modified and simplified to reflect a growing trend of moderation and refinement in Shaker attitudes and practices. The only major innovation to arise in the dances at this time was an even stronger emphasis on doctrinal themes associated with the movement (Patterson 387). The use of the arms in Shaker dances is one of the best examples of this trend. In 1842, a revelation at the Mount Lebanon village instructed laborers to dance with their arms out and palms upturned so that “the Angels would bestow upon them the gifts of God” (qtd. in Patterson 387). By the late laboring period, this convention of dancing with the palms up had crept into every dance performed among the Believers. However, the number and variety of dances performed at all was steadily declining.

As Shakerism moved more toward the mainstream and distanced itself from earlier times of fervor, laboring dances became slower and calmer. By 1884, the only movement that was still being carried out in Shaker services was a slow and minimal march. One Believer, Florence Phelps, recalled a meeting of young people held in the 1890s where an older sister came to teach a laboring dance from earlier days. “Well, we got such a laugh out of it,” Miss Phelps told Daniel Patterson, “that they stopped it, and we never learned the dance” (Patterson 454). The close of the late laboring period in the 1880s effectively marked the end of a century-long tradition of dancing among the United Society of Believers. What remained among the Believers after the 1880s were vestigial traces of the full-bodied dance once performed among them.
Shaker Dances of Worship and Recreation

For the Shakers, dancing functioned most often as a form of worship, carried out during formal worship services. Dance was a means of showing humility to the will of God. It served as an act of mortification for the Shakers, allowing them to manifest their desire to put off the carnal aspects of their lives. Dance was a way in which Believers could feel the power of God come over them, and it was performed as a form of praise to God. Shaker members recorded instances of dance as a part of worship service both in personal journals and in collective records.

The record of one worship meeting, held in the Shaker community at Alfred, Maine on Christmas Day 1845, is one of the most comprehensive examples of how dance functioned as worship. In this extraordinary meeting, Believers manifested many of the characteristics common to Shaker dances of worship. It was held on Christmas day, in accordance with a revelation received three months earlier instructing them to do so, and was recorded for the Society in Alfred by an anonymous scribe. This unnamed Shaker wrote that the Believers met together to hold a worship service and spent the day in prayer, singing, dancing, and receiving revelation from various members of the group. These mediums relayed visions, warnings, and instructions for the Society from God. The revelations also contained directives for the Believers to dance in particular ways.

Many of the dances performed that day portrayed a theme of the need for humility among the Alfred Believers. One brother in the group relayed instructions for kneeling and crawling as a means of showing humility to God. The recorder of this meeting related: "Elder Brother Merrill observed that he had been impressed that it was our duty
to humble ourselves before God and manifest our humility before each other by crawling upon our hands and knees back and forth on the floor” (“Journal of December 25th” 8). The Believers responded to his suggestion “very readily” and crawled to show their humility before God and to each other. Later in the meeting, another brother instructed the members of the Society to “Bow low, all ye people and bend your knees, and bow your faces to the floor” (“Journal of December 25th” 15). The group together proceeded to bow down with their faces to the floor and reflect on their humble state. By physically carrying out movement in their meetings that manifested an attitude of humility, the Shakers used dance in worship services to both manifest and increase feelings of humility among Believers.

Dancing was also used in worship services to symbolically express the Shakers’ belief in the mortification, or putting off, of the carnal elements of life. In this same Christmas Day service, as the group lay face down on the meeting house floor, the brother who had instructed the Society to bow proclaimed, “Arise, arise and again shake yourselves each one from your death and bondage” (“Journal of December 25th” 15). The Alfred Believers rose from the floor and shook in a dance of fervor and desire to symbolically rid themselves of the death, sin, and bondage of mortality. They repeated this dance of purging several times throughout the meeting. “Had a very zealous and powerful shake,” the author recorded at one point in the entry (“Journal of December 25th” 7). Shaking symbolically represented in dance the Shakers’ desire to free themselves of carnal elements.
As the Believers shook themselves in this dance, their fervor and dedication was rewarded with manifestations of the power of God. "[...] many of the young brethren and sisters were seized with the power of God, bowing, twisting, and turning" ("Journal of December 25th" 9). The meeting progressed and an increasing number of those participating experienced this feeling of being overtaken with divine power. "All united and again shook powerfully, many more were seized with the power of God, some speaking in tongues, bowing, turning, and various operations" ("Journal of December 25th" 17). These manifestations were not limited to the improvisational shaking dances. Even as the group joined together in regulated marching and other proscribed dances, members of the Society were again affected by divine forces: "Labored a quick song during which some ten or twelve of the young sisters received very powerful operations of the gifts of God" ("Journal of December 25th" 17). Dances of worship, such as these, became opportunities for Believers to physically experience the power of God.

Just as dance was a means of receiving communication from God, it was also a means of communicating feelings of praise to God in Shaker worship services. A Summary View of the Millennial Church explained this function of dance in worship services. "The faculty of dancing [...] was undoubtedly created for the honor and glory of the Creator; and therefore it must be devoted to his service, in order to answer that purpose" (Green 92). Dancing as a form of praise was practiced often among the Shakers.

Lucy Ann Hammond, a young Shaker from the Harvard, Massachusetts Society, kept a short journal of her experiences in 1830 visiting three other Shaker communities.
She recorded her experiences in dancing with the members of each Society; her relatively brief record mentions dancing often. Hammond wrote specifically of experiences in dancing to praise God, such as one event during a Sunday worship service in New Lebanon, New York. After singing hymns and listening to several sermons, Hammond described, “Elder Brother said he want[ed] to rejoice—we rejoice in the dance. Eldress Ruth came to me and said ‘Now rejoice.’ I can truly say I did” (Hammond). Dancing was carried out in Shaker meetings as form of communicating praise and thanksgiving to God.

Another journal from the same time period, kept by Elizabeth Lovegrove in the Mount Lebanon Society, similarly shows dancing as a form of praising God. “[. . .] we then went forth in exercise in marching, shuffling, and various ways,” Lovegrove penned. “Sometimes we shook, sometimes [. . .] we rejoiced, clasped hands, leaped, turned, bowed, and served God with all our hearts” (93:10). The Shakers believed that dancing was a fitting part of worship services through which they could express praise and rejoicing to God.

But worship was not the only function of dance among the Shakers. For many Shakers, dancing also served as a form of recreation, even while it was performed in worship services. Devout Shakers worked hard in Shaker communities. Shaker women spent long hours doing domestic chores, and Shaker men were constantly engaged in maintenance and farming in Shaker villages. Hard work was a central ethic around which Believers organized their lives. In this culture of work, dancing was often perceived, by those Shakers who performed it, as a diversion from the monotony and rigors of nineteenth century domestic and agricultural work. The acceptable venue for performing
dance in Shakerism was a group meeting. Meetings were held often throughout the week, not just on Sundays. The need was frequent for diversion in the midst of a culture with such a strong emphasis on work.

