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April 15, 2015

Bodies of Zion: Toward a Latter-day Saint Gender Theory and Sexual Ethics

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## Abstract

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A common tenet of LDS doctrine maintains that both marriage and family life transcend earthly existence to constitute an eternal destiny considered essential to cosmology. To fulfill such an eternal destiny, practitioners must choose to participate in a temple ritual known as sealing to secure their eternal marriage, and any children born between eternal partners are forever sealed to their families. These doctrines manifest in the LDS cliché that *families are forever*. Given that embodiment in a physical body serves as a key benchmark in LDS cosmology, procreation between heterosexual partners is imperative to the eternal progression of LDS spirits who are otherwise held back in the spirit world prior to their embodiment. Often referenced as Heavenly Father's Plan, LDS cosmology establishes a conservative yet fluctuating matrix of beliefs and practices regarding gender, sexuality, and embodiment that has historically restrained LDS members from taking liberal positions on many LGBT and feminist issues, like California's Proposition 8, while concurrently providing a substrate for doctrinal innovations on LDS issues like plural marriage. This study begins with an examination of the early church's emphasis on marital and family practices as constructive of an LDS community envisioned in the ministry of Joseph Smith and other early prophets of the LDS church. Subsequently, I investigate both members' and the church's response to LGBT and feminist issues by relating them back to the central dogma of LDS marital doctrine. I conclude by compiling and analyzing a select corpus of LDS pamphlets that reinterpret the church's body of knowledge regarding gender, sexuality, and embodiment into a series of directives for youth. Taken together, these inquiries into LDS doctrine and practice lead toward an incipient, LDS-specific gender theory and sexual ethics.

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The personal and professional support from the Department of Religion at Emory University has helped me feel at home over the past four years. By uniting the frameworks I have gathered in this department with my own underlying interest in Latter-day Saint Christianity, I hope to contribute to the growing study of gender and sexuality within the church.

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Put simply, it's still a 'big deal' to live a life of same-sex attraction because very little in society is set up to acknowledge the family ties you propose to make.

Kath Weston



## Introduction

Since its Broadway opening in 2011, *The Book of Mormon* musical has won multiple artistic awards and set ticket sale records while simultaneously focusing renewed international attention on the LDS church and its doctrines. Pending the premiere of the musical, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) issued an official statement that asserted, “The production may attempt to entertain audiences for an evening, but the Book of Mormon as a volume of scripture will change people's lives forever.”<sup>1</sup> The musical’s songwriter, Robert Lopez, later described the church in a paradoxically similar manner by stating, “It’s such a load of baloney... But people believe in it so strongly, and their lives are demonstrably changed for the good by it.”<sup>2</sup> Although his lyrics lampoon the origins of the church and its religious claims, Lopez lauded the tangibly positive ways in which the LDS gospel generally affects its adherents.

In spite of his praise of the positive effects of the church on individuals, Lopez’s lyrics allude to the tragic yet frequent situation in which practitioners fail to effortlessly conform to the LDS central dogma that integrates religious conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, kinship, and salvation in the song “Turn it Off.” In this song, two LDS missionaries named Elder Price and Elder Cunningham sing about struggling to adjust to their new mission field in Uganda. To ameliorate their concerns, a more experienced missionary, Elder McKinley, compares their struggles to his own struggle with same-sex desire. McKinley, who is portrayed as tragically naïve, teaches the new missionaries to ignore their negative feelings in the same manner in which

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<sup>1</sup> Lyman Kirkland, “*Book of Mormon* Musical: Church’s Official Statement,” *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom: The Official Resource for News Media, Opinion Leaders, and the Public*, February 7, 2011, accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/church-statement-regarding-the-book-of-mormon-broadway-musical>.

<sup>2</sup> Dave Itzkoff, “A Sweet Show, With Blasphemy and Cussing” *New York Times*, February 16, 2011, accessed March 20, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/20/theater/20mormon.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=book%20of%20mormon%20musical&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/20/theater/20mormon.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=book%20of%20mormon%20musical&st=cse).

he ignores his homosexuality. Through song and tap dance, McKinley blithely concludes, “Boys should be with girls. That’s heavenly father’s plan.”<sup>3</sup> Admittedly, *The Book of Mormon*’s stylization of LDS missionaries sacrifices verisimilitude for satiric effect. Still, the musical plays with certain tropes of LDS belief that confound the efforts of LGBT and feminist individuals within the church to reconcile their political and religious sensibilities. After all, how can LGBT and feminist members actually feel fulfilled in a church whose central dogma, cited here as “heavenly father’s plan,” is built upon restrictive expectations to engage in heterosexual marriage? In his investigation of LGBT kinship practices, anthropologist John Borneman questioned how “the excluded find means to articulate their needs” within “normative frameworks institutionalized in marriage and kinship.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, my thesis seeks to delineate LDS frameworks of marriage and kinship, their history, and how both scriptural and modern prophetic discourses on gender and sexuality have coalesced around the teleological objective of eternal marriage and exaltation.<sup>5</sup>

Entering the LDS church as a convert at the age of fifteen, I spent the majority of my three active years in the church as an adolescent minor. As such, my religious education was admittedly skewed towards the objectives of preparing to serve a two-year mission, learning the fundamentals of LDS belief and practice, and, most importantly, becoming worthy for marriage in the temple. These objectives, which are commonly held by most LDS young men, are inextricable from one another for multiple reasons. Firstly, preparing both for a mission and for temple marriage entail adhering to commandments against pre-marital sex, masturbation,

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<sup>3</sup> Trey Parker, Robert Lopez, and Matt Stone, *The Book of Mormon: Book, Music and Lyrics* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2011), 27.

<sup>4</sup> John Borneman, “Caring and Being Cared For,” in *The Ethics of Kinship: Ethnographic Inquiries*, ed. James D. Faubion (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield: 2001), 42. (29-46).

<sup>5</sup> Eternal marriage, celestial marriage, and marriage in the temple are interchangeable phrases referencing the same temple ritual that eligible LDS practitioners undergo as a supplement to their civil marriages to become sealed together for eternity. The religious implications of marriage in the temple will be discussed at length in chapter 1.

alcoholic consumption, and a series of other body-centric commandments. Without following such commandments, LDS members are not eligible to become married in the temple. Unlike civil marriage, which governments and the church recognize until death, marriage in the temple ensures that partners will remain sealed together in heaven for eternity after death. Given that marriage in the temple is a “commandment of God,” adherence to the other embodied commandments necessary to become eligible for temple marriage assumed a heightened importance.<sup>6</sup>

When understood alongside the LDS fundamental belief that heavenly spirits must become embodied on earth before progressing to more advanced stages of spiritual progression, a topic I analyze in chapters 1 and 2, the commandments to maintain a chaste body and marry in the temple constitute an embodied theology central to LDS dogma.<sup>7</sup> As a teenager in the church I soon realized that the embodied theology I learned, however, was quite different from that of my young women peers. Differences in religious education between young men and women are ostensible in the heavily divided lessons and experiences mandated for youth of different genders. For instance, while young men’s religious education focuses more intently on the spiritual powers that accompany their membership in the Aaronic priesthood, young women are mandated to engage in religious experiences that promote traditionally feminine gender roles, including home keeping and preparation for motherhood. One implication of the church-mandated differences in religious experience between young men and women is the development of distinctly masculine and feminine religious subjectivities, which I discuss in chapter 3.

How do gendered religious experiences, like those mentioned in above, result in the establishment of distinctly masculine and feminine religious subjectivities? Writing in the

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<sup>6</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Young Women Manual 1* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002), 76–80.

<sup>7</sup> David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign*, April 5, 2013, 41-44.

context of Catholic youth, Robert Orsi recounts a sister teacher's admonition that "abstract theological notions... make no sense to youngsters unless somehow accompanied by 'concrete experiences.'" <sup>8</sup> Orsi terms this process as "the corporealization of the sacred." <sup>9</sup> In a similar manner, the central dogma of LDS church, which I characterize as a temple marriage, eternal family, and fixed binaries of gender and sexuality, becomes real when members of the church subject their bodies to gendered prescriptions for religious belief and practice. Although anthropology on the LDS church and its members is virtually non-existent, many LDS authors have written about their experience of LDS dogma on gender and sexuality. For example, Joanna Brooks' *Book of Mormon Girl* is an autobiographical account of Brooks' experience learning about the LDS doctrine of pre-earthly spirit existence through film as a youth. <sup>10</sup> Brooks also describes the LDS church's involvement in the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and California's Proposition 8, topics that I cover in chapter 1. Furthermore, the church's largest publisher, Deseret Book, has published *In Quiet Desperation: Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction*, a multi-authored text in which several LDS members with same-gender attraction describe their struggle to reconcile desire with LDS teachings. Given the novelty of such a project, the publisher included a preface stating, "like the living Church that is its owner, Deseret Book Company seeks to respond to changing needs and circumstances. This book has been prepared to help readers understand some of the struggles and crosses of those who experience same-gender attraction." <sup>11</sup> In general, these works adopt a confessional tone that precludes inclusion into the category of anthropology of Mormonism.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 74-75.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Joanna Brooks, *Book of Mormon Girl* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 13-28.

<sup>11</sup> Fred Matis, Marilyn Matis, and Ty Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation: Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2004), xi.

My thesis, on the other hand, does not build on positions of faith or personal experience in the church, for the most part. Rather, my intention is to present a selection of historical and theological material from LDS doctrinal authorities to render intelligible the nuanced position of the LDS church on LGBT and feminist issues. The apparent dearth of such material in a centralized form made my own coming out process exceedingly difficult, and I hope that this thesis will help scholars move toward a more centralized gender theory and sexual ethics based in LDS doctrines. I contend that the incipient gender theory and sexual ethics of the LDS church, which I delve into more deeply in chapters 2 and 3, cannot be understood apart from the church's central dogma on eternal marriage and family life.

In chapter 1, I explain the origins of the LDS doctrine of eternal marriage and its requirement for the exaltation of church members.<sup>12</sup> With particular attention given to early church history and scripture I describe the meaning of exaltation as distinct from the Christian theological category of salvation. Focusing on the uniquely LDS conceptualization of Zion, I claim that embodied practices like procreation attained an ontologically sacred status due to their function in the restoration of the church and hastening of the second coming of Christ. Finally, I discuss marriage and kinship practices in the context of their role in identity formation of the early Saints. Due to the role of eternal marriage in LDS exaltation and identity formation, I propose that deviance from its requirements poses a significant threat to Joseph Smith's material restoration of the church and their exaltation.

In chapter 2, I examine the LDS LGBT and feminist movements of the past several decades. Pioneers of these movements have gained support at the grass roots level while confronting the leaders of the LDS church with recommendations for progressive, liberal reforms

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<sup>12</sup> LDS prophets roughly define exaltation as placement in the most prestigious heaven, known as the Celestial Kingdom. These sources will be discussed at length in chapters 1 and 2.

on policies like same-sex marriage and ordination of women. Although many such confrontations have resulted in the excommunication of LDS activists, they also have placed pressure upon the church to either adapt or reaffirm their official views of gender and sexuality during this period. Given the ways in which particular conceptualizations of gender and sexuality inform LDS cosmology, I claim that the LDS doctrines of eternal marriage and eternal gender restrict activists from proposing LDS LGBT-inclusive theologies due to doctrinal discordance.

In chapter 3, I review the history of church pamphleteering as a strategy to educate LDS youth on the central dogma of gender, sexuality, marriage, and kinship. In addition to these documents' educational role, many of these pamphlets also constitute a mechanism by which the church regulates the bodily comportment of its members. To this end, the church has dictated positive and negative religious meanings to body parts and bodily functions. The church claims that youth will gain spiritual power beyond their non-LDS, worldly peers by comporting their bodies according to particular LDS standards. Taken together the pamphlets of the church provide a distinctly LDS gender theory and sexual ethics.

