

Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability

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Almost two decades have elapsed since I published *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). My book began by acknowledging and illustrating the “Americanization” thesis advanced by others—namely that the LDS Church and religion had spent the first half of the twentieth century in a deliberate policy of assimilation with American society and was thus following the time-honored trajectory traced by such early scholars as Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber—from a peculiar and disreputable sect toward a respectable church, increasingly comfortable with the surrounding American culture.¹ My main argument, however, was that, since the mid-twentieth century the Church had begun to reverse course and was trying to recover some of the distinctiveness that seemingly had been lost during assimilation. I called this reversal a process of “retrenchment,” and I emphasized that it was a historic anomaly, for conventional wisdom predicted that all new religions would either be stamped out, be socially and politically quarantined, or eventually be assimilated by the dominant surrounding culture. Once on the path toward assimilation, how and why did the LDS Church resist and then reverse course?

I answered that question by drawing on recent sociological theories about new religious movements, arguing that new religions thrive not by full assimilation but by maintaining a degree

of peculiarity and thus tension with the surrounding culture.² If this tension becomes excessive, the new religion will face a “predicament of disrepute,” as Mormonism did in the nineteenth century, and its survival will be jeopardized. However, if assimilation proceeds too far, the religion faces a “predicament of respectability,” where its identity or “brand” does not stand for anything distinctive enough to be attractive—a condition which Mormonism approached by the middle of the twentieth century.³ Growth and prosperity depend upon finding and maintaining an optimum level of tension on a continuum between disrepute and respectability.⁴ This *external* tension typically arises in part from a certain *internal* strictness and sacrifice entailed by Church membership, lest members grow complacent in assuming that the promised rewards can be had without any “cost.” The costs and sacrifices imposed on members define the boundaries of the LDS way of life and therefore their very identity as “Mormons”—even as these boundaries help also to define the external image of the organization. The leaders of the LDS Church by midcentury seem intuitively to have understood all this and to have deliberately begun moving the religious and political culture of the Church back in a sectlike direction, as though to recover some of its lost distinctiveness and societal tension. I went on to identify various institutional expressions through which the resulting LDS retrenchment process had become evident, especially in the realms of formal organization, focus on modern prophets and scriptures, gender and family, missionizing, genealogy and temple worship, and religious scholarship.

While *The Angel and the Beehive* was well received and fairly reviewed in general, it has been criticized, and properly so, for certain inconsistencies or ambiguities. Any theoretical framework is likely to fit the data only imperfectly. One issue seems to be the nature and scope of the *assimilation* process that I described. To some of my readers, it has not been clear just what about Mormonism was being assimilated to what else? I had originally been thinking in terms of Mormon assimilation broadly with American culture, especially American popular culture. Yet some critics seemed to see continuing assimilation, rather than retrenchment, in the Mormon turn toward political conservatism and in the constant Church efforts to convince other Christians—especially

Evangelicals—that Mormons are legitimately part of the Christian family.⁵ Isn't the Church, in effect, pursuing a policy of assimilation with the more conservative denominations? My answer is no. To the extent that Mormonism identifies itself with other relatively *high-cost* religions, it is still resisting and rejecting assimilation with the secular culture of the society in general.

A derivative ambiguity in my assimilation-versus-retrenchment argument was my failure to emphasize enough that, while the retrenchment in question, has external implications, it is primarily an *internal* process. Externally, the Church continues to seek respectability and acceptance as one Christian religion among others. Members will recognize, however, that what we tell ourselves internally is that there is only *one* true church, and ours is it! We continue to cherish our peculiarities as ways of emphasizing that exclusive claim, even as we cringe over what outsiders make of those peculiarities and try to gloss over them whenever we are confronted with them.

Another critic has focused on my interpretation of the part played by the “correlation movement” in the retrenchment process. Whereas I saw correlation as the vehicle by which retrenchment was implemented, Roger Terry sees correlation as a major feature of assimilation. He argues that, even though the retrenchment process was focused on resisting the worldly cultural encroachments of the 1960s and 1970s, the Church actually was quietly coming to resemble the rest of the “global economy dominated by multinational corporations, organizational values, and professional managers. In light of this development, the Church wasn't moving *away* from American society but *with* it, and by the turn of the millennium, Mormons had actually come to define mainstream corporate respectability.” Seen in that light, says Terry, despite my claim that correlation and a renewed emphasis on peculiarity were all part of a retrenchment, that is, going “against American societal trends, [yet] . . . on a more fundamental level, this retrenchment effort was simply a well-executed program of going with the flow.”⁶

While I share Terry's perceptions about the extent to which the organizational culture of the Church has absorbed the bureaucratic ethos of the corporate world, I would not go so far as to say, as he does later, that the reverse is also true—i.e., that the

Church has run the risk of being simply “absorbed into a global economy dominated by multinational corporations.” The peculiarly Mormon *values* emphasized by the Church in the retrenchment process should not be confused with the *means* used in that process (i.e., Correlation), even though such means do implicate other values as well. As an analogy, we would not, I trust, claim that the advanced computerization of our genealogical research program implies that technological values have displaced the religious values underlying our family history program.

All such questions and criticisms about my theoretical framework are valid and useful, but in general I think my 1994 book has held up fairly well as an interpretation of LDS Church history since midcentury. Indeed, until recently, it has been about the only scholarly treatment of recent LDS history, though it is now joined by Claudia Bushman’s valuable overview of contemporary issues in Mormonism;⁷ and Jan Shipps, I understand, has a truly comprehensive history of the modern Church well underway.

Meanwhile, I offer in this article something of an update to *The Angel and the Beehive*. The book was published in 1994, just as Howard W. Hunter succeeded Ezra Taft Benson as president of the Church, to be succeeded himself in 1995 by Gordon B. Hinckley. The Hinckley era, to which the Hunter presidency was a compatible prelude, slowly but surely introduced a series of changes in Church policy that have had the cumulative effect of pulling the pendulum of ecclesiastical culture back somewhat from the retrenchment mode and toward assimilation. This reversal has not occurred uniformly along all the dimensions which I discussed in my book, but it has occurred extensively enough to give the Church a different “feel” now from the retrenchment environment that reached its zenith in the administration of President Benson. I will first identify some examples of this seeming retreat from retrenchment, and then I will suggest the tensions to which the Church seems to have been responding in the policy changes it has made. My presentation here can be only suggestive, for I haven’t yet gathered the kind of systematic data needed for reliable conclusions. Nor am I claiming that there has been a wholesale rollback of the retrenchment policies, but only some relatively modest “course corrections.”

Prophets, Scriptures, and Doctrine

Although the retrenchment themes of “follow the prophet” and “he will never lead the Church astray” have continued unabated, some Church leaders have recently softened these intimations of infallibility. In the 1989 October general conference, Elder James E. Faust, while calling for the sustaining of the current prophet (Benson), also denied in passing any claim of infallibility for the prophets and pointed to the collective and consultative nature of the revelatory process as protection against being led astray.⁸ In 1992, Elder Dallin H. Oaks acknowledged that the Church can claim to speak for “higher authority” on moral questions but not on “the application of those moral questions to specific legislation.”⁹ More broadly, a 2007 LDS Newsroom article began with the declaration that “not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine,” and goes on to emphasize the collective deliberation and consultation required among the Presidency and the Twelve in the process we sometimes call “canonization.” There is no hint of any infallibility claim but only an explanation that the revelations and doctrines of the Church are always relative to time, place, audience, and circumstances.¹⁰ In 2009, the *Mormon Times*, a section of the Church-owned *Deseret News* which also maintains a blog with the same name, carried a series of articles by Michael Ash, a prominent LDS apologist, on LDS prophets and their fallibility, on scriptural relativity, individual dissent, etc., starting with an article attacking the notion of a prophet’s infallibility and redefining the meaning of “lead[ing] astray.” While *Mormon Times* routinely includes a disclaimer of official endorsement, it seems highly unlikely that such an article (or extensive series) could have appeared under *Deseret News* auspices in the 1980s.¹¹

Obviously none of these instructions contradicts the injunction to follow the prophet, but the emphasis and tone are both very different from what we received in the 1980s, for example, from Elder Ezra Taft Benson’s “fourteen fundamentals,” which insisted not only that a prophet could never lead us astray but also asserted that the prophet was authorized to pronounce on any topic whatsoever, temporal or spiritual; or from Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s unequivocal designation of certain ideas as “deadly

heresies,” even though some of them had conspicuously been taught by earlier presidents of the Church.¹² Despite McConkie’s authoritative tone and his following among the folk as the final arbiter of true doctrine, his stature has recently been undermined somewhat at the official level. The introduction that he had written for the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon was modified to eliminate the claim that the Lamanites were the “principal” ancestors of today’s Native American Indians and replaced by the more modest assertion that the Lamanites were “among” the ancestors of the Indians. Here we can see the orthodoxy of FARMS taking precedence over McConkie’s orthodoxy.¹³ Similarly, many of the italicized chapter headings that he had written for the Book of Mormon were rewritten to eliminate their obvious and unnecessary racist connotations.¹⁴ Finally, to the great relief of many of us, his *Mormon Doctrine*, for half a century the chief resort of strict, doctrinaire Mormons, was finally allowed to go out of print in 2010.¹⁵ It had officially been replaced in 2004 by *True to the Faith*, an anonymously written and more basic description of gospel topics arranged in alphabetical order. It bears the First Presidency’s imprimatur but without their names, communicating that changes among personnel in the First Presidency do not affect this book’s official status.

An even more conspicuous indication of assimilationist thinking at the doctrinal level can be found in the recent official tendency to soft-pedal, if not to abandon totally, some of the most distinctive teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, such as those in the King Follett Discourse. In its ongoing efforts to enhance its image as a mainstream Christian denomination, rather than a weird “cult,” the Church seems to be backing away as much as is feasible from such distinctive teachings as heavenly parents, the eternal progression of God from a mortal state, and the potential human destiny of godhood.