Meetings were not formally labeled as recreational events, but for those who participated in them, they functioned as such. The Meeting Journal from the Shakers living at Mount Lebanon in 1842 told of the meeting schedule, “Meetings of some kind are very regularly attended either to worship, or reading, and singing meetings, and most of them are enlivening and refreshing” (“Extracts From the Meeting Journal” 3). Meetings were perceived by members not only as a time to worship, but also as a time to be enlivened and refreshed. The dancing performed in group meetings functioned as recreation for the Shakers.

This recreational function of dance can be seen in the language the Shakers used to describe their experiences in dancing. Dancing is described with words such as “lively,” “freedom,” “rejoicing,” “glorious,” and “refreshing.” in Shaker journals. For example, the Meeting Journal from Mount Lebanon stated that the members there “Exercised in square order and circular march, and danced a few lively tunes. Considerable freedom manifested” (“Extracts From the Meeting Journal” 10). Dancing fulfilled the need for recreation and diversion that the Shakers had in their rigorous lives.

Shaker records point even more specifically to this recreational function in describing particular meetings where dancing was performed. In her record of her trip to other Shaker communities, Lucy Ann Hammond revealed an example of recreational dancing in Shaker meetings. After spending several weeks in the New Lebanon
community, Hammond, and those with her, prepared to return to the Harvard Shaker village. The members at New Lebanon held an informal farewell dance for their departing brothers and sisters. Hammond reported on the meeting:

The Elders came down; we placed in ranks. William Burnham spoke and opened the meeting. They marched two songs then went in the round two, then the Brethren and Sisters took their own rooms, and labored a few songs very lively [...] then took our seats and visited, very fast, no idle time, after visiting about an hour, they arose and sung farewell.

(Hammond)

Dancing served as a social recreation for the two groups of parting Shakers.

Elizabeth Lovegrove recorded in her journal the Shakers’ interest and excitement for dancing as a diversion from the other aspects of their lives. One evening, the Society at Mount Lebanon, where Lovegrove resided, was apparently anxiously awaiting that night’s meeting. “We felt impatient for meeting time to come,” she reported (Lovegrove 93:8) “But O! Alas in the evening the thunder rolled, the lightenings flashed and rain poured down in great fury, which deprived us of our meetings and made us feel very disconsolate” (93:8). A short time later, a small group assembled in the meeting house to sing and Lovegrove was sent to spread the news that the meetings were going to be held in spite of the rain. “I r[a]n to join the first company I could get and soon the alarm spread around the house that there was liberty for us to go to the meeting room and march a little now” (Lovegrove 93:8). Dancing, in this instance, functioned as the only, and much anticipated, form of recreation available to the Society.
Lovegrove also wrote about special outings where dancing was performed. She recorded a summer outing where meetings were held outside, presumably for the purpose of enjoying a particularly nice summer’s day. “In the afternoon we marched up into the North orchard and had our meeting, the trees were in full bloom and the fragrant smells added pleasure to the joyful scene” (94:1-2). The Believers commenced a worship service, but the underlying feeling of the meeting reveals a sense of enjoyment and entertainment for the gathering. “We had a glorious meeting,” Lovegrove reported, “[. . .] with singing and dancing, praising, marching, leaping, shouting, preaching, and praying” (94:2).

Later in Shaker history, after the 1850s, the earlier strictness against recreation began to be loosened somewhat. From this point on, the Shakers more openly engaged in recreation. In October of 1863 Shakeress Nancy Moore, in the South Union, Kentucky Shaker settlement, wrote of a similar gathering to that described by Elizabeth Lovegrove in 1827. This time, the purpose for the gathering was more explicitly understood to be recreation. She tells that all who were able to go, “went to the flat rock to have a little pic-nic and spree this forenoon [. . .]. They played and jumped ropes then partook of a little repast–then assembled together and sung and marched and danced” (162). Activities such as this one were common in Shaker settlements in the second half of the nineteenth century. In these outings, dancing provided entertainment, recreation, and social interaction for members of the United Society of Believers. Although Shaker dancing remained distinct from social forms of dancing performed by non-Shakers, it performed many of the same social or recreational functions.
Mormon Dance Description

Unlike the Shakers, the Mormons followed more closely the trends of social dancing occurring in the rest of America in the nineteenth century. By the late 1830s, when Mormon dancing really began to flourish, dancing in the United States was no longer exclusively the realm of the elite class. Instead of focusing on intricate footwork and proper placement of the body in courtly dances, dance manuals began to stress figures and spatial relationships of dancers (Schneider 624). Mormon dancing similarly reflected this new attention to general moving rather than classical technique.

One observer, Colonel Thomas L. Kane, wrote of the Mormon dancing he witnessed in July 1846 on the banks of the Missouri River:

Their leading off the dancing in a great double cotillion was the signal bade the festivity commence. To the canto of debonnair violins, the cheer of horns, the jingle of sleigh-bells, and the jovial snoring of the tamborine, they did dance! None of your minuets or other mortuary processions of gentles in etiquette, tight shoes, pinching gloves, but the spirited and scientific displays of our venerated merry grandparents [. . .]. [They danced] French fours, Copenhagen jigs[,] Virginia reels, and the like forgotten figures, executed with the spirit of people too happy to be slow, or bashful or constrained. (30-31)

Mormon dancing during the nineteenth century was reflective of the overall trend in American social dancing towards socializing and recreation and away from etiquette and formality.
There were two primary forms of dancing performed by average Latter-day Saint members from the late 1830s until the 1880s. These forms were general social dancing (usually performed at places such as parties and balls for the purpose of mingling and entertaining) and exhibition dances. Exhibition dances were done in similar settings to the social dances but were intended more as small performances than as general, participatory forms of dancing.

Social Dances

Although some social dances came and went with changing fashions over the 40-year period from the late 1830s to the 1880s, certain dances persisted as principle forms of Mormon dancing during this time. The Grand March, Quadrilles (or Cotillions), and the Virginia Reel were the most representative and universal examples of Mormon social dancing. These forms of social dancing were consistently performed by the Mormons throughout the nineteenth century.