## Chapter 1

### Eternalizing Kinship: History of the Doctrine of Celestial Marriage

The extent to which marriage occupies a critical position in LDS theology helps explain why stakeholders on both sides of contentious LGBT and feminist issues in the church have depicted their opponents as apostates. Addressing these contentions from the perspectives of church leaders and activists, chapter 2 will investigate the politics of disavowal, adaptation, and advocacy of LDS doctrines regarding marriage, gender, and sexuality. LDS scriptures, which are primarily composed of *The Bible*, *Book of Mormon*, and *Doctrine and Covenants*, also speak definitively on the topic of marriage.<sup>13</sup> For example, Section 131 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* states that “celestial marriage” is prerequisite for obtaining the “highest degree of celestial glory,” also known as “exaltation.”<sup>14</sup> LDS soteriology, primarily composed of the doctrines of salvation revealed through the prophet Joseph Smith, is similar to other forms of Christianity in its promise of salvation through faith in the atonement of Christ, but the LDS doctrine of exaltation augments preexisting Christian notions of the afterlife by claiming that exalted families will advance to godhood.<sup>15</sup> Stated otherwise by LDS Apostle Russell Nelson, “While salvation is an individual matter, exaltation is a family matter.”<sup>16</sup> By positioning celestial marriage as a rite of passage essential to the exaltation of its adherents, LDS theology inevitably

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<sup>13</sup> The complete scriptural canon of the LDS church recognizes a total of four books; they include *The Holy Bible* (King James Version), *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The LDS church represents the “standard works” to be part of an open scriptural canon based on the doctrine of continuing revelation. Due to continuing revelation, the LDS canon is subject to revision by general authorities of the church. For a more detailed account of the LDS canon, see: Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, *Answering Mormons’ Questions: Ready Responses for Inquiring Latter-day Saints* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal, 2012), 33.

<sup>14</sup> Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 131: 1-4.

<sup>15</sup> Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 132: 18-23.

<sup>16</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign*, November 1, 2008, 92.

raises the eschatological significance of marriage beyond that of its Protestant contemporaries. This emphasis on marriage, no doubt, helps account for the 31% higher prevalence of marriage among LDS individuals in the United States.<sup>17</sup> To demonstrate how celestial marriage came to constitute both a vital step in LDS eschatology and a key marker of alterity between Latter-day Saints and their non-LDS peers, this chapter will analyze church history and revelations from the Prophet Joseph Smith and other early LDS prophets and apostles.

## Introduction

The ideal of restoring Christianity to its primitive fullness motivated Joseph Smith to found the LDS church in Fayette, New York on April 6, 1830. Smith espoused his restoration on the revelation that all other Christian churches had apostatized from “true” Christianity. This revelation, which was recorded in 1838 and would later be canonized in the *Pearl of Great Price*, came about during the spring of 1820. Smith, fourteen years old at the time, ascertained from god, “that all [other] creeds are an abomination; that those professors were all corrupt; and that their hearts are far from me.”<sup>18</sup> Smith spent the next decade restoring the tenets of Christianity to their “fullness,” a term that LDS Christians use to refer to the restored teachings of the LDS church. Smith’s radically restorationist vision for his incipient religious movement mirrored certain aspects of other movements of the Second Great Awakening, including the Shakers, in the region that Whitney Cross described as the “Burned-over District” of upstate New York.<sup>19</sup> For example, the LDS law of consecration, which obligated members to devote their material talents and resources to preparing for the coming millennium, contributed to the initial LDS

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<sup>17</sup> Allison Pond, “A Portrait of Mormons in the U.S.,” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. July 24, 2009, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/07/24/a-portrait-of-mormons-in-the-us/#2>.

<sup>18</sup> Pearl of Great Price: Joseph Smith History 1:1-26.

<sup>19</sup> Marvin S. Hill, “The Rise of Mormonism in the Burned-over District: Another View” *New York History* 61 (1980) 411 – 430.



sense of detachment from broader nineteenth-century America socioeconomic structures. Despite its relinquishment of the law of consecration in 1838, LDS communities maintained an aura of peculiarity that American cultural anthropologist Evon Vogt claimed was “reinforced by out-group antagonism and persecution.”<sup>20</sup> Given the rapid increase in the variety of forms of religious expression during this period, one might expect that Protestant Americans would have tolerated the nascent LDS church. What made the restored teachings of LDS Christianity so peculiar and offensive to the sensibilities of nineteenth-century Protestantism? The LDS construction of the afterlife, especially its divergence from traditional Protestant notions of kinship and godhood, played a pivotal role in the alienation of LDS Christians from their Protestant peers.

### **Persecution of Latter-day Saints in the Early Church**

Although Smith described his teachings as *restored* rather than new, many of them were unprecedented by the standards of nineteenth-century Christian theology. Several central, innovative doctrines he revealed included the existence of multiple heavens that differ by prestige, eternal families established through celestial marriage, and continuing revelation by LDS prophets and apostles. The doctrine of continuing revelation, which states that church prophets and apostles are authorized to issue religious directives in the form of conference talks and scripture, justified Smith’s canonization of the existence of three segments of heaven – telestial, terrestrial, and celestial kingdoms.<sup>21,22</sup> While these latter-day additions to traditional Protestant theology were revolutionary in their own regards, they did not attract as much

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<sup>20</sup> Evon Z. Vogt and Thomas F. O’Dea, “A Comparative Study of the Role of Values in Social Action in Two Southwestern Communities,” *American Sociological Review* 18 (1953), 648.

<sup>21</sup> Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 68: 1-5.

<sup>22</sup> Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 76: 81-113.

negative attention from outsiders as the LDS doctrine of celestial marriage. Smith's teachings about celestial marriage, which were recorded in 1843 despite being practiced as early as 1831, integrated the controversial revelations that worthy LDS members were entitled to plural marriage and godhood in the afterlife.<sup>23</sup> According to LDS historian Terryl Givens, polygamy was "the most notorious of [early LDS] religious practices," which aggravated the growing rancor already established by the doctrines of continuing revelation and the law of consecration.<sup>24</sup> By permitting a plurality of wives, celestial marriage, which was required for godhood in the celestial kingdom, raised questions about the morality of LDS practitioners.<sup>25</sup> Other reform movements that were founded during Second Great Awakening also emphasized unconventional configurations of kinship and gender to usher in the new millennium. For example, the Shakers of Ann Lee, also known as "The Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing," posited a god that is "equally male and female" in addition to practicing celibacy.<sup>26</sup> Despite the growing prevalence of such unorthodox beliefs in the antebellum United States, the LDS practice of plural marriage drew particularly negative attention due to its connection to sexual licentiousness. According to Alfreda Eva Bell, "Mormon women are treated as but little better than slaves [ ] and are frequently subjected to personal violence."<sup>27</sup> Accounts like these fueled anti-LDS sentiment among nineteenth-century Americans. How did such persecution shape the developing LDS church?

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<sup>23</sup> Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 132: 58-66.

<sup>24</sup> Terryl Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth : Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>25</sup> Since the early twentieth century up until today, LDS Christians have practiced celestial marriage monogamously. Although celestial marriage no longer implies plural marriage, these practices were closely associated with one another before the abolition of plural marriage in 1890. In fact, David Buerger stated in *The Mysteries of Godliness* (59), "Celestial marriage was applied to and equated with plural marriage until the late nineteenth century."

<sup>26</sup> Carol Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conducts: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 132.

<sup>27</sup> W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 161.

As evinced by the forced migrations of Saints out of New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois by opponents of LDS Christianity, Joseph Smith and his acolytes attracted hostility seemingly wherever they settled. In virtually all of these cases, the flashpoint issue that led to the expulsion of Saints from their early settlements was LDS polygamy. For example, in his “Executive Order 44,” the Governor of Missouri, Lilburn W. Boggs, justified his expulsion of Mormons based on their “attitude of an open and avowed defiance of the laws,” including their reluctance to obey laws against plural marriage.<sup>28</sup> Patrick Mason, a historian of “Mormon Studies” and practicing member of the LDS church, claims, “By the late nineteenth century, opposition had profoundly shaped Mormon identity.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, artifacts found both in LDS rhetoric and scripture still reveal fears of persecution by non-LDS compatriots. For example, as a contingent of LDS Christians migrated from Nauvoo, Illinois, to their new settlement in the Salt Lake Valley after the violent assassination of Joseph Smith in Carthage, Illinois, Smith’s predecessor, Brigham Young, received a revelation stating:

Thy brethren have rejected you and your testimony, even the nation that has driven you out; And now cometh the day of their calamity, even the days of sorrow, like a woman that is taken in travail; and their sorrow shall be great unless they speedily repent, yea, very speedily. For they killed the prophets, and them that were sent unto them; and they have shed innocent blood, which crieth from the ground against them.<sup>30</sup>

Young received this timely revelation at Winter Quarters, Nebraska, where almost 3,500 LDS men, women, and children camped during the winter of 1847 as they awaited safe passage westward.<sup>31</sup> Canonization of their experience of exile in the West was formative for early LDS Christians and subsequent generations.

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<sup>28</sup> Lynn S. Neal, “Anti-Mormonism,” in *Religious Intolerance in America: A Documentary History*, ed. John Corrigan and Lynn S. Neal (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 82.

<sup>29</sup> Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 153.

<sup>30</sup> Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 136: 34-36.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Edmond Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri: Winter Quarters, 1846-1852* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 89.

To the extent that the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century LDS practice of polygamy engendered accusations of both doctrinal and sexual deviance by suspicious Protestants, LDS polygamy came to constitute a marker of difference for Saints. As a result, the practice of plural marriage alienated LDS Christians from other American denominational expressions of Christianity. Jan Shipps, an eminent non-LDS historian of the LDS church, posited that nineteenth-century Protestants and Catholics interpreted LDS polygamy as a threat to “the monogamous base of ‘civilized’ family life.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, nineteenth-century Christians legitimated their turn to family values by connecting them to Christian sexual ethics, an association that Karen Armstrong claims to have been developed over “two thousand years’ worth of cultural conditioning.”<sup>33</sup> Given that nineteenth-century Christian sexual ethics signified polygamy as sinful to same degree as adultery and sexual infidelity, many non-LDS Christians criticized the LDS church for ensnaring the souls of their converts in unethical kinship relations. For example, Thomas Cary Johnson, a nineteenth-century Protestant and severe critic of LDS Christianity, stated:

Polygamy welds the Mormons together in a solid unity inasmuch as it separates between the Mormons and the rest of the world; and inasmuch as having permeated Mormon society it cannot be condemned without disgrace either in one’s self or kinfolks.<sup>34</sup>

Johnson’s statement calls attention to the fact that LDS doctrine prohibits celestial marriage between LDS and non-LDS partners. As such, why would a faithful LDS Christian engage in an out-group relationship given the requirement of celestial marriage for exaltation? Addressing this concern, historian Kathleen Flake claimed that the ideological connections between polygamy, celestial marriage, and salvation in the LDS church caused plural celestial marriage to endure as

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<sup>32</sup> Jan Shipps, “Difference and Otherness: Mormonism and the American Mainstream,” in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna, (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 85.

<sup>33</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Gospel According to Woman* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 55.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Cary Johnson, *Mormonism* (Richmond, VA: Whittet and Shepperson, 1905), 30.

a moral obligation for early LDS Christians who desired exaltation in the afterlife.<sup>35</sup> With the understanding that LDS Christians preserved their practice of marriage in spite of out-group persecution due to its doctrinal association with exaltation, we now turn to the question of how this association developed in the early LDS church.

### **LDS Bodies, Marriage, and Eternity**

Upon their exile from the United States into Salt Lake Valley, the Saints retreated from historical time and entered into the mythic time of the latter days.<sup>36</sup> Brigham Young presented this final move westward as a literal fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2, which states “the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.”<sup>37</sup> The Saints’ migration to Salt Lake Valley, thereby portrayed as a fulfillment of prophecy, signaled that the millennium was closer than at any point before. However, before the millennium could commence, the Saints needed to establish Zion in their new territory. By resignifying the term Zion to mean “the pure in heart,” Joseph Smith altered the focus of the millennium away from a particular geographic region and towards the embodied practices of the Saints.<sup>38</sup> Charged with restoring Zion before the millennium through their purity of heart, Saints’ faithfulness to the mission of the church, including everyday practices like settlement building, marriage, and childbearing, assumed an eschatological significance.

Plural marriage, which Smith proposed as “an ancient order of marriage in which one man took several wives,” was but one component among an inventory of other practices that

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<sup>35</sup> Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 45.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Smith adapted the expression “latter days” to refer to the seventh and final dispensation (time division) that he commenced by restoring the LDS Church in 1830. See Doctrine and Covenants 128 for more information on past dispensations.

<sup>37</sup> Reed C. Durham, Jr., “Westward Migration: Planning and Prophecy” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 1563.

