

Eastern Kentucky University

Encompass

---

Online Theses and Dissertations

Student Scholarship

---

2023

## "Temporal Salvation": A Study of LDS Leadership Strategies From 1874-1917

Haley Elaine Pettit

Eastern Kentucky University, haley.pettit31@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://encompass.eku.edu/etd>

---

### Recommended Citation

Pettit, Haley Elaine, "'Temporal Salvation': A Study of LDS Leadership Strategies From 1874-1917" (2023). *Online Theses and Dissertations*. 806.  
<https://encompass.eku.edu/etd/806>

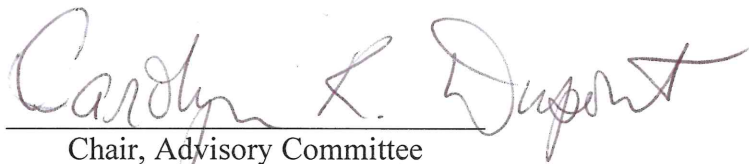
This Open Access Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at Encompass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Online Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Encompass. For more information, please contact [laura.edwards@eku.edu](mailto:laura.edwards@eku.edu).

“TEMPORAL SALVATION”: A STUDY OF LDS LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FROM  
1874-1917

BY

HALEY ELAINE PETTIT

THESIS APPROVED:

  
Chair, Advisory Committee

  
Member, Advisory Committee

  
Member, Advisory Committee

  
Dean, Graduate School

## STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree at Eastern Kentucky University, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library. Brief quotations from this document are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgements of the source are made. Permission for extensive quotation from or reproduction of this document may be granted by my major professor. In her absence, by the Head of Interlibrary Services when, in the opinion of either, the proposed use of the material is for scholarly purposes. Any copying or use of the material in this document for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature:

x Wally Pettit

Date: 11/2/23

“TEMPORAL SALVATION”:  
A STUDY OF LDS LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FROM 1874-1917

BY

HALEY ELAINE PETTIT

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
Eastern Kentucky University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

2023

© Copyright by HALEY ELAINE PETTIT 2023  
All Rights Reserved.

## DEDICATION

*To my greatest friend and partner in all things, Evan.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a thesis required equal parts curiosity, resolve, and humility. Eastern Kentucky University's History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies Department nurtured these qualities within me during my undergraduate and graduate studies. Special thanks to the professors that helped me evolve as a scholar—Dr. Carolyn R. Dupont, Dr. Joshua A. Lynn, Dr. Catherine L. Stearn, Dr. Bradford J. Wood, and Dr. Todd Hartch. My mentor, Dr. Dupont, taught me how to compose powerful writing (believe me, it was one lesson among many). Dr. Lynn and Dr. Stearn graciously served on my advisory committee and offered much-needed advice along the way. Dr. Hartch and Dr. Wood taught me to listen quietly to the primary sources, trust my judgement, and follow my passions. Most of my sources came from outside my state, so I want to thank ECU's library for helping me find and secure sources from all over the country. Special thanks are due, most of all, to my family and friends including, but not limited, to Evan, Jo, Herb, Joanna, Finnley, Missy, Rachel, Brittani, Tabby, Patrick, Brandon, and Evan B. I doubt I would have finished this project without their support and encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

Between 1874 and 1917, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints transitioned from a group operating on the fringes of American society to an adeptly functioning American bureaucratic institution. LDS leaders managed the change through wielding their doctrine to help them achieve “temporal salvation.” This study maps how LDS leaders shifted the meanings of two of their doctrines—plural marriage and the Word of Wisdom—from 1874 to 1917 to achieve their larger goals. Plural marriage originally served to unite the members of their faith—the Saints—against non-members, or the Gentiles. Most Americans wholly rejected polygamy, so LDS members used plural marriage as a rallying banner to withstand federal pressure to abandon the practice. Once LDS leaders realized that preaching plural marriage rendered their church unable to survive in United States territory, LDS leadership shifted the meaning of plural marriage to avoid disincorporation and their members’ disenfranchisement. While covertly sanctioning plural marriage themselves, LDS leaders sacralized polygamy’s history to minimize the marker that separated the Saints from Protestant America. LDS leaders believed it was the Lord’s will to use duplicitous and misleading strategies, so they did not think their actions threatened their infallibility. As part of their strategy to achieve temporal salvation, they joined the American Prohibition movement. They shifted their temperance-inspired Word of Wisdom doctrine from an optional tenet to a required commandment to develop more commonalities between their church and Protestant America. The LDS Church prioritized the survival of their institution over any other directive, explaining how the doctrines shifted in importance and meaning rapidly between 1874 and 1917.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Introduction.....	1
Historical Background .....	1
Historiography .....	10
Thesis.. .....	14
Chapter 1: Building United Resistance Using Polygamy “...they are the enemies of <i>mankind...I do not care what position they occupy.</i> ” .....	21
Strategies for the Saints .....	23
Strategies Between the Saints .....	37
Conclusion .....	45
Chapter 2: Wielding Polygamy as a Political Tool “ <i>it was the will of the Lord to do it in     order to gain a Victory...</i> ” .....	47
Scott Amendment and 1887 Constitution.....	49
Woodruff’s 1890 Manifesto.....	59
Public Abandonment of Polygamy .....	64
Statehood, Smoot, and Scapegoats .....	72
Conclusion .....	79
Chapter 3: Word of Wisdom, Prohibition, and Reed Smoot “ <i>We, as a people, should     have been the first to lead this great reform.</i> ” .....	81
Optional Temperance to Outspoken Prohibition .....	83
Word of Wisdom as a Political Tool.....	90
The Duality of Reed Smoot: Communications Liaison, Senator, and Apostle .....	99

Conclusion .....	102
Measuring Success: A Comparison of the LDS Church and the Anti-Saloon League..	104
Bibliography .....	112

## Introduction

### Historical Background

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) emerged as one restorationist religion among many during the Second Great Awakening. Joseph Smith Jr. founded the faith in 1830 after a series of visions from God that commanded him to restore the church Jesus Christ established over a thousand years ago because Christian denominations “were all wrong.”<sup>1</sup> Nicknamed Mormonism, after one of the faith’s ancient prophets, Smith’s religious ideas enticed disillusioned Christians in New York’s burned-over district. His ever-expanding following remained loyal to him while he relocated his church from New York to Ohio, Missouri, and, finally, to Illinois. Controversy partly inspired the frequent relocations; Smith dabbled in practices and behaviors ranging from morally questionable to illegal. Between tax evasion, fraud, treasure hunting, and committing adultery, Smith found himself the subject of rumors—based on fact and myth—that prevented his members, who called themselves Saints, from remaining in any place for more than a few years. The mistrust many frontier Americans felt towards Mormons grew into hostility, especially in Missouri. Smith’s Saints suffered from persecution that began with social isolation and escalated to the destruction of property, tarring and feathering leaders, mob violence, and state government-sanctioned mass murder. In 1838, Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs signed an executive order describing Mormons as “the enemy.” As such, the government needed to “exterminate or drive [them] from the state” with a force as large as

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013) Joseph Smith—History 1:18-19.

“consider[ed] necessary.”<sup>2</sup> Three days later an anti-Mormon mob slaughtered eighteen men, women, and children, a catastrophe memorialized today by the LDS Church as the Haun’s Mill Massacre. Reportedly, one mob member justified the murder of a ten-year-old: “Nits will make lice, and if he had lived he would have become a Mormon.”<sup>3</sup> The metaphor illustrated how frontier Americans viewed Mormons. To them, the Saints were unclean pests, and they deserved swift extermination.

The Saints fled shortly after, settling in Nauvoo, Illinois. Despite the new location, Smith’s unusual practices continued to spark scandal, igniting anti-Mormon sentiment in surrounding areas. Four short years later, a mob murdered Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, while they awaited trial in Carthage Jail for their role in destroying a printing press.

After a succession crisis that created a schism, the next prophet, Brigham Young, led his people across the Rocky Mountains and settled in Mexican territory in 1847. In seventeen years, the Mormon Church relocated five times. Young’s Saints did not relocate again after their successful colonization of the Salt Lake Valley, but that resulted from settling just outside the reach of the American government rather than from a warming relationship between the two.

Most Americans rejected Mormons and their faith for a variety of reasons. The Saints voted together, upsetting the balance of power on the frontier. Smith startled neighboring communities when his quasi-theocratic kingdom in Nauvoo ignored Illinois laws and, even occasionally, federal laws. Finally, nineteenth century Americans who

---

<sup>2</sup> Lilburn Boggs, “Gov Boggs’s Extermination Order,” 27 Oct 1838, Missouri Digital Archives. The extermination order was not officially rescinded until 1976.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Jenson, *The Historical Record: Volume Five* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson, 1889), 671-673.

adhered to Victorian standards of morality and sexuality rejected Smith's experimentation with polygamy. Polygamy, plural marriage, the Principle, the Solemn Covenant, or Celestial Marriage all refer to the Mormon practice where a man may marry more than one wife.<sup>4</sup>

These factors and others contributed to the Saints' exodus outside United States borders. In any case, constant rejection shaped how Mormon leaders viewed themselves, their faith, and their opposition, leading "many Saints [to] expect to be misunderstood or misrepresented."<sup>5</sup> LDS leaders forged for themselves and their people an identity that impacted their interactions with the world outside Zion's walls.

Smith's regular run-ins with the law as well as the government's failure to protect him from persecution sowed seeds of mistrust towards outsiders. Using an Old Testament term, Smith identified all non-Mormons as Gentiles. Nine months after the Haun's Mill Massacre, Smith told his apostles that "proving a traitor to the brethren" was a sin as abhorrent as betraying Christ.<sup>6</sup> He rewarded loyal followers with powerful positions in either the newly established First Presidency or Quorum of Apostles, oftentimes prioritizing loyalty over seniority. Smith shared some of his most controversial revelations with individuals he trusted, so while leaders of the Church possessed knowledge of Smith's revelations, most laity did not.

---

<sup>4</sup> Technically, the described practice is termed polygyny, but nineteenth century Americans used the word "polygamy" when identifying a man married to more than one wife. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the same language found in the primary sources.

<sup>5</sup> American rejection of Mormonism is captured effectively in J. Spencer Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Smith Jr, *History of the Church: 1838-1839* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 3:385.

The most notorious revelation concerned plural marriage. Smith believed God commanded him to restore the polygamous marriage practice ancient prophets observed.<sup>7</sup> He practiced polygamy in the early 1830s, an undertaking he kept from most members of the Church and, at times, his first wife. On the other hand, his most loyal followers knew about the revelation and married additional wives themselves. While valiantly proclaiming “what a thing it is for a man to be accused of...having seven wives, when I can only find one,” Smith continued to marry more women, some of whom were already married to living husbands.<sup>8</sup> During Smith’s tenure as prophet, seer, and revelator of the Church, he never publicly advocated polygamy. Members outside his inner circle received sanitized, misleading, or falsified information. This system produced two consequences with major implications. First, it encouraged two distinct churches to function simultaneously in a hierarchical structure. More loyal members were privy to confidential practices, while the rest of the laity participated in the church Smith projected publicly. Second, it inspired wild rumors and contradictory messages, creating confusion and bewilderment for the Saints.<sup>9</sup>

To tackle the growing rumors concerning Smith’s extramarital relationships, he nurtured a dichotomy between his Saints and the Gentiles. Smith publicly chalked up rumors to the devil trying to stop him, since he was “the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam.”<sup>10</sup> Smith’s community

---

<sup>7</sup> The LDS Church interprets any Old Testament prophet having more than one partner as a polygamous relationship. Examples include Abraham, Jacob, and Solomon. This is a much different interpretation than other branches of Christianity. See Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 3-12.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:411. Scholars estimate Smith married more than thirty women. See B. Carmon Hardy B, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 42.