The Grand March. The Grand March was a common beginning to any dance event in Mormon culture. The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers record in one of their historical quarterlies that “After the opening prayer in every Mormon community dance, the orchestra played the Grand March” (“Dancing – A Pioneer Recreation” 345). There are many accounts that tell of Grand Marches leading out a dance event, but few actually describe the Grand March. Again, the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers relate that the Grand March “was generally led by those highest in authority in the community” (“Dancing–A Pioneer Recreation” 345). They also describe how the Grand March initiated the rest of the dances of the evening, putting dancers in place to begin the first
set of the ball. "Most of the time the participants in the march broke up into groups of eight to start a quadrille" ("Dancing -- A Pioneer Recreation" 345). The march was a type of processional that ceremoniously began the dance event.

The Mormons give little other description of this Grand March, but a contemporary account, published in Philadelphia in the 1870s, gives a fuller description of what the Grand Marches were probably like. In his dance manual, E.B. Reilley tells of the Grand March:

[It] Generally heads the programme of Balls, Parties, Soirees, &c., and is sometimes performed immediately preceding supper, and is properly executed as follows: The first gentleman and lady will promenade around the room, the others will all follow: then the whole will form a single column of two lines, gentlemen on the left and ladies on the right, when they all execute the Grand March around the room, as directed by the Master of Ceremonies. (199)

The Quadrille. Even more characteristic of Mormon dance events than the Grand March was the quadrille, often called a cotillion. Almost every written record of Mormon dancing until the 1880s that specifically mentions the types of dances performed at events mentions a quadrille or cotillion. Even in the harsh winter of 1846, as the Saints camped in tents on the bank of the Mississippi River after being driven from their homes in Nauvoo, they danced cotillions. One young Mormon woman who spent the winter in these circumstances wrote that they would "form a cotillion [. . .] by the big log fire, and
often [they] did so at evening, and danced to amuse [them]selves as well as to keep [their]

blood in proper circulation" (Whitney, "Travels" 102).

The terms quadrille or cotillion were actually broad names used to describe

several different but similar dances. Ruth E. Yashko, in her study of pioneer dancing in Utah, delineates the five different dances that were often denoted with the names quadrille or cotillion. Although Yashko focuses on dances from Utah during the latter half of the nineteenth century, these dances were generally very similar to those performed in earlier times among the Mormons in other places. The Plain Quadrille, Lancers Quadrille, Variety Quadrille, Waltz Quadrille, and Polka Quadrille were similar to each other in that all five involved four couples dancing together. The gentlemen would stand on the right in each pair, and each couple would stand opposite from another so that the eight dancers together formed a square with open corners (Yashko 23). Each quadrille was made up of three, four, or five different parts, called changes. Different music was played for each of the changes.

There were many different varieties within each type of quadrille. Steps were varied, but involved the type of movement that is typically pictured in a square dance. Callers would direct dancers in steps such as an "Allemande Right." In this step "each gentleman, passing by his partner, gives [his] right hand to [the] lady on his right and turns her once around clockwise" (Yashko 23). Dancers engaged in other steps such as advancing and retreating, exchanging places with other dancers in the square, joining hands and circling, bowing, and passing through each other (Yashko 23-24). Variations depended most upon who was calling the dances.
The biggest differences between the five forms of quadrilles were the footwork used to move dancers around and through each other, and what happened between changes in the dances. The Plain Quadrille was the most common quadrille performed by the Mormons. It was “usually danced with a smooth walking step or a two-step” if the music had a two-step rhythm (Yashko 19). The Plain Quadrille differed from the Lancers Quadrille in footwork. The Lancers Quadrille used a quick gliding step rather than a smooth walking step. It also included an introduction where dancers would salute (or bow to) their partners or the corners of the square before beginning to dance (Yashko 19). Footwork was the primary distinction between these two forms of quadrilles.

The Variety Quadrille, Waltz Quadrille, and Polka Quadrille were distinct because they included some sort of dancing step in the breaks between changes. The Variety Quadrille ended each change with a different step. The first change might end with a waltz, the second with a polka, and the third with a schottische (similar to a polka). The Waltz and Polka Quadrilles used only their respective dance steps on breaks between changes (Yashko 19-20). In a Waltz Quadrille, for example, dancers would move in and around each other advancing and retreating, turning, and changing places and partners during the changes. In between changes, they would waltz with their own partners and then return to the square for another change with the group.

The Virginia Reel. Country dances (or contra danses) originated in England in the seventeenth century. They were performed by couples who danced through a set pattern of figures, usually in lines, but sometimes in squares. By the 1850s, country dances were thought to be out of fashion both in Europe and in most parts of the United States.
(Pugliese 257), but the Mormons continued to do some country dancing later than most of their American contemporaries. Colonel Thomas Kane’s description, quoted above, eludes to this continuance of country dances among the Mormons (30-31). Colonel Kane witnessed the Mormons as they danced country dances, but the practice of including a large number of country dances in their social dance events did not last long.

Most records of Mormon dancing that post date Colonel Kane’s encounter record only one country dance being practiced as a regular part of Latter-day Saint dances: the Virginia Reel (or Sir Roger de Coverley). Beadle’s Dime Ball-Room Companion and Guide to Dancing, published in 1868, offers an explanation for this one remaining country dance:

It is customary to conclude the evening with some simple, jovial, spirit-stirring dance, in which all, young and old, slim and obese, may take a part. Any contre danse (country dance,) answers this purpose; but the prime favorite is Sir Roger de Coverley (or Virginia Reel) which has held its own, in spite of the lapse of time and the mutations of fashion. (Beadle 23)

Although Beadle’s Guide was describing dance gatherings in the East, this convention of including one Virginia Reel was also very common, and almost without exception, at Latter-day Saint dance events.

Mormon records do not specifically describe the particular way in which the Virginia Reel was carried out among the Latter-day Saints, but it was likely very similar to the Virginia Reel being done in other parts of the country by non-Mormons. Mormon
converts came in a continual stream from the Eastern United States to LDS settlements further west. These converts brought with them dance manuals from the East and the knowledge of dancing being performed in the East. Without specific descriptions of Mormon dancing, eastern dancing manuals and guides written before the 1880s become the closest source for determining what Mormon dances looked like. For example, a dance manual written by Thomas Hillsgrove in New York in 1863 was used by a popular Utah musician and dance caller for many years as he carried out dances in Mormon communities (Daughters, “Dancing–A Pioneer Recreation” 354). Without much specific description by Mormon writers, this manual and others like it are good sources for understanding what Mormon dances probably were like.