<sup>38</sup> Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 97: 21.

were required for establishment of Zion and the hastening of the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup> According to Smith's revelation, the time had come for the physical restoration of certain ancient principles, including plural marriage, which had been established during the fullness of the gospel in earlier dispensations.<sup>40</sup> Without opposition from neighboring Christians, LDS pioneers exerted creative license in constructing the Zion that Smith's restored gospel had envisioned. Given that Joseph Smith proclaimed that god had once lived on earth like humans with his own family, there was a clear paradigm for pioneer Saints to follow to achieve their own godhood.<sup>41</sup> Much like Mircea Eliade's description of consecrating sacred space as "reproducing the work of the gods," LDS procreation recreated Smith's prophetic account of how all humanity derived from a heavenly father and mother.<sup>42</sup> In describing this doctrine, anthropologist Fenella Cannell states, "Humans, continuing to give birth to children in the Celestial Kingdom, will send them out into new worlds of their own making just as Heavenly Father once sent them out into this world."<sup>43</sup> To establish Zion and achieve the glory of their heavenly father, pioneers would need to reenact his procreative feat through their own participation in plural marriage.<sup>44</sup> While articulating the progression from human mortality to godly immortality, Cannell draws attention

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<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Harmer-Dionne, "Once a Peculiar People: Cognitive Dissonance and the Suppression of Mormon Polygamy As a Case Study Negating the Belief-Action Distinction," *Stanford Law Review* 50 (1998): 1298.

<sup>40</sup> Brian C. Hales, "Encouraging Joseph Smith to Practice Plural Marriage: The Accounts of the Angel with a Drawn Sword," *Journal of Mormon Historical Studies* 11 (2010): 55-71. Regarding his call to enact polygamy, Joseph Smith informed his disciple Joseph Lee Robinson the following in 1841: "He had besought the Lord to take this instruction from him that he might not have the responsibility of introducing and putting into practice that order of things because of the great opposition it would meet because of the traditions of the people. But it came to pass the Lord instead of releasing him from that burden, he sent an holy angel with a drawn sword unto him, saying unto him, Joseph, unless you go to and immediately teach that principle (namely polygamy or plural marriage) and put the same in practice, that he, Joseph, should be slain for thus saith the Lord, that the time has now come that I will raise up seed unto me as I spoke by my servant Jacob as is recorded in the Book of Mormon."

<sup>41</sup> In "The Family: a Proclamation," the first presidency (prophet and two counselors) claims that all Saints will "progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny." This quote follows the model that humans will achieve godhood in the future and preside over their own universes.

<sup>42</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harcourt, 1957), 29.

<sup>43</sup> Fenella Cannell, "The Christianity of Anthropology," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11 (2005): 343.

<sup>44</sup> Brigham Young was an outlier in procreative achievement, to be sure, with 55 wives sealed to him in the temple. For more information on polygamy and church presidents, see Jeffry Ogden Johnson, "Determining and Defining 'Wife': The Brigham Young Households," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (1987): 57-70.

to the roles of marriage and procreation that accompany godhood. If god was once human, then humans have the potential to become gods with their own spirit children. However, to obtain godhood in the Celestial Kingdom, one must undergo the LDS ritual of celestial marriage in the temple.

Providentially, their arrival in sacred, unregulated space allowed LDS pioneers to embrace plural marriage at an accelerated pace. Within days of arriving in 1847, Brigham Young, the successor to Joseph Smith, selected a plot of land on which to construct the Salt Lake Temple where celestial marriage ceremonies and endowment ceremonies, which are prerequisite to celestial marriage, would commence.<sup>45</sup> However, this project would require years to complete, so many plural marriages and endowments were consecrated, with the permission of church leadership, in such diverse places as Salt Lake City's Council House and a nearby mountaintop named Ensign Peak.<sup>46</sup> The Council House would come to be known as the Endowment House and signaled the ecclesiastical pressure to spread plural marriage.<sup>47</sup> Within the first several years of LDS establishment in Salt Lake, Apostle Orson Pratt commanded the Saints to enter polygamous marriages as their leaders had done for over a decade; he said:

Now, let us enquire, what will become of those individuals who have this law taught unto them in plainness, if they reject it? [A voice in the stand, "they will be damned."] I will tell you: they will be damned, saith the Lord God Almighty, in the revelation He has given. Why? Because where much is given, much is required; where there is great knowledge unfolded for the exaltation, glory, and happiness of the sons and daughters of God, if they close up their hearts, if they reject the testimony of His word, and will not give heed to the principles He has ordained for their good, they are worthy of damnation, and the Lord has said they shall be damned.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Church Educational System, *Presidents of the Church Student Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 30-33.

<sup>46</sup> Lamar C. Berrett, "Endowment Houses" in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 456.

<sup>47</sup> Marie Cornwall, Camela Courtright, and Laga Van Beek, "How Common the Principle? Women as Plural Wives in 1860," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (1993): 141-142.

<sup>48</sup> Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," (speech at Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, UT, August 29, 1852).

Facing a choice between damnation and the potential for godhood, it is not surprising that the proportion of LDS families practicing plural marriage rose to 20-30% of total LDS families during the late nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup> By this point in LDS history, the notion of the Celestial Kingdom was inextricably linked to LDS prescriptions for marriage and procreation. This linkage would come to constitute the doctrine that I designate as redemptive matrimony.

### **Plural Marriage and Identity Formation**

To the extent that plural marriage set apart early LDS communities as peculiar, this practice continually reproduced the notion that LDS identity was distinct from Protestant Christian identity. The perception that the Saints were somehow distinct was essential to their claims that they exclusively held the keys to the only true gospel. According to the Book of Mormon, there are “save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil.”<sup>50</sup> As the foundational text of the LDS movement, the Book of Mormon reassured LDS individuals that out-group opposition was not only a sign of fulfilled prophecy but in fact was confirmation that they were following the one true church. Consequently, the LDS Church, unlike its peers among the minority denominations of Christianity such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists, incorporated a history of persecution and exclusion into its narrative tradition. For that reason, the practice of plural marriage played an important role in the identity formation of Saints who otherwise would have faced incorporation into denominational Christianity and thereby lost their distinctive essence. As such, the slow relinquishment of this practice over the course of several decades, precipitated

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<sup>49</sup> Flake, *Politics of American Religious Identity*, 65.

<sup>50</sup> The Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 14: 10.



by church President Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto, brought into question whether LDS identity would destabilize without its defining characteristic.<sup>51</sup>

After the LDS Church banned its practice of plural marriage, the doctrine of celestial marriage remained an integral part of LDS conceptions of the afterlife and kinship. The U.S. federal government solely specified plural marriage as illegal, leaving the LDS church the liberty to signify other aspects of marriage freely. In an effort to mediate between the demands of the federal government and the religious beliefs of his congregation, Wilford Woodruff was direct in explaining his rationale for banning plural marriage to LDS practitioners, stating:

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.<sup>52</sup>

Following this manifesto, longstanding doctrinal association between plural and celestial marriage presented difficulties for post-polygamy LDS Christians. For instance, how could LDS truth claims about marriage, which were revealed as infallible, be accepted unequivocally despite their obvious adaptations to the political exigencies? Also, how would the church resignify the plural marriage teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young? Woodruff responded to these questions by stating that continued practice of plural marriage would result in the federal government's dissolution of the church, including all of its infrastructure and future celestial marriage ordinances.<sup>53</sup> Woodruff's prioritization of celestial marriage ordinances over polygamy demonstrated that celestial marriage, not plural marriage, was fundamental to LDS cosmology and therefore indispensable to the church's mission. From this moment forth, celestial marriage

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<sup>51</sup> Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Official Declaration 1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Wilford Woodruff, "Stake Conference Address," (speech, Cache Stake Conference, Logan, UT, Sunday, November 1, 1891).

would retain its role as that which distinguished LDS practitioners are peculiar but would no longer subject them to accusations of deviance.

### **Eternity and Deviance**

With celestial marriage firmly established both as a fundamental component of LDS cosmology and important factor in LDS identity formation, church discourse increasingly focused on articulating how the covenant of marriage structures the afterlife. For example, Joseph F. Smith, prophet of the LDS church from 1835-1844, stated:

The implication here is this, that they who are clean in their lives; who are virtuous; who are honorable; but who will not receive this covenant of eternal marriage in the house of God, shall come forth—and they may even enter into the celestial kingdom, but when they enter there they enter as servants—to wait upon those ‘who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.’<sup>54</sup>

Smith follows this statement by remarking on the “bitterness” that characterizes the eternal destinies of those people who fail to conform to the covenant of celestial marriage. To be sure, spending eternity as a servant in the Celestial Kingdom represents a more *glorious* destiny than placement in the Terrestrial or Telestial Kingdoms. However, the role of servant still indicates a life of deviance from the normative expectation of LDS Christians. In particular, the expectation of marriage presents theological concerns for LDS individuals who fail to conform to the heterosexist ideal. LDS church leaders’ discourse on the deviance of modern-day expressions of gender and sexuality demonstrates the defensive stance the church has taken on issues concerning marriage and the family. As LDS Apostle M. Russell Ballard stated:

In today’s world, where Satan’s aggression against the family is so prevalent, parents must do all they can to fortify and defend their families. Our most basic institution of

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<sup>54</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith, Vol. 2.*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1956), 62.

family desperately needs help and support from the extended family and the public institutions that surround us.<sup>55</sup>

The persecution that characterized early LDS experience still pervades the historical memory of many Saints who, despite membership in a church of over fifteen million members and cultural hegemony in many parts of the American West, paradoxically depict themselves as underdogs in their struggle to persist within a religiously corrupt period of history. Understanding how LGBT and feminist LDS practitioners reappropriate the LDS history of persecution to meet their own needs is a future area of research.

## **Conclusion**

Since the founding of the LDS Church, prophets have articulated a model of the afterlife that integrates the concepts of marriage and family into cosmology. Although there have been mutations in marital practice, like the ebb and flow of polygamy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, doctrines and practices associated with marriage have intimately affected the religious identity formation of Saints throughout their history. The materiality of these practices has constituted a central component of both Joseph Smith's restoration and the building of Zion on the American continent. Given the abiding importance of marriage and family in LDS cosmology, in the next chapter I will demonstrate how these doctrines have come to inform the politics of gender and sexuality in the LDS church during the twentieth century.

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<sup>55</sup> M. Russell Ballard, "What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest," *Ensign*, November 1, 2005, 45.

## Chapter 2

## Gender Politics and Cosmology in the LDS Church

The frequent inclusion of discourse about the family throughout late twentieth-century LDS texts was by no means exceptional during an era in which conservative Christian organizations appealed to the American public for a return to traditional family values. Yet what distinguishes the LDS turn to the family from other conservative Christianities was its underlying theology that located salvation within the context of kinship and embodiment. The family is “central to the creator’s plan” in LDS theology, and constructions of kinship therein applied a uniquely LDS understanding of gender as an organizing principle.<sup>56</sup> Movements for LGBT and feminist equality among members of the LDS church have conflicted with church authorities over how to foster inclusivity while maintaining the view of gender binary that is fundamental to the church’s notions of personhood and salvation. Furthermore, eminent LDS church authorities have influenced the ethos of these negotiations by distinguishing the gay and lesbian, feminist, and intellectual movements as “particularly dangerous to the spiritual health of the church.”<sup>57</sup> This study will analyze the tensions between LDS LGBT and feminist movements and the church through a textual analysis of each side’s claims on LDS cosmology. In doing so, this study will measure the degree to which LDS authorities have reformed and reaffirmed their discourse about LGBT and feminist issues over the past several decades. Given the rapidly

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<sup>56</sup> The LDS doctrine of salvation through embodiment in families is captured by the following quote: “Birth into a family was the way God chose to send His spirit children to earth. Marriage and family relationships are the central means He has prepared to achieve His purposes.” In Daniel K. Judd, Guy L. Dorius, and David C. Dollahite, “Families and the Great Plan of Happiness,” in *Strengthening Our Families: An In-Depth Look at the Proclamation on the Family*, ed. David C. Dollahite (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 2000), 8.

<sup>57</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “President Packer Interview Transcript from PBS Documentary” *Newsroom: The Official Resource for News Media, Opinion Leaders and the Public*, July 20, 2007, accessed 14 December, 2014, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/president-packer-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary>.

changing political climate especially surrounding LGBT issues in the United States, scholarly attention towards the positions of the LDS church offers a transitory glimpse into an evolving gender theory and sexual ethics.