<sup>9</sup> Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 29-36.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 6: 408-409.

already felt targeted and misunderstood, so his denials effectively encouraged their separation from the American mainstream. All the while, he and his inner circle continued to practice polygamy and excommunicated whistleblowers as needed. The Church excommunicated Assistant Church Presidents John Bennett and Oliver Cowdery when they either confirmed or did not deny that Smith had multiple partners.<sup>11</sup> Through excommunications, Smith established an implicitly understood dynamic that scholar Michael Quinn described as “theocratic ethics”: all other Gentile laws, customs, or moral prerogatives paled in comparison to God’s commandments revealed through Joseph Smith.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of his and his inner circle’s convictions, Mormons understood that to transgress against Smith was to transgress against God. The sin warranted public humiliation and excommunication of the unrepentant. Smith’s theocratic ethics also provided him with the illusion of authoritarian power. On June 8, 1844, Smith ordered the destruction of a Nauvoo printing press that published details about Smith’s polygamous lifestyle. His order led to his arrest and murder nineteen days later.

By the time of Smith’s untimely death in 1844, his Saints felt battered, prejudiced, and, most importantly, united by collective trauma. The dynamic, commanding, and captivating Brigham Young encouraged the dichotomy Smith originally inspired, using the Saint’s collective trauma to encourage righteous indignation towards an American government that failed to protect their constitutional rights. To provide refuge from over a decade of Gentile harassment, Young led his people across the United States to the Salt Lake Valley starting in 1847.

---

<sup>11</sup> Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 11-12, 24-25.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Quinn, *Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 88-89.

Even after the United States acquired the Utah territory in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Young and many members of the Quorum were not motivated to heed the federal government. As millenarians, they believed the end of the world neared, so negotiating with a fallen government seemed unnecessary. Until the end of the American Civil War, the federal government did not prioritize answering the “Mormon question,” even as the LDS Church proclaimed polygamy as central to their faith and essential for earning the highest degree of salvation in 1852. However, the late 1860s brought technological innovation and a stronger federal government with the construction of the transcontinental railroad and a preserved Union that quelled the Confederacy. Both developments increased the Gentile population in Utah’s territory and allowed the federal government to extend its authority into the territory. LDS leaders, accustomed to their geographic isolation free from interference, often met federal interactions with hostility. Famously, Young threatened violence towards federal intervention: “they shall have their throats cut and sent to hell.”<sup>13</sup>

Elected officials met Mormons with hostilities of their own. Utah applied for statehood in 1847, and Congress swiftly denied the application over polygamy concerns. In 1856, the new Republican party promised to rid the United States of the “twin relics of barbarism: slavery and polygamy.”<sup>14</sup> The same year, Congress defeated Utah’s second bid for statehood. Once the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified and slavery abolished, Republicans set their sights on ridding the Union of the other

---

<sup>13</sup> John Turner, “Unpopular Sovereignty: Brigham Young and the U.S. Government, 1847-1877,” in *Mormonism and American Politics*, ed. Randall Balmer and Jana Reiss (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2016), 19.

<sup>14</sup> Kelly Elizabeth Phipps, “Marriage and Redemption: Mormon Polygamy in the Congressional Imagination, 1862-1887,” *Virginia Law Review* 95, no. 2 (April 2009): 438.



barbaric relic. Meanwhile Mormons saw the American government as encroaching on their religious liberties. A long and painful battle with the federal government ensued. The battles raged in court cases, in legislation, and in Mormon and Gentile sermons. The United States would not allow Mormons to continue practicing polygamy, and Mormons would not suffer silently while the United States took their religious liberties from them.

This struggle ultimately expanded into armed conflict. Recently depicted as America's first civil war, the Utah War of 1857-1858 framed the hostile relationship between the two parties for the next half century.<sup>15</sup> Regarding Young's threats of throat-slashing as a legitimate threat to American colonizers in the west, President James Buchanan sent U.S. troops to remove Young from his governor's seat. Mormons panicked, an understandable response considering their shared memories of martyred leaders and forced westward emigration. Young ordered the Mormon militia to assemble and meet the federal army. Young capitulated shortly after, but the war's consequences were significant. It confirmed the opposing parties' view of one another; the American government saw Mormons as a belligerent and fanatical population operating on the fringes of acceptable society, and Mormons saw the American government as persecuting them senselessly.

During the Utah War, the Mountain Meadow Massacre destroyed the already disastrous relationship between Mormons and mainstream Americans. Mormons disguised as Native Americans from the Paiute tribe murdered 120 Methodist colonizers

---

<sup>15</sup> David L. Bigler and William Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War, 1857-1858* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

after the Mormons promised safety in exchange for their weapons.<sup>16</sup> Brigham Young denied knowledge of the event and refused blame. His proclamation of innocence fell on deaf ears, as Americans regarded Young and his Saints as a blood thirsty stain on their otherwise enlightened society. At the same time, Mormons viewed the accusation as further proof that they were being unfairly targeted. Yet, Young did have knowledge of LDS involvement in the Mountain Meadow Massacre, and LDS authorities hid these details from most Mormons. In their eyes, it was more expedient to let the blame rest on the Paiutes. Thus, Young continued the tradition Smith started in sharing accurate information with high-ranking members of the Church while weaving a sanitized truth for the laity. Regardless of the intention to disguise Mormon involvement in the Massacre, the result solidified the tradition that leaders did not owe lay members transparency. Federal investigations implicated several Mormons, and only then did the Church acknowledge LDS member involvement in the massacre. In 1870, the Church excommunicated one member, a prominent colonizer, who played a critical role in the 1857 massacre. John Lee stood trial in 1874, though nine Mormons were indicted. Lee faced the firing squad as the lone guilty member in 1877.<sup>17</sup>

Much of the armed conflict ended with the Utah War, but legal battles continued over polygamy's legality under the First Amendment. Determined that the First Amendment did not pertain to polygamy, the Senate denied Utah statehood again in 1874. Mormon men filled Utah's penitentiary and indignant rhetoric filled Mormon chapels. Children were taught to avoid identifying their fathers and intentionally

---

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Barringer Gordon and Jan Shipps, "Fatal Convergence in the Kingdom of God," *Journal of the Early Republic* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 309-310.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon and Shipps, "Fatal Convergence in the Kingdom of God," 340-342.

deceive federal marshals; women went into “the underground” to avoid perjury. By 1886, the Church’s First Presidency entered the underground. While the highest level of the Church’s hierarchy operated in hiding, the third prophet after Brigham Young, John Taylor, allegedly received a revelation that the Mormon church would never abandon polygamy.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, abandon it they did. In 1890 LDS prophet Wilford Woodruff publicly proclaimed that leaders of the Church no longer advised their members to practice polygamy.<sup>19</sup> Temporally content with the Church’s announcement, Congress allowed Utah to join the Union in 1896 after denying the first six attempts. However, Utah’s admittance into the Union did little to heal the rifts between the LDS Church and the American government. Many Americans continued to view the faith as a threat to American sanctity, a fear that did not subside as the country entered the twentieth century.

The LDS Church entered the twentieth century with their own host of problems. Now that Utah was officially a state, how might the sizeable Mormon population ease themselves into the American world? Moreover, how could LDS authorities convince their members to become loyal to the United States when they, their parents, neighbors, and leaders defied US law and went to the penitentiary with their heads held high? And, perhaps most importantly, how might LDS authorities convince the American public of their loyalty to the Union?

---

<sup>18</sup> John Taylor, An Alleged Revelation Given to President John Taylor, 27 September 1886, in *Doing the Works of Abraham*, ed. B. Carmon Hardy (Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2007): 325-326. Hardy classifies the revelation as “alleged” because the original document is not extant, although several photocopies of the document exist.

<sup>19</sup> Wilford Woodruff, “Official Declaration,” in Hardy, *Works of Abraham*, 346-347.

## Historiography

This transitional period of the LDS Church captured the interest of both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars, resulting in multiple perspectives: polemical, apologetic—or more recently—nuanced and multi-disciplinary. For much of the twentieth century, scholars published critical or deferential perspectives concerning Mormon attempts to protect polygamy, and, when that failed, abandon the very same religious practice that prevented them from the mainstream in the first place. Protestant Americans—including American scholars—resisted Mormon integration into respectable society. At the same time, LDS leadership protected their archives, presumably in attempt to avoid further persecution by controlling access to documents and manuscripts that could damage the Church’s reputation. Faithful members enjoyed increased access to the archives, but even then, archivists closely monitored and censored research.<sup>20</sup> The Church discouraged Mormon scholars from investigating controversial topics and even excommunicated scholars who ignored their leaders’ suggestions. Importantly, Mormon history is tethered to the Mormon belief system; early Mormon history serves as Mormon canon. As such, early church history was crafted into a sacralized narrative, rather than afforded a balanced scholarly analysis.<sup>21</sup> Scholarly analysis of Mormon history may sometimes seem heretical to Mormons because a conviction of the sanctity of early Mormon history is critical in establishing a solid foundation of the faith.

---

<sup>20</sup> B. Carmon Hardy, “Polygamy, Mormonism, and Me,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 41, no. 2 (2008): 87.

<sup>21</sup> Davis Bitton, *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 183.

As a result, Mormon history became bifurcated. Scholars crafted sympathetic Mormon history for sympathetic audiences, or, in equal measure, reached scathing conclusions that reinforced what most Americans presumed. The Church's fierce protection of their archives did not ease until the 1970s amidst a new historiographic development.<sup>22</sup> "New Mormon History," a phrase coined by LDS scholar Michael Quinn, began building a bridge across the chasm.<sup>23</sup> Scholars of New Mormon History tend to argue that Mormons successfully entered the mainstream, even if peripherally. Scholars disagree widely when they consider *how* Mormons entered the mainstream. Quinn's methodological approach led him to argue that because twentieth-century Mormons considered their faith "as central to their self-identity," LDS members trusted their authorities wholeheartedly. Thus, authorities possessed a great deal of implicit power over their members. Quinn illustrates their implicit power by detailing how LDS authorities misled their people and the United States from 1890 to 1906. They privately authorized polygamous marriages for themselves and for select members of the LDS Church despite their public abandonment of polygamy. They pushed their people towards the mainstream because the federal government forced their hand, but their individual convictions justified their polygamous relationships. Quinn concludes that LDS leaders chose this impromptu strategy to balance their individual convictions with adherence to federal law.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> David J. Whittaker, "Mormon Studies as an Academic Discipline," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism*, ed. Terryl L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 94-95.

<sup>23</sup> Quinn argues the historiographic shift occurred with the release of a book in 1950, but I argue it is later in the 1970s. Michael Quinn, *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), vii.

<sup>24</sup> Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 1 (1985): 96.

Thomas Alexander does not differ significantly in his content and argument, but his tone is indirect and deferential, a key difference, as the LDS Church excommunicated Quinn in 1996 after he published his research. Alexander argues that within the First Presidency and Quorum, the appearance of unity was far more important than any other directive. The First Presidency required strict adherence to their policies, regardless of dissenting apostles, though they were encouraged to individually share their perspectives before they reached a decision. Through the perception of collegial authority, LDS authorities used their authority to guide their members into modernity. The strategy was a desperate one; Congress forced the LDS Church to relinquish their most sacred practice to survive.<sup>25</sup> Quinn and Alexander address the lack of transparency between authority and laity, arguing that several LDS leaders were quite uncomfortable with the lack of transparency, but it was a necessary sacrifice given the circumstances.