The earliest indications I saw of this tendency was the seeming equivocation of President Hinckley’s answers to questions about these doctrines in some of his public interviews during the 1990s. For example, in an August 1997 interview with Don Lattin, religion writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, President Hinckley was asked directly whether Mormons believe that God was once a man, and he answered, “I wouldn’t say that. There was a little cou-

plet coined, ‘As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.’ Now that’s more of a couplet than anything else. That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.”¹⁶ Then the nimble president switched the subject to “eternal progression.”

Similar deflections away from such topics can be seen in his interview the same month with David Van Biema of *Time* magazine, which the reporter readily recognized as “downplaying the faith’s distinctiveness.”¹⁷ Interestingly enough, President Hinckley seemed to be reacting to concerns about equivocation on matters of traditional doctrine when he included the following comment during one of his addresses in the October 1997 general conference: “I personally have been much quoted, and in a few instances misquoted and misunderstood. I think that’s to be expected. None of you need worry because you read something that was incompletely reported. You need not worry that I do not understand some matters of doctrine. I think I understand them thoroughly, and it is unfortunate that the reporting may not make this clear. I hope you will never look to the public press as the authority on the doctrines of the Church.”¹⁸

Lest we assume that such retreats from LDS doctrinal distinctiveness are for public consumption only, we need look no farther than the 2010–11 official lesson manual for the priesthood and the Relief Society to see a rather remarkable erosion of distinctive doctrines. One might have thought that *Principles of the Gospel*, used for years as the manual for new converts and investigators, had already been properly vetted, cleansed, and simplified for the “lowest common denominator” of LDS doctrine, but no: It had to be relieved of yet more material that might detract from a mainstream Christian image for Mormonism. Among the traditional LDS teachings that have been eliminated or seriously watered down in the new version, *Gospel Principles*, are that faithful members can become gods; God was not always a god but became God in the same way that LDS members can become gods; both Jesus and Satan are our brothers; and we are children of heavenly parents (including a mother), and that what is required for salvation is true faithfulness, not primarily obedience to a checklist of works-oriented commandments.¹⁹ Yet another kind of important change in this manual has been a reworking of the citations to

sources, such that the main sources of dubious doctrines, especially Elder McConkie, have been removed or replaced, as for example, in the discussion of the gathering of Israel and of signs of the Second Coming.²⁰

Gender and Family Policies

Church teachings and policies on gender and family have always evolved in response primarily to cultural and political developments in the surrounding American society. Although these teachings were expressing a preference for neo-Victorian domesticity by the middle of the twentieth century, one systematic sociological study found that, by 1990, the instructions to women and families in the *Ensign* “had evolved in such a way that the traditional ideal [was still being] reaffirmed even as new roles and behaviors [were being] accommodated.”²¹ Such normative discrepancies between the ideal and the actual always introduce strains and anxieties, especially between generations. Recall that, in 1987, President Benson had delivered some rather stern instructions to LDS mothers employed outside the home. These directives drew on earlier counsel from President Spencer W. Kimball, who had called on wives to “come home from the typewriter, the laundry, the nursing; come home from the factory, the cafe. No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother—cooking meals, washing dishes, making beds for one’s precious husband and children.” Benson himself then added: “The Lord clearly defined the roles of mothers and fathers in providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam—not Eve—was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow. Contrary to conventional wisdom, a mother’s calling is in the home, not in the market place.”²²

Then in 1995, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” was promulgated in large part as a product of the strains in the Church for the previous two decades over gender roles and also over policies toward homosexuals. While the ideal doctrines and policies set forth in the proclamation have continued to be promoted since then, and some of them even reemphasized, a certain amount of softening at the operational level can now be seen in Church counsel on women’s careers versus their domestic priorities. Note the remarkable contrast between the earlier Kimball-

Benson injunctions and the apostolic counsel of Elder Quentin L. Cook in 2011, when he urged the Saints to keep in mind two important principles. One was that no woman devoting herself primarily to raising and nurturing children needs to “apologize” for her career decision; and the second was that “we should all be careful not to be judgmental or assume that sisters are less valiant if the decision is made to work outside the home. We rarely understand or fully appreciate people’s circumstances.”²³ His tone here seems to me almost defensive, as though both kinds of careers, and not just the second, had come under criticism among the Saints in recent years.

Even in 2007, General Relief Society President Julie B. Beck offered a rather relaxed reiteration of motherhood as the ideal for Mormon women in her address, “Mothers Who Know.”²⁴ Her remarks generated considerable controversy on the many new feminist blogs that had been created since Benson’s time. Eventually a kind of counter-construction to Beck’s conceptualization was offered by the bloggers with the title, “What Women Know.” In analyzing this controversy and counter-document, Andrea Radke-Moss, a historian at BYU-Idaho, found a great variety in women’s reactions to Beck’s talk, ranging from strong support to strong disagreement with the perception of some women that she was trying “to pigeonhole all women into one set of expectations.”²⁵ To me the most remarkable thing about the controversy over the Beck speech was the freedom which the bloggers felt in publicly offering their opinions, including some strong dissents, to a message that was, after all, delivered in general conference.

I concur with the Radke-Moss observation that this episode represents a new posture by Church leaders that encourages “a more honest discussion of controversial . . . issues in church publications.” Even if the blogosphere had been available twenty years ago, it’s hard to imagine this kind of episode without a few disciplinary councils in its wake.

Instead, the Beck controversy was followed, in the worldwide training conference the next year, by comments from Church leaders that seemed responsive particularly to that controversy. Elder Oaks, for example, pointed out that, in emphasizing the primary responsibility that mothers have for the nurture of their children, the Proclamation on the Family doesn’t say exclusive re-

sponsibility. Then when Julie Beck herself, in a 2008 meeting with a group of BYU women, was asked if they should have careers, she is quoted as having said, “Whatever your dreams are, go for it. . . . Sometimes you don’t have control over the Lord’s time and plan. . . . Go for broke, but don’t lose sight of the gospel. When the time comes to marry and have children, re-evaluate.”²⁶

Clearly the Church’s instructions to Mormon women have left considerable space for individual adaptations but at the cost of a certain accompanying ambiguity. Indeed, the Church itself is now a major employer of mothers; for example, a fifth of all BYU faculty members are women, and some of them certainly have small children at home.²⁷ Counselors and researchers who have studied the consequences of this ambiguity find that it can be quite alienating for women. In 2008, two psychologists from BYU’s counseling and career center presented a paper at the annual conference of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP). They spoke of the “anxiety and guilt” experienced by many women, whether or not they choose a career outside the home. In a culture that tends to look upon such choices as a dichotomy of good versus evil, women who choose careers feel the judgment of women on one side of the dichotomy, and those who stay home full time feel the judgment of those on the other side. The women who came to their counseling center, the two therapists reported, found it very helpful just to be able to talk about their predicament.²⁸

Certainly the examples of modern Mormon women in the “I’m a Mormon” series on mormon.org provide models that are remarkable in their variety—which, I take it, is the whole idea of those vignettes; but they don’t do anything to clear up the ambiguity that many women seem to perceive in Church doctrines and policies about the roles advocated for women.²⁹ At the same time, however, official policies directed toward the most intimate aspects of husband-wife relationships, which had earlier been quite intrusive, have increasingly (and appropriately) been left to the ultimate discretion of the couples themselves—for example, in matters of birth control, artificial insemination, and in-vitro fertilization.³⁰

Other important changes in the LDS ecclesiastical culture are also apparent since the 1970s. In those days, even as feminist poli-

tics were gaining ground in the outside world, Church policies toward women had increasingly reflected the retrenchment motif occurring in the Church more generally. “Correlation” placed under priesthood control all auxiliary programs that had once been quasi-independent under female leadership. Restrictions on the participation of women in sacrament meeting programs were added so that (for example) opening and closing prayers had to be offered by men, and the major “sermon” at the meeting was always given by “the priesthood” (i.e., a man). Women were still expected to take crying children out of the sacrament meetings and to look after them during the subsequent auxiliary meetings. With the turnover of another generation, however, women started to give prayers and otherwise participate more equally in sacrament meetings. Women began to participate not only in monthly ward council meetings but even in some weekly priesthood executive committee meetings.³¹ Fathers began to share more fully in caring for children during meetings.

Even at BYU, a Women’s Research Institute (WRI) was established in the early 1970s and in 1975 began to sponsor an annual women’s conference. On the other hand, with the passage of time, the presentations at these conferences became increasingly “correlated,” which is to say that their content became less academic or intellectual and more devotional and spiritual in nature.³² The WRI also sponsored a variety of research projects and grants on issues of importance to women, but it apparently had outlived its mandate by 2010, when it was closed down, much to the disappointment of its large constituency.³³ Yet at about the same time, a new multivolume series on LDS women’s history, *WOMEN OF FAITH IN THE LATTER DAYS*, was initiated in the Church Historical Department with Richard E. Turley Jr. and Brittany A. Chapman as co-editors.³⁴ With the blessing of many priesthood leaders, at least in California, Claudia Bushman’s oral history project through the School of Religion at the Claremont Graduate University has produced more than a hundred rich and candid interviews with LDS women of varying ages in California, and at least one book is projected that will analyze the experiences reported in these interviews.