## **Introduction**

LDS theology regarding gender and sexuality has evolved to maintain relevance to the lives of LDS members. This evolution in church doctrine reflects the historical contingency of categories like gender, sex, and sexual orientation and is evident in the teachings of prophets and apostles, the LDS church's highest authorities in both spiritual and practical matters.<sup>58</sup> Modern prophets in the LDS church, who serve also as church presidents, are accorded the authority to "interpret the mind and will of the Lord" on modern-day issues as they arise.<sup>59</sup> The feminist and LGBT movements of the 1970s through early 2000s provided an impetus for church leaders to reaffirm, and potentially adapt, traditional LDS doctrines on gender and sexuality. Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley's 1995 revelation stated, "gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."<sup>60</sup> Hinckley's statement was a major development in the church's discourse on gender, and later chapters will determine whether Hinckley's proclamation reflects a reaffirmation of longstanding LDS doctrine or a contextually motivated theological innovation. Regardless, Hinckley's revelation, popularly known by its title, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," has become central to the church's theological

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<sup>58</sup> The hierarchy of the LDS church includes one prophet, two counselors, and twelve apostles. These figures hold priesthood power that enables them to dictate new doctrines and revise older doctrines and church policies.

<sup>59</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Revelation: The Word of the Lord to His Prophets," *Ensign*, May 1977, accessed December 2, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1977/05/revelation-the-word-of-the-lord-to-his-prophets?lang=eng>.

<sup>60</sup> The magnitude of this statement on LDS individuals is manifest by the church's prescription to hang a copy on the wall of every home. More information on this prescription can be found in: Julie B. Beck, "Teaching the Doctrine of the Family," *Ensign*, March 2011, 12-17.

case for encouraging members to oppose political campaigns that drive equal rights legislation for women and LGBT populations. According to the LDS church Handbook:

Members are encouraged to support measures that strengthen the moral fabric of society, particularly those designed to maintain and strengthen the family, the fundamental unit of society. In some exceptional instances the Church will take a position on specific legislation, particularly when it concludes that moral issues are involved. Only the First Presidency can speak for the Church or commit the Church to support or oppose specific legislation or to seek to intervene in judicial matters.<sup>61</sup>

Serving as a catechism, the Handbook and manuals of the LDS church provide a comprehensive list of church policies and doctrines, respectively, regarding topics ranging from sacrament to domestic abuse. Altogether, these resources describe the doctrinal teaching about how gender and sexuality are relevant to religious experience and the ecclesiastical policies that bishops and other church leaders must execute by virtue of their ministerial authority.

### **LDS Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Race**

LDS church and member involvement in the political battles surrounding the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1979 and the passage of California's Proposition 8 in 2008 demonstrates their political mobilization around issues pertaining to the family. Historian Neil J. Young describes this mobilization as religiously motivated. In an essay on the status of the ERA as a moral issue, he argues, "Mormon theology heightened its emphasis on women's subordinate status and domestic place." Young contends, "the ERA fight provided women with an opportunity to resist some of those limitations by becoming public political actors for the church."<sup>62</sup> For the intents and purposes of this thesis, I ask: in which ways does the LDS church emphasize "women's subordinate status"? How do dissenting LDS members respond to such

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<sup>61</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook 2: Administering to the Church* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009), 189.

<sup>62</sup> Neil J. Young, "The ERA Is a Moral Issue: The Mormon Church, LDS Women, and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment," *American Quarterly* 59 (2007), 625.

female subordination? More recently, the church's involvement in California's Proposition 8 legislation, which banned same-sex marriage statewide, has led to increased scrutiny of their political agenda. In late June 2008, a letter from the First Presidency of the LDS church, written by Prophet Thomas S. Monson and his two counselors, was sent out to all LDS congregations in California to be announced during the upcoming Sunday service to all active members thus stating:

The Church's teachings and position on this moral issue are unequivocal. Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, and children are entitled to be born within this bond of marriage. A broad-based coalition of churches and other organizations placed the proposed amendment on the ballot. The Church will participate with this coalition in seeking its passage. Local Church leaders will provide information about how you may become involved in this important cause. We ask that you do all you can to support the proposed constitutional amendment by donating of your means and time to assure that marriage in California is legally defined as being between a man and a woman. Our best efforts are required to preserve the sacred institution of marriage.<sup>63</sup>

Given the "unequivocal" immorality of same-sex marriage, active members are limited in their ability to question the church's stance on this issue without facing potential chastisement from church authorities. Examples of LDS church discipline include "disfellowship," excommunication, and being questioned by the "Strengthening Church Members Committee," which retains archives of church members who have criticized LDS doctrines, practices, and leaders through their "letters to the editor, political activities, statements made to reporters, and other published writings."<sup>64</sup> How, therefore, can members who dissent with church policies prudently forge social movements in the church that have potential for substantive policy change?

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<sup>63</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "California and Same-Sex Marriage," *Newsroom: The Official Resource for News Media, Opinion Leaders and the Public*, June 30, 2008, accessed December 14, 2014, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/california-and-same-sex-marriage>.

<sup>64</sup> Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 364.

Several LGBT and feminist campaigns led by LDS members in the past decades have resulted in the highly publicized excommunications of church members who actively sought a revision of church policies. By pressuring church leadership for doctrinal and policy change from a grassroots level, these activists challenged the hierarchical structure of the church. Most recent were the excommunications of Kate Kelly, an advocate for women's priesthood in the church, and John P. Dehlin, who advocated policy changes that would have made the church more inclusive to gay and lesbian members.<sup>65</sup> Kelly's organization, Ordain Women, maintains a website featuring hundreds of practicing LDS members who have joined the movement to end the church's policy preventing women from holding the priesthood. Dehlin, whose roots in the LDS church span over five generations, manages a website, Mormon Stories Podcast, whose mission is "exploring, celebrating and challenging Mormon culture through stories."<sup>66</sup> Hundreds of active LDS members have used Dehlin's online forum for seeking community affirmation and pragmatic advice regarding how to reconcile LGBT and LDS identities. A podcast from late November 2014, states:

Meg and Jake [Abhau] were conservative Mormons when their 13 year old son came out to them as gay 18 months ago. In this series, the Abhaus discuss the problems that LGBT teens face in the LDS church and how those problems can spill over and impact the families of all LGBT Mormons. The Abhaus are very concerned about the damaging messages that LGBT people hear at church, and how rejection is a huge factor in the appallingly high suicide rate among LGBT teens and young adults.<sup>67</sup>

If excommunication presents a predictable form of discipline to members of the church who dissent on issues of gender and sexuality, then why do so many dissenters remain stalwart

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<sup>65</sup> Cadence Woodland, "The End of the 'Mormon Moment'," *New York Times*, July 14, 2014, accessed December 14, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/15/opinion/the-end-of-the-mormon-moment.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/15/opinion/the-end-of-the-mormon-moment.html?_r=0).

<sup>66</sup> "About," *Mormon Stories Podcast*, accessed December 14, 2014, <http://mormonstories.org/about/>.

<sup>67</sup> Tyler Alden, "508-510: The Abhau Family — Supporting their Gay Son, Dealing With Faith Crisis and Finding their Voice," *Mormon Stories Podcast*, November 20, 2014, accessed December 14, 2014, <http://mormonstories.org/abhau-family-supporting-their-gay-son-dealing-with-faith-crisis-and-finding-their-voice/>.



supporters of their causes within the church rather than simply renouncing membership? Several examples of modernization throughout the church's history may reveal why there is ample reason for dissenters to hope for policy and doctrinal change.

In 1978 the LDS church repealed its policy that denied priesthood ordination to members of African descent.<sup>68</sup> This policy change, which was introduced at least one decade after similar reforms in other peer Christian denominations, is often cited to substantiate claims that the LDS church is amenable to accommodating political pressures. These pressures, some of which the LDS church now faces regarding its policies on gender and LGBT members, include, "adverse publicity from the media, pressures from the black community, threats of successful litigation, an organizational imperative for growth, the quest for respectability, and challenges from Mormon intellectuals and activists."<sup>69</sup> The potential for policy change is manifest by the church's sanctioning of black men holding the priesthood, not to mention its earlier reversal of polygamy. But is a policy change necessarily equivalent to doctrinal change? Are church policy and doctrine interchangeable? Doubt about this purported equivalence stems from the disparity in gravity between matters of policy and doctrine.<sup>70</sup> Since "policy can be altered by administrative decision while doctrinal matters require divine revelation," President Spencer W. Kimball's 1978 decision to grant priesthood to worthy black members necessitated an official declaration that he had received divine revelation regarding the issue.<sup>71</sup> In line with this precedent, changes in the church's stance on same-sex marriage will require novel doctrines given through divine

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<sup>68</sup> Armand L. Mauss, "Sociological Perspectives on the Mormon Subculture," *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984): 448.

<sup>69</sup> O. Kendall White, Jr., and Daryl White, "Abandoning an Unpopular Policy: An Analysis of the Decision Granting the Mormon Priesthood to Blacks," *Sociology of Religion* 41 (1980): 231-245.

<sup>70</sup> In the case of black LDS members receiving the priesthood, the distinction between policy and doctrine became a flashpoint issue. For more information on this distinction, see: John J. Stewart and William E. Bennett, *Mormonism and the Negro*, (Orem, Utah: Community Press, 1960), 46-47.

<sup>71</sup> "Official Declaration 2," Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed December 14, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/od/2?lang=eng>.

revelation that build upon, and possibly revise, previously held notions about gender and cosmology.

### **Gender and Cosmology in the LDS Church**

Although the term gender is more often applied as an analytic category for outsiders' critiques of LDS gender inequality, the leaders of the LDS church have constructed a gender theory that unequivocally claims conservative gender roles as a foundation of normative families. Spencer W. Kimball, who served as prophet from 1973 until 1985, taught, "The husband is expected to support his family and only in an emergency should a wife secure outside employment. Her place is in the home, to build the home into a heaven of delight."<sup>72</sup> Kimball's statement was befitting of the ERA campaign and Roe v. Wade era politics that led many liberal Americans to question assumptions about the role of women in society. Subsequent LDS prophets have maintained conservative standards on the place of women in society. For example, President Ezra Taft Benson stated "We urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family," a revelation that twenty-first century President Gordon B. Hinckley sustained.<sup>73</sup> As such, the spirit of LDS doctrine over issues of women and the home has not changed greatly over the past four decades. In 1994, LDS sociologist Tim Heaton found that married LDS women hold full-time jobs at a rate 30% lower than the national average.<sup>74</sup> Doctrinal injunctions against working women are likely responsible for this discrepancy, suggesting that LDS populations are

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<sup>72</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Eternal Marriage Student Manual* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 237.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Tim B. Heaton, "Familial, Socioeconomic, and Religious Behavior: A Comparison of LDS and Non-LDS Women," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (1994): 173.

influenced by the gender norms of the church. These directives for the behavior of church members are inscribed in other doctrines of the church as well.

LDS doctrine mythologizes gender differences through rhetoric that situates destiny, salvation, and morality in gender identity. The historiography of gender by prominent LDS apostle D. Todd Christofferson claims, “From age immemorial, societies have relied on the moral force of women.”<sup>75</sup> Statements like Christofferson’s are reminiscent of the nineteenth century’s “cult of true womanhood” that idealized women by essentializing their feminine traits.<sup>76</sup> Given that Joseph Smith founded the LDS church in the early nineteenth century, it is not surprising that artifacts from the cult of true womanhood may have been incorporated into LDS doctrine.<sup>77</sup> The LDS doctrine of salvation that physical birth into an earthly body is requisite to attaining “the highest realms in God’s celestial kingdom” raises the stakes of womanhood by situating women’s procreative role as an integral step in the spiritual progression of humanity.<sup>78</sup> Are LDS women able to opt out of the expectation to fulfill their sacred gender role?

LDS leaders conceptualize the transgression of gender expression norms as morally problematic because of the centrality of gender distinction in LDS cosmology. During the organization of the LDS church, prophet Joseph Smith revealed that heavenly “spirit children” had a choice to either follow Jesus’ plan and become embodied on earth or to follow Lucifer’s plan and reject their right to mortal bodies.<sup>79</sup> The division among spirit children due to Lucifer’s

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<sup>75</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “The Moral Force of Women,” *Ensign*, October 2013, accessed December 14, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/the-moral-force-of-women?lang=eng>.