Richard Van Wagoner's *Mormon Polygamy: A History* and B. Carmon Hardy's *Solemn Covenant* are foundational texts to understand how polygamy functioned at the institutional level. Van Wagoner's 1989 work followed polygamy's beginning, evolution, and demise within the Mormon church, offering the first comprehensive history of polygamy. Hardy's 1992 *Solemn Covenant* follows suit, arguing that there was no singular reason Mormon leadership deceived their members and practiced polygamy privately. Tenacious adherence to personal conviction in the face of adversity, millenarian expectations while technological advances brought the federal government closer to the Saints, and a desire for the Church to survive with its doctrine

---

<sup>25</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, "To Maintain Harmony": Adjusting to External and Internal Stress, 1890-1930," in *New Mormon History*, 249-250.

intact all motivated LDS leaders to publicly deny but privately grant polygamous marriages. Neither work apologizes for nor condemns the practice.

The historical field continues to amend the bifurcation of the twentieth century. David Whittaker's historiographical essay succinctly described the trend of twenty-first century scholarship—scholars have gradually removed barriers that sequestered Mormon history from American history.<sup>26</sup> Simply put, Mormon history *is* American history. In the past twenty years, the contributions of political, religious, or social scholars viewing Mormonism as a necessary component of American history reflects a shrinking of the chasm between Mormon history and American history.

Contrary to Alexander and Quinn, scholar Kathleen Flake argues that the LDS Church did not capitulate to the American government at the turn of the twentieth century. Instead, she maintains, the federal government and the Mormon church negotiated an agreement that benefited both parties. The Senate required Mormons to “conform their kingdom...” to mainstream Protestant standards. In return, the Senate would guarantee their protection against the Protestant establishment, an organized system determined to limit and delegitimize LDS power.<sup>27</sup> In a similar fashion, John Turner, affirms the pragmatic nature of LDS Church leadership, arguing that the LDS Church managed their conflict with the federal government from 1851 to the early twentieth century through pragmatic strategies, rather than with moral convictions.<sup>28</sup> Sarah Barringer Gordon contends that the Mormon conflict with the federal government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals larger constitutional issue of

---

<sup>26</sup> Whittaker, “Mormon Studies,” 102.

<sup>27</sup> Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 8-11.

<sup>28</sup> John Turner, “Unpopular Sovereignty,” 19.

religious freedoms in the United States. She argues that the federal government upheld the power of the Protestant establishment through protecting its moral authority with constitutional law.<sup>29</sup> Konden Smith Hanson argues that when events are categorized as merely religious instances and sequestered from political history, it is difficult to trace patterns about how Americans understood religion's role in their country. He analyzes the Utah War of 1857-1858, the antipolygamy crusades, the Chicago's World Fair in 1893, and Reed Smoot's Senate hearing together, ignoring any classification as merely political or religious. He evaluates how Mormon "assimilation into modernity impacted American modernity." Rather than existing on the periphery, Mormons directly impacted how Americans "understood themselves in relation to their country, their religions, and each other."<sup>30</sup>

## **Thesis**

Despite the incredible scholarship about the faith's transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, a more complete understanding of LDS leadership strategies during the transition requires scholarship in tune with recent historiographical trends. LDS leaders used their doctrine as tools to produce a desirable outcome. Alexander and Quinn produced rich scholarship that analyzed LDS leaders' motivations amidst the conflicts plaguing the church at the turn of the twentieth century. Gordon, Hanson, Flake, and Turner all carefully evaluate how both the LDS Church and the federal government were formidable opponents that battled over political dominance. However, a closer lens evaluating the strategies LDS leadership used between 1874 and

---

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 224.

<sup>30</sup> Konden Smith Hanson, *Frontier Religion: Mormons and America, 1857-1907* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019), 3-4.



1917 allows further insight into the doctrines LDS leaders willingly sacrificed or prioritized to preserve their institution. By using much of the same source material Quinn and Alexander used and engaging twenty-first-century historiographical trends, I will offer a different interpretation from Alexander and Quinn. Highlighting the LDS Church's strategies during the slow demise of polygamy, Utah's prohibition movement, and Reed Smoot's tenure as a senator and an apostle indicates that LDS leaders considered doctrine and their members necessary casualties to protect the Church's infallible divinity while they entered the American mainstream. LDS sermons, public announcements, and Church-sponsored newspapers help uncover the messages LDS authorities wanted to share with their members and the world. Minutes from LDS apostle meetings, diaries from general authorities, and correspondence to and from LDS leaders uncover a reality much more complex, nuanced, and problematic. Using the two groups of evidence together demonstrates that LDS Church leaders wielded doctrine and peoples to their discretion.

As an additional note on sources and methodology, I relied on sourcebooks compiled by scholars between the 1970s and 2000s, digitally transcribed manuscripts, and online archives compiled by Brigham Young University and the University of Utah. My financial and geographic situation prevented the opportunity to visit physical archives. Because of this, accessible sources originated from scholars who published them for their own purposes. Naturally, that came with some limitations and possible biases. However, I do not find that my access to sources prevented my ability to effectively analyze a complex time for the LDS Church. It is also important to me to briefly disclose my religious background. I was raised in an LDS home, and my

ancestors trekked across the United States as part of the Mormon migration to the Utah territory in the nineteenth century. My third great grandfather helped colonize Colonia Juarez with his third wife after serving time for crimes related to polygamy. Although I no longer consider myself a member of the Church, the religion's customs and standards shaped my identity. That said, my own complex history with the LDS Church does not limit my ability as a scholar. Like most scholars, I am devoted to crafting an objective narrative.

From 1874 to 1917, the LDS church underwent five different administrations. Each administration sanctified their own interpretation of the LDS gospel, but one continuity endured. The First Presidency and the Quorum believed the Church's need for survival far surpassed any other need. Serving an institution that needed protection from constant attack enabled leaders to justify sacrificing moral imperatives in a similar manner to their predecessors. The strategy allowed LDS Church leaders to veil their intentions with LDS and Gentile audiences to maintain flexibility during conflict. Ultimately, the truth was their prerogative to conceal or reveal. Celestial Marriage and the Word of Wisdom were two doctrines central to building a sacralized narrative that subtly guided their members into the mainstream while attempting to assure the American audience that they had misjudged Mormons. The strategy assured what LDS leaders called "temporal salvation."

The phrase "temporal salvation" appeared in Joseph Smith's 1833 revelation of what is today referred to as the Word of Wisdom. The revelation was a list of dietary recommendations that included limiting meat consumption, increasing fresh food intake, and avoiding tobacco and "strong drinks," later interpreted as coffee, tea, and

alcohol. Adhering to the recommendations would bring “temporal salvation,” meaning a long and healthy life.<sup>31</sup> The phrase appeared periodically since then, but not necessarily in the context of the Word of Wisdom. Its meaning evolved to mean the survival of the LDS Church. From 1874 to 1905 the main threat to the LDS Church’s temporal salvation was its continuance in practicing polygamy in the face of a federal government and Protestant establishment that would not tolerate deviation from monogamous lifestyles. In 1905, Joseph F. Smith declared that members would be excommunicated if they entered plural marriage, marking an end to polygamy’s centrality to Mormon doctrine. “Temporal salvation” then evolved again. It became synonymous with achieving success in the mortal world, a necessary evolution given their recent loss of political authority. Signifying a successful earthly life as “temporal salvation” expanded the Church’s authority beyond the spiritual. Thus, LDS leaders used political affairs as tools to protect their spiritual institution. An analysis of apostle and senator Reed Smoot’s position as a religious and political leader from 1900 to 1917 reveals that Prophet Joseph F. Smith believed it his prerogative to use Smoot’s dual position to suit the Church’s best interests. The play benefited the Church, so it could not possibly be morally adverse.

The LDS church endured tumultuous conflict that legitimately threatened the Church’s survival. By 1917, however, they emerged as a successful Protestant organization that was as American as any Protestant organization. They functioned as well as any modern secular bureaucracy. In demonstrating this transformation, three chapters ranging from 1874 to 1917 follow. Although the federal government began

---

<sup>31</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013), 89: 1-21.

strong arming the LDS church in 1862 with the Morrill Act, an anti-polygamy statute, this study begins analysis in 1874 with the passage of the Poland Act. The act placed Utah courts under federal jurisdiction, increasing their effectiveness in enforcing anti-polygamy laws. Thus, the conflict between the federal government and the LDS Church sharply increased. In 1916, Governor William Spry signed a statewide prohibition bill into law, a measure greatly influenced by Joseph F. Smith and Reed Smoot. Smith's tenure as prophet ended with his death in 1918, so concluding my analysis in 1917 near the end of Smith's life seemed prudent given how much Smith influenced the political sphere.

In the first chapter, I will showcase how, by refusing to compromise with the federal government over the freedom to practice polygamy, LDS general authorities from 1874-1887 nurtured the dichotomy Joseph Smith introduced as the first prophet of the Church. With the Saints in geographic isolation, polygamy was a useful tool to connect the first generation of eastern Mormons to the second generation of Utah Mormons. Continuing the practice regardless of extreme hardship kept the collective trauma initially caused by violence in the Midwest alive. Polygamy's use changed as the arm of the federal government grew stronger, the theme of the second chapter. Wilford Woodruff publicly abandoned polygamy as a short-term tool to achieve Utah statehood and regain government-seized Church property. From 1890-1905 presidents Wilford Woodruff and Joseph F. Smith proclaimed against practicing polygamy while sanctioning it privately, similarly to how Joseph Smith and his inner circle practiced polygamy while denying it publicly. To the Church leaders' dismay, Reed Smoot's 1905 senate hearing revealed the church's persistence in practicing polygamy. As a

result, Joseph F. Smith used polygamy to form a sacralized past for current and future Mormons. I used the word “sacralized” as a concept to identify how the Church nurtured a narrative of its own history that was beyond reproach. Through using static language that indicated polygamy belonged to a previous era of Mormons, it set twentieth-century Mormons apart from their ancestors without condemning polygamous marriages conducted before 1905. Smith nurtured this sacralized past from 1905 to the end of his presidency. From 1874-1917, polygamy’s use changed three times, showcasing the doctrine’s fluidity in the hands of LDS leaders.

The Church’s strategy to enter the American mainstream included more than abandoning a morally adverse practice to the Protestant establishment. In the third chapter, I will also explore the strategies LDS leaders used during the country’s prohibition movement. Utah achieved statehood in 1896 as the prohibition movement gained national attention, so there was no greater theater to prove to the Protestant establishment that Mormons belonged to the religiously fueled progressive movement. LDS leaders urged the importance of a previously ignored 1833 revelation to their members, putting the Word of Wisdom on the stage as evidence that they had something significant in common with Protestants. Through mapping how LDS leaders used the Word of Wisdom from 1874 to 1917, I will also show the Word of Wisdom’s fluidity was akin to polygamy’s fluidity.

In the third chapter, I will also examine how Joseph F. Smith used and justified Reed Smoot’s position as an apostle and as a senator. At least politically, the LDS Church entered the mainstream after Utah entered the Union and sent representatives to Congress. To maintain their existence in the mainstream, LDS authorities needed Smoot

to aid the Church in repairing the Church's image. Smoot functioned as an intermediary between the federal government and the Church. Consequently, Smoot helped Gentiles perceive the Church as a non-threatening American religion by protecting the Church from unfavorable press and scandals that threatened the Church's reputation. Joseph F. Smith also used Smoot to protect the Church's image and turn the Church into a savvy institution that influenced the political arena from a safe distance.