Yet probably nothing has done as much to increase the voices and visibility of Mormon women in this generation as the cre-

ation of all the electronic social media, especially the blogosphere; and these, as far as I can tell, have encountered more appreciation than disapproval from Church leaders. It is primarily because of such blogs as *Exponent II* (an e-continuation of the venerable feminist quarterly newspaper by the same name) and Mormon Feminist Housewives that Peggy Fletcher Stack could declare, “Feminism is back!”³⁵ In their feminist content, these sites range from somewhat conservative to rather adventurous, but almost all of them have been founded by women who are participating members of the LDS Church and anxious to explore the intersection between their feminist yearnings and the roles expected of them in the teachings and policies of the Church.³⁶ The discussions cover a huge range of interests from the personal and mundane to the deeply philosophical and theological. Expressions of anguish and anger are not uncommon, as the bloggers reach out to each other for insights and understanding about their personal efforts to cope with family problems or their struggles to come to terms with their experiences at church. Tresa Edmunds, one of the most active and outspoken of the bloggers, speaks of the lingering “environment of fear” (of Church discipline or family disapproval) into which today’s Mormon women “come out” as feminists, and I do not doubt that such fears would have been justified a generation ago; but Church discipline for public expressions in these blogs seems very unlikely in today’s LDS Church.³⁷ Apparently it is even safe now to discuss the history and development of the concept of a Heavenly Mother, which astonished me when I saw the extensive article on that subject in 2011 in *BYU Studies*, of all places!³⁸

Dealing with the Issue of Homosexuality

Since my book was finished in the early 1990s, the retrenchment policy had not yet confronted certain newer issues of gender and family, particularly homosexuality. As this issue became increasingly prominent, the reaction of Church leaders was predictably quite conservative. I think all Latter-day Saints were taken by surprise to learn how many Mormon families were affected by this issue and particularly by how rapidly homosexual relationships and lifestyles gained acceptance in the surrounding society. In the later 1990s and early 2000s, as same-sex marriage increas-

ingly became a divisive political issue, Church leaders tried to walk the narrow line between (on the one hand) condemning all aspects of homosexuality and politically resisting attempts to normalize it, while (on the other hand) urging civility, kindness, and love toward homosexuals.³⁹ As late as 2006, the *Church Handbook of Instructions* still required that members with even homosexual *feelings* should repent and be referred to professional counseling. During the same period, however, both the emerging professional literature and the personal accounts of LDS families and individuals were raising doubts about the traditional assumption that the homosexual preference was either entirely learned or entirely a matter of choice.⁴⁰ The clash between the traditional and the emerging understandings about the issue came to a head politically in the 2008 Proposition 8 campaign in California and similar campaigns in other states, which quickly translated such scientific questions into contentious public policy issues, especially the legitimacy of same-sex marriage.

The public relations blowback for the Church from its political campaigns made clear the need to take new public positions on gay rights that would emphasize the need to distinguish its firm position on *marriage* from other questions about the rights of homosexuals, both in society generally and in the Church particularly. One result was the rather remarkable and unexpected entry in November 2009 of Michael Otterson, the managing director of LDS Public Affairs, into the debate over various civil rights for homosexuals in Salt Lake City—and this time on the more liberal side of the debate. As Church spokesperson, he supported a Salt Lake City ordinance outlawing discrimination in housing or employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland publicly added his personal view that the new Salt Lake City ordinance in question should also be adopted by the state legislature.⁴¹ In September 2010, the press reported on a dramatic meeting of invited adults in the Oakland California Stake, called by the stake president, in which Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy listened quietly but emotionally to numerous personal accounts about the anguish of gay members and their families who had been dealing with the policies and politics of the Church relating to homosexual relationships. The meeting culminated in a dramatic apology from Elder

Jensen for the pain these people had experienced throughout the Proposition 8 campaign, although he did not, of course, apologize for the campaign itself.⁴²

In view of such developments, it was perhaps not surprising to see a softening of the Church's guidance on relationships with homosexual members in the latest *Church Handbook of Instructions*, released in November 2010. This version of the *Handbook* made a clear distinction between homosexual behavior, which would require repentance, and homosexual feelings, which would not. The same instruction reiterated the 2006 guidance that celibate homosexual members were to be eligible for all blessings of membership, including callings and temple recommends.⁴³

Perhaps the most explicit indication of the official change in tone on this subject was the development that occurred in the wake of President Boyd K. Packer's address at the 2010 October general conference, which (among other things) referred to homosexuality as an "impure and unnatural" condition that could be overcome. This talk was widely criticized, and not only outside the Church. The damage control was immediate: Before Elder Packer's remarks could be published in the Church magazine, or even on the LDS website, they were modified to remove his characterization of homosexuality—a post hoc revision that must have had few, if any precedents, in the experience of a president of the Quorum of the Twelve.⁴⁴

A few days later, the Utah Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and its allies delivered to Church headquarters a petition with 150,000 signatures denouncing Packer's characterizations of homosexual feelings and relationships. Otterson then responded with a long statement emphasizing common ground with the HRC, acknowledging the legitimacy of the HRC's concerns about civil rights and understanding for homosexuals, and condemning persecution and bullying, even while maintaining the Church's right to reject same-sex marriage.⁴⁵ Another form of outreach from headquarters occurred when several prominent members of the Utah gay community were given special invitations to the Christmas concert in the huge Conference Center.⁴⁶ Liberal Mormon blogger Joanna Brooks charted these steps as very reassuring, but her *Religion Dispatch* colleague John-Charles Duffy had a more pessimistic interpretation.⁴⁷ All things considered, though,

the Church has come some distance during the past decade (and especially since the Prop 8 campaign) in an effort to reduce the tension between its policies and the emerging consensus for accommodating homosexuals in modern societies.⁴⁸

Rapprochement with Independent Scholarship

Perhaps the most conspicuous indication of a retreat from retrenchment—and the one most gratifying to scholars like me—has been the outreach and rapprochement of the current generation of Church leaders to scholars, especially those not employed by the Church. Whether Mormon or not, and whether devout or not, these scholars have lately enjoyed a tacit acceptance by leaders—sometimes even appreciation—as well as access to the Church library and archives that is unprecedented in the history of the Church, with the possible exception of the brief “Arrington Spring” in the early 1970s. This more conciliatory and encouraging posture toward scholars seems to have started during the presidency of Howard W. Hunter (1994–95) and was continued and expanded under President Gordon B. Hinckley (1995–2008).⁴⁹ The excommunications and other forms of discipline exercised against intellectuals during the 1980s and early 1990s seem to have dwindled or even stopped altogether, and a new official openness has become apparent toward unsponsored scholarship in general and toward controversial issues in particular.⁵⁰ Of course, there was no official announcement of such a change from any Church leaders, but many events and developments during the Hinckley years testify to a greater appreciation among Church leaders for the benefits and usefulness of the work done by Mormon scholars, whether or not they are employed or sponsored by the Church.

Perhaps the most concrete evidence can be found in several important books published by Mormon scholars on controversial subjects during the Hinckley years. The first of these was actually a trilogy, *Standing on the Promises*, dealing with the African American experience in the LDS Church.⁵¹ Published by Shadow Mountain, an imprint of the Church-owned Deseret Book of Salt Lake City, this trilogy is semi-fictionalized history. It draws on historical data from many archives, including those of the Church itself, and stays close to the documented facts, even though it is ostensibly

“fiction.” It is remarkably candid about the tragic treatment of black Latter-day Saints in Mormon history, especially considering its publisher. The appearance of these titles from the official Church press could not have happened without approval at the highest ecclesiastical level (and, indeed, did not happen without some tense negotiations between authors and nervous editors, as reported to me by one of the authors).

On another delicate subject in Mormon history, namely the Mountain Meadows Massacre, historian Will Bagley published *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), which argued, among other things, that Brigham Young was not merely an accessory after the fact but had approved the massacre before the fact. Yet there was no official reproof or condemnation for his attack on the traditional Church account of that massacre. Instead, the Church commissioned three of its own senior, distinguished historians to reopen the whole history of that tragedy and to write a new and fuller account from scratch. In doing so, the Church opened its archives without restriction to these authors, who put their own integrity on the line as professional historians, committing themselves to produce a full and candid account based on a complete search not only of Church archives but of several other archives as well. The result by Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard was *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*, which was evaluated favorably enough by professional peers to be published by the Oxford University Press in 2008 as the first of a two-volume work on the topic.⁵² With fuller evidence than that available to Bagley, this book acknowledged the markedly hostile rhetoric and histrionics of Brigham Young before the massacre but did not find evidence to support Bagley’s conclusion that Young approved the actual massacre, either before or after the fact.

In 2003, I published *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage*, which demonstrated that the racist heritage of Mormonism was originally far more extensive and doctrinal than just its application to black people, though that heritage has by now been greatly attenuated and even reversed. In 2004, Kathleen Flake published *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), which revealed how the seating of the first Mormon U.S. senator was almost prevented by the failure of the LDS leadership to abandon polygamy in good faith for nearly two decades after that practice had been ostensibly ended in 1890. Then, in 2005, three biographies of LDS presidents were published, including one of the founding prophet: *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling*, by Richard Lyman Bushman, and two of the most important presidents of the late twentieth century: Gregory A. Prince and William R. Wright's *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, and Edward L. Kimball's *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (including a supplemental DVD).⁵³ All of these presidential biographies were remarkably candid, partly because they were based not only on archival materials under Church control but also on many materials that were not.⁵⁴

These biographical and other works cited above were not the only important books on Mormon history to come out during the Hinckley years, but they were especially noteworthy because (1) so many of the authors were independent of Church control or employment but were given generous access to the Church archives; and (2) all of these books engaged sensitive and controversial issues in Mormon history that would, in my judgment, have brought official censure or discipline upon these authors a quarter century earlier. Think, for example, of D. Michael Quinn's *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* article on post-Manifesto polygamy, which today would probably not raise an official eyebrow but which began the unraveling of Quinn's relationship to the Church in the 1980s.⁵⁵ Or consider the candid but sympathetic *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), by Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippets Avery, which was met by official censure and silencing of the authors in Church-sponsored venues in 1984, but which was honored at a special twenty-five-year retrospective session of the Mormon History Association's annual conference in 2009 with the current Church Historian in attendance.⁵⁶ As if these contrasts between the 1980s and the current era do not speak for themselves, consider the following eloquent statement in an LDS Newsroom release in June 2009. I submit that this statement could not have been issued by the LDS Church of 1985:

The new Church History Library is the substance behind the growing emphasis of transparency in the Church's interaction with the public. This facility opens the door for researchers and historians of all kinds to flesh out the stories of Mormon heritage that pass through the imagination of Latter-day Saints from generation to generation. The Church cannot undertake this project on its own. It requires a groundswell of countless individuals—from within and without the Church—operating on their own personal inspiration. The story of the Church will inevitably be told as historians of good faith are given access to the library's records and archives. . . . It is in the interests of the Church to play a constructive role in advancing the cathartic powers of honest and accurate history. In doing so, the Church strives to be relevant to contemporary audiences that operate under changing cultural assumptions and expectations. A careful, yet bold presentation of Church history, which delves into the contextual subtleties and nuances characteristic of serious historical writing, has become increasingly important. If a religion cannot explain its history, it cannot explain itself.⁵⁷

As the Church leadership has thus reached out in friendship to all sorts of individual scholars “of good faith,” it has also seemingly embraced the Mormon History Association itself, with which it had earlier maintained a meticulous and wary arms-length relationship. Since 2002, the Church Historian has attended nearly every conference of the MHA by assignment—and not just with perfunctory greetings, but as a participant throughout the conference. Furthermore, at the 2007 MHA conference, the Church Historian presented a check for \$10,000 from the LDS Foundation to the MHA leadership to inaugurate a new endowment campaign. He also made a “generous personal donation and challenged those in attendance to ‘go thou and do likewise!’”⁵⁸ Probably a similar gesture from the Church leadership toward *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* at this stage would suggest either the arrival of the Millennium or a drop in temperature to absolute zero in hell, depending on your view of *Dialogue*; but even the new posture of Church leaders toward the MHA is a strong indication that the work of sincere and competent scholars of various kinds is now welcome.