<sup>76</sup> John J. Bukowczyk, “Holy Mary, Other of God: Sacred and Profane Constructions of Polish-American Womanhood,” *The Polish Review* 48 (2) 2003: 199.

<sup>77</sup> For a Catholic analog of LDS doctrine on women’s essentialized qualities, see: Jane F. Collier, “Mary to modern woman: the material basis of Marianismo and its transformation in a Spanish village,” *American Ethnologist* 13 (1): 1986: 100-107.

<sup>78</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “The Moral Force of Women,” *Ensign*, October 2013, accessed December 14, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/the-moral-force-of-women?lang=eng>.

<sup>79</sup> Joseph F. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2006), 181, 297.

plan has been likened to a cosmological struggle between good and evil. To further develop what Jesus' cosmological plan entailed, Apostle Boyd K. Packer explains that the plan requires the union between male and female, whose "complementing differences are the very key to the plan of happiness."<sup>80</sup> LDS individuals' rejections of gender roles, therefore, are thought to result from the interference of "Satan," who "attempts to undermine the family by confusing gender."<sup>81</sup> To deny these roles, which are "set forth in exalted celestial declarations," is a direct assault against the cosmology organized by the divine.<sup>82</sup> As such, men and women actively engaged in the LDS church are expected to affirm their cosmology by comporting themselves in a manner consistent with prescribed gender roles, of which LDS individuals cannot simply opt out. Given the rigidity of these roles, which cosmological claims have LDS members employed to contest the church's seemingly inflexible definition of gender and sexuality?

### **Constructing LGBT-Inclusive LDS Theologies**

Several LDS LGBT liberationist theologies have been proposed to challenge the normative claims of recent LDS prophets (mid-twentieth century to present) who have consolidated the church's conservative doctrines on gender and sexuality. The LDS LGBT-inclusive theologies of Devan Mark Hite, Seth R. Payne, and Taylor G. Petrey provide key insights into the doctrines advocated by many liberal LDS members. Hite's ethnographic approach to LGBT-inclusive theology has utilized the narratives of LGBTQ members and their families to construct "everyday" theological positions; he claims, "there exists enough variation

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<sup>80</sup> Boyd K. Packer, "For Time and All Eternity," *Ensign*, November 1993, accessed December 14, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1993/10/for-time-and-all-eternity?lang=eng#10->.

<sup>81</sup> "Satan," Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed December 14, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/topics/satan?lang=eng&query=Gender>.

<sup>82</sup> Boyd K. Packer, "For Time and All Eternity," *Ensign*, November 1993, accessed December 14, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1993/10/for-time-and-all-eternity?lang=eng#10->.

from within the faithful body of the Church on this issue that the question of how we are *using* our beliefs might serve as a primary force that can generate what is necessary to inspire more inclusive positions within Mormonism.”<sup>83</sup> Hite’s grassroots approach to theological modernization suggests that the interpretations of LDS members as a whole, rather than solely those members of liberal opinions, must inform any post-heteronormative LGBTQ hermeneutics. Given that church members are asked to sustain leaders by lifting hands at bi-annual General Conferences, the church’s most democratic practice, there is some precedent for Hite’s grassroots approach. Payne emphasizes the tendency in LDS thought to “eternalize” temporal concepts like kinship, gender, and sexuality, which have become “inexorably intertwined” with LDS notions of God.<sup>84</sup> The distinctly LDS notion that spirits were gendered before they entered their earthly bodies constitutes one example in which LDS theology has eternalized the gender identity of all people, making it impossible to extricate gender from definitions of personhood. Finally, Petrey’s “post-heterosexual Mormon theology” calls for LDS doctrines to incorporate a postmodern understanding of gender to ameliorate the position of LGBT members. Later chapters of this thesis will illustrate the ways in which LGBT LDS members face practical liabilities and handicaps due to particularly conservative components LDS doctrine on gender and kinship. Heavily informed by Judith Butler’s queer theory, Petrey states:

The experiences of transsexuals, transgender, drag, intersexuality, and the variety of gender performances in gay, lesbian, and straight cultures are not adequately understood through the category of gender as a system that matches “masculine” and “feminine” sexual desires to “male” and “female” bodies. The history of this categorization of sexual preferences in connection with gender relies on the same heterosexual matrix that it

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<sup>83</sup> Devan Mark Hite, “The ‘Queer’ God(s) of Mormonism: Considering an Inclusive, Post-Heteronormative LGBTQI Hermeneutics,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 64 (2013): 55.

<sup>84</sup> Seth R. Payne, “Mormonism and Same-Sex Marriage: Theological Underpinnings and New Perspectives,” *Journal of Catholic Legal Studies* 41 (2012): 43-48.

attempts to explain. Gender simply fails as a category for thinking about sexuality, and LDS discourse should move beyond such an infelicitous conflation.<sup>85</sup>

Like Butler, Petrey contends that practices associated with gender and kinship are merely norms that have been constructed through reiteration over time rather than reflective of substantive realities.<sup>86</sup> As such, the eternalization of these concepts by LDS prophets, according to Petrey's argument, unnecessarily restricts LDS members to modernist notions about the body, kinship, and gender. Given the incompatibility between the gender theories of Butler and LDS cosmology, how has the LDS church addressed its members' grassroots efforts to become more LGBT inclusive?

Similar to its strategy to remedy the doctrinal ambiguity regarding the priesthood of black members, the LDS church has established an official website that compiles the most updated positions of the church on LGBT issues. This website, called [mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org), displays quotes and extended theological discourses from LDS prophets and apostles primarily on the topic of same-sex attraction. The most prominent of these passages is a section entitled "Where the Church stands," which states:

The experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though individuals do not choose to have such attractions, they do choose how to respond to them. With love and understanding, the Church reaches out to all God's children, including our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters.<sup>87</sup>

The tone of this passage is ostensibly sympathetic to the struggles of lesbian and gay members, which is consonant with Tanya Erzen's ethnographic finding that conservative Christian organizations have increasingly focused on the potential for compassionate religious healing of

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<sup>85</sup> Taylor G. Petrey, "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44 (2011): 122.

<sup>86</sup> For more information about Butler's postmodern conceptualization of gender and sexuality, see: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>87</sup> "Love One Another: A Discussion on Same-Sex Attraction," Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed December 14, 2014, [mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org).

homosexuality rather than traditional anti-gay rhetoric.<sup>88</sup> Still, the above passage does not address other sexual phenomena like bisexuality or transgenderism. The exclusion of these latter phenomena from [mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org) would be expected given that bisexuality and transgenderism are distinct from gay identity. Upon further inquiry, the LDS church's position on transgenderism is equally as dismissive as its position on same-sex attraction is tolerant. Referring back to the church's normative statements on gender comportment, as mentioned earlier in this essay, LDS doctrine posits that Satan "confuses gender" in order to destabilize the eternal family. As such, the LDS church determines Satan to be the cause of transgenderism while taking a more liberal view on same-sex attraction. While the church maintains "members of the Church who have same-sex attractions, but don't act on them, can continue to enjoy full fellowship in the church, which includes holding the priesthood, carrying out callings, and attending the temple," it withholds these privileges from transgender members.<sup>89</sup> In addition to being restricted from full fellowship, the Human Rights Campaign, an influential LGBT civil rights advocacy group in the United States, attests that "a transgender Mormon who has sex reassignment surgery will almost certainly be subject to ecclesiastical discipline."<sup>90</sup> A future direction of this research will be to uncover the narratives of gender nonconforming LDS members to investigate the role that cognitive dissonance plays in reconciling conflicting religious and gender identities.

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<sup>88</sup> Tanya Erzen, *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 184.

<sup>89</sup> "Love One Another," Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org).

<sup>90</sup> "Stances of Faiths on LGBT Issues: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)," Human Rights Campaign, accessed December 14, 2014, <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saint>.

## **Conclusion**

Although this chapter claims that LDS leaders have reaffirmed and adapted doctrines on gender and sexuality to meet the social and political exigencies of the past half-century, its aim is not to deconstruct the doctrines of the LDS church through revealing the historical contingency of their theological evolution. Rather, I have sought to provide a theological and historical context into which Latter-day Saints' variety of increasingly postmodern views on gender and sexuality will fit. In addition, this project intends to demonstrate the incremental reforms in LDS doctrine that emerge through dialectical engagement between church members and church authorities. The value of this project is its narration of a political landscape within LDS culture that rejects a flattening of all members' beliefs into one normative belief system. As I will show in the next chapter, the instruction of LDS youth and young adults in categories that shape understandings of marriage and family, such as gender and sexuality, demonstrates a system of sexual ethics unique to LDS theology.



## Chapter 3

## Teaching Gender and Sexuality Through Religious Pamphleteering

As the previous chapters demonstrate, the collected teachings of latter-day prophets and LDS scriptures emphasize the significant role of gender and gendered acts like marriage and sexuality in LDS cosmology. In addition to these sources, the LDS church has compiled an assortment of pamphlets that systematically assimilate church teachings on these topics into a concise set of directives for practitioners. Often overlooked by scholars and the popular press, these tracts provide insight into the moral principles conveyed through religious education in the church, particularly to LDS youth. For instance, the most prominent of these pamphlets in recent years, *For the Strength of Youth*, contains an introduction by prophet Thomas Monson stating, “the standards in this booklet will help you with the important choices you are making now and will yet make in the future.”<sup>91</sup> Charged with guiding adolescents through their formation into adulthood, many parts of *For the Strength of Youth* establish normative expectations for youth that regulate gender expression, sexuality, and body presentation through the creative deployment of religious doctrine and imagery. A close reading of this and other pamphlets reveals how the LDS church has harnessed the pamphlet genre to govern increasingly intimate behaviors of youth, even masturbation and same-sex physicality. In doing so, LDS pamphlets provide a moral praxis for correctly performing gender and sexuality in addition to systematizing the religious meanings superimposed upon the body.

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<sup>91</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *For the Strength of Youth* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), ii.

## Introduction

Since Joseph Smith's inauguration of the LDS movement, pamphlets and other compact literature by the church have served a crucial role in the development and dissemination of the latter-day gospel. Spreading the LDS gospel, particularly the *Book of Mormon*, both domestically and internationally was imperative to Smith's millennialist restoration of Christianity but posed logistical concerns upon the newly formed church. For instance, the publication of any single book edition rarely exceeded several thousand copies prior to the invention of the rotary printing press in the mid-1840s, so the publication of 5,000 copies of the first edition *Book of Mormon* was unusually onerous for its time period.<sup>92</sup> Although pamphlets lacked the religious primacy of the *Book of Mormon*, their concise and inexpensive production suited the practical needs of early LDS missionary endeavors. In addition to enabling rapid dissemination of the LDS gospel, a pamphlet containing several of Joseph Smith's revelatory tracts would eventually develop into a distinct component of the LDS canon named *The Pearl of Great Price*.<sup>93</sup> The canonization of religious ideas previously available through pamphlets suggests that these materials contained religious teachings that somehow exceeded those already written in the *Book of Mormon* and *Doctrine and Covenants*. The excess of meaning contained within these pamphlets offer glimpses into the spirit of earlier periods in the development of church doctrine.

Pamphlets, unlike scriptures, are more tightly associated with discrete time periods and therefore reveal the presuppositions that inform the intellectual climates of particular moments in church history. As historian Franklin Baumer contends, the "intellectual history" of particular

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<sup>92</sup> Gayle Goble Ord, "The Book of Mormon Goes to Press," *Ensign*, December 1, 1972, 80.