Due to the protections provided by the First Amendment combined with many American Protestant sects' transition to corporate bureaucratic models, large Protestant institutions today possess a great deal of capital and political power. Using the notion that Protestant Churches have moral authority, they use their power to influence the political arena when it benefits them. Although plenty of American Protestant churches still doubt whether the LDS Church qualifies as a Protestant faith—it certainly does—the LDS Church is one of many non-partisan institutions that enter the political realm when they see fit. By accepting church institutions as infallible, Americans yield much of their own sovereignty to powers who prioritize their institutions far more than the people that support their institution. A closer examination of how these large institutions function internally as well as how they wish to be perceived sheds lights on why Americans protect non-political institutions that do not seem to represent their best interests or perspectives.

## Chapter 1: Building United Resistance Using Polygamy

*“...they are the enemies of mankind...I do not care what position they occupy.”*

In 1852, five years after the Saints reached the Salt Lake Valley, apostle Orson Pratt announced that God restored the principle of plural marriage to the Latter-Day Saints. Pratt proclaimed to the world—safely in their desert refuge—that male Saints would have multiple wives, just as the prophets of old. One of the best orators in church leadership, Pratt initially struggled with accepting the doctrine. After disfellowship and rebaptism, Pratt eventually testified to the doctrine’s truth. In his 1852 declaration, he explained that members who wished to receive the highest degree of exaltation needed to enter the Principle, one name, among many, that Saints used to describe a man marrying more than one woman.<sup>32</sup>

The LDS Church knew this announcement would cause Gentile outcry, and Protestant America reacted unsurprisingly given their own devotion to monogamy. One LDS newspaper editor reported, “none seem to penetrate so deep, or to be so well calculated to shake to its very center the social structure which has been reared.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Congress attempted to dismantle polygamy in 1862 with the Morrill Law, which outlawed polygamy and bigamy. However, the government could not enforce the law because polygamous couples married privately in ecclesiastical ceremonies. Scholar Carmon Hardy stated, without recorded marriages, “so far as the law was concerned, [polygamous couples] were only irregular partners.”<sup>34</sup> Even with the occasional

---

<sup>32</sup> Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 29-36; Pratt’s sermon was reprinted in *Journal of Discourses Vol 6*, 349-363.

<sup>33</sup> Hardy, *Works of Abraham*, 76, referencing *Millennial Star* 15:1, 1 Jan. 1853. The digitized copy of the *Millennial Star* includes a reprint of Joseph Smith’s plural marriage revelation but not the comments section where the editor made his comment.

<sup>34</sup> Hardy, *Works of Abraham*, 329.

successful arrest, finding an impartial jury was challenging. The LDS community protected their own from the enemy rather than disclose their neighbors' marriages, not surprising given their relationship with municipal and state governments in the early history of the Church. All the while, LDS leaders reminded their people that the Lord had restored polygamy; it was a commandment, and souls unwilling to practice plural marriage would be damned.

Congress attempted to curtail polygamy again with the 1874 Poland Act, which placed Utah civil and criminal courts under federal jurisdiction. The arm of the federal government successfully reached into Utah's territory; it was the first real measure that checked the Church's political authority. Appalled at the federal government's audacity to regulate their spiritual lives, from 1874 to 1887, the LDS Church challenged federal government authority in equal measure through fervent rhetoric and subversive behavior, all while appealing court rulings. Public sermons connected the Mormon community to the first generation of Saints, inspiring them to unite through a shared and everlasting persecution. The Gentiles persecuted the Saints in the early years of the church, and the next generation of Gentiles were just as unsatiated. The apostles and First Presidency preserved the dichotomy between Saint and Gentile through urging themselves, their brothers in the gospel, and the laity to practice polygamy in the face of a tyrannical government. Both implicitly and explicitly, the message was simple—spiritual law superseded federal law. Even as the federal government strengthened its power through the 1882 Edmunds Act, LDS authorities motivated the Saints to face extreme hardship, using polygamy as their rallying banner. The 1882 act classified “cohabitation” as illegal and disenfranchised Americans who practiced polygamy. A



successful cohabitation charge merely required evidence of an unmarried couple living together, solving the weaknesses in the 1862 and 1874 anti-polygamy acts. Federal marshals no longer needed marriage records to charge polygamous couples.

Consequently, federal marshals arrested cohabitating Saints at an alarming and debilitating rate. All husbands to multiple wives, the First Presidency went into hiding in 1886. LDS leaders preached that the blame for the Saints' struggles belonged to the liberty-extinguishing government, rather than to the organization that urged their members to subvert federal authority. LDS leaders felt entirely blameless before the law and before their people, a mindset developed through intentional misconstruction.<sup>35</sup>

### **Strategies for the Saints**

Two years after Orson Pratt pronounced polygamy central to LDS faith, Brigham Young called for the construction of the Endowment House in 1854 as a temporary place to conduct religious ceremonies—including, but not limited to, plural marriage—while temple construction in Salt Lake City and St. George was underway. About twenty years later, in 1876, the First Presidency published a statement announcing the closure of the Endowment House. The First Presidency explained that the LDS Church would quickly construct three more temples throughout Utah's territory, placing the temple ceremonies "within the reach of all who are worthy...without their being compelled to travel." Threats to early Saints' safety forced the first generation to abandon their first temple in Kirkland, Ohio and their second temple in Nauvoo, Illinois. Almost thirty years after many had abandoned their Illinois

---

<sup>35</sup> In this work, I will use the word misconstruction to name the behavior where LDS leaders deliberately constructed false narratives related to the Church including, but not limited to, past and present LDS leaders, doctrine, and LDS policy.

homes, the 1876 announcement signaled permanence. The Church no longer needed the temporary building. The St. George temple neared completion, the Salt Lake Temple's construction continued unobstructed, and LDS leaders announced plans for future temples. The Church and its ceremonies would survive the pressure the federal government applied with the 1874 Poland Act. The Endowment House did not officially close until November 1889, but Brigham Young's announcement set the tone for how LDS authorities communicated their expectations to their people. Young stated, "when the Saints were required to build the Temple at Kirkland, Ohio, they were few in number and poor in means... The Lord increased their substance, provided ways of deliverance from their enemies, and bestowed gifts and knowledge upon them which are beyond all earthy prices. So it will be now...and through Satan may rage...we will prosper." The First Presidency seamlessly wove current Saints into the celebrated history of past Saints. Just as the government fought against the first generation, the second generation should expect nothing less. The federal government outlawed polygamy fifteen years prior, and the courts were under federal jurisdiction, but Mormon practices would continue "until the redemption of Zion shall be fully accomplished."<sup>36</sup>

In 1877, Brigham Young reorganized the church's structure, instituting a bureaucratic chain of command that began with the father in the home and ended with the prophet. The prophet was God's chosen representative on earth who communicated messages sent directly from God. He appointed two counselors to serve alongside him,

---

<sup>36</sup> Brigham Young, John W. Young, Daniel H. Wells, 25 Oct. 1876, "To the Bishops and Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," in *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964, Volume 2*, ed. James R. Clark (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft Inc. 1965), 278-281.

and the three men comprised of the First Presidency. According to LDS scripture, the First Presidency shared their authority with the Quorum.<sup>37</sup> However, in Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Joseph F. Smith's tenure as prophets, their authority far superseded Quorum authority.

The editor who published the First Presidency's messages in 1965 classified the structure Young instituted as "one of the most historical documents in Mormon history" because the LDS church still uses the same structure. After introducing the bureaucratic structure, Young and his counselors stressed the importance of LDS children's education. Only faithful Latter-day Saints ought to teach children and only with materials made by the Saints. Parents were encouraged to ask their children about "their words [and] actions...if not every day, at least as often as they can and not allow many days to elapse."<sup>38</sup> Instituting a system that monitored the next generation's education maintained the dichotomy between Saints and Gentiles and fueled the mistrust Saints felt towards nonmembers. By urging protection from Gentiles, by proxy, the Gentiles were dangerous.

Brigham Young died in August of 1877, and the next prophet, John Taylor, continued implementing the rigidly hierarchical reorganization Young started. Apostle meeting minutes and the epistle that announced Taylor's presidency suggested unity after Young's death. The transition of power from Smith to Young manifested into a schism, but Taylor transitioned seamlessly. John Taylor witnessed the murder of Joseph Smith and his brother in 1844. The mob that took the lives of Joseph and Hyrum also

---

<sup>37</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants*, 107:24.

<sup>38</sup> Young, JW Young, Wells, "Circular of the First Presidency," 11 July 1877, in *Messages Vol. 2*, 288-289.

shot Taylor, but his pocket watch took most of the damage. For Taylor, this deeply traumatic—and formative—experience painted a static image of the Gentiles that fueled his strategies until his death in 1887. Taylor staunchly defended polygamy, and the apostles trusted him to lead while the federal government arrested male members of the Church for polygamy and contempt of court.<sup>39</sup>

To counter pushback from more hesitant members who considered abandoning polygamy, LDS authorities provided clarification concerning personal revelation, an ambiguous doctrine given the Church’s deferential structure. If God permitted faithful Saints to receive personal revelation, then what was the procedure if a personal revelation did not coincide with revelations from LDS authorities? President John Taylor responded, “no man is authorized to teach to the Church new or advanced doctrines except the Presidency thereof. Light comes from the head.”<sup>40</sup> The announcement signaled deference under Church law. If a member considered beliefs that failed to match doctrine given by LDS authorities, then the member was simply wrong. To illustrate, LDS member and author Edward Tullidge published a biography of Joseph Smith in 1878 after consulting a few LDS authorities. Tullidge converted while the Saints lived in Illinois and made the trek to the Salt Lake Valley alongside other LDS members. However, President Taylor released a message in the *Deseret News* stating that he had revoked Tullidge’s Church archive clearance, so the biography was untrustworthy. According to LDS scholar Claudia Bushman, Tullidge wanted to offer a balanced perspective of LDS history. Accustomed to polarized thought,

---

<sup>39</sup> “Historian’s Office Journal,” 6 Sept. 1877, in *Minutes of the Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 1835-1951* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2020); Quorum of the Twelve, between 4 Sept.-1 Oct. 1877, in *Messages Vol. 2*, 300.

<sup>40</sup> John Taylor, “The Blessing of Children,” 15 April 1878, in *Messages Vol. 2*, 312-313.

President Taylor rejected Tullidge's perspective. He stated the archives "are of too sacred a nature to be tampered with by irresponsible persons." Tullidge later left the Church for the competing Mormon sect, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>41</sup> The leaders' monopoly on information communicated to the laity that only following leadership led to salvation. Despite the doctrine of personal revelation, members possessed limited leeway in interpreting doctrine. When members attempted to navigate the tumultuous conflict between Church and State, apostle Joseph F. Smith made it clear, stating "every man in this Church, who has the ability to obey and practice it [polygamy] in righteousness and will not, shall be damned, I say I understand it to mean this and nothing less, and I testify in the name of Jesus that it does mean that."<sup>42</sup> It begs the question—if the choices were either following LDS leadership or eternal damnation, was there really a choice?