Two other indications of the same new posture can be found in the responses of Church leaders (1) toward the establishment of new courses and endowed chairs in Mormon studies at some of the nation's universities, and (2) toward various important aca-

democratic conferences on Mormonism held under auspices not controlled by the Church. The public statements in Church-sponsored media, such as the LDS Newsroom, about the new academic Mormon studies programs are clearly favorable and supportive, despite the strictly secular contexts in which these programs are being created.⁵⁹ With a similar collegial attitude, the Church is now sending some of its General Authorities, with academic backgrounds and credentials of their own, to participate in important conferences under outside, secular auspices—not merely as official observers but as regular and equal program participants.

Aside from the conferences of the Mormon History Association, already mentioned, perhaps the earliest of these “outside” conferences was the May 2005 conference on “The Worlds of Joseph Smith,” held at the Library of Congress, with Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Twelve as a major speaker.⁶⁰ Other examples would include the 2009 annual conference of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), where Elder Robert S. Wood of the Seventy was the concluding banquet speaker;⁶¹ the inaugural conference in 2010 of the Mormon chapter of the Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy, held at the University of Southern California, where the opening speaker was Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy;⁶² and even the Third Congress of Traditional and World Religions, held in Kazakhstan in July 2009, where Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy presented a paper.⁶³ Similarly, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Twelve participated as one among a diverse collection of LDS commentators at the *Patheos* website on “The Future of Mormonism.”⁶⁴

In light of all these developments, well might Richard Bushman have declared that a new “golden age” of historical scholarship has dawned among the Mormons. In a capstone address at the June 2011 oral “*festschrift*” in honor of his eightieth birthday, Bushman rejoiced in the new intellectual environment, citing some of the same developments I have discussed here.⁶⁵ This new era, he claimed, “has brought into existence a realm of independent inquiry where scholarship is no longer judged by its partisan conclusions but by its accuracy and insight.” Mentioning especially Elder Marlin K. Jensen, LDS Church Historian, and Richard E. Turley Jr., Assistant Church Historian, Bushman credited them

and their colleagues in the new LDS Church History Library with “the conviction that the Church and its history can flourish in the realm of free, open, and independent inquiry. . . . We do not need to conceal our history. We believe it will be more convincing and more engaging and more true if we tell it as it is.” Bushman also acknowledged the foundational but abortive efforts of Leonard J. Arrington, Church Historian in the 1970s, to implement essentially the same philosophy of historical research and writing but discreetly avoided placing the Arrington project and its fate within the context of the retrenchment era, as my theoretical framework does.⁶⁶ He suggested simply that “Leonard . . . would be immensely pleased with what is happening now . . . [when] history writing . . . is built on a much steadier foundation than his Camelot, with much better prospects for continuance.” By “steadier foundation,” I presume that Bushman was referring to the wider support for such scholarly (as contrasted with apologetic) history among today’s General Authorities.⁶⁷

Explaining the Partial Retreat from Retrenchment

I have offered a variety of evidence, mainly from the public record, in an effort to demonstrate that, in several important respects, the Church has modified the single-minded retrenchment thrust that characterized its policies after the mid-twentieth century. For about the last twenty years, the retrenchment motif has been displaced by a more assimilationist posture in certain aspects of doctrine and scripture, in the definition of gender and family roles, in policies toward homosexuals and homosexuality, and in a new engagement with scholars and scholarship in Mormon studies that have recently emerged in the world outside Church sponsorship or control. While I think I have made a pretty good case for this change of direction in the ecclesiastical culture of the Church, I hasten to add that the retrenchment of the past half century has not been entirely rolled back, especially at the grass-roots level. Correlation, a major vehicle of retrenchment, is alive and well. “There is only one true Church” and “follow the prophet” continue to be recurrent slogans with intimations of prophetic infallibility. Adult lesson manuals continue to be intellectually simplified and sanitized treatments of history and doctrine, with official instruction that they are not to be supple-

mented with “outside” materials. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” continues to be emphasized, with variations from traditional gender roles considered as exceptions to be justified, rather than as truly acceptable alternatives. Many of the “peculiar” doctrines and practices of Mormonism continue to be emphasized, both inside and outside the Church, including the importance and historicity of the Book of Mormon, missionary service, genealogical research, temple worship, and the Word of Wisdom.

My argument, then, is not that retrenchment has ended and we are back to the assimilationist posture of 1950. The theory in my 1994 book is a cyclical one—or rather a pendular one—in which the growth and strength of the Church depend on periodic “course corrections” to maintain an optimum level of cultural tension with the surrounding society, which itself is constantly changing.⁶⁸ While the function of retrenchment (intentionally or not) might be to restore an assimilating religion to “optimum” (rather than minimal) tension with the surrounding society, each new retrenchment campaign seems to start from a more advanced stage of assimilation than the last one did, so that the ecclesiastical culture is never pulled all the way back to the tension level from which it started. The actual pattern, then, seems to be two steps toward assimilation and only one back toward retrenchment. The end result is typically still a well-assimilated religious community in the long term.⁶⁹ In the short term, though, we might see the opposite—a strong retrenchment thrust followed by a partial retreat again toward assimilation, which is what I think has occurred during the past two decades.

But why and how? The answer to why seems to be an effort on the part of the Church to respond to the accelerated and sharpened attacks on its public image in the wake of its new political prominence. As Mormonism has grown in size and in geographic dispersion around the United States, the political initiatives of its hierarchy, as well as of its prominent individuals, have attracted increasing attention to its history, its internal and external policies, and especially its peculiarities. In the mid-1970s, during the campaigns of the International Women’s Year (IWY) and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), the Church began to exert its political muscle, both publicly and surreptitiously, in ways that

were unprecedented in the twentieth century.⁷⁰ During the ensuing three decades, up through the most recent political campaigns in various states over gay rights and same-sex marriage, the membership of the Church also increased fourfold. Mormons gained over-representation in Congress, and prominent individual Mormons became serious candidates for the presidency.

Unwelcome national attention to Mormonism's legacy of polygamy was once again stirred up by schismatic groups and magnified by popular television programs. Hostility and ridicule from gay rights advocates and their allies in politics and the mass media raised such issues as Church control over individual Mormon political decisions, unwholesome secrecy in the temples and governing councils of the Church, Mormon gender inequality, implausible elements in the founding narratives of Mormonism, and even the unusual Mormon underwear. Highly touted and successful Broadway productions such as *Angels in America* and *The Book of Mormon: The Musical*, while not necessarily unfriendly to Mormons or the Church, nevertheless added to the emerging national (and international) image of Mormonism as weird and laughable. In short, the Church in recent years has been losing control over its own public image, its own "brand."

To counteract these attacks on its image, the Church seems to have turned primarily to its Department of Public Affairs. The public relations enterprise has been a prominent part of Church operations at least since the 1970s; but with the appointment of Michael Otterson as its head in 1997, Public Affairs has gained a new importance and turned the Church in a new direction.⁷¹ In the past, the responses of Church spokesmen to scandal or to criticism (internal or external) have had a somewhat defensive tone, a kind of "circling of the wagons," a tendency to avoid revealing more than necessary while making an effort to get on to a different subject. This approach has often left an impression that there was more to the story, perhaps something the Church was trying to hide.⁷² Now, however, under Otterson, the strategy seems almost opposite, whether the spokesmen (and now spokeswomen, too) are Church leaders or Public Affairs representatives.

There seems to be a new, proactive expansiveness and transparency in facing the world's questions and criticisms.⁷³ Otterson himself is exceedingly smooth and quick in taking on the media;

as only one example, I would cite his July 2011 reaction to the pejorative “cult” label so thoughtlessly attached to the LDS Church by media commentators (who should know better) and by Christian evangelicals (who have a vested interest in using the label).⁷⁴ Especially impressive has been Otterson’s handling of the popularity of the clever Broadway *The Book of Mormon: The Musical*, starting with the low-key official Church reactions and culminating in an expensive PR blitz that, in effect, turned the tables on the musical’s producers by surfing on their wave of popularity with a conspicuous and pricey promotion of the “I’m a Mormon” series in Times Square and in placards atop hundreds of New York taxis.⁷⁵

Beyond these new proactive measures toward the mass media, the Church, through Public Affairs, has also embraced the popular “social media” in a big way, sponsoring a variety of its own websites and encouraging individual Mormons to go out and engage the world with their own personal ideas and testimonies.⁷⁶ More importantly, for my argument about the pull-back from retrenchment, one sees no effort to discipline dissenting LDS bloggers or otherwise to control either the content or access to the content on those sites which present alternative views on official Church positions. Instead, Church spokespersons enter those sites and conversations with skill and good will. Rather than warnings about “alternate voices,” we are urged instead to engage in the discussions about the Church and its people, lest we abdicate to others the right to define us and our public image.⁷⁷ In the words of Elder M. Russell Ballard, “There are conversations going on about the Church constantly. Those conversations will continue whether or not we choose to participate in them. But we cannot stand on the sidelines while others, including our critics, attempt to define what the Church teaches.”⁷⁸