<sup>93</sup> Dennis Gaffney, "Early Mormon History Explained," *Public Broadcasting Service*, April 13, 2007, accessed March 8, 2015, [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/fts/saltlakecity\\_200602A18.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/fts/saltlakecity_200602A18.html). According to Gaffney, "The book is a collection of early Mormon pamphlets that includes the Church's Articles of Faith; Smith's interpretation of the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of Matthew from the Bible; Smith's translation of an ancient Egyptian papyrus that he said contained the story of the ancient Jewish prophet Abraham while he was in Egypt; and Smith's autobiographical account of his early life that included an account of his 'First Vision.'"

cultures “must take cognizance not only of the ‘great books’ but of the ‘tracts for the times’ (pamphlets, manifestoes, speeches, and sermons), novels (both good and bad), essays, letters, private reflections, etc.”<sup>94</sup> Paying heed to this claim, LDS historian and bibliographer David Jay Whittaker laid the groundwork for LDS pamphlet studies in his 1982 dissertation entitled *Early Mormon Pamphleteering*. After assembling and analyzing a comprehensive anthology of LDS pamphlets written during the first three decades of the church’s existence, Whittaker concluded, “Early Mormon pamphleteering was a gradual movement from a freelance and informal press to more formal and controlled productions.”<sup>95</sup> The nineteenth-century transition to more formalized church pamphlets facilitated the increase in authority that these documents would exert upon the lives of individual practitioners.

By the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, thoroughly formalized church pamphlets supplied a regulatory mechanism by which church leaders systematically modeled the normative behaviors and beliefs for a geographically and culturally diverse worldwide membership. Warranted by the doctrine of continuing revelation, church prophets and apostles utilized the pamphlet genre to prescribe increasingly authoritative moral praxis regarding gender and sexuality, including prescriptions for polygamy prior to 1890 in addition to gender conformity and occasionally homophobic behavior. In claiming the regulatory potential of church pamphlets, I hope to not give the impression that all LDS Christians regard church pamphlets as religiously infallible and the terms therein doctrinally mandated. To forward such claims would require extended ethnographic investigation of practitioner attitudes towards these texts. Instead, I simply hope to demonstrate that pamphlets formally produced by the LDS church reveal an increasingly structured view of the body and bodily behaviors that it deemed

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<sup>94</sup> Franklin L. Baumer, “Intellectual History and its Problems,” *Journal of Modern History* 21 (1949): 192. (191-203)

<sup>95</sup> David Jay Whittaker, “Early Mormon Pamphleteering” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1982), 398.

worthy of systematization among all members. Although pamphlets served a regulatory function by modeling appropriate behavior and readings of the body, the policing of members' behaviors would be achieved through additional regulatory steps such as the interviews required for priesthood advancement and missionary work and annual interviews for the temple. These practices will be discussed at length later.

### **Transition in Nineteenth-Century LDS Pamphleteering**

During the first decade of the church, LDS leaders were prolific in their publication and distribution of missionary pamphlets. According to one estimate by Brigham Young, the British mission of the church, which had been one of the most successful, distributed 5,000 "Books of Mormon" and over 60,000 missionary "tracts" over the summer of 1839.<sup>96</sup> With the distribution of tracts far outnumbering that of sacred texts like the *Book of Mormon* by a ratio of 12:1 in local mission fields, the features of a pamphlet-based missionary economy began to emerge.

Many pamphlets published in the 1840s and 1850s sought to outline fundamental LDS doctrines, but this objective became a moving target due to the protean nature of doctrine in the still-emerging religious movement. Compounding this issue, it was unclear who held authority in the early church for determining which doctrines were fundamental. While many early LDS converts felt inspired to spread their new faith through producing pamphlets, few of these pamphlets ever received official recognition by the church. Despite their lack of authority, the publication of missionary pamphlets accelerated along with the church's efforts to expand geographically. Missionary pamphleteering in the early LDS church focused primarily on topics

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<sup>96</sup> Brigham Young, "Testimony to the Divinity of Joseph Smith's Mission – Elders Should Go to Their Missions Without Purse or Scrip – The Lords Deals with the Saints – Jesus Their President – Satan Angry," in *Journal of Discourses by President John Taylor, His Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, vol. 4, discourse 6, ed. George D. Watt et al. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1886), 35. (33-42)

that set apart its practitioners from other Christians, so the teachings of Joseph Smith often took precedent. Paradoxically, by outlining Smith's idiosyncratic doctrines, LDS Christians faced the precarious position of appearing too distant from other forms of Christianity. LDS tracts, therefore, would require intentional corroboration of LDS beliefs by both LDS and non-LDS Christian scriptures. To this end, apostle Parley P. Pratt, an original member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "erected a standard for all future Mormon pamphleteers by setting down a formula for describing Mormonism's basic doctrines and listing biblical proof-texts."<sup>97</sup> Still today, a cursory inspection of the bibliographies of most LDS works demonstrates how common the corroboration by biblical "proof-texts" has become among LDS exegetes.

In addition to missionary pamphlets, the development of a distinct sub-genre of LDS pamphlets, which I call the *practitioner pamphlet*, began to take place in the first decades of the church. Foremost among this genre was apostle Franklin Richards' 1851 pamphlet, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Choice Selection from the Revelations, Translations, and Narrations of Joseph Smith*, a compilation of fundamental doctrines almost exclusively extracted from the teachings of Joseph Smith. Included in these teachings were Joseph Smith's translations of papyri obtained from "the Catacombs of Egypt" and the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew in addition to a brief autobiography.<sup>98</sup> Richards described his pamphlet as "a source of much instruction and edification to many thousands of the Saints, who will by an acquaintance with its precious contents be more abundantly qualified to set forth and defend the principles of our Holy Faith before all men."<sup>99</sup> What distinguished Richards' pamphlet from missionary pamphlets was his

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<sup>97</sup> Peter Crawley, "Parley P. Pratt: The Father of Mormon Pamphleteering," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (1982), 15. (13-26).

<sup>98</sup> Joseph Smith, *The Pearl of Great Price*, comp. Franklin D. Richards (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1851), vi.

<sup>99</sup> Franklin D. Richards, "Etoile du Deseret – Pearl of Great Price – New Catalogues, etc. – Postal Information," *Millennial Star*, July 15, 1851, 217.

assertion that it was “not adapted, nor designed, as a pioneer of the faith among unbelievers.”<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, *The Pearl of Great Price* sought to systematize belief among the Saints by providing sections like the “Articles of Faith” that served as a rudimentary creed. Without formal endorsement by the church, however, the creeds contained therein would not hold authority over the lives of the Saints.

Since the *Pearl of Great Price* “was not compiled by an official committee of the Church,” this pamphlet occupied a liminal space in LDS theology throughout the first several decades of its existence.<sup>101</sup> Despite having been assembled from the teachings of Joseph Smith, *The Pearl of Great Price* did not exert the same degree of authority as sacred text. In 1880, however, acting president John Taylor canonized this pamphlet after several revisions from the first edition.<sup>102</sup> The most significant of these revisions was the addition of a section entitled “Revelation on the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant, Including the Plurality of Wives,” which Joseph Smith privately recorded in 1843.<sup>103</sup> According to church historian Jerald Johansen, “the brethren wanted the revelation on plural marriage to have as wide a circulation as possible; thus it was published in the Pearl of Great Price as well as the Doctrine and Covenants.”<sup>104</sup> By canonizing Smith’s revelation on plural marriage, LDS leaders bolstered their vindication of the practice of plural marriage on grounds that it was protected under the religious expression clauses of the U.S. Constitution.<sup>105</sup> More importantly, the LDS church deemed the pamphlet

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<sup>100</sup> Smith, *Pearl*, v.

<sup>101</sup> James R. Clark, “Our Pearl of Great Price: From Mission Pamphlet to Standard Work,” *Ensign*, August 1, 1976, 16.

<sup>102</sup> Jerald Ray Johansen, *A Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price: A Jewel Among the Scriptures* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon, 1998), 27.

<sup>103</sup> Joseph Smith, *The Pearl of Great Price*, comp. Franklin D. Richards (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1878), 64.

<sup>104</sup> Johansen, *Commentary*, 27.

<sup>105</sup> “Affairs in Utah: Sermon by Orson Pratt--His Denunciation of the Anti-Polygamy Bill--Investigation of Dr. Forney's Affairs--Probability of Proving his Peculations--How the Mormons Regard Young Joe Smith's Pretensions--Trifling Depredations by the Indians,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1860, accessed March 10, 2015,

“binding upon us as a people and as a Church.”<sup>106</sup> The canonization of *The Pearl of Great Price* exemplified a trend in LDS pamphleteering from informal to formal, standardized texts produced by the committees of the LDS church rather than its individual emissaries. This transition would set the stage for a second century of Mormon pamphleteering in which most texts would bypass the need for canonization due to the authority they derived from being the product of a standardized church publishing establishment.

### **Moral Agency and the (Sexual) Ethic of Submission**

What makes *The Pearl of Great Price* such a fruitful text for introducing the investigatory aims of this study? In addition to exemplifying the transition to more formalized pamphlets, the final section of its text, entitled “Revelation on the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant, Including the Plurality of Wives,” reveals a sexual ethics that promotes submission as a normative criterion. Like several pamphlets that would follow it, Smith’s “Revelation” makes normative claims about the nature of eternal marriage and the roles of men and women therein. The claims of this text will serve as a foundation for studying more recent pamphlets from the LDS church.

Early in his recorded revelation, Smith claims, “I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.”<sup>107</sup> Smith’s revelation is direct in its requirement that all believers must engage in the covenant of celestial marriage, including polygamy, to attain exaltation. Anticipating objections, Smith continues:

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<http://www.nytimes.com/1860/06/07/news/affairs-utah-sermon-orson-pratt-his-denunciation-anti-polygamy-bill.html>.

<sup>106</sup> Clark, “Standard Work,” 21.

<sup>107</sup> Smith, *Pearl* (1878), 64.

God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law... Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily, I say unto you, *Nay*; for I, the Lord, commanded it. Abraham was commanded to offer his son Issac; nevertheless, it was written, Thou shalt not kill. Abraham, however, did not refuse, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness.<sup>108</sup>

By citing biblical cases of compliance to seemingly problematic commandments, Smith promotes a moral praxis of uncritical submission to god and his prophets. Admittedly, Smith's call for uncritical submission to the marriage covenant is unexceptional insofar as many other Christian, and non-Christian, ethical frameworks value similar behavior as a signifier of faith. What distinguishes Smith's revelation from many other commandments is the way in which one's gender determines the stakes of compliance. On the final page of Smith's revelation, he states:

If any man have a wife, who holds the keys to this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my Priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe, and administer unto him or she shall be destroyed... Therefore, it shall be lawful in me, if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things, whatsoever I, the Lord his God, will give unto him, because she did not administer unto him according to my word; and she then becomes the transgressor; and he is exempt from the law of Sarah, who administered unto Abraham according to the law, when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife.<sup>109</sup>

By rendering women's noncompliance as a significant impediment to the exaltation of *all* parties involved, Smith places disproportionate onus on women to surrender their bodies to men in plural marriage covenants. After all, according to Smith's revelation a man whose marriage offer is refused is exempt from "the law of Sarah," but a woman who refuses his offer is a "transgressor" and "shall be destroyed." As I will outline in the subsequent sections, LDS practitioner pamphlets from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries exhibit a similar deployment of gender-dependent religious values.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 70.



## **Pamphleteering to Youth: Toward an LDS Theory of Gender and Sexuality**

The role of religious organizations in providing values-based sexual education to youth, particularly adolescents, has been well studied. According to Christian ethicist Kate Ott, “Religious institutions serve more teens than any other agency in the community except public schools.”<sup>110</sup> Insofar as religious organizations inform youth with normative understandings about bodies, gender, and sexuality, they have the responsibility for promoting beliefs and practices that accord with underlying religious doctrine. Ott criticizes the curricula of many religious sexual education programs for both over-emphasizing the doctrine of “abstinence-only-until-marriage” and generally ignoring the “positive meanings” of gender and sexuality.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, Ott’s observation accurately perceives a general trend in Christian sexual education of youth. However, an investigation of LDS teachings on gender and sexuality reveals a richness of positive meaning associated with the body that has heretofore been largely ignored by the media that have ghettoized LDS Christianity into the body-negative imaginary of conservative Christianity.

As the previous chapters show, prophets and apostles have provided numerous educational discourses signifying sex and bodies with religious meaning. In order to integrate these discourses into a growing canon of LDS sexual education, LDS leaders have established a collection of pamphlets for parents, educators, and youth that far exceed the topic of abstinence-only sexual education. An investigation of several, currently influential pamphlets will suffice the scope of this project; they include: *For the Strength of Youth*, *To Young Men Only*, *Fulfilling My Duty To God: For Aaronic Priesthood Holders*, and *Young Women Personal Progress*.