In the Virginia Reel, six to eight couples formed two lines, facing each other, with the gentlemen in one line and ladies in the other. The couple closest to the musicians was titled the head couple, and the one farthest away was the foot couple. The first part of the dance consisted of several sets in which the head lady and foot gentleman and the head gentleman and foot lady took turns advancing and retreating diagonally towards each other. These couples, from opposite ends of the lines, met in the middle of the two lines and performed different figures such as turning around each other and doing dos-a-dos around each other. Hillsgrove describes the remainder of the Virginia Reel as it was likely carried out in Mormon settlements:

The head couple join right hands and turn once and a half round; the head lady then turns with the left hand every gentleman down the line, alternately turning her partner with the right hand; while the gentleman
turns every lady with his left hand, alternately turning his partner with the right; when they arrive at the bottom they turn partners and pass up inside to the head again, and then separate, the lady turning to the right and passing down on the outside of the ladies' line, and the gentleman turning to the left and passing down on the outside of the gentlemen, and all follow, meeting their partners at the foot, and return up on the inside to places; the first couple then join hands, chassez down the middle, and take their position below the last couple. Then the figure commences with a new couple at the head. (225-226)

The dance continued until every couple had their turn as head couple and completed the figures that the first couple had done. The Virginia Reel was a common addition to many Mormon social dance events.

**Theme Dances.** One final aspect of Mormon social dancing worth noting is the common practice of holding theme dances. These dances were organized around a certain theme that encouraged socializing or highlighted a particular group in the community. Bow dances, toe dances, and weigh dances were some of the activities organized to promote socializing at Mormon dances. For bow dances, every lady who came to the dance would bring two bows or ribbons. She would wear one and seal one in an envelope. The men at the dance would draw an envelope and match their bows to the ones being worn by the ladies to find their first partners for the dances. For toe dances, the ladies at the dance would stand behind a curtain with only the toes of their shoes showing. The men who came would each pick a “toe” and stand by the lady’s foot they had chosen. When the
curtain was pulled back, they were face to face with their dance partners for the next dance. Weigh dances were a novel way of collecting entrance fees to dances. “When we had weigh dances,” one Mormon woman recalled, “a man would pay so much a pound for the partner he drew. The girls' names were placed in a hat, then the boys would each draw a name. The girls would be weighed, and the boys usually paid half a cent a pound” (Daughters, “Pioneer Dancing” 377). Theme dances such as the bow, toe, and weigh dances encouraged the social aspects of Mormon dances.

Other theme dances helped to highlight particular members, especially immigrant members, of different Mormon communities. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Mormon missionaries began to be sent throughout the world, especially to Europe, to spread the message of Mormonism. Most foreign converts to the Mormon church during this time left their homes and made the long journey to the United States to join themselves with the rest of the Saints. These foreign-born Latter-day Saints brought with them many cultural traditions, including dance. Theme dances that focused on particular international traditions were one of the ways that foreign dancing infused itself into the Mormon culture.

For example, Latter-day Saints who had immigrated from Scotland held Scottish dances where they danced Highland Flings and Sword Dances, dressed in the native costumes they had brought from Scotland (Daughters, “Pioneer Dancing” 390). In some communities, Mormons had emigrated from many different countries. The town of Spanish Fork, Utah was primarily settled by Mormons from four different parts of the world. “As Spanish Fork was largely made up of people from Wales, England,
Scandinavia and Iceland, each nationality held a dance at least once a year” (Daughters, “Pioneer Dancing” 392). Each dance event with an ethnic theme highlighted a particular country’s native dances. During Welsh dances, step-dancing was featured. During Irish dances, those who knew jigs had an opportunity to dance them. And during Scandinavians celebrations, they danced the Danish Swift. Theme dances that focused on the native countries from which Mormons immigrated highlighted national dances and helped to spread them throughout Mormon communities.

**Exhibition Dances**

These ethnic dances also appeared in the exhibition dances that were performed by Latter-day Saints at this time. During the 1850s, 60s, and 70s, a succession of theater companies were organized in Utah. Debra Sowell has outlined these companies and the performances they presented of drama, dance, and pantomime. Only a small number of Latter-day Saints actually ever performed dances in this theatrical setting, but larger numbers of Mormons were involved in smaller dance exhibition performances throughout Mormon settlements. These performances commonly took place during the intermissions of parties and balls where Mormons were engaged in social dancing. Exhibition dances were sometimes performed by local dancing masters, or, more often, they were presented by individuals who were immigrants from other countries or whose families had immigrated from other countries and had brought ethnic dances with them.

One member of the Kaysville, Utah community, for example, recalled the small intermission performances that took place there in the 1860s and 1870s. Some members of the group would sing and “the dancing master, Mr. Burton, usually favored them with
a step-dance or a broom-stick dance" (Daughters, “Dancing–A Pioneer Recreation” 366).

Ethnic dances, especially those from the British Isles, became the favorite exhibition
dance form in many Mormon communities. Certain Saints in the Southern Utah town of
Kanab were well known for their jigs (Daughters, “Dancing–A Pioneer Recreation” 377).

In St. George, Utah, several of the older settlers “could really do the hornpipe, the
highland fling and double shuffles, furnishing top entertainment and a lot of variety
during the dance intermission” (Daughters, “Pioneer Dancing” 364). Mormon

communities throughout Utah and Idaho sported this type of exhibition dancing in which
local members of the community put on small performances, usually made up of ethnic
dances, during the intermissions of social dance events.

Mormon Dances of Recreation and Worship

The most frequent reason for dancing among the Mormons was recreation. The
Latter-day Saints danced to find diversion from many of the hardships they endured
throughout their early history. They also danced at other times to celebrate prosperous
and happy circumstances. Mormon recreational dancing occurred in the Latter-day Saint
settlement in Nauvoo, Illinois. It was performed while the Mormons were crossing the
plains on their way to the Great Salt Lake Valley, and dancing was also done in Latter-
day Saint settlements of the Utah territory. Journals and autobiographies of early Latter-
day Saints are the most useful sources for describing the recreational function of Mormon
dancing in each of these places.

The LDS church settlement in Nauvoo, Illinois was the first place in which the
Mormons openly performed and accepted dancing as an appropriate activity for church
members. Prior to that time, there was a degree of uncertainty among Mormons as to how dancing was to be treated in their religion. An incident that occurred in the LDS settlement at Kirtland, Ohio, where the Saints lived prior to coming to Nauvoo, shows the hesitancy of some early Mormon members to give up the anti-dancing traditions of many of their contemporary American Christians. The minute book for church administrative meetings recorded that in 1837, “The Church in Kirtland disfellowshiped twenty-two brethren and sisters until they make satisfaction for uniting with the world in a dance the Thursday previous” (Smith, History 2:519). Mormon historian Milton Backman explains that in Joseph Smith’s absence, local leaders in Kirtland, who had been raised in the Christian tradition of dancing as a sin, acted to eliminate the recreation from the church there without having received guidance on the subject from Smith (246). But by the time the Saints settled in Nauvoo, a different attitude toward recreational dancing was beginning to emerge.