It seems that the Church leaders have recognized a certain inevitability about their loss of control over how the Church is discussed and covered in these sites and have decided that its interests are better served by maintaining a constructive relationship with them than by opposing them. Good examples are the long conversation of Richard Bushman with Michael Cromartie, Ken Woodward, and a dozen journalists and scholars at a Florida meeting of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2007;⁷⁹

Michael Otterson's regular appearance for the past five years on the *Washington Post*'s "On Faith" series;⁸⁰ his informative interview with Steve Evans on the blog *By Common Consent* in 2009;⁸¹ and Elder Quentin L. Cook's entry into the *Patheos* discussion on the future of Mormonism in 2010.⁸² In the same spirit was the long two-part interview that the LDS Newsroom gave in 2008 to *Times and Seasons*, another prominent site in the Mormon bloggernacle, even before Otterson's interview with *BCC*.⁸³

Such openings to the outside and increased transparency have had some effects on internal Church policies as well. Public Affairs callings at the stake level have been greatly enhanced as the local face of the LDS Church through proactive bridge-building with local civic and religious leaders, regular communications with local mass media, and various civic and humanitarian projects such as Mormon Helping Hands.⁸⁴ Indeed, an important Churchwide result has been to reconceptualize the mission of the Church in *four* parts instead of three. At least since President Kimball's time, the Saints have been taught that the "three-fold mission of the Church" consists of preaching the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead. Section 2.2 in Book 2 of the new 2010 *Church Handbook of Instructions* changes somewhat the terminology and arrangement of these three and adds a fourth: "In fulfilling its purpose to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation, the Church focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities. These include helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ, gathering Israel through missionary work, caring for the poor and needy, and enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances." This revision of the Church's mission statement was not reported in any official LDS Newsroom releases, and only incidentally in *Mormon Times*.⁸⁵ Otherwise it does not seem to have received much attention in the regular meetings of the Saints, as far as I can tell, perhaps because the new (fourth) emphasis on humanitarian goals represents an outreach to the world, so different from the more strictly spiritual nature of the original three from the "retrenchment" era. Yet many LDS blogs have certainly picked up on the change and praised it.⁸⁶

Another reflection internally of the new Public Affairs orientation was the decision to make Book 2 of the 2010 *Church Hand-*

book of Instructions available on the internet, which seemed to take both the Saints and the outside world by surprise, given the strenuous efforts to restrain access to earlier versions. Comments about the new internet access were very appreciative both from inside and outside the Church.⁸⁷ Both substantively and symbolically, this decision bespeaks the new policy of greater transparency, candor, and openness in the Church and should help to neutralize the public stereotype of an unduly “secretive” Mormon leadership. It will also help rank-and-file Church members to feel inclusion and “ownership” where programs and policies are concerned. Since the membership in general is not involved in the creation and promulgation of Church rules and policies, these sometimes come across as what “they” (remote leaders) impose upon “us” (ordinary folk). However, now that all members can directly access and review the policies that affect them the most, a more informed membership will gradually emerge with a greater awareness of Church expectations, both in personal behavior and in the requirements of all the various callings held by themselves and their fellow ward members. The rules and policies will seem more like “ours” as a Church than as “theirs.”

Conclusion

All things considered, it seems clear that at least a partial reversal of the late twentieth-century retrenchment process is underway, both in the ecclesiastical culture of Mormonism and in the efforts of the leadership to improve and soften the Mormon public image. These internal and external processes are connected, for they are both driven by an organizational imperative to modify the degree of cultural and political tension that had developed in recent decades. Tension is *increased* both by Church demands on the membership that seem excessive or “weird” to the outside and by Church policies that seem at odds with the general normative and political consensus—or that challenge powerful interest groups. Tension is *reduced* to the extent that demands on members seem less strenuous and/or the Church seems to pose a lesser political challenge to interest groups in the “establishment.” As I have argued here, tension reduction seems to be the order of the day as the new century unfolds. Internally, certain traditional ideas about the Book of Mormon and some doctrines from the

Nauvoo era have been dropped or soft-pedaled as no longer central to Mormonism, thereby reducing somewhat the discrepancies with traditional Christianity. Although the “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” remains very much in force as a statement of doctrine and policy, modifications and exceptions are increasingly accommodated at the operational level—that is, in the ways that gender roles are expressed in actual behavior. Accommodations for the spiritual needs and human rights of homosexuals have been made in Church policies, both internally and in civil law. Scholarship on Mormon doctrine, history, and culture is now welcomed by Church leaders, even when it comes from independent scholars, LDS and otherwise. These internal changes, though not dramatic, should be apparent to any of us who were active scholars in Mormon studies through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

Externally, meanwhile, the Church has ramped up its assimilationist thrust, especially through a Public Affairs apparatus that has been enhanced both in visibility and in sophistication. The initiatives taken in recent years, whether by Public Affairs or by the Church leaders more generally, point to policies that have become less defensive, and more proactive and transparent, in the struggle to define and enhance the Church’s public image. It is no longer enough to go back and forth with the Evangelicals on whether Mormons are, in fact, Christians. That was yesterday’s preoccupation.⁸⁸ Today, though still in conversation with Evangelicals, Mormon outreach seems much more interested in actively cultivating new relationships with Catholics, Jews, and Muslims, both Churchwide and through initiatives of stake Public Affairs Councils at the local level. Besides the special VIP invitations extended to dignitaries from these religions to the open-house events at our new temples, interfaith outreach takes many other forms as well, which are well publicized by articles in the LDS Newsroom and *Mormon Times*, among other venues.⁸⁹ Like most of these other traditional faiths, the LDS Church has also recently embraced humanitarian outreach to all communities, regardless of their religion, as a fourth part of its public mission statement—certainly a move also in an assimilationist direction.

Is all of this working? Is the LDS Church gaining increased acceptance and respectability as a legitimate and valued institution in the American religious family? That is a much harder question

to answer, despite all the new energy and resources that Public Affairs has exerted toward that end. The residue of ill will over the campaigns against same-sex marriage remains strong, especially among gay rights sympathizers in the secular world and in the more liberal religious communities, where it is used to validate traditional claims about Mormon weirdness, retrograde theological and social teachings, and political conspiracies.⁹⁰

So far the results of the latest Public Affairs offensive seem somewhat mixed, even among observers who might wish the Church well. A *Washington Post* observer early in 2011 outlined the mixed blessings for the Church of the political prominence of Mitt Romney and other Mormon politicians. Whereas Michael Otterson was quoted as saying he thought such prominence indicated that the Mormon community had “finally arrived,” many other experts quoted in the same article saw as much mistrust and ill will as ever toward Mormons.⁹¹ This article was duly noted at LDS Newsroom and was followed by a great variety of prominent voices from American religions and politics weighing in on the pluses and minuses of the growing LDS political visibility.⁹² In one of these responses, Otterson himself wrote extensively to clarify what he meant (and did not mean) in saying that Mormons had “arrived.” Comments by bloggers following the comments by Otterson and others certainly displayed the range of popular opinion about Mormons on the national scene.⁹³

One of the most interesting—and perhaps problematic—aspects of the various Public Affairs initiatives directed externally is their unintended consequences for internal LDS consumption (and perhaps vice versa). For example, the enormous variety in the models of Mormon womanhood expressed in the “I’m a Mormon” ads certainly complicates the model that one would infer from the Proclamation on the Family, an interesting point aired by an LDS woman in Utah, who described these ads as “drastically misleading”: “The disparity between the image my Church is trying so hard to convey to the world and the image local members are being told they must adhere to . . . is a bit unnerving.”⁹⁴ Of course, the professionals and bureaucracies in the Church that are tasked with external image-making are different from those tasked with internal Saint-making, so such discrepancies are probably inevitable. In a similar vein, one wonders also if the efforts at

Public Affairs to take relatively liberal positions (or at least less conservative ones) on external issues such as gay rights, illegal immigrants, and “green” construction policies, provide an exaggerated impression of diversity among the Saints on these issues while attempting to separate the Church itself from its common image as arch-conservative.⁹⁵

What is apparent, however, from this presentation is the growing importance of LDS Public Affairs policies and spokespersons in a “course correction” intended to reshape the popular image of Mormons and their Church in such a way as to reduce the political and cultural tension with American society. This external course correction, however, is having its implications also for certain internal changes that promise to soften, or even partially roll back, a few prominent features of the earlier retrenchment policies regarding doctrine and scripture, women’s roles, and the acceptance of homosexuals and scholars with “alternate voices.” One wonders what additional course corrections are around the corner as the Church approaches its bicentennial, and what implications these might have for LDS members in other parts of the world.

Notes

1. My thinking here was informed also by theories about the “natural history” of new social movements, which I had used in my earlier work on the sociology of political “reform” movements. See, for example, my essay, “On Being Strangled by the Stars and Stripes: The New Left, the Old Left, and the Natural History of American Radical Movements,” *Journal of Social Issues* 27, no. 1 (1971): 183–202; I was guest editor for this issue. See also my *Social Problems as Social Movements* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975), chap. 2, esp. 57–71.

2. This idea, too, was derivative from earlier studies showing that commitment and growth in religious movements are importantly dependent on demands for strictness and sacrifice from the membership. See, e. g., Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972). During the 1980s, Rodney Stark, in collaboration with William S. Bainbridge and other younger colleagues, elaborated such ideas into an entirely new paradigm for understanding the success of new religious movements (NRMs). See,

e.g., Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Clearly my own work was influenced by this emerging paradigm, which is explained more fully by R. Stephen Warner, "Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 5 (March 1993): 1044–93.

3. I had first advanced this general framework and terminology in invited lectures under the auspices of the Charles Redd Center at Brigham Young University (1982) and the B. H. Roberts Society in Salt Lake City (1983), and then in the following published articles: "Assimilation and Ambivalence: The Mormon Reaction to Americanization," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 20–67; "Church, Sect, and Scripture: The Protestant Bible and Mormon Sectarian Retrenchment" (with Philip L. Barlow), *Sociological Analysis* (now called *Sociology of Religion*) 52, no. 4 (1991): 397–414; and "The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation and Identity: Trends and Developments since Midcentury," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 129–49.