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<sup>110</sup> Kate M. Ott, “Re-Thinking Adolescent Sexual Ethics: A Social Justice Obligation to Adolescent Sexual Health” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 7 (2007): 1, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/530>.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

These four pamphlets differ by intended audience, historical import, and length. Nonetheless, these pamphlets share certain characteristics including: official publication and mass distribution by church, adherence to Parley Pratt's formula for corroborating LDS beliefs with both LDS and non-LDS scriptural sources, and emphasis on the cosmological role of the physical body in attaining exaltation.

### ***For the Strength of Youth***

Contained within the forty-four concise pages of the LDS pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* are a series of prescriptions for everyday conduct that fall under nineteen categories ranging from "Agency" to "Self-Reliance."<sup>112</sup> These guidelines for moral conduct, many of which relate directly or indirectly to doctrinal notions about the body and sexuality, inform much of the content that youth leaders are encouraged to convey to their students in religious education settings.<sup>113</sup> As such, the church mandates that "each youth ages 12 to 18 and all priesthood and auxiliary leaders who work with youth" have hard copies of this pamphlet.<sup>114</sup> Youth typically carry a copy of this pamphlet bundled inside their scripture cases alongside standard works like the Bible and Book of Mormon, and the popularity of condensed, wallet-size *Strength of Youth* pamphlets indicates the way in which this text has integrated into the everyday life of many LDS youth. The ubiquity and emic content of these pamphlets makes them an excellent subject for scholarship on the unique meanings and categories with which LDS theology interprets the body.

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<sup>112</sup> Latter-day Saints, *Strength*, 1.

<sup>113</sup> When LDS youth reach age twelve, boys and girls are channeled into young men's and young women's educational programs. For the next six years, young men advance through the Aaronic Priesthood offices of Deacon, Teacher, and Priest, and young women progress through the young women classes of Beehive, Mia Maid, and Laurel.

<sup>114</sup> Heather Whittle Wrigley, "For the Strength of Youth Updated and Refreshed," *Church News*, December 16, 2011, accessed March 13, 2015, <https://www.lds.org/church/news/for-the-strength-of-youth-updated-and-refreshed?lang=eng>.

Church prescriptions for dress, dating, dancing, physical health, and sexual purity contained within *For the Strength of Youth* all impart the platitude that immoral physical behavior results in desensitization to the *Holy Ghost*.<sup>115</sup> This pamphlet also makes the inverse argument that moral physical behaviors, such as modest dress, abstinence from sex and pornography, and avoidance of vulgar music and dance, all contribute to a spiritual disposition that invites the Holy Ghost. For instance, the section on “Dress and Appearance” makes the following claims:

Prophets of God have continually counseled His children to dress modestly. When you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and you can be a good influence on others. Your dress and grooming influence the way you and others act.<sup>116</sup>

Although the exhortation to dress modestly may come across as superficial, the religious implications of such bodily comportment are not to be underestimated. By claiming that one’s dress and grooming influence his or her actions and spiritual status, *For the Strength of Youth* ascribes religious value to normative bodily presentation. In doing so, the text draws from examples of dress and grooming to instantiate a more general tenet of LDS theology that bodily behavior has implications that far extend beyond earthly existence. Apostle Boyd K. Packer summarizes this belief in stating the position of the LDS church on this matter: “We come into mortal life to receive a body and to be tested, to learn to choose.”<sup>117</sup> Indeed, the bodily aspect of mortal existence is essential to salvation and exaltation, which Cannell describes as “redemptive

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<sup>115</sup> LDS apostle Marion G. Romney defined the Holy Ghost more precisely, stating, “The gift of the Holy Ghost is an endowment which gives one the right to enjoy the enlightenment, companionship, and guidance of the Spirit and the influence of the Holy Spirit as long as he complies with the commandments of God.” In Marion G. Romney, “The Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, May 1, 1974.

<sup>116</sup> Latter-day Saints, *Strength*, 6.

<sup>117</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Choice,” (speech, General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT, October 12-13, 1980).

physicality.”<sup>118</sup> Additional prescriptions for bodily comportment that invites the Holy Ghost include:

When dancing, avoid full body contact with your partner. Do not use positions or moves that are suggestive of sexual or violent behavior or are otherwise inappropriate.<sup>119</sup>

Choose to obey the Word of Wisdom (see D&C 89). When you are obedient to this law, you remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life. You gain the blessings of a healthy body, an alert mind, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost.<sup>120</sup>

Before marriage, do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without clothing. Do not do anything else that arouses sexual feelings. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body. Pay attention to the promptings of the Spirit so that you can be clean and virtuous. The Spirit of the Lord will withdraw from one who is in sexual transgression.<sup>121</sup>

Apart from their role in aligning one’s behavior with a particular vision of good conduct, these injunctions against immoral behavior are existential to the extent that they set LDS youth apart from their *worldly* peers. This motif of differentiation, which can be traced throughout the history of LDS identity formation, has been intentional rather than secondary.

The examples of immoral behavior listed in *For the Strength of Youth*, such as suggestive dress and dancing, provide a foil to the self-described *peculiar* identity of LDS persons. As mentioned in the previous chapter, an important aspect of Joseph Smith’s restoration was to revise Christianity with meaningful differences to realign it with the primitive church. Such differences, including celestial marriage and the plurality of wives, maintained a level of alterity that would prevent LDS Christianity from assimilating into denominational Christianity. As a means of perpetually reproducing an identity as “other,” standards like those mentioned in *For the Strength of Youth* support claims to peculiar identity. Brent Fillmore, an LDS Church

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<sup>118</sup> Fenella Cannell, “The blood of Abraham: Mormon redemptive physicality and American idioms of kinship,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (2013): S77. (S77-S94)

<sup>119</sup> Latter-day Saints, *Strength*, 23.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 25

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

Educational System (CES) administrator, traces Joseph Smith's deployment of the term peculiar to that of other "covenant people[s]" throughout Judeo-Christianity whose adherence to unique standards has constituted their claim to peculiarity.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, Fillmore observes a similar process at work in the church's strategies for conveying the standards listed in *For the Strength of Youth*. The LDS church's assertion to be the sole authority to confer the Holy Ghost to modern-day believers accounts, at least in part, for its emphasis on bodily comportment as a means to sensitize one to the Holy Ghost. After all, by becoming spiritually closer to the Holy Ghost, LDS Christians celebrate the exceptionalist identity asserted by leaders tracing back to Joseph Smith.

In addition to entering into a new phase of religious education, youth spanning the ages twelve to eighteen also attain a new level of spiritual maturity making them eligible to begin participating in certain rituals in the temple.<sup>123</sup> Since participation in certain temple *ordinances*, like celestial marriage, is required for exaltation, youth are encouraged to make preparation for the temple a practice of everyday life.<sup>124</sup> To be *worthy* of attending the temple, youth must have a testimony of the restored gospel and follow the standards of the church. Among its various functions, *For the Strength of Youth* serves as a rough guide for youth to measure their worthiness to enter the temple. Speaking on the directives contained within this pamphlet, Quorum of the Seventy president Early C. Tingey stated, "There are certain truths, certain 'things as they really are,' that are enforced by standards—many of which can be measured."<sup>125</sup> Due to the quantifiable nature of many of its standards, *For the Strength of Youth* complements

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<sup>122</sup> Brent D. Fillmore, "Promoting Peculiarity—Different Editions of *For the Strength of Youth*," *Religious Educator* 8 (2007): 78. (75–88)

<sup>123</sup> LDS youth are only capable of conducting baptisms as proxies for the dead in the temple. Other temple ordinances require endowment, which are peculiar to adults in the church.

<sup>124</sup> Kathleen Lubeck, "Preparing for the Temple Endowment," *New Era*, February 1, 1987, 19.

<sup>125</sup> Earl C. Tingey, "For the Strength of Youth" (speech, General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT, April 2-3, 2004).

other church regulatory mechanisms for ensuring the worthiness of its youth to enter the temple. Foremost among these mechanisms is the temple interview, a formal process conducted by a bishop, or other regional priesthood leader, to precede the official granting of permission to enter the temple. During the interview, priesthood leaders judge youth on criteria encompassing points of belief and conduct. To meet these criteria, youth must meet with priesthood leaders who read formally through a standardized list of questions to determine the temple worthiness of the interviewee.<sup>126</sup> Through these standardized interviews, local church leaders obtain annual affirmations of chastity from each of their youth.

### ***To Young Men Only: Interpreting and Regulating the Young Male Body***

Just over a decade after its original publication of *For the Strength of Youth* in 1965, the LDS church published an additional, equally prescriptive pamphlet on bodily meanings and immoral behaviors called *To Young Men Only*. This pamphlet, unlike *For the Strength of Youth*, was composed from the teachings of one general authority, apostle Boyd K. Packer, whose 1976 priesthood address during general conference was directed, as its title would suggest, “to young men only.”<sup>127</sup> Although the church propagates this pamphlet to a lesser degree than *For the Strength of Youth*, in part due to its more restricted audience, it is still widely circulated as an official manual of the Aaronic Priesthood.<sup>128</sup> Like *For the Strength of Youth*, *To Young Men*

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<sup>126</sup> According to LDS historian Edward L. Kimball, priesthood leaders ask: Does the member have a testimony of Jesus Christ? Does the member believe in the priesthood authority vested in the prophet and apostles? Concerning matters of conduct, the priesthood leader asks: Does the member obey the law of chastity. Does the member “live in harmony and peace at home?” Does the member also hold membership in organizations that negate the mission of the church? Does the member obey the word of wisdom, which prohibits the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and other specified drugs? Does the member pay tithes? See Edward L. Kimball, “The History of LDS Temple Admission Standards,” *Journal of Mormon History* 24 (1998): 135-176.

<sup>127</sup> Boyd K. Packer, *To Young Men Only*, comp. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976), 1.

<sup>128</sup> A list of currently accepted manuals in the church can be found at <https://www.lds.org/languages/eng?lang=eng>. In 2011, my bishop in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, distributed these pamphlets during a young men’s priesthood

*Only* alludes to the doctrine of redemptive physicality by stating, “[The body] has within it powers which, if properly used, will contribute greatly to your exaltation.”<sup>129</sup> By constructing an ethics of bodily comportment that establishes control over bodily power as a normative criterion, Packer appeals to young men to cultivate an inward disposition of control that will result in good moral conduct; he states:

Develop your body to full and useful capacity. Develop manly stamina and control... A young man should learn to rule his body. Like his temper, he should keep it always under complete control.<sup>130</sup>

Within your body you have the power of creation. This is a very sacred power. You must always guard the power with manly wisdom.<sup>131</sup>

Don't let that physical part of you take charge. Stay in control. Condition your body to do the will of your mind. One who can control his thoughts has conquered himself.<sup>132</sup>

If you can control your thoughts, you can overcome habits, even degrading personal habits. If you can learn to master them, you will have a happy life.<sup>133</sup>

The signal of worthy manhood is self-control.<sup>134</sup>

Packer's mind-over-matter concept of the self presumes that good moral conduct follows from a well-controlled mind, and, on the other hand, poor moral conduct, including masturbation and homosexual acts, result from failure to control one's thoughts. Rather than accepting homosexual desires as inborn, Packer describes them as a derailment of natural desires:

There is a falsehood that some are born with an attraction to their own kind, with nothing they can do about it. They are just 'that way' and can only yield to those desires. That is a malicious and destructive lie. While it is a convincing idea to some, it is of the devil. No one is locked into that kind of life. From our premortal life we were directed into a physical body. There is no mismatching of bodies and spirits. Boys are to become men –

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meeting and extolled the truths contained therein. Although *To Young Men Only* does not carry the same degree of influence as *For the Strength of Youth*, its status as a current manual indicates the church's affirmation of its content.

<sup>129</sup> Packer, *To Young Men*, 3.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

masculine, manly men – ultimately to become husbands and fathers. No one is predestined to a perverted use of these powers.<sup>135</sup>

By precluding the notion that bodily comportment plays a role in constructing the gendered self, Packer’s advice accords with the LDS doctrine of gender as an essential, pre-ordained characteristic of all spirits and embodied persons.

To explain the physical and spiritual gender binaries of LDS Christianity, apostle Neil L. Anderson states, “We know that gender is an essential characteristic of both our mortal and eternal identity and purpose. Sacred responsibilities are given to each gender.”<sup>136</sup> Indeed, an exclusively male LDS priesthood presumes an innate quality of men predisposing them to hold the power of the priesthood. Packer’s statements about the young men and power are consonant with a growing corpus of LDS literature for youth that prescribes the ways in which young men and women should perform outwardly in order to magnify their inward gender identity.