Helen Mar Whitney, an early member of the LDS Church, admitted that “no girl loved dancing better than I did” (“Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo” 90). Whitney’s reminiscences of early Mormon history include many references to dancing. She recorded that in Nauvoo in 1842 “dancing was not so much approved at that time, at least was not so commonly practiced among the Saints” (Whitney, “Scenes in Nauvoo” 146). This statement reflects an attitude toward dance reminiscent of that taken in Kirtland. But only a year later, Whitney reported a very different scene in Nauvoo. “During the winter of 1843, there were plenty of parties and balls” (“Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo” 90). On Christmas day of that same year, Joseph Smith recorded that he held a dance at
his own house. “A large party supped at my house, and spent the evening in music, dancing, &c., in a most cheerful and friendly manner” (History 6:134). Vestiges of traditional Christian prohibitions against dancing began to fall away in Nauvoo, and dancing became an accepted and more widely practiced form of recreation among the Mormons.

The Latter-day Saints began to leave their settlement in Nauvoo in early 1846 (LDS Church Educational System 309). The first wagon train to cross the Mississippi River out of Nauvoo was only the first of hundreds of wagon and handcart companies that brought Mormon converts from the Eastern United States to the Great Salt Lake Valley between 1846 and the late 1860s. These cross-country journeys were long and often difficult for the individuals that made the migration to Utah. Dancing was recorded again and again in the journals of Latter-day Saints crossing the plains. It served as recreation or diversion from the hardships that many Saints endured in their journeys.

In fact, the Mormon precedent for dancing on their journeys across the plains was set just prior to the departure of the first wagon train bound for Utah. In their winter camp of 1847, Mormon prophet Brigham Young received a revelation from God that specifically instructed the Latter-day Saints, “If thou art merry praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving” (Doctrine and Covenants 136:28). This admonition was included in the Doctrine and Covenants as a scriptural reassurance of the appropriateness of dancing in Mormon life. The instruction was implemented frequently and gratefully among groups of migrating LDS pioneers. Daniel H. Wells, an early Mormon Church leader, described the
prevalence of dancing among the Mormons as they crossed the plains in one simple statement: “Upon the Plains you can see them dancing and kicking up their heels (sic)” (Journal of Discourses 5:41). The journals and reminiscences of Mormon pilgrims who took part in these long treks repeatedly testify of the truth of Wells’ statement and of the Mormons eagerness to dance with a merry heart in spite of difficult conditions.

Aroet Lucious Hale crossed the plains to the Salt Lake Valley as a teenager in one of the first Mormon wagon trains to make the expedition. He recalled the recreational dancing that he engaged in during the journey West:

Our travels across the plains was a long, tiresome trip over one thousand miles with ox teams. It was hard on old people and women with children. The young folks had enjoyment. Presidents Young and Kimball were very kind and indulgent to the young. They frequently stopped within a mile or so apart. The young would visit from one camp to the other and frequently would get music and have a good dance on the ground. (Hale 17)

Hale’s account shows how Brigham Young and another leading Mormon authority, Heber C. Kimball, arranged the long pioneer journey to allow the young people from both groups to hold dances along the way. This encouragement of dance by Latter-day Saint leadership is evidenced in other journals from this time.

The autobiography of Robert Gardner records his memories of a difficult time in Mormon history when church leaders encouraged recreational dancing. The summer after the Saints left Nauvoo, the United States Government demanded that five hundred Mormon volunteers from the temporary Mormon settlement in Iowa join the army and
march to Mexico to assist in fighting the Mexican-American War. The Mormons obliged, forming the “Mormon Battalion” under very arduous circumstances in order to prove their loyalty to the government. Many women and children were left to make the long journey to the Salt Lake Valley alone. Gardner was one of the men left among the Mormons to help the families whose fathers and husbands were gone. He described the situation that arose: “Many an evening I have visited the famili[ies] of men who had gone with the battalion in time of snow storm[s] and found them in open log houses [. . .]. I would go and get them some dry wood and help them all I could, but it seemed hard times [. . .] men was so scarce, and so many sick and dying” (Gardner 14). In these terrible conditions, Gardner explained how Mormon leaders continued to encourage recreational dancing. “Yet the authorities kept up their meetings and now and then ha[d] a dance to keep up the spirits of the people” (14). Recreational dances enlivened the spirits of the Latter-day Saints as they crossed the plains and were encouraged by Mormon leaders.

The Mormon Battalion, themselves, also used recreational dances to keep up their spirits on their own long trek to New Mexico and California. Volunteer Zadok Judd recalled their dances. “[. . .] after a hard day’s march, the fiddle was brought out and a lively dance would commence and would continue for the entire evening. There were no girls but many of the boys would take the girls side and do the dance all right. The boys did say it was the best way to rest” (26). Recreational dancing was encouraged by Latter-day Saint leaders as a release or diversion for the many church members who endured long journeys to the West.
Once the Mormons reached the Salt Lake Valley and began to establish themselves there, their dancing also began to function as celebration, as well as diversion. The first wagon train arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in July of 1847. By August of 1848, the Mormons held a public festival to celebrate their first harvest in the valley. Mormon pioneer and leader Parley P. Pratt described the event. “On the 10th of August we held a public feast under a bowery in the center of our fort [. . .] there was prayer and thanksgiving, congratulations, songs, speeches, music, dancing, smiling faces and merry hearts” (335). The Christmas celebrations of that same year also included this type of celebratory dancing. The journal of Emmeline B. Wells recounts a party on Christmas Day of 1848 that Brigham Young attended with his family. She tells of Young’s leading out the dancing: “After the Santa Claus tree was stripped of its gifts, the floor was cleared and the dancing commenced, and there was good music, too, and President Young led the dance [. . .] to the great delight of the little folks” (541). This type of dancing, performed at special occasions, was carried out in Mormon communities throughout Utah and the surrounding areas.