4. A very similar argument was under development by Laurence R. Iannaccone from the discipline of economics. See, e.g., his "A Formal Model of Church and Sect," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (Supplement): S241–68 (1988); "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives," *Journal of Political Economy* 100, no. 2 (1992): 271–92; and "Why Strict Churches Are Strong," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994): 1180–1211. Eventually sociologists Stark and colleagues, and Iannaccone from economics, merged their efforts to produce the above-mentioned "new paradigm," which has since come to be described (not entirely accurately) as "rational choice" theory applied to religion. This merger reached its zenith in Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

5. See, for example, the review of O. Kendall White Jr., "Swimming Up the Mainstream," *Sunstone*, June 1996, 62–65.

6. Roger Terry, "Competing Values within the Restored Church: An Organizational Analysis," unpublished paper, 2010, 25–26, emphasis mine. Terry also quotes, to the same effect, Warner P. Woodworth, "Brave New Bureaucracy," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 34.

7. Claudia L. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006).

8. James E. Faust, "Continuous Revelation," *Ensign*, November

1989, 8–11. In the 1994 general conference, President Hunter, on succeeding to the presidency of the Church, also alluded to the consultative process in decision-making, emphasizing, indeed, the requirement of unanimity in all matters of importance. Howard W. Hunter, “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, November 1994, 7–8.

9. Dallin H. Oaks, “Religious Values and Public Policy,” *Ensign*, October 1992, 60.

10. “Approaching Mormon Doctrine,” Newsroom, May 4, 2007: <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/approaching-mormon-doctrine> (accessed July 31, 2011).

11. Michael R. Ash, “Challenging Issues and Keeping the Faith, Part 10,” column in *Mormon Times*, a section of the *Deseret News*, July 13, 2009, <http://www.mormontimes.com/article/4534/Challenging-issues-and-keeping-the-faith-Part-10>. The series ran up through Part 17 during a two-month period. In mid-2011, the *Mormon Times* site was relocated under the general *Deseret News* site, as explained at <http://www.deseretnews.com/mormontimes/newsletter> (accessed July 10, 2011).

12. Ezra Taft Benson, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” *Liahona*, June 1981, 1–3 (published only in the *Liahona*, but not in the *Ensign*, as nearly as I have been able to determine); and Bruce R. McConkie, “The Seven Deadly Heresies,” June 1, 1980, *BYU Speeches* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1980).

13. I am attributing this revised introduction to McConkie on the basis of his central role in the entire process of producing the new editions of all four LDS standard works in 1979 and 1981. Carrie A. Moore, “Intro Change in Book of Mormon Spurs Discussion,” *Deseret News*, November 9, 2007, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/695226049/Intro-change-in-Book-of-Mormon-spurs-discussion.html> (accessed June 29, 2011). For the significance of my allusion to FARMS, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_for_Ancient_Research_and_Mormon_Studies (accessed June 29, 2011).

14. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Church Removes Racial References in Book of Mormon Headings,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 16, 2010, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home/50882900-76/mormon-book-changes-church.html.csp> (accessed June 29, 2011).

15. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Landmark ‘Mormon Doctrine’ Goes out of Print,” *Salt Lake Tribune* May 21, 2010, Religion Section, p. 1.

16. The Lattin interview appeared in the April 13, 1997, issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. SC-3, and in the *Chronicle*’s online publication *SF Gate*, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/1997/04/13/SC36289.DTL&type=printable> (accessed March 31, 2011). I felt sure that I recalled a similar attempt by President Hinckley to finesse

such questions in his April 7, 1996, interview with Mike Wallace on CBS's *60 Minutes* program, but I couldn't find it in the 2008 reprise of that interview at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/31/60minutes/main3775068.shtml> (accessed June 29, 2011). Perhaps I had yet another interview in mind.

17. The Van Biema interview appears in *Time*, August 4, 1997, 56, where President Hinckley first refers to people becoming gods as "an ideal," but eventually conceded that there is such a belief in the LDS Church. On the subject of whether God was once a man, the president again equivocated: "I don't know that we teach it. I don't know that we emphasize it. . . . I understand the philosophical background behind it, but I don't know a lot about it, and I don't think others [do]."

18. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Drawing Nearer to the Lord," *Ensign*, November 1997, 4. Yet ironically, as recently as June 27, 2011, in an extensive LDS Newsroom article discussing the nature of God and man, the allusions to human divinization were so oblique as to be missed altogether by many LDS Church members, to say nothing of the "public press" whose characterizations concerned Hinckley. A section titled "Identity" reads: "We know ourselves by knowing God"; the discussion of the "divine attributes" instilled in God's children is based entirely on Romans 8:17, not on any LDS scriptures or literature. The passage there about our being "heirs" of God and "joint heirs with Christ" can and will, of course, be read in the figurative way that such passages have always been understood by the rest of Christianity—and even by Mormons not well informed on the more exotic teachings of Joseph Smith. See <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/permanent-things-toward-an-understanding-of-mormons> (accessed June 29, 2011).

19. I found it convenient to copy this list from *Green Oasis*, <http://www.blakeclan.org/jon/greenoasis/?s=gospel+principles+changes> (accessed June 29, 2011). However, these and other changes between *Principles of the Gospel* and *Gospel Principles* are amply documented, chapter by chapter, in the website for the Mormon Religious Ministry, <http://mrm.org/gospel-principles> (accessed June 29, 2011). The claims in these unofficial sources accord well with my own findings in perusing the new manual. I found myself resonating strongly with the anonymous commentator on *Green Oasis*, who summarized poignantly that he could see the reasons for such changes; but "at the same time, I'm sad to see the leaders of the LDS Church continue to distance themselves from some of the doctrines that I cherished most as a member of their faith. These doctrines gave me hope and made Mormonism interesting. Without them, Mormonism becomes just another shade of Protestantism (*yawn*)." I would add that the ironic result, intended or not, is to make

Mormonism seem more convergent with Evangelical Protestantism—closing somewhat the “wide divide,” as it were. NOTE: Since I accessed this post originally, the site at the above URL reports that Green Oasis is “no longer being updated” (i.e., is defunct). However, the comment just quoted can still be accessed by going to “explore all of my past posts” and selecting “the-new-gospel-principles,” dated August 11, 2009.

20. The de-McConkie-ization of this manual was given special attention on the website *Confetti Antiques & Books*, <http://www.confettiantiques.com/book-reviews/gospel-principles-manual-changes-bruce-r-mcconkie-is-removed/> (accessed June 29, 2011).

21. Laurence R. Iannaccone and Carrie Miles, “Dealing with Social Change: The Mormon Church’s Response to Change in Women’s Roles,” *Social Forces* 68 (1990): 1231–50, esp. 1246.

22. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Mothers in Zion,” delivered at a Fireside for Parents at BYU, February 22, 1987, and widely disseminated as a pamphlet. Also available http://fc.byu.edu/jpages/ee/w_etb87.htm (accessed June 29, 2011).

23. Quentin L. Cook, “LDS Women Are Incredible,” *Ensign*, May 2011, <http://lds.org/ensign/2011/05?lang=eng> (accessed June 28, 2011).

24. Julie B. Beck, “Mothers Who Know,” *Ensign*, November 2007, 76–78.

25. Andrea G. Radke-Moss, “Bickering over Beck: Mormon Women’s Petition Resistance to Julie B. Beck’s ‘Mothers Who Know’ Talk,” paper presented at the annual conference of the Mormon History Association, Springfield, Illinois, Session 3C, May 29, 2009.

26. In this paragraph I am relying on the account of the Radke-Moss paper provided by Emily W. Jensen, “Blogging over Beck: Analysis of Reaction to ‘Mothers Who Know,’” *Mormon Times*, May 27, 2009, http://www.mormontimes.com/article/9209/Blogging-over-Beck-analysis-of-reaction-to-Mothers-Who-Know?s_cid=search_queue&utm_source=search_queue (accessed June 29, 2011). The full Jensen article appears at <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/2258988/posts-> (accessed August 1, 2011).

27. Seth Lewis, “Women Faculty No Longer a Rare Commodity,” *BYU Universe* online, April 11, 2001, <http://newsnet.byu.edu/story.cfm/30971> (accessed June 29, 2011).

28. Molly Farmer, “Working Mothers Not Alone in Feeling Judgment,” *Mormon Times*, October 3, 2008, reporting on the session: “Women and Careers: Role Conflict throughout the Lifespan,” a paper presented by Melissa Goates-Jones and Lisa Levitt, annual conference of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychologists, 2008, Salt Lake

City. See http://www.mormontimes.com/article/10612/Working-mothers-not-alone-in-feeling-judgment?s_cid=search_queue&utm_source=search_queue. The announcement of the AMCAP meeting appears on its website, <http://ldsamcap.ning.com/> (accessed June 29, 2011).

29. To find these vignettes, go to www.mormon.org, and navigate to “Our People,” then “I’m a Mormon.”

30. The 2010 LDS *Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Administering the Church*, Sections 21.4.3, 21.4.4, and 21.4.7, <http://lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church?lang=eng> (accessed June 29, 2011).

31. Non-Mormon journalist Eric Gorski, quoting a number of knowledgeable scholars, sees these developments as indicating a new visibility and voice for ordinary Mormon women. Gorski, “Mormon Women Emerging from Shadows,” *Mormon Times*, January 30, 2008, *Deseret News* archives, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705383405/Mormon-Women-Emerging-From-Shadows.html> (accessed August 1, 2011).

32. Such an evolution in the contents of these conferences will be apparent from comparing the published proceedings across time. See http://mormonlit.byu.edu/lit_work.php?w_id=6608 (accessed June 29, 2011).

33. For Vice-President John Tanner’s official announcement of the closing of the Women Research Institute, see <http://news.byu.edu/archive09-Oct-womens.aspx> (accessed June 29, 2011). A skeptical and disappointed response by Keri Withington on Yahoo’s Associated Content is at http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2363642/brigham_young_university_dissolves.html?cat=9 (accessed June 29, 2011).