### ***Young Women Personal Progress and Duty to God: Indexing the Sacred Qualities of Each Gender***

As historian M. Guy Bishop intuits, “childrearing is nothing more than an adult attempt to instill in children the values that the more mature generation espouses.”<sup>137</sup> Indeed, LDS values related to marriage, eternal family, and of normative gendered behavior, which inform much of the beliefs and religious experience of LDS adults, pervade a significant portion of church’s youth ministry. In seeking to reproduce normative conceptions of manhood and womanhood among youth, the LDS church has published two booklets, one for young women and one for

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>136</sup> Neil L. Anderson, “Power in the Priesthood” (speech, General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT, October 10-11, 2013).

<sup>137</sup> M. Guy Bishop, “Preparing to ‘Take the Kingdom’: Childrearing Directives in Early Mormonism,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 7 (1987): 275. (275-290)



young men, that are meant to guide the religious experiences of members ages twelve through eighteen. These booklets underlie the church's two principal youth programs, Young Men's Duty to God and Young Women's Personal Progress. The differences between the two programs, manifest in their accompanying booklets, demonstrate how LDS youth ministry instills different values among young men and women. For instance, missionary service plays a large role in the young men's program while preparation for family life is the primary objective of the young women's program. The propagation of such gendered "value experiences," which are admittedly representative of a broader cultural landscape of LDS gender binary, aid in the formation disparate religious subjectivities for young men and women.<sup>138</sup> As young women are socialized through these programs to have distinctly feminine religious experiences, they develop religious lifeworlds that are distinct from those of young men.

The texts of *Fulfilling My Duty to God* and *Young Women Personal Progress* begin by comforting the reader with the message, "You are a son of God" and "You are a beloved daughter of God," respectively.<sup>139,140</sup> After urging all youth to adhere to the same moral standards outlined in *For the Strength of Youth*, these texts diverge as young women are provided with a set of responsibilities distinct from those of young men. For instance, young men are exhorted to fulfill their Aaronic Priesthood through religious service while young women are encouraged to "accept and act upon the Young Women values" and "prayerfully choose goals help cultivate feminine attributes."<sup>141</sup> The introduction of *Young Women Personal Progress* states:

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<sup>138</sup> A list of young women's value experiences, which are designed to help instill feminine values, can be found on page 11 of the Young Women's Personal Progress booklet.

<sup>139</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Fulfilling My Duty to God* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 7.

<sup>140</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Young Women Personal Progress* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009), 1.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

We strive to live the Young Women values, which are: faith, divine nature, individual worth, knowledge, choice and accountability, good works, integrity and virtue. We believe as we come to accept and act upon these values, we will be prepared to strengthen home and family.<sup>142</sup>

The Personal Progress program uses the eight Young Women values to help you understand more fully who you are, why you are here on the earth, and what you should be doing as a daughter of God to prepare for the day you go to the temple to make sacred covenants. It will help you prepare for your future roles as a faithful woman, wife, mother, and leader in God's kingdom.<sup>143</sup>

Although the Young Women values listed above (faith, knowledge, etc.) are not necessarily peculiar to LDS women, the text interprets them for women in a manner that accords with traditional LDS notions of womanhood. For instance, under the value heading on "Faith", the text states:

Review what 'The Family: A Proclamation to the World' (see page 101) says about a mother's role. With a mother, grandmother, or leader, discuss the qualities a woman needs in order to teach children to have faith and to base their decisions on gospel truths. How can these principles help you in your life today and help you prepare to be a faithful woman, wife, and mother? Record your thoughts and feelings in your journal.<sup>144</sup>

Under the value heading of "Divine Nature", the text states:

As a young woman you are blessed with divine feminine qualities. Increase your understanding of and appreciation for womanhood. Read Proverbs 31:10–31 and two talks on womanhood from a conference issue of the Church magazines. Review what "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (see page 101) says about being a wife and a mother. Then ask your mother or another mother you admire what she thinks are important attributes for being a mother. List the attributes in your journal. Then choose one of those attributes and strive to develop it. After two weeks report your success to a parent or leader.<sup>145</sup>

Under the value heading of "Knowledge", the text states:

Learn a new skill or talent that will help you care for your own future family or home (for example, playing the piano, singing, budgeting, time management, cooking, sewing, or

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 22.

child care). Share with your family, class, or Young Women leader what you have learned.<sup>146</sup>

Learn how to organize, clean, and maintain a home from your mother, grandmother, or another woman you admire. Then apply what you have learned in your home... Learn about the proper care of clothing, including how to wash, iron, and make basic repairs and alterations. Apply the skills you learned by taking care of your clothing.<sup>147</sup>

These excerpts show the church's co-opting of gender-neutral religious values into a gendered framework for religious education that privileges traditional LDS roles for women. The value experiences prescribed above, such as preparing to maintain a home, call for women to interpret religious values in a way that restricts them to the existential purpose of women in LDS religious discourse.

## Conclusion

The tacit gender theory of the LDS church, which assimilates doctrines from scriptural and latter-day prophetic sources, occupies a critical place in several influential pamphlets used for the religious education of youth. These pamphlets fulfill the dual roles of teaching youth how to understand their bodies and outlining a set of prescriptions for physical conduct that constitute their regulatory capacity. Such prescriptions for bodily comportment and moral conduct fit into the church's religious education because of their connection to LDS doctrines on the eternal nature of gender and gendered acts, like marriage and procreation. Due to the requirement that youth adhere to these pamphlets' strict code of moral conduct in order to be found worthy to enter the temple, the directives contained therein powerfully influence the behaviors and experiences in which youth engage.<sup>148</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling, a biologist and gender theorist, has

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>148</sup> According to Holman et al., rates of pre-marital sex among LDS youth are significantly lower than those of their peers. See Thomas B. Holman and John R. Harding “

investigated the ways in which the gendered socialization of children is central to understanding how young men and women's bodies become integrated into cultural contexts. She states, "experience changes the body and is not merely driven by events internal to the individual."<sup>149</sup> In addition to altering young bodies through the experience of regulation, LDS pamphlets instill a regulatory paradigm within youth. Instances of this reproduction of regulatory values include Joseph Smith and Boyd K. Packer's respective sexual ethics of submission and control.

According to Martha Nussbaum, "Boys are bounced and tossed in the air; girls are carefully cradled. These are ways in which society creates men and women."<sup>150</sup> Following Nussbaum's logic, the directives of the LDS church for regulating the behaviors and experiences of youth are part and parcel of a gendering process that culminates in the production of normative young adults. The religious implications of this process are significant. By promulgating normative gendered behavior as doctrine, the LDS church raises the stakes of political struggles surrounding issues of women's ordination and same-sex marriage discussed in the first chapter. Although the pamphlets discussed in this chapter are not meant to be the final word regarding the church's position on gendered and sexual belief and conduct, they offer a glimpse into the lifeworld in which LDS youth derive vocabulary and grammar for interpreting their bodies.

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The Teaching of Nonmarital Sexual Abstinence and Members' Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors: The Case of Latter-Day Saints," *Review of Religious Research* 38 (1996): 55-56. (51-60)

<sup>149</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling, Cynthia Garcia Coll, and Meaghan Lamarre, "Sexing the baby: Part 2 applying dynamic systems theory to the emergences of sex-related differences in infants and toddlers," *Social Science and Medicine* 74 (2012): 1700. (1693-1702)

<sup>150</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 270.

## Conclusion

Throughout the past few months, the LDS church has been involved in two events that reinvigorated my interest in investigating its doctrines on gender, sexuality, and marriage. In addition to confirming the timeliness of my thesis, these two events serve as case studies to assess whether my thesis fulfills its goal of providing insight to readers who wish to more fully understand the positions and trajectory of the LDS church on LGBT and feminist issues. The first event, an LGBT non-discrimination agreement between the LDS church and the state of Utah, was heavily publicized throughout popular media outlets immediately after its press release in mid-January, 2015. In one of several articles by *The New York Times* on this agreement, entitled “Mormons Seek Golden Mean Between Gay Rights and Religious Beliefs,” Laurie Goodstein observed that LDS support of LGBT non-discrimination, “astonished some lawmakers in the halls of Utah’s Capitol, who called it a watershed moment that could reconfigure the debate over gay rights in their socially conservative state.”<sup>151</sup> The most intriguing aspect of the church’s statement regarding LGBT non-discrimination was its reaffirmation of its doctrines and policies against same-sex relations and simultaneous adaption to an evolving political climate in the United States regarding LGBT issues. In spite of its opposition to employment and housing discrimination against LGBT individuals, LDS leaders cited the constitutional right to religious liberty to justify their support of individuals refusing to serve LGBT customers for religious reasons. As noted in chapter 3, LDS polygamists from the nineteenth century employed the same religious liberty argument when defending plural marriage.

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<sup>151</sup> Laurie Goodstein, “Mormons Seeks Golden Mean Between Gay Rights and Religious Belief,” *New York Times*, January 27, 2015, accessed April 11, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/28/us/mormons-seek-golden-mean-between-gay-rights-and-religious-beliefs.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/28/us/mormons-seek-golden-mean-between-gay-rights-and-religious-beliefs.html?_r=0).

The second event was a talk given apostle L. Tom Perry at the General Conference of the LDS church on April 4, 2015 regarding marriage and family. In this talk, Perry stated, “we want our voice to be heard against all of the counterfeit and alternative lifestyles that try to replace the family organization that God Himself established.”<sup>152</sup> By characterizing LGBT and other “alterative lifestyles” and families as “counterfeit,” Perry garnered the criticism of LGBT-friendly media outlets and both non-LDS and some LDS social media users. Namely, according to *The Advocate*, “the Mormon Church may have bent a little on its antigay stances by supporting the ultimately successful drive for antidiscrimination legislation in Utah, but speakers at the church’s Annual General Conference over the weekend left no doubt that the church’s traditional views remain intact.”<sup>153</sup> Criticisms like these reflect society’s underlying mistrust of the LDS church regarding LGBT issues. I propose that such mistrust results from an incomplete understanding of where the church stands, and how it has evolved, on these issues. Calling the LDS church “antigay” ignores the doctrinal nuances that prevent homosexual members from conforming to its celestial marriage ideal. In many ways, as noted in chapter 2, the LDS church has taken a deliberately sympathetic tone towards LGBT members who remain celibate. Furthermore, chapter 1 demonstrates the ways in which procreative marriage became an essential aspect of Smith’s restoration of an LDS Zion in the American West, a standard that would continue to preclude same-sex relations a century later. While subsequent scholarship will need to be conducted to help elucidate more fully the church’s stance on LGBT and feminist issues

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<sup>152</sup> L. Tom Perry, “Why Marriage and Family Matter – Everywhere in the World,” April 3, 2015, accessed April 11, 2015, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/04/why-marriage-and-family-matter-everywhere-in-the-world?lang=eng>.

<sup>153</sup> Trudy Ring, “Mormon Leader Denounces LGBT Families as ‘Counterfeit’” *The Advocate*, April 7, 2015, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.advocate.com/politics/religion/2015/04/07/mormon-leader-denounces-lgbt-families-counterfeit>.

and how this stance has evolved over the years, my thesis provides ample material for moving toward a more fully articulated gender theory and sexual ethics of the LDS church.

Although I discussed LDS LGBT and feminist activism and its potential for doctrinal change in the LDS church in chapter 2, my thesis left unanswered the question of how much power activists in the LDS church hold. A future direction of this research will be ethnographic work that seeks to understand how the changing views of LDS members at large regarding issues of gender and sexuality inform the doctrinal changes from the prophet and his apostles. After all, changes in the church's policies do not occur in a vacuum. Ethnographic studies will help determine whether a critical mass of support within or outside of the church is required for policy changes like LGBT non-discrimination. Furthermore, the origins of the ideas contained within the pamphlets I discuss in chapter 3 will need to be more fully elucidated. For example, do the doctrines therein come about through consensus by the prophet and his twelve apostles? Answering these questions will help LDS and non-LDS persons more fully understand the nature of the church's views of gender and sexuality, which will contextualize future church actions on LGBT and feminist issues.

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### Chapter 3

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## Conclusion

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