Beginning in 1830, LDS authorities gathered the saints twice a year to communicate essential messages, highlight missionary efforts, and vote members into leadership positions. General Conference lasted about three days, and Saints were encouraged to attend. Fifty years later, LDS authorities commemorated the April 1880 session of General Conference as the "year of jubilee." The conference included four sermons from high-ranking leaders that highlighted the importance of practicing polygamy. Using vivid rhetoric, the sermons painted a sharp distinction between the Saints and the Gentiles and reassured Saints that the pressure from the federal

---

<sup>41</sup> Taylor, "Life of Joseph The Prophet By Edward W. Tullidge," *Deseret News*, 30 Oct 1878, 27; Claudia L. Bushman, "Edward W. Tullidge and The Women of Mormondom," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 4 (2000): 20, 16.

<sup>42</sup> "Discourse Delivered by Elder Jos. F. Smith," *Deseret News Weekly*, 7 July 1878, 11 Sept. 1878, in *Works of Abraham*, 114.

government to comply with anti-polygamy laws was a temporary discomfort. The leader who originally announced polygamy's practice in 1852, Orson Pratt, absolved the Saints of any fault for violating U.S. laws by stating, "all we have done in this Church has been done by direct communication and revelation from heaven."<sup>43</sup> The next morning, Apostle Erastus Snow proclaimed that polygamy solved social ills like prostitution. Consequently, Gentiles were not only guilty of nurturing monogamy, a system that—in their eyes—defiled women, they were hypocritical for targeting the LDS Church: "the daughters of Eve are left...to fall a prey to the brutish lusts of wicked men, and afterwards to be cast off to die, rotten with disease, in gutters and in dens and hovels...it seems to us the sheerest hypocrisy...to decry the honorable marriage of the Latter-day Saints."<sup>44</sup> Snow's emphatic sermon concluded the meeting. The Saints left the first day of the Year of Jubilee Conference with Snow's message fresh in their mind. Cementing the message, President John Taylor reminded "we are not under any obligation to our enemies...if they can stand it we can. When I see men violating the sacred principles of liberty...I feel to realize that they are the enemies of mankind and of the nation. I do not care what position they occupy."<sup>45</sup> Taylor was the next morning's concluding speaker. Taylor and Pratt were not only two of the most powerful orators in the Church, but they also boasted rich histories of defending the faith. The two men were a suitable choice to communicate the conference's intentional theme—the Church and its teachings remained unchanged, regardless of federal authority.

---

<sup>43</sup> *The Year of Jubilee: A Full Report of the Proceedings of the Fiftieth Annual Conference*, ed. George F. Gibbs and John Irvine (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1880), 26.

<sup>44</sup> *The Year of Jubilee*, 56-57.

<sup>45</sup> *The Year of Jubilee*, 77.

Understanding the implicit power LDS leaders possessed over their people requires examining how the laity responded to the Lord's commandments. Many male LDS members proudly proclaimed in the court room that if "the laws of my country should come in conflict with the laws of God... I shall invariably choose the latter."<sup>46</sup> However, communications between polygamous women reveals a more unembellished narrative. Many women submitted to plural marriage despite personal feelings, illustrating that LDS women felt they had limited personal choice.

An interview with apostle Franklin D. Richards' first wife, Jane Snyder Richards, reveals the dynamic between wives within plural marriage and the deference younger plural wives felt towards practiced polygamous women. Jane Richards sought advice from one of President Taylor's wives, who "in a motherly way" instructed, "everything would grow right and easy as time went on and accepting the situation with religious spirit" would bring happiness. After Mrs. Richards became a seasoned plural wife herself, a younger woman in the community sought her advice. Mrs. Richards confessed earlier in her interview that her initial response to her husband marrying another woman "was crushing." However, she reprimanded the advice-seeking woman, "she must not make a confidant of anybody" because "your husband... will hate me for it." Later in the interview, Mrs. Richards added, "the woman ceased her complaints... and lived happily in polygamy."<sup>47</sup> The interview showcased how silence and acceptance were the primary coping skills in tolerating plural marriage, two qualities typically felt in individuals lacking personal choice.

---

<sup>46</sup> Von Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 120.

<sup>47</sup> Mrs. Matilda Coley Griffing Bancroft, "Mrs. F. D. Richards, Inner Facts of Social Life in Utah," in Hardy, *Works of Abraham*, 146-151.

An LDS-owned newspaper, the *Woman's Exponent*, illustrated the same sentiment in an article. In reference to an Old Testament story where women contracted leprosy for complaining, the author lamented, "I wonder how many cases of leprosy there would be at present, if every woman was stricken with it that speaks against Celestial Marriage."<sup>48</sup> The speaker, like Mrs. Richards, communicated frustration with wives who complained about something outside their control. Indeed, polygamous women listened when the general authorities told them polygamy was a blessing that brought exaltation, but the women expected one another to bear it with grim and stoic acceptance.

Heber J. Grant's diary also illustrated the extreme pressure LDS women felt regarding polygamous marriage. Shortly before the First Presidency called him to apostleship in 1882, Grant began his attempt to secure a second wife. By February of 1884, Grant had proposed to two different women, Emily Wells and Augusta Winters. Grant and Wells knew one another from childhood, and according to Grant's diary, she expressed hesitancy to become his plural wife. She required three proposals before she "finally consented" to be his third wife. On the other hand, Augusta Winters became Grant's interest after a spiritual experience. In this experience, he wrote down names of eligible women on multiple slips of paper and the word "neither" on the last slip. After prayerful consideration, he drew Augusta Winter's name from his pocket. Grant's retelling of his spiritual experience provides an illustrative example of how Mormons believed in God's regular involvement in personal life, right down to which slip of paper his Saints drew from their pockets. In addition, Grant's actions showcased that

---

<sup>48</sup> "Celestial Marriage," *Women's Exponent* 10:17 (1 Feb. 1882), 135.



the principle of plural marriage was far more important than whomever he married. Grant described Winters as “almost a stranger.”<sup>49</sup>

During Grant’s pursuit of a plural wife, President Taylor deliberated whether leaders who did not take plural wives should maintain their positions of authority, further explaining Grant’s behavior.<sup>50</sup> Four months after picking Winters’s name from his pocket, Grant proposed. Like Wells, Winters accepted his proposal in February, but by March, both women withdrew their acceptance. Grant neglected to mention either Wells or Winters again until 1887 when he implicitly mentioned his wives.<sup>51</sup> Winters became Grant’s second wife and Wells, his third, in the summer of 1884, despite their initial repeated refusals.<sup>52</sup> Both women remained married to Grant for the entirety of their lives, but the hesitancy reflects how Winters and Wells may not have relished the thought of becoming a plural wife, even if their suitor was an apostle. Both women would eventually go into hiding to avoid perjuring their husband on the witness stand.

In early 1882, amid Grant’s search for another wife, Congress passed the Edmunds Act. It became law in March, and a federally appointed commission headed to Utah to ensure its enforcement. The law jailed and fined polygamists (cohabitating and otherwise) between \$300 and \$500 and disenfranchised polygamists from all local and state civic duties. However, it also included an olive branch to polygamists willing to comply—they would receive amnesty and their children would be legitimized if born before 1893. Utahns registering to vote needed to pledge that they did not practice

---

<sup>49</sup> Heber J Grant, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant: 1880-1945*, ed. Davis Bitton, Scott G. Kenney, Michael D. Quinn (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2015), 15 Nov. 1881, 3 May 1883, 8 Oct. 1833.

<sup>50</sup> “Minutes,” 14 Oct. 1882, *Minutes*.

<sup>51</sup> Grant Diary, 24 Jan. 1884, 26 Feb. 1884, 1 Mar. 1884.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew J Haslam, *Heber J. Grant: Exemplar to the Saints* (American Fork: Covenant Communications, 2003): 71-72.

polygamy or cohabit with more than one partner “in the marriage relation” with their signature. That year, the territory reported 33,266 registered voters, and the commission reported that 12,000 Mormons became ineligible to vote because of the Edmunds Act.<sup>53</sup> The Edmunds Act individually barred polygamists from voting, but because the Church encouraged member unity in political affairs, the Edmunds Act also limited the Church’s political power.

The First Presidency urged their people to withstand the federal government’s mounting pressure. The public response to the Edmunds Act advised Saints to sign the oath if they felt compelled and to financially support those fighting the law in court. The Supreme Court later declared the “test oath” unconstitutional, but the disenfranchisement aspect of the Edmunds Act remained. President Taylor proclaimed that the entire religion was under attack, but paradoxically judged the Edmunds Act as nonsensical because it targeted all Mormons when only ten percent practiced polygamy.<sup>54</sup> The Utah Commission Report roughly verified Taylor’s estimation, reporting that eleven percent of Mormon voters were disenfranchised. Still, with Saints dispersed throughout the large Utah territory, the estimate probably undercounted the number of disenfranchised Mormons. Numbers aside, most Saints were still eligible to vote under the Edmunds Law, and the government granted amnesty to polygamists willing to abstain. President Taylor did not have a convincing case that every Mormon was under attack. Luckily for him, federal marshals ruthlessly targeted Saints who continued to practice polygamy. They hunted male polygamists to arrest, female

---

<sup>53</sup> *The Edmunds Act, Reports of the Commission* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Company: 1884), 15, 7-9, 64; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 47.

<sup>54</sup> John Taylor and George Q Cannon, *Messages Vol. 2*, 342-347.

polygamists to testify against their husbands, and children of polygamous marriages to disclose the nature of their parents' relationship and reveal their hiding locations.<sup>55</sup>

After the polygamy raids began, federal marshals asked women socially unacceptable and intimate questions about their marriage. Now, President Taylor could use the pulpit to declare that the Saints were, indeed, under attack.

In the leaders' efforts to unite their people against the federal government, communications with the Saints became spiritually militant and highlighted the communal nature of the faith. Apostle Moses Thatcher wrote in the *Deseret News* that asking the Saints to abandon polygamy was to "cast our children into reservoirs and ash pits, on vacant lots and dung heaps, or throw them on the railroad track; and encourage them in ways that lead to death, hell and the grave."<sup>56</sup> Thatcher's response matched many responses from church leaders, especially in April's and October's 1885 sessions of the General Conference. The 1885 conferences were conducted while the First Presidency and most apostles hid from federal marshals. Still, some apostles risked presiding over the conference, so the First Presidency sent epistles for them to read on their behalf. Between 1882 and 1887, over one thousand LDS men were convicted of cohabitation; the General Conference presented a prime opportunity to encourage Saints to strengthen their resolve.<sup>57</sup>

The April 1885 epistle began by reassuring members, "never at any time have we had more joy and satisfaction in the Gospel." The epistle continued the encouraging message by connecting the Saints' current situation to previous generations by stating

---

<sup>55</sup> Von Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 118.

<sup>56</sup> Moses L Thatcher, *Deseret Weekly News*, 7 May 1884, in Hardy, *Works of Abraham*, 309.

<sup>57</sup> Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 48.

“not only in times past, but in our day, the wicked have persecuted, tormented, and murdered the saints of God.” Through urging inner peace while acknowledging current harassment, the First Presidency communicated that the trial was evidence that God chose them as his people. October’s 1885 conference echoed April’s epistle: “to be imprisoned and abused are not causes of sorrow to *true* Saints; they are causes of rejoicing.” If a guilty conviction after a fair trial occurred, “we should submit to it as martyrs have submitted in every age when God has had a people upon the earth.”<sup>58</sup> To suffer, then, was to be God’s people.