34. Announcement through fliers distributed at the Mormon History Association annual meeting in 2010 and 2011 and also posted on its own website: <http://www.ldswomenoffaith.org/> (accessed June 29, 2011). Authors have been told that the first book, an anthology of vignettes about women in the earliest years of the Church, will be published before the end of 2011.

35. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormon Feminism: It’s Back,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Lifestyle Section), August 13, 2010, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/lifestyle/50080435-80/women-church-mormon-lds.html.csp?page=1> (accessed June 29, 2011).

36. A good indication of the range and variety of Mormon feminist expressions is the symposium built around an earlier article by Kathryn Soper, “As Sisters in Zion.” See “Mormon Feminism: A Patheos Symposium,” <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Mormon-Feminism-A-Patheos-Symposium.html> (accessed June 29, 2011). See also *W.A.V.E.* (Women Advocating for Voice and Equality), www.ldswave.org (accessed June 29, 2011), which is oriented toward ac-

tion as well as discussion. Some of these feminist sites, considered “mommy blogs,” have apparently attracted considerable interest from non-Mormon women as well. See http://www.salon.com/life/feature/2011/01/15/feminist_obsessed_with_mormon_blogs/index.html (accessed June 29, 2011).

37. Tresa Edmunds, “The Next Generation of Mormon Feminism,” August 9, 2010, *Patheos*, also uses “renaissance” to refer to the changed situation of Mormon women. <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/The-Next-Generation-of-Mormon-Feminism.html> (accessed June 29, 2011). One of the reviewers for this article made the cogent point that the feminist blogging is “primarily, but not exclusively, an exercise of connection and understanding and self-assertion”; and even though some of the content is also “insightful and profound,” it is instructive that “it’s producing very little angst among Church leadership, which suggests a significant departure from the theology-based, idea-based Mormon feminism of the past.”

38. David L. Paulson and Martin Pulido, “‘A Mother There’: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven,” *BYU Studies* 50, no. 1 (2010): 71–97. While I appreciated the research and discoveries in this article, I found the tone of it a bit disingenuous in places (e.g., 73–75, 85), where the authors leave the impression that the subject has never been considered off-limits by Church leaders. I suspect that certain LDS feminist authors of an earlier generation would strongly disagree with that facile dismissal of their experiences.

39. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Same-Gender Attraction,” *Ensign*, October 1995, 7–11; an “interview” on LDS Newsroom, [no date] 2006, with Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Lance B. Wickman: “Same-Gender Attraction,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/official-statement/same-gender-attraction> (accessed June 29, 2011); “Church Responds to Same-Sex Marriage Votes,” Newsroom, November 5, 2008: <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-responds-to-same-sex-marriage-votes> (accessed June 29, 2011); and “The Mormon Ethic of Civility,” Newsroom, October 16, 2009: <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/the-mormon-ethic-of-civility> (accessed June 29, 2011).

40. See, e.g., Ron Schow, Wayne Schow, and Marybeth Raynes, eds., *Peculiar People: Mormons and Same-Sex Orientation* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991); William S. Bradshaw, “Biology and Homosexuality,” LDS Resources for Latter-day Saints Dealing with Homosexual Attraction,” <http://www.ldsresources.info/professionals/bradshaw.shtml> (2007); and Fred Matis, Marilyn Matis, and Ty Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation: Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, an imprint of Deseret Book, 2004).

41. "Church Supports Nondiscrimination Ordinances," Press Release, LDS Newsroom, November 10, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-supports-nondiscrimination-ordinances> (accessed June 29, 2011); see also Rosemary Winters and Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Apostle: LDS Gay-Right Measures Could Work for State," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 11, 2009, http://www.sltrib.com/lds/ci_13766464 (accessed July 1, 2011).

42. Carol Lynn Pearson, "Elder Marlin K. Jensen Listens to Pain Caused by Prop. 8," Proclamation (online website maintained by Affirmation), September 17, 2010, <http://blog.affirmation.org/2010/09/elder-marlin-k-jensen-listens-to-pain-caused-by-prop-8/> (accessed June 29, 2011); also Holly Welker, "LDS Elder Marlin Jensen's Prop 8 'Apology': We Need Clarification," *Huffpost Religion*, September 27, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/holly-welker/elder-jensen-prop-8-apology_b_739609.html (accessed June 29, 2011); and Joanna Brooks, "Mormon Leader: 'I'm Sorry' for Hurtful Legacy of Prop 8," *Religion Dispatches (rd magazine)*, September 28, 2010, http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/sexandgender/3437/mormon_leader%3A_%E2%80%98i%E2%80%99m_sorry%E2%80%99_for_hurtful_legacy_of_prop_8/ (accessed June 29, 2011).

43. See the 2010 *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Administering the Church*, Section 21.4.6; also the LDS Newsroom Q&A on the distinction between "feelings and inclinations" on the one hand, and behavior, on the other, posted July 18, 2011, <http://newsroom.lds.org/official-statement/same-gender-attraction> (accessed June 29, 2011).

44. See the following articles by Peggy Fletcher Stack in the *Salt Lake Tribune* during October 2010: "Apostle: Same-Sex Attraction Can Change," October 3; "Mormons Divided on LDS Apostle's Speech on Gays," October 4; "Apostle's Speech on Gays Changed on LDS Website," October 8; and "High-Ranking LDS Leader Weighs In on Same-Sex Attraction," October 25.

45. "Church Responds to HRC Petition: Statement on Same-Sex Attraction," October 12, 2010, Press release, LDS Newsroom, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-mormon-responds-to-human-rights-campaign-petition-same-sex-attraction> (accessed June 29, 2011).

46. Holly Welker, "The LDS Church's Unequal Treatment of Gay and Feminist Activists," *Huffpost Religion*, January 10, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/holly-welker/gay-activists-bear-their-_b_806542.html (accessed June 29, 2011).

47. Joanna Brooks, "Homosexual Thoughts and Feelings Not a Sin, Says New LDS Handbook," *rd Magazine*, November 11, 2010, <http://www.religiondispatches.org/disatches/joannabrooks/3720/homosexual>

_thoughts_and_feelings_not_a_sin%2C_says_new_lds_handbook (accessed June 29, 2011); compare John-Charles Duffy, "Are Mormons Changing Their Stance on Homosexuality? Actually the Church Has Dug Its Heels In Even Further," *rd Magazine*, December 22, 2010, http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/sexandgender/3923/are_mormons_changing_their_stance_on_homosexuality/ (accessed June 29, 2011).

48. The twists and turns in the LDS struggle with homosexuality are ably analyzed by Alan Michael Williams, "Mormon and Queer at the Crossroads," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 53–84.

49. Both Hunter and Hinckley had been supporters and protectors of Arrington's project in the face of strenuous opposition from other apostles, according to Leonard J. Arrington's autobiography, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 74–91, 214–15.

50. The only exception to this general statement of which I am aware, and the only one to receive any public notice, was the case of Grant H. Palmer in late 2004, who had written *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002). With the trappings of scholarship, this book was nevertheless, in effect, an exposé of serious inaccuracies in the official Church narrative of Mormonism's founding—inaccuracies, however, already well known to Mormon historians. Palmer was eventually disfellowshipped from the Church for his efforts. His case received considerable public attention because he had recently retired from decades of service in the Church Education System. Apparently the Strengthening Church Members Committee had provided a dossier on Palmer to his stake president. A brief news account of the Palmer case can be found in the archives of his publisher, Signature Books, December 12, 2004, citing an Associated Press account, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050306102953/www.signaturebooks.com/news.htm> (accessed June 29, 2011).

51. The authors are Margaret Blair Young, who teaches English at Brigham Young University, and Darius Aidan Gray, former president of the Genesis Branch, an auxiliary unit of the LDS Church founded originally in 1971 for black and mixed-race families and individuals who wish to attend as a supplement to worship services in their own home wards. The trilogy consists of *One More River to Cross* (2000); *Bound for Canaan* (2002); and *The Last Mile of the Way* (2003).

52. "Book Provides an Unflinching Look at Mountain Meadows Massacre," Press Release, LDS Newsroom, September 5, 2008, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/book-provides-an-unflinching-look-at-moun>

tain-meadows-massacre (accessed June 29, 2011). The second volume, reporting the aftermath and legal trials of the massacre, has not yet appeared.

53. Bushman's was published by New York publisher Alfred Knopf; Prince's and Wright's by the University of Utah Press; and Kimball's by the Church's Deseret Book, which (again) necessitated special negotiations for author prerogatives, the resolution of which led to the inclusion of a DVD with the book, containing material omitted from the printed text, earlier biographies of both Spencer W. Kimball and his wife, Camilla Eyring Kimball, photographs, and other supplementary material.

54. Clearly the same candor and transparency can be expected in the publication of the new multi-volume series of the JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, even though both the content and the publisher will ultimately be under Church control. See <http://lds.org/churchhistory/content/0,15757,4609-1-2335,00.html> (accessed June 29, 2011).

55. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890–1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 9–105. Quinn has put his troubled relationships with certain LDS General Authorities on the record in, for example, "The Rest Is History," *Sunstone* 18 (December 1995): 50–57; "150 Years of Truth and Consequences about Mormon History," *Sunstone* 15 (February 1992): 12–14, and his interview, in Philip Lindholm, ed., *Latter-day Dissent: At the Crossroads of Intellectual Inquiry and Ecclesiastical Authority* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011); reviewed in this issue.

56. "25-Year Retrospective Panel," Session 6-B, Mormon History Association annual conference, Springfield, Illinois, May 21–24, 2009.

57. See "'A Record Kept:' Constructing Collective Memory," Newsroom Commentary, LDS Newsroom, June 11, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/a-record-kept-constructing-collective-memory> (accessed June 29, 2011). A year later, McKay Coppins, a *Mormon Times* columnist, responded to reading Bushman's *Rough Stone Rolling* with a strong plea against censorship in Mormon history. "McKay Coppins: The Case against Mormon Censorship," *Mormon Times*, September 24, 2010, http://www.mormontimes.com/article/17337/McKay-Coppins-The-case-against-Mormon-censorship?s_cid=queue_title&utm_source=dm_title (accessed June 29, 2011).