Recreational forms of dancing also functioned as worship for many Latter-day Saints who performed them. Dancing was never performed as any formal type of worship service in the LDS Church, but social forms of dance often served among the Latter-day Saints to express praise, thanksgiving, and devotion to God. Mormons wrote frequently in their journals about social dances where they experienced feelings of worship for God. Early Mormon leader, Heber C. Kimball, expressed this LDS attitude toward dance when he said, “I have no other desire in my heart than to make all the acts of my life praise
God. When I go into a ballroom I can there contemplate upon the things of God and praise Him in the dance” (Journal of Discourses 11:146). Brigham Young, also, spoke of this relationship between dance and worship among the Latter-day Saints. He admonished the church: “[. . .] refrain, purify, and sanctify yourselves before your God, and get so much of the spirit of truth that you may become filled with it, so that you can shout aloud with all your might to the praise of God, and feel your hearts clear as the noon-day sun. Then you can dance, and glorify God” (Journal of Discourses 1:120). These two statements illustrate what the Mormons believed was necessary in order for dancing to be worshipful. Dancing had to be a reflection of a universal feeling of praising God in all aspects of life. If Latter-day Saints lived according to the precepts and commandments that their religion taught, then approaching the ballroom to dance had the potential to be a worshipful experience. Journals and autobiographies of early Mormon members reveal how the Mormons used dancing to worship God in informal worship settings.

Joseph Graften Hovey was a convert to the Mormon Church in 1839 (Hovey 13). Prior to joining the LDS Church, he had been raised by his father as a “Close Communion Baptist” and was well-acquainted with several other Christian denominations he had investigated (12). In his autobiography, Hovey described the experience that he had in seeing dances carried out in a spirit of worship among the Mormons:

Brother Brigham organized a number of couples and set the band to playing a tune, after which we kneeled down and prayed to the God of Heaven. I can truly say that the prayer that was offered up and the music
and the dance were controlled with the Spirit of God which caused me to shed a flow of tears for joy [. . .]. Truly I was led to say this was the way the ancient fathers praised the Lord in a dance. (43)

Hovey’s account conveys a sense of admiration at being able to participate in dance as a form of worship. Coming from his protestant Christian background, this type of dancing, social in structure, yet carried out in a spirit of worship, reverence, and praise for God, would have likely seemed foreign. Yet he understood and conveyed the feeling that this dancing was, in fact, an act of praising God. His account manifests how the Mormons were able to dance in such a way that they felt a sense of worship as they performed the dances, even as they were involved in recreational settings.

This association between worship and dance was so strong that the Latter-day Saints even allowed dancing to be done in one of their most sacred places of worship, the Nauvoo Temple. Dancing was not performed as a formal part of Mormon temple services, but was carried out in the temple at times after those services. Brigham Young gave accounts of dancing in the temple as did other Latter-day Saints who experienced it. Mormon member Norton Jacob recorded in his journal on the fourth of February 1846 that he “repaired to the temple where [he] found the brethren and sisters recreating themselves with music and dancing” (28-29). Another Latter-day Saint, George Laub, commented on the dancing that he witnessed in the Nauvoo temple. “I was permitted to enter into the temple frequently passing and repassing from one apartment to the other and the old and young men and maidens went forth in their dances. This was pleasing to the Lord” (Laub 35). Both Jacob and Laub observed other Latter-day Saints dancing in
the Nauvoo Temple. Although Jacob associated the word “recreating” with the dances, Laub related the dancing to pleasing the Lord.

Brigham Young’s record of the dancing that was performed in the Nauvoo Temple is the most detailed of any of the accounts. His description indicates how recreational dancing and worship may have been related. On December 30, 1845, Young wrote about an occasion when recreational dances in the temple actually became worship. After spending the day performing formal services in the temple with a group of church members, Young wrote that several of the brethren in the temple were invited to bring out their musical instruments and play. “This was too much for the gravity of Brother Joseph Young who indulged in dancing a hornpipe, and was soon joined by several others, and before the dance was over several French fours were indulged in” (Smith, History 7:557). Young went on to record his participation in the dancing. “The first [French Four] was opened by myself with Sister Whitney and Elder Heber C. Kimball and partner. The spirit of dancing increased until the whole floor was covered with dancers, and while we danced before the Lord, we shook the dust from off our feet as a testimony against this nation” (Smith, History 7:557).

This experience of recreational dancing turning to an expression of worship and communication to God among the Mormons occurred just prior to the time that the Saints were forced from their homes and temple in Nauvoo by increasing mob violence against them. Dancing, in this case, was not only a form of recreation, but it also became a fervent prayer for the persecuted. The transformation from recreation to worship came as the entire group united together to dance. This feeling of collective participation, in a
setting that was most sacred to the Mormons, the temple, combined with the pressing circumstances they were under, to transform their recreational dancing into worshipful dancing. The social function of the dances they performed became second to the compelling circumstances that weighed upon the participants’ minds. In this way, progressing from common recreational forms, dancing became worship for the Latter-day Saints as it was suffused with religious feeling.

Comparison of Shaker and Mormon Dancing

Dance functioned similarly for both the Shakers and Mormons. It served as a recreation or diversion for both groups, and also acted as a form of worship where members of each religion could offer praise to God. The most significant differences in the function of dance in the two religions came in the differing emphasis that each group placed upon dance. For the Shakers, dance was primarily a form of worship service. It was included in their formal worship settings and was used, not only to show praise to God, but also to symbolically represent other aspects of worship such as gaining humility and ridding Believers from the sins of the flesh. The Mormons never included dancing as a part of formal worship services, and therefore limited its function as a form of worship. Dancing, the Latter-day Saints believed, could have worshipful intent as it communicated feelings of praise and thanksgiving to God. It was not, however, a means of achieving any particular spiritual ends in worship service. The Mormons, instead, predominately practiced dancing as a recreational activity. It was encouraged by Mormon leaders as a means of lifting the spirits of the Mormon people, especially during times of hardship. Dancing also served as an important part of celebrations in Latter-day Saint culture during
the 1800s. For the Shakers, dancing was not even openly considered a recreation until the last half of the nineteenth century, although it functioned as such prior to that time.

Dance and Doctrine

The correlation between doctrinal beliefs about the physical body and dance among the Shakers and Mormons comes in three main areas of focus. First, the very fact that the Shakers and Mormons danced, in an environment of general Christian religious opposition to dancing, reflected the ideals that each religion held about the physical body in their theologies. Second, the type of movement that the Shakers and Mormons used in their dancing was related to their respective beliefs about the role of the physical body in achieving happiness in this life and salvation in the life to come. And last of all, the way in which dance functioned as worship or recreation for both religions, was influenced by their beliefs about the physical body both in mortality and immortality.