The epistle even highlighted the silver lining of the Edmunds Act, stating that it revealed those “who have made a pretense of being faithful members.”<sup>59</sup> The rhetoric celebrated Saints who proudly defended their right to practice polygamy and, in equal measure, vilified others for breaking under the pressure. To motivate the Saints to stay the course, they promised those who chose God’s path that “their names will be held in everlasting honor in time and eternity.” For those who neglected God’s laws, “not one of you can do this without displeasing your God and endangering your salvation.”<sup>60</sup> Taylor and Cannon expected their people to take a narrow and polarized path. Still, they acknowledged the Saint’s pain, adding, “probably at no period in the world’s history has Satan had such power over the hearts of the children of men as he appears to wield at the present.”<sup>61</sup> The leaders perceived the federal government punishing plural marriage as evidence that the devil controlled the federal government.

---

<sup>58</sup> Taylor and Cannon, *Messages Vol 3*, 5-9; Italics in the quote added.

<sup>59</sup> Taylor and Cannon, *Messages Vol 3*, 23-41.

<sup>60</sup> Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 48.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor and Cannon, *Messages Vol 3*, 23-41.

Cannon and Taylor's messages vilified the government beyond their proclamation that Satan controlled their hearts by comparing their protection from persecution akin to the safety one might expect "at the hands of Algerine pirates." In this period of crisis, even friendship with nonmembers was discouraged. The April epistle also demeaned the marshals for targeting high-ranking members of the church, revealing an interesting expectation of the First Presidency. The LDS church functioned as a centralized institution where, as President Taylor said in previous years, "light comes from the head." The federal government wanted to curtail a practice promoted by "the head," so "the head" was the prudent target. While criticizing the federal government, the epistles celebrated the Saints' persistent American patriotism in equal measure. The extreme polarization of the two sides illustrated the ever-expanding gap between God's people and Gentiles. October's epistle proclaimed, "we have always had a strong desire to obey such laws, and to place ourselves in harmony with all the institutions of the country."<sup>62</sup> Presidents Taylor and Cannon neglected to mention their first prophet's frequent violations of US law such as officiating marriages illegally and ordering the destruction of a printing press that reported his polygamous relationships. Nevertheless, the myth solidified the Saint's moral footing, regardless of the misconception.

Though the circumstances had changed dramatically since the Year of Jubilee when LDS leaders celebrated the Church's half-centennial anniversary by decrying compromise, Taylor and Cannon continued to preach that submitting equated to damnation. They acknowledged the continuity, writing, "the question has been asked us,

---

<sup>62</sup> Taylor and Cannon, *Messages Vol 3*, 30.

how long we intend to pursue this course. In answer we say, that at no time during our existence have we shrunk from the investigation of our conduct.”<sup>63</sup> They acknowledged the same idea six months later: “We did not reveal celestial marriage. God revealed it, and he has promised to maintain it...there is but one course for men of God to take.”<sup>64</sup>

Taylor and Cannon concluded their April epistle by declaring that less than two percent of members practiced polygamy, a woefully inaccurate statistic. Two years prior, Taylor stated that ten percent of Mormons practiced polygamy, and polygamist convictions created overcrowding in the surrounding penitentiaries; jails as far away as Detroit housed members convicted of cohabitation. Two percent of the Mormon population would not overcrowd the penitentiaries. The epistle’s purpose, then, was to inspire righteous indignation at the expense of accuracy.

Between conferences, Taylor and Cannon hoped to inspire more indignation in another epistle that an LDS leader read at the anniversary celebrating Young’s Saints reaching the Salt Lake Valley. They claimed that the Edmunds Act disenfranchised over 200,000 Americans, an interesting claim given there were 33,266 voters in the territory. At the end of this celebratory epistle they urged, “We can afford to live for our religion, and if needs be, to die for it; but we cannot afford to violate our covenants, nor to perjure our souls before God!”<sup>65</sup>

Above all else, the epistles revealed the mindset of two cornered leaders. Vilifying Saints who capitulated to the federal government was a threat to their legitimacy. They desperately needed to keep the dichotomy between Saint and Gentile

---

<sup>63</sup> Taylor and Cannon, *Messages Vol 3*, 5-9.

<sup>64</sup> Taylor and Cannon, *Messages Vol 3*, 27.

<sup>65</sup> Taylor and Cannon, *Messages Vol 3*, 20-21.

alive, and they hoped the messages legitimized their strategies and repaired the foundation of their authority that the government had chipped away. With each arrest and each Supreme Court ruling that affirmed the constitutionality of anti-polygamy laws, their church was in peril. Nevertheless, the epistles would just have to do. Effectively leading their church during a crisis required them to leave their hiding places, an action they would not do, despite ardent criticism.<sup>66</sup> Following the conclusion of April's epistle, apostle and newlywed to two new wives Heber J. Grant asked the congregation to pass a resolution that organized a commission to investigate the "wrongs the people of this Territory have suffered." Naturally, the LDS Church reported the vote as unanimous.<sup>67</sup> Using the power of the written word, Taylor and Cannon appeared to have united the Saints to face the Gentiles.

### **Strategies Between the Saints**

Polygamy played a crucial role in the identity LDS leaders developed between 1874 and 1887. Expecting over 100,000 people to view the federal government as evil and, consequently, accept substantial hardship for not complying with its laws required LDS leaders to see themselves as irreproachable. Leaders manipulated language to the effect that it absolved their accountability under the law. Through minute technicalities, LDS leaders maintained their self-image as the very picture of American patriotism. Using polygamy, LDS leaders rehearsed a myth about themselves as morally superior American patriots that cemented over time. Consequently, when Saints or Gentiles violated LDS leaders' version of morality, leaders responded with impassioned shock. Their responses to repugnant behavior deflected the attention from their own behavior.

---

<sup>66</sup> Von Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 127.

<sup>67</sup> *Messages Vol 3*, 13.

The result left leaders regarding themselves as unimpeachable moral crusaders in a world on the brink of moral collapse.

Initially, the federal government struggled to enforce their polygamy laws. The Saints conducted their polygamous marriages without civic records, so LDS leaders forged a myth based on a technicality. According to them, in entering polygamous marriage, they were not violating anti-polygamy laws because those laws did not apply to them. Therefore, polygamy served to justify behavior that fell outside of federal law while still preserving their identify as obedient American citizens. Because practicing plural marriage was against U.S. law, LDS authorities needed to absolve themselves of illegal behavior to maintain their image as infallible, ethical, and morally upright leaders. Even after Congress added cohabitation to their anti-polygamy laws, leaders did not see themselves as willfully violating the law. They married under a higher authority than the state, and the anti-polygamy law was unconstitutional. Heber J. Grant often lamented that he hoped Taylor would return from the underground, as administrative duties became increasingly difficult without the First Presidency. Even so, Grant justified President Taylor's absence: "U.S. Officials...have warrants for him violating the Edmunds law, something by the way that he has never done." President Taylor, indeed, practiced polygamy, cohabitated with his wives, and he married after the Edmunds Act. Shortly before his death at the age of 78, he married a 26-year-old while in the underground. Grant often questioned the purpose of keeping a diary, but he used his diary to rehearse the myth he needed to maintain President Taylor's innocence.<sup>68</sup> The mindset provided critical peace of mind when the First Presidency

---

<sup>68</sup> Grant Diary, 3-5 June 1885; Quinn, "New Plural Marriages," 30; Grant Diary, 4 Nov. 1881.



remained in the underground while over ten thousand of their people could not vote. The First Presidency's secretary, L. John Nuttel, wrote to a polygamous apostle who fled to England, "there does not seem any degree of alarm or excitement in any quarter."<sup>69</sup>

The way LDS authorities understood events also maintained their innocence to themselves. President George Q. Cannon explained in his diary why one of his Saints gave away their location to federal marshals. Allegedly, an "exceedingly prying" young woman vindictively revealed John Taylor and George Q. Cannon's location after "she had become angry at some reproofs which our hostess had given her." At least in his entry, Cannon did not consider other reasonable explanations for the young woman's behavior, such as the growing resentment that Cannon and Taylor used valuable resources to remain in hiding while Saints filled the territory's penitentiary, a perspective mentioned by apostle Moses Thatcher in an 1888 meeting.<sup>70</sup> Instead, Cannon concluded that bickering between women, an explanation rooted in sexist stereotypes, caused their location's compromise.

The myth of innocence strengthened when church leaders vilified behavior outside their own moral code. Grant detailed a tirade delivered by President Taylor while in hiding, commenting that he had never "seen him worked up more than he was while talking on this subject." The subject related to officials pursuing polygamists instead of the actual violators of moral law—those guilty of adultery or prostitution. Ironically, a prostitution scandal emerged months after Taylor's tirade when a well-known LDS leader and police officer paid prostitutes to seek out Gentile company

---

<sup>69</sup> L. John Nuttel to Daniel H. Wells, 19 May 1885, in *Messages Vol 3, 4*.

<sup>70</sup> Cannon Diary, 20 Jan. 1886, in *Minutes*; Grant Diary, 22 Oct. 1888.

exclusively. When ensnared, the Gentile would be arrested and charged with paying for sexual services, thus exposing the real violators of morality. Once the scheme became public, however, the perpetrator was charged and jailed for establishing a brothel.<sup>71</sup> Disfranchising Saints for practicing polygamy—because it was seen as a sexual deviance—while not extending similar treatment to individuals practicing prostitution or adultery certainly presented an ethical dilemma. The water muddied, however, when LDS leaders in the community, regardless of motivation, engaged in the same deviances they universally condemned.

A scandal involving apostle Albert Carrington presented another significant challenge to the LDS leaders' innocence myth. Carrington admitted to participating in serial adulterous behavior spanning over a ten-year period while a mission president in England. As a result, the apostles conducted a church trial to determine his church standing. Carrington argued his innocence through a subjective technicality—because he did not “go the whole figure,” so to speak, he was not guilty of adultery. He described his extra-marital relationships, instead, “as a little folly in Israel.” Despite Carrington's defense, he was unanimously excommunicated. Diary entries from apostles present at Carrington's trial reveal utter revulsion at Carrington's pretense of innocence, and their disgust did not dissipate for several years after. The apostles refused to grant Carrington's request for rebaptism several times between 1885 and 1887. The shock the apostles felt revealed that they viewed plural marriage as entirely different from adultery.

---

<sup>71</sup> Hardy, *Works of Abraham*, 326.

Grant lamented in his diary that the timing of the discovery was “unfortunate,” as “our enemies were so hard at work enforcing the provisions of the Edmunds Law.”<sup>72</sup> Grant understood that Carrington’s affairs strengthened their enemy’s resolve because they believed that the LDS leaders’ pretense of moral innocence was unfounded. Lost on Grant, however, was the situation’s irony. Carrington used a minute technicality to argue innocence under the letter of the law and ignored the socially accepted spirit of the law, strikingly similar to the arguments LDS leaders made regarding the Edmunds Act. In that context, the apostles rejected Carrington’s reasoning, but the leaders believed in their own innocence under the Edmunds Act. Accustomed to the misconception, Carrington used the same reasoning to justify his socially unacceptable behavior, especially because polygamy was socially unacceptable to most American Protestants. The apostles’ rejection of Carrington’s defense reflected how polygamy provided a segue to faulty arguments.