58. "MHA Launches Endowment Campaign," *MHA Newsletter* 42, no. 3 (July 2007): 1. The LDS Foundation is an agency of the Church under the Presiding Bishopric's jurisdiction.

59. See, for example, press releases from the LDS Newsroom in 2006 and 2007 on the Howard W. Hunter Chair at Claremont Graduate

University and the fuller 2008 treatment of Mormon studies in academia more generally. See <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/chair-for-mormon-studies-planned-at-claremont> (accessed June 29, 2011); <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/mormon-studies-and-the-value-of-education>; and <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/academic-interest-in-mormonism-rises> (accessed June 29, 2011).

60. The program appears on <http://lds.org/library/display/0,4945,510-1-3067-1,00.html> (accessed June 29, 2011). The proceedings of this conference were edited by John W. Welch and published by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at BYU and are available through Deseret Book, <http://deseretbook.com/Worlds-Joseph-Smith-John-W-Welch/i/4962212> (accessed July 3, 2011).

61. "Mainstreaming and Marginalization of Religious Movements," http://www.cesnur.org/2009/slc_cyberpro.htm (accessed June 29, 2011).

62. "Mormon Engagement with the World's Religions: Perspectives and Possibilities with the Abrahamic Traditions," University of Southern California, June 11–12, 2010, <http://fidweb.org/projects/fid-events/2010/mormonism-and-world-religions>. This site had been taken down as of June 29, 2011. Elder Porter's speech, however, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCso4wm3aZI> (accessed June 29, 2011).

63. "Church Represented at World Religions Conference in Kazakhstan," Press Release, LDS Newsroom, July 22, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-represented-at-world-religions-conference-in-kazakhstan> (accessed June 29, 2011).

64. Quentin L. Cook, "Partnering with our Friends from Other Faiths," contribution to a *Patheos* discussion on "The Future of Mormonism," <http://www.patheos.com/Topics/Future-of-World-Religions/Mormonism.html> (accessed June 29, 2011).

65. See the explanation appended to my contributor's note. The papers at this event have not been published as of August 10, 2011, but the four young organizers of the Bushman symposium are expecting to co-edit and publish the papers as a *festschrift* some time in 2012.

66. Mauss, *Angel and Beehive*, 170–71.

67. Even though I was present for Bushman's remarks, I am relying for these quotations on Peggy Fletcher Stack, "In This Mormon Moment, LDS Church History Blooms," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 27, 2011, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home2/52076094-183/church-mormon-history-lds.html.csp?page=1> (accessed June 29, 2011).

68. Ryan T. Cragun and Michael Nielsen, "Fighting Over 'Mormon': Media Coverage of the FLDS and LDS Churches," *Dialogue: A Journal of*

Mormon Thought 42, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 65–104, perceptively argue that such changes in the LDS Church are an effort to achieve and maintain *legitimacy* in the national culture, rather than assimilation *per se*. They illustrate their conceptualization by reviewing the struggle of the Church to control the use of its traditional names (and therefore its “brand”).

69. For this important insight, expressed in somewhat different ways, see Ryan T. Cragun, “Moving Targets: Mormon Retrenchment toward the ‘New Mainstream,’” Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, annual conference, October, 2008, Louisville, Kentucky. All this is very theoretical, of course, and does not deal with the hard empirical question of how we might measure degrees of assimilation or retrenchment.

70. The most thorough and recent work on these events is Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, and Equal Rights* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005).

71. Strictly speaking, Otterson was made head of LDS Media Relations in 1997 and managing director of the Public Affairs Department only in 2008, thereby becoming the Church’s official spokesman.

72. Ups and downs in the Mormon public image have been traced in some detail by Jan Shippo, “Surveying the Mormon Image since 1960,” *Sunstone*, April 2001, 58–72.

73. See the extensive description of this new posture on the official LDS Newsroom site: “The Diverse Voices of Mormonism,” a Newsroom Commentary, September 28, 2010, <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/article/the-diverse-voices-of-mormonism> (accessed June 29, 2011).

74. Michael Otterson, “The Mormon Church and the Media’s ‘Cult’ Box,” a post on Sally Quinn’s “On Faith” site: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/on-faith/post/the-mormon-church-and-the-medias-cult-box/2011/07/19/gIQAZgj9NI_blog.html (accessed June 29, 2011).

75. For examples of official early LDS reactions to the musical, see <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-statement-regarding-the-book-of-mormon-broadway-musical>; and <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/on-faith-blog-why-i-wont-be-seeing-the-book-of-mormon-musical>. For the LDS PR blitz in New York City, see http://www.abc4.com/content/news/top_stories/story/Mormons-blitz-Times-Square/TOVoDE5TFECpGrBUArY6uw.csp?rss=20 and <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/mormon-nyc-ad-campaign-savvy-branding/story?id=13888304> (all accessed June 29, 2011).

76. Apostle M. Russell Ballard, who oversaw the Public Affairs Department until February 2011, is himself a great advocate of individual member initiatives in engaging the internet in conversations about their religion. See his “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” *Ensign*, July

2008, <http://lds.org/ensign/2008/07/sharing-the-gospel-using-the-internet?lang=eng> (accessed June 29, 2011). Since February 2011, Elders Tom Perry and Quentin Cook have been the apostles overseeing Public Affairs.

77. In contrast to Elder Dallin H. Oaks's warning Church members away from "alternate voices" two decades ago (Oaks, "Alternate Voices," *Ensign*, May 1989, 27–30), Michael Otterson expressed the new official position when he declared: "Do we cringe when we see unofficial voices? Absolutely not. Do we recognize that we have to do better and better to make our voice heard and be recognized as a valuable resource? Yes." www.bycommonconsent.com/2009/06/09/interview-with-michael-otterson (accessed June 29, 2011).

78. Ballard, "Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet."

79. "Mormonism and Politics: Are They Compatible," May 14, 2007, <http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Mormonism-and-Politics-Are-They-Compatible.aspx> (accessed June 29, 2011).

80. Otterson's posts in the *Washington Post* are archived at http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/michael_otterson/ (accessed June 29, 2011).

81. Michael Otterson, interviewed June 9, 2009, on By Common Consent, www.bycommonconsent.com/2009/06/09/interview-with-michael-otterson (accessed June 29, 2011).

82. Cook, "Partnering with Our Friends from Other Faiths."

83. <http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2008/11/12-questions-for-the-lds-newsroom-part-two> (accessed June 29, 2011).

84. See reports on <http://publicaffairs.lds.org/pa/eng/> (accessed June 29, 2011).

85. Emily W. Jensen, "Today on the Bloggernacle," *Mormon Times*, December 7, 2009, http://www.mormontimes.com/article/6706/Today-in-the-Bloggernacle?s_cid=search_queue&utm_source=search_queue (accessed June 29, 2011).

86. See, for example, <http://www.mormonshare.com/forum/the-new-four-fold-mission-of-the-church>; <http://mormonlife.com/story/1245-is-the-churchs-threefold-mission-becoming-fourfold>; and <http://www.lds.net/forums/lds-gospel-discussion/28516-another-mission-church.html> (accessed June 29, 2011).

87. See, for example, Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Now Everyone Can View LDS Church Stances on Social Issues," *Salt Lake Tribune* (Lifestyle Section), November 19, 2010, recapitulated in http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/30/official-mormon-handbook-n_789361.html (accessed June 29, 2011). Volume 1, reserved for General Authorities, bishoprics, and stake, mission, and temple presidencies, is not publicly available.

88. See, e.g., Craig L. Bloomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997); and an extensive review by several LDS scholars at <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=11&num=2&id=318> (accessed June 29, 2011).

89. See, e.g., <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/historic-speech-at-byu-by-catholic-cardinal-historic-speech-given-at-brigham-young-university>; <http://worldmuslimcongress.blogspot.com/2008/04/mormons-muslims.html>; <http://www.mormontimes.com/search?l=10&q=interfaith+muslim&submit=>; <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-morlims2apr02,1,2488142.story?page=2> http://www.jewishjournal.com/jews_and_mormons/; <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/4/14/church-interfaith-mormon-jews/> (all accessed June 29, 2011).

90. However, there is reason to believe that the Church's role in the Proposition 8 campaign was widely appreciated among the more conservative faith communities. See, e.g., http://www.mormontimes.com/article/11462/NY-Times-ad-denounces-violence-against-LDS?s_cid=search_queue&utm_source=search_queue (accessed June 29, 2011).

91. Sandhya Somashekhar, "High-Profile Mormons in Media, Politics, Advance Understanding of Church," *Washington Post* (On Faith section), February 7, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/07/AR2011020705607.html?hpid=moreheadlines> (accessed June 29, 2011).

92. Scott Taylor, "Mormons & Media: Revisiting 'Mormonism's Moment'?" *Washington Post*, February 15, 2011, (On Faith section), <http://www.mormontimes.com/article/19746/Mormons-Media-Revisiting-Mormonisms-moment> and <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/the-church-and-politics> (both accessed June 29, 2011).

93. See http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/michael_otterson/2011/02/mormons_speak_for_the_faith.html (accessed June 29, 2011).

94. Doree Ashcraft, "Life Portrayed in Mormon Ads Not Consistent with Reality," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 9, 2011 (Opinion section), <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/opinion/51357520-82/mormon-ads-hairless.html.csp> (accessed June 29, 2011).

95. On the gay rights issue, see Otterson's statement before the Salt Lake City Council. On the immigration issue: "Mormon Church Supports Principles of Utah Compact on Immigration," *Deseret News*, November 11, 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700080772/Mormon-Church-supports-principles-of-Utah-Compact-on-immigration.html>; and "N. Y. Times praises Utah Compact," *Deseret News*, December 6, 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700089118/NY-Times>

praises-Utah-Compact.html (both accessed June 29, 2011). On the “green” issue, see the 2010 LDS Newsroom’s press release about numerous examples across the years, “Timeline of Conservation Practices,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/ConservationPractices/> (accessed June 29, 2011).