The very presence of dancing in both religions can be tied to their individual views of the relationship between spirit and body. For the Shakers, who believed that the body was inherently corrupt and remained that way, the union of body and spirit had to be supremely controlled by the spirit. Dancing, although a bodily activity, became an exercise in allowing the spirit to dominate the pairing of body and spirit. As Green and Wells explained,

There is a too powerful connection between the body and mind [or spirit], and too strong an influence of the mind upon the body, to admit of much activity of mind in the service of God, without the co-operating exercises of the body. But where the heart is sincerely and fervently engaged in the
service of God, it has a tendency to produce an active influence on the body. (93)

As men and women strove to express sincere feelings toward God in their spirits, their bodies were motivated to move in accordance with these feelings. In spite of the fleshly nature of dance, it became a sanctified and acceptable means of manifesting spiritual control over the physical body.

The Mormons' uncommon acceptance of dancing can be linked, similarly, to their belief that the spirit and body each exercised control over the other. Unlike the Shakers, who saw the body as unredeemable, the Mormons believed that the body could be made good, under the correct influences. As long as the balance of power resided in the spiritual side of the human soul, the body was sanctified and good. Mormon dancing followed this doctrinal pattern. As long as dancing was carried out in a way that allowed the spirit to be in control, it was acceptable and good. "Those who cannot serve God with a pure heart in the dance, "Brigham Young admonished, "should not dance" (Journal 1:30). By dancing in such a way that spiritual convictions could still be felt and kept, Mormons believed that dancing held an appropriate place in Latter-day Saint culture.

The underlying beliefs of the Shakers and Mormons about the relationship between body and spirit opened the door for dancing to be performed in each of their societies. However, the type of movement that each group found acceptable, under this mandate to dominate dance with the spirit, was very different. For the Shakers, movement reflected two central ideals in their doctrine of the physical body: mortification of the flesh, and living a life of self-denial.
The doctrine of mortification encouraged Believers to rid themselves of affection toward the flesh, and replace it with enmity. The “promiscuous,” improvisational Shaker dances that involved wild, unpredictable, and sometimes violent movement, reflected this foundational belief in ridding oneself of the carnal body. The practice of the “taking in of native spirits,” among the Shakers, is an example of mortification of the body exemplified through movement. Believers who acted as mediums for these “native spirits” performed movement that was humiliating and, often, generally socially unacceptable in nineteenth century American culture, but it was revered as a means of demonstrating an individual’s willingness to give up the flesh and be overcome by the will of God. The very movement for which the Shakers received their name, shaking, also manifest in movement the doctrine of mortification. As they shook, they rid themselves of the sin associated with the flesh. This shaking also manifested the larger intent of the doctrine of mortification, that, by eliminating attachments to the flesh, Believers were prepared to inherit salvation in the life to come, freed from their physical bodies.

Movement also revealed the Shaker doctrine of self-denial. The proscribed dances of the Shakers, with their carefully selected steps and underlying doctrinal themes, exhibited the Shaker belief in the strictness of the way. Self-denial of the physical body was requisite for mortal happiness and immortal salvation, and Shaker-choreographed dances exhibited this belief. Believers moved in carefully designed pathways, intricate circles and squares, as narrowly and strictly executed as was the rest of Shaker life. Believers moved with a sense of deliberateness and control that reflected the willpower
and self-control needed to live as a faithful Shaker. The Shaker dance, the Narrow Path, was a good example of a dance that exhibited the doctrine of self-denial and showed the strictness of the Shaker way. As Believers carefully placed one foot in front of the other to physically create a narrow path of their own steps, they were reminded of the doctrinally narrow path of self-denial required of them in their religion.

The type of movement found in Mormon dancing was, likewise, indicative of Latter-day Saint feelings about the body. Because the body was considered to be essential, both to achieve happiness in this life and also in the life to come, movement reflected a sense of celebration. Whether performed as diversions during times of great hardship, or as a means of thanksgiving at times of celebration, Mormon dances always reflected feelings of joy for the privilege of possessing a body. As the many accounts of Mormon dancing reveal, the movement was lively and jubilant. Their dances were full-bodied and spirited, conveying a sense of celebration even in the darkest times of difficulty in Mormon history. Because the body was an instrument of happiness, movement that presented it as such was predominant in Mormon dancing.

Mormons also took great care to avoid certain types of movement in their dances. While the Shakers embraced the unconventional, ecstatic movement of "promiscuous" dancing, the Mormons specifically avoided such movements in their dancing. Founding LDS leader Joseph Smith wrote specifically about the ecstatic dances of the Shakers and French Prophets in the Mormon newspaper *Times and Seasons*. Smith warned Mormon members not to participate in this type of dancing, declaring that "[...] such a heterogeneous mass of confusion can never enter into the kingdom of Heaven" ("Try the
spirits” 744). Another early Mormon leader also described this avoidance of ecstatic movement. Parley P. Pratt admonished, “All the strange ecstasies, swoonings, screamings, shoutings, dancings, jumpings, and a thousand other ridiculous and unseemingly manifestations, which neither edify nor instruct, are the fruits of [. . .] deceptive spirits” (Key to the Science 120). The movement of Mormon dancing, while lively and celebratory, was not to be extreme or out of control.

Not only the type of movement common to Shaker and Mormon dancing, but also the function of dances in these two religions, reflected their individual beliefs about the physical body. For the Shakers, the function of dance, primarily as a form of worship, was related to Shaker beliefs about the role of the body in achieving mortal happiness and immortal salvation. Dance was considered appropriate for Shaker society, and specifically for Shaker worship, because it was an opportunity to let the feelings of the spirit be manifest through the body. It had the potential to lead men and women toward the overall goal of subjection of the body and subsequent happiness in mortality.

Dancing also belonged in Shaker worship because of the ability it had to allow Believers to symbolically and physically enact spiritual ideas. The Shakers’ commitment to the doctrines of mortification and self-denial, for example, could be strengthened as they engaged in dances that acted out and reinforced these ideas for those participating in them. As Believers came to a greater understanding of and willingness to live these principles relating to their physical bodies, they were also preparing themselves for eternity, when they would inherit salvation freed from their bodies. By physically acting
out their willingness to give up physical bodies, the Shakers were more prepared to receive immortal happiness without them.

The stringent daily routines of Shaker life reflected the strict asceticism associated with their doctrines of celibacy and self-denial of the flesh. Life was structured around a rigid separation of the sexes that affected almost every aspect of daily life. It was understood that the body was to be entirely controlled and literally endured in order to have happiness in this life and salvation in the life to come. In this atmosphere of asceticism, dancing not only served as worship, but also as a diversion and form of release. Dancing was one of the rare events in Shaker life where Believers could move their bodies freely. Bound in the rest of their lives to where they had to walk, and even which doorway they had to pass through, dancing became a welcomed recreation for the Shakers, even when it was not formally called such. In these ways, dancing reflected and was influenced by the views that the Shakers had of the role of the body in achieving happiness both in this life and the next.