In addition, it illustrated the hierarchy of power in the Church. The First Presidency and apostles controlled when, how, and in what context individuals used certain arguments. In the case of plural marriage, it was permissible to intentionally misinterpret the law to keep themselves infallible. In the case of adultery, however, it was not permissible to use misconception. The complex and, at times, paradoxical-reasoning nevertheless enabled LDS leaders to defend their innocence while condemning actions they regarded as deviant. Grant’s diary illustrates this very thought process when he reflected on early church history after a discussion with “Bro Lysander Gee.” When discussing Oliver Cowdrey’s fall from the Church, Gee said he personally

---

<sup>72</sup> Grant Diary, 30 Oct. 1885, 6 Nov. 1885; Brigham Young Jr Diary, 6 Nov. 1885, in *Minutes*.

knew Cowdrey committed adultery before “he lost his faith.” Soothed by Gee’s assertion. Grant stated, “it strengthens my faith to learn that even the leading men of the Church cannot commit sin and remain in the Church, unless they repent.” However, scholarly analysis reveals that Cowdrey did not commit adultery. He only lost his faith after the Church excommunicated Cowdrey for “seeking to destroy [Joseph Smith’s] character” after he did not vehemently deny that Smith committed adultery. Once Cowdrey left the fold—forcefully—he lost his influence over the Saints and weakened the rumors about Smith. The first rumors about Cowdrey’s adulterous behavior appeared from the mouth of Brigham young after 1872, twenty years after Cowdrey’s death.<sup>73</sup> Using polygamy, LDS leaders constructed a false narrative about Cowdrey. The misconstruction strengthened the next generation of Saints, justifying the creative liberties LDS leaders took.

While encouraging the Saints to stay the course in the battle for religious freedom, church leaders coordinated efforts to protect members who practiced plural marriage. Their strategies revealed how Church leaders felt entitled to subvert federal law, especially discreetly. Although the rhetoric to the lay community was proud, uncompromising, and vehement, the language between leaders revealed polarizing perspectives that justified deliberate misconstructions.

In an 1878 meeting with clerical leaders ranging from bishops to the First Presidency, President Taylor explained that although they ought not compromise their stance on plural marriage, “neither need we be blatant nor defiant.” He advised the leaders to be alert to members in their congregation who might be in danger of being

---

<sup>73</sup> Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 5, 9-12; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 3, 5.

arrested. “If there was any chance of their being prosecuted, he advised the brethren to give a hint to ‘get’ in a wise and prudent way...we might give them a mission, or they might go over into Arizona, or further still, into Mexico.” Church leaders used their authoritative power to slip polygamists out of federal marshals’ grasp under the guise of missionary service. Second counselor in the First Presidency Joseph F. Smith spent much of 1885 and 1886 conducting missionary work and Church business in Hawaii, only to return when Taylor was on his deathbed.<sup>74</sup>

As federal presence in the territory heightened, so too did the coordination to colonize Mexico. In June 1885, the First Presidency and Quorum met for the first time in four months to discuss colonizing Mexico. Typically, the two groups met often, but Taylor had “been keeping out of the way of U.S. Officials.” The discussion of Mexico as the primary purpose for the meeting while many LDS leaders were evading federal marshals speaks to the meeting’s importance. Although church authorities felt motivated to colonize Mexico for a variety of reasons, including preaching the gospel, they were chiefly motivated to “explore for a location, upon which the Saints...could settle.” The daughter of Mexico’s mission president from 1895-1907 recalled later in her life that the colonies were set up as a refuge for polygamous families who suffered from American persecution, a sentiment echoed in Grant’s diary.<sup>75</sup> In a meeting determining whether the Church should lease their Mexican land, Joseph F. Smith advocated against renting the lands because “the lands in Mexico were purchased to aid

---

<sup>74</sup> Taylor, *Messages Vol 2*, 323; Grant Diary, 27 July 1887; Franklin S. Richards, “Reminisces” in *Minutes*.

<sup>75</sup> Franklin D. Richards Diary, 23 Feb. 1880, in *Minutes*; Grant Diary, 29 Jan. 1885; Anthony W. Ivins, *Cowboy Apostle: The Diaries of Anthony W. Ivins 1875-1932*, ed. Elizabeth Oberdick Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013), xxviii-xxv.

the poor people that had to flee to Mexico for safety.”<sup>76</sup> Across meeting minutes, diaries, and messages from the First Presidency, the diversity of sources point to the conclusion that the Church’s enthusiasm for Mexican land primarily served their interests in evading the federal government, not for proselytization. LDS leaders used colonization and proselytizing efforts to protect polygamy.

In an early 1878 meeting with the Quorum, the presidents of the different stakes (regional boundaries akin to dioceses in the Catholic Church), bishops, and elders, President Taylor gave an emphatic sermon urging the male leaders in the room to disregard personal feelings and defer to higher authorities in important matters. In this case, important matters were political elections where he required the leaders to urge the Saints to unify against the political—non-Mormon—opposition. Taylor asked, “Do we not live in a Republican government and have the right to vote as we please?” He answered, “Yes, and go down to hell as we please.”<sup>77</sup> Although the context of the statement did not directly relate to plural marriage, Taylor frequently depicted any Gentile conflict as belonging to a larger religious battle operating in a zero-sum game. Any loss of LDS power meant a gain in federal power—the power responsible for attacking their religion. Language used in this way maintained the environment where any outsider was an enemy to the Kingdom. General authorities exhorted obedience and deference to avoid damnation, even in matters such as voting in local elections.

The religious battle’s critical nature was cemented in sacred ceremonies, helping to explain the zeal LDS leaders portrayed in their defense of polygamy. In early 1880, three short months before the bicentennial Year of Jubilee celebration of the Church’s

---

<sup>76</sup> Grant Diary, 8 Sept. 1887.

<sup>77</sup> “Minutes,” 23 Feb. 1878, in *Minutes*.

organization, the Quorum and First Presidency gathered to ceremoniously wash one another's feet and read section 123 of *Doctrine and Covenants*. Joseph Smith wrote the section while in a Missouri jail cell shortly before the Saints forcibly relocated to Illinois. In the section, Smith called for the Saints to record every wrongdoing done to them and to use the records to advocate for their rights. He later described their opposition as so evil, it made "hell itself shudder." After reading the passage, Taylor highlighted the similarities between Joseph Smith's 1839 situation to their 1880 situation. Though over forty years passed, the enemy remained intent on ensuring their destruction.<sup>78</sup> Heavily impacted by the January 19 meeting, apostle Wilford Woodruff, recorded a revelation in his journal a week later: those preventing the Saints from practicing the "Patriarchal Law of Abraham... shall be damned."<sup>79</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Although the circumstances between 1874 and 1887 differed drastically, the messaging from the First Presidency remained the same. Using polygamy as the rallying banner, LDS leaders used centralized messaging filled with moral rhetoric that urged their people to identify the federal government as the enemy and that persecution was a mark that they were God's people. Church leaders subverted federal authority in multiple ways while still maintaining their image as infallible. Plural marriage played a central role in the identity LDS leaders forged because they used the doctrine to absolve themselves from adhering to laws they disagreed with. They provided avenues for their polygamous members to hide in Mexico, Canada, England, and the Hawaiian Islands

---

<sup>78</sup> 19 Jan. 1880, *Minutes; Doctrine and Covenants*, 131.

<sup>79</sup> "Revelation Given to Wilford Woodruff in the Wilderness of San Francisco Mountain in Arizona on the 26 Day of Jan. 1880," *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale: Signature Books, 1983), 7:617-618, 620.

under the guise of missionary efforts. The strategies LDS Church leaders used during 1874 and 1887 reflected polygamy's centrality to the LDS Gospel, but not only on a doctrinal level. LDS leaders used polygamy as a tool to defeat the power of the federal government. And all the while the war raged, the leaders required the Saints to weather the storm.

Moreover, the federal government persisted in fighting the Church's political power. Because LDS leaders continued to resist federal law despite the Edmunds Act, Congress concocted another strategy to check the power of the LDS Church—disincorporation. The Edmunds Act had checked the political power of the church, but the proposed Edmunds-Tucker Act would check the Church's financial power. Disincorporation would prevent the Church from adequately funding their challenges to the Edmunds Act because the act would seize corporate Church property and income. By 1887, the Church financially backed several successful businesses and newspapers, owned shares in Gentile railroad companies, and frequently invested in mining ventures. Simply put, disincorporation would cripple the Church's institutional functionality. If disenfranchisement did not change the Church's strategies regarding polygamy, Congress believed that disincorporation just might.



## Chapter 2: Wielding Polygamy as a Political Tool

*“it was the will of the Lord to do it in order to gain a Victory...”*

As Congress drafted the Edmunds-Tucker Act, LDS leaders found themselves on the defense. The federal government’s power had only strengthened since 1874; it became a permanent discomfort instead of the predicted temporary inconvenience. LDS leaders’ use of polygamy needed alteration due to the changed circumstances. Instead of as a rallying banner, polygamy served as a political tool from 1887 to 1917. In LDS leaders’ hands, polygamy became a gambling tool, a bargaining chip, and finally, a scapegoat.

1887 marked a change in the tone LDS leaders used when communicating with the Saints. The language grew softer and deferential towards the federal government. They increased their messaging about how their religion encouraged compliance with the law. However, between 1887 and 1890, the LDS Church maintained their covert plans to secure polygamy’s survival. Despite their best efforts, Congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act in March 1887. The same year, and months before President Taylor’s death, he received a revelation that if any LDS leader ended the practice of polygamy, they were leading the Church astray.<sup>80</sup> Between 1887 and 1890, the Church suffered several legislative and judicial losses. By 1890, the federal government revoked the Church’s incorporation status, resulting in the loss of properties that financed their religious, political, and economic operations. On top of the financial loss, Congress announced their work on a bill that disenfranchised every LDS member in Utah, regardless of their marriage relation.

---

<sup>80</sup> John Taylor, 27 Sept. 1886, in *Works of Abraham*, 325-326.

Consequently, the next prophet, Wilford Woodruff, issued an official declaration that announced the Church discouraged plural marriage. He proclaimed his people as continually law-abiding, despite rumors indicating the contrary. LDS Saints and Gentiles alike interpreted Woodruff's Manifesto as the end of Mormon polygamy. However, LDS leaders interpreted the Manifesto differently. Publicly, the Church abandoned polygamy, but the Church's inner circle both married and granted plural marriages in secret. Just as in Joseph Smith's days, two churches existed simultaneously in a hierarchal structure. The trusted inner circle was privy to practicing sacred religious practices while the same leaders communicated to the laity that polygamy's days were over. LDS authorities viewed Gentiles as their oppressor, so they did not categorize their actions as deceitful. A little folly in Israel, indeed.

The strategies brought church survival, or temporal salvation, but at a tremendous cost. By 1905, LDS authorities secured Utah's statehood and Congress reinstated Church property, but the Church's public image suffered. LDS authorities proved unable to prevent public scrutiny despite their discrete strategies. A congressional hearing for a recently elected senator, Reed Smoot, revealed that LDS leaders covertly sanctioned polygamy. Their strategies appeared shortsighted at best and deceitful at worst. Thus, polygamy's next transformation occurred. No longer simply a doctrine, polygamy existed to clean the Church's record and restore trust.

LDS Church authorities used their dynamic tool in one final way—to sacralize the past that desperately needed legitimization. From 1905 to 1917, LDS leadership created vast space between the polygamous Saints and the modern, monogamous Saints. They minimized polygamy's role in the lives of nineteenth century Saints and

framed their persecution as unfounded bigotry. Rather than the most important revelation, Joseph Smith's restoration of polygamy was just one of many infallible revelations. Consequently, the Church eliminated the central role polygamy played in Protestant America's rejection of the LDS faith. LDS leaders then framed twentieth century Saints as monogamous and patriotic Protestant Americans. In stark contrast to the previous strategy where they used polygamy to separate Gentiles and Saints, the Church used their sacralized past to highlight commonalities between Mormons and Americans. The abandonment of polygamy while sanctifying its past guaranteed the Mormon church survived. They entered the American mainstream without sullyng the LDS Church's centralized authority.