The relationship between doctrines of the physical body and dancing among the Mormons was also connected with their view of the role of the body in mortality and immortality. In Mormon doctrine, happiness was associated with first, having a body; second, controlling the body with the spirit; and third, taking care of the body as the tabernacle of the spirit. Dancing as a recreation fit suitably into this doctrinal framework. It was a bodily activity, and as long as it was carried out in such a way as to allow the spirit to influence the body, it was accepted and even encouraged in Latter-day Saint society. Dancing was also viewed as a very advantageous way of exercising and caring
for the body. Brigham Young encouraged church members to exercise their bodies in
dancing and other activities. "[Fiddling and dancing] give me a privilege to throw
everything off, and shake myself, that my body may exercise and my mind rest. What
for? To get strength, and be renewed and quickened, and enlivened, and animated”
(Young 242). Dancing as a recreation could contribute to a Latter-day Saint’s ability to
achieve happiness in mortality as it allowed members to exercise and care for their
physical bodies.

Dancing also reflected the Mormon view of the essential role of the physical body
in receiving immortal salvation. The body was seen in LDS theology as a necessity for
gaining immortal salvation; it would be physically resurrected and permanently joined to
the spirit in the life to come. The body was celebrated in Latter-day Saint thinking as a
final instrument of salvation. Recreational and worshipful dance in Latter-day Saint
culture reflected feelings of joy and respect for the body. As noted earlier, the movement
of Mormon dancing was lively and reflected a sense of celebration. This was in keeping
with the Latter-day Saint view that the body joined with the spirit to give individuals a
fullness of joy. Movement that was seen as being not in keeping with the divine
attributes of the body was shunned. Dance, as an activity of the body, celebrated the
privilege of receiving a body in mortality and the promise of being reunited with a
perfected body in the life to come. As a physical celebration of doctrinal ideals, dancing
was appropriate in Mormon culture as a form of recreation and also as an opportunity to
express devotion, praise, and thanksgiving to God.
Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary and Conclusions

In a time when religious views and changing societal roles made dancing and religion largely incompatible in American life, the Shakers and Mormons of the nineteenth century were able to reconcile dancing with their theological views. This reconciliation was made possible because of the role that each group saw for the physical body in enabling individuals to have happiness in this life and salvation in the life to come.

For the Shakers, who viewed the body as something to be overcome both in mortality and in the life to come, dancing was acceptable because it allowed spiritual attributes to prevail. It acted as a physical representation of fundamental Shaker ideologies. By symbolically acting out Shaker doctrines in dance, they were reinforced among Believers. The dancing that Shakers performed in their worship services also reflected the Shaker belief in putting off the flesh, both in this life and the life to come.

The Mormons saw the body as a blessing, as long as it was controlled by the spirit. Dancing that was carried out in a spirit of reverence was appropriate in Mormon society because the body was to be celebrated. Recreational dances were a means of enlivening and caring for the physical body. Mormon dancing reflected feelings of celebration and, at times, also communicated feelings of reverence and worship for God.

Because dance is so integrally tied to the human body, issues and beliefs about the body held by different cultural and societal groups are essential to understanding the
dances of those groups. For the Shakers and Mormons, uncovering what they believed about the physical body helps to illuminate why and how they danced. Although their doctrines of the human body had been noted before, no one had done a comprehensive analysis of their specific beliefs about the physical body pertaining to its role in achieving happiness in mortality and salvation in the eternities. Also, these doctrinal ideas about the body had never been examined in their unavoidable relationship to the dancing of the Shakers and Mormons. By correlating their perspectives on the body to their dancing, the singularity of dancing in these religious societies is more readily and deeply understood.

**Recommendations**

This topic originally came to interest me almost three years ago. At that time, in the course of another research project, I had surveyed a large number of LDS journals and autobiographies written in the nineteenth century. In these records, I encountered many personal accounts of dancing among the Mormons. I then became familiar with some of the publications that had been written addressing the subject of Mormon dance. It appeared to me that early Mormon members had written more about dance than twentieth century authors had extrapolated from their writings. I felt strongly that there was something more to be said about Mormon dancing than had been previously presented.

I contemplated this idea for several months and finally came to the conclusion that the concept that was missing was how uniquely Mormon religious beliefs had influenced their dancing. It became clear to me that this influence was directly related to LDS attitudes about the physical body. Dancing, as a bodily event, had to be connected with these beliefs. At approximately the same time, I was reminded of the subject of Shaker
dancing and began to wonder if a similar situation could be seen in their religion. Because both groups had doctrinal ideas that were divergent from the Protestant mainstream in nineteenth century America, and because both groups allowed dancing in their religion, it seemed that both religions had experienced a distinctive intertwining of doctrine and dance. My journey through histories, journals, and doctrinal works of the Shakers and Mormons has confirmed my original impression of the connection between beliefs about the body and dancing. I have seen that dance cannot be separated from the experiences of those who perform it. Dance is inextricably bound to the bodies and beliefs of its dancers and their circumstances.

I see further implications for this approach to studying dance in anthropological studies of other religious, cultural, and societal groups who dance, outside of nineteenth century America. I believe that the dances of other cultures and societies may be understood more completely when viewed through this lens of body perspectives. The example of the Shakers and Mormons indicates that our ability to dance in a particular way is significantly influenced by our ability to understand the role of the physical body in our lives. For cultures who see the body differently, the place, style, and appropriateness of dancing is vastly different. Dancing reflects our ideals and beliefs about the human body.

My first recommendation, therefore, for continuing research beyond this thesis, is to apply the same technique of understanding beliefs about the body to other cultural and societal groups who dance. Beliefs about the human body, obviously, cannot be taken as the sole explanation for why and how a particular group dances, but understanding the
internal constraints and freedoms that certain groups place upon the body through their ideologies gives a strong indication of what is possible in their dancing. Further correlations between beliefs about the body and dancing may be discovered by studying other religions, ethnic groups, and communities who dance, and whose ideologies about the role of the human body in life may be reliably studied.

Another area in which further research is needed is in the dance histories of both the Shakers and Mormons. A comprehensive history of the historical development of dance in Latter-day Saint culture from its beginnings to the present, including specific descriptions of dancing taken from primary sources, would be very valuable for anyone studying Mormon dance. Likewise, a chronology of Shaker dance history that shows the progression of the Believers’ dancing from its beginnings to its final disappearance from Shaker worship service and culture is needed. Another application of this research that could also be developed further is to identify possible ways in which specific doctrinal ideas may have influenced other forms of Shaker and Mormon art such as music, poetry, and architecture.
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