### **Scott Amendment and 1887 Constitution**

Securing statehood seemed the only solution to remove federal interference from the Church's affairs. The territory's population boasted a healthy LDS majority who paid deference towards the LDS hierarchy. Because Church leaders often offered advice pertaining to political sphere, gaining statehood would salvage some of the Church's political power.<sup>81</sup> With disincorporation and disenfranchisement threatening the Church, LDS leaders tried to delay the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act and secure statehood by gambling with polygamy. When that failed, they advocated for the Church's interests in Utah's 1887 Constitutional Convention to increase the likelihood that Congress would accept Utah's bid for statehood. Congress denied Utah's previous statehood attempts because they regarded polygamy an abhorrent practice. Thereby, LDS leaders used polygamy as a bargaining chip to negotiate for statehood.

---

<sup>81</sup> Leo E Lyman, "The Political Background of the Woodruff Manifesto," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24, no 3 (1991): 21-23.

Following LDS leader orders, Brigham Young's son and his First Counselor during his presidency, John W. Young, traveled to Washington, D.C. to advocate for the LDS Church in 1886. LDS lawyer Franklin S. Richards and Utah delegate John T. Caine also accompanied Young. The trio highlighted the Church's interwoven religious and political authority. It also revealed the Church's utmost desire to dismantle the Edmunds-Tucker Act because they sent a well-rounded and trustworthy team. Early in 1887, Young sent the First Presidency a telegram asking for advice regarding a proposed amendment to the Edmund-Tucker Act, the Scott Amendment. Congressmembers "friendly to the Church" pushed the Scott amendment, which would delay the Edmunds-Tucker Act for six months. In theory, the amendment provided Utah with enough time to enter a bid for statehood.<sup>82</sup> They believed if Utah submitted a constitution that outlawed polygamy, Congress would allow Utah's entry into the Union. Thus, the Scott Amendment might provide LDS leaders with the state power they needed to fight federal oversight. The next day, President George Q. Cannon responded, "urge Scott amendment and any other amendment which will defeat objects of the enemy."<sup>83</sup> Cannon's militant message communicated the LDS leaders' strategy for the next year—defeat the enemy, no matter the cost. Thus, LDS authorities supported an amendment that required Utah to abandon polygamy, though they had no intention of abandoning polygamy, themselves. The House of Representatives voted The Scott Amendment down in January, but LDS leaders continued deliberating the propriety of the amendment.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Lyman, "Woodruff Manifesto," 22.

<sup>83</sup> First Presidency Office Journal, 17-27 Jan. 1887, in *Minutes*.

<sup>84</sup> *Congressional Record: Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the Forty-Ninth Congress, Second Session Volume 18* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887): 585-596.

Two days after approving Young's fight for the Scott Amendment, the First Presidency and the Quorum met to discuss the liquidation of Church assets. The apostles advised, "all real property not needed for church uses should be sold." They discussed selling a wide range of assets, including railroad company shares, to trusted members of the Church. In the event the Edmund-Tucker Act passed, they hid as many of their assets as possible to store until the Church could secure assets again. During the meeting, Cannon and the apostles also discussed the Scott Amendment. The fact that LDS leaders had both the liquidation of assets and the Scott Amendment on their meeting agenda reflected how LDS leaders saw the issues as interconnected, also reflecting that, to them, they possessed political authority. Cannon told his apostles that President Taylor "remarked with unusual energy that he entirely approved of the proposed amendments."<sup>85</sup> For most of 1887, Taylor was too ill to attend meetings, so whether he approved the amendment is difficult to evaluate. In any case, the coordinated effort to dismantle the Edmunds-Tucker Act and liquidate church assets showcased how the Church was an organized and calculating institution with far-reaching influence.

Not lost on LDS leaders was the moral reasoning needed to justify supporting an amendment that required Utah to craft an anti-polygamy constitution. In February, twelve to fifteen LDS leaders met to discuss their perspectives on the Scott Amendment. The meeting lasted for twelve hours. Meeting minutes and diaries from two members present at the meeting note that most members supported the Scott Amendment. Only two opposed it, and two supported it as long as "we can do it without

---

<sup>85</sup> Minutes, 19 Jan. 1887, in *Minutes*.

making it appear to Israel a Compromise or sacrifice.” They deliberated “whether it was the will of the Lord to do it in order to gain a Victory.” The majority believed it was the Lord’s will to support the Scott Amendment. One leader even suggested crafting a definition of polygamy for the state constitution that would specifically not incriminate polygamous LDS members. Most supported the Scott Amendment because they doubted that Congress would approve the Scott Amendment in the first place. In their eyes, voicing LDS support of the Scott Amendment created no legitimate risk. Not supporting it, however, created significant risk. Charles W. Penrose argued that the public would interpret lack of Church support as “the few polygamists who control affairs in Utah [as] unwilling to have the question submitted to the...people.” Penrose’s perspective revealed the men’s insecurities more than perhaps he intended. President Cannon and the prophet’s son, John W. Taylor, expressed worry about the Saints voting for a constitution that outlawed polygamy. In their eyes, it destabilized their legitimacy and undid their work in “schooling the Latter-Day Saints to what we believe today.”<sup>86</sup> Taylor’s words reflected how LDS leaders still believed that “light comes from the head.”

The men who predicted Congress would not accept the Scott Amendment were right—the Edmunds-Tucker Act became law on March 8, 1887, without the proposed Scott Amendment. A few weeks later, President Taylor suffered illnesses too severe to run the Church. Consequently, President Cannon oversaw Church affairs, a managerial shift unknown to the apostles at the time.<sup>87</sup> Even without the Scott Amendment, Utah’s

---

<sup>86</sup> “Remarks of the Brethren on Scott Amendment,” 26 Feb. 1887 in *Minutes*; Grant Diary, 26 Feb. 1887; Franklin D. Richards Diary, in *Minutes*, 383.

<sup>87</sup> Grant Diary, 3 Aug. 1887. President Cannon did not admit the nature of President Taylor’s illness to the apostles until after Taylor’s death in a heated meeting on August 3.

leaders still arranged a constitutional convention to draft another bid for statehood. In their proposed constitution, the state punished polygamy and bigamy.

The Church leaders' perspective remained unchanged during the Constitutional Convention; "it was the best thing we could do under the circumstances." Aware that Church involvement in the 1887 Constitutional Convention would create confusion for members and outrage from opposition, Cannon urged, "it *must not be known* that the [anti-polygamy] provisions came from President [Taylor], it must appear that our delegates to the Constitutional Convention had framed them."<sup>88</sup> LDS leaders understood their actions as duplicitous; they merely sought the appearance of submitting to federal authority. On July 5, the delegates officially added the polygamy and bigamy provision to the drafted constitution.<sup>89</sup> If ratified through popular vote and accepted by Congress, Utah would enter the Union as a state that punished non-monogamous marriage.

Seven members of the Quorum met with President Cannon a few days after to celebrate the Constitutional Convention's progress. Five of the seven members wholeheartedly supported Utah's constitution. In addition, apostles Moses Thatcher, Heber J. Grant, and John W. Taylor advised those present to "simply, in a quiet way, get their friends to understand that their action had the approval of the First Presidency and Twelve Apostles." They advised any concerned members to pray to "become convinced by the inspiration of the spirit that this move had the sanction of God." At the close of the meeting, "in the most forcible manner," President Cannon assured that "no Latter-day Saint would offend his Creator [by] voting for the adoption of the

---

<sup>88</sup> Grant Diary, 20 June 1887. Italics original to the entry.

<sup>89</sup> Richards diary, 5 July 1887, in *Minutes*.

Constitution.” Because the Lord approved of the duplicity, using polygamy to bargain for statehood was morally sound.

For the remainder of the summer, LDS leaders traveled throughout the territory to communicate First Presidency and Quorum support of the constitution. In one meeting with local LDS leaders, Grant “request[ed] them not to mention the fact of my meeting...as they [their enemies] would say that this movement was a Church movement instead of a political one.”<sup>90</sup> However, “this movement” was the very definition of a Church movement; Grant and other members of the Quorum used the Church-established hierarchy and authority to communicate how their people ought to vote in a state election. Grant’s warning to this group of local leaders revealed how the Church continued their use of polygamy to craft misconstructions. Multiple leaders within the LDS Church’s inner circle sanctioned using misleading information to suit a larger purpose. The institution itself sanctioned the misconception; it was not merely the actions of one or two misguided members or leaders.

LDS leaders outside the inner circle did not always wholeheartedly accept their leaders’ interpretation of the Lord’s will. When Grant traveled to Southern Utah to deliver his instructions, LDS local leader Anthony Ivins frankly criticized the First Presidency and Quorum’s duplicity. He argued he had yet to hear “any sound argument in favor of the position.” As Grant’s first cousin, Ivins probably felt safer to air his grievances than he would have otherwise. Ivins eventually accepted the strategy nonetheless, stating, “I suppose it is the proper thing to sail into the Union under false colors or it would not be attempted, but my nature is such that I cannot so easily

---

<sup>90</sup> Grant Diary, 7 July 1887, 12 July 1888.



reconcile myself to such a condition of affairs.” In later years, the LDS Church called Ivins to serve as the mission president for Mexico. In that capacity, he secretly performed Mexico’s plural marriages from 1895 to 1905.<sup>91</sup>

While apostles traveled to ensure the constitution’s success, President Taylor died in hiding. Taylor defended polygamy, no matter the circumstances, which provided direction for his Quorum. His death left his apostles unsure of how to continue battling against the federal government. The lack of direction led to a tumultuous and antipathetic transition of power from John Taylor to the next prophet, Wilford Woodruff. Although Taylor died in 1887, LDS leaders delayed Woodruff’s prophet confirmation until 1890. In the meantime, the Quorum assumed power of the Church.

In the October 1887 session of General Conference, an LDS leader read an epistle drafted by the Quorum. The epistle contained a diverse array of instructions including pursuing “practical education,” buying products made in Utah, and the importance of marriage, but the Saints received no instructions about the upcoming vote for Utah’s statehood. The section on marriage did not mention plural marriage, either.<sup>92</sup> The Quorum omitted the topics intentionally. Grant noted in his diary, “it was decided to say nothing in the Epistle regarding the Constitutional Convention.” Richard’s diary echoed similar sentiments, “better say nothing...that could possibl[y] prejudice our case before Congress.” Instead, the leaders trusted their Saints to understand that they did not risk damnation for accepting Utah’s constitution. They put their faith in discrete messages communicated down the hierarchy. With the stakes so high, it was unlikely

---

<sup>91</sup> Ivins Diary, 9 Oct. 1895; Hardy, *In Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II.

<sup>92</sup> Grant Diary, 6 Oct. 1887; Richards Diary, 7 Oct 1887 in *Minutes*; Wilford Woodruff, “A Communication” 10 Oct. 1887 in *Messages Vol 3*, 132-155.

that the Quorum would gamble this way unless they were confident in the hierarchy's effectiveness in motivating Saints to vote according to instructions. Their plan worked; in late 1887, nearly 13,000 people voted in favor of Utah's constitution, with less than 500 votes against it. For context, Utah had 18,000 registered male voters in 1884, and 82% of the voters belonged to the LDS-supported political party.<sup>93</sup>

As part of Utah's admission into the Union with the provided constitution, Congress required the Quorum to publish an announcement to the "Latter-Day Saints asking them to conform their lives to the Law of Congress." In essence, Congress called the Church's bluff. If Utah promised to outlaw polygamy, then how would the Church impact the efficacy of the law, given 80% of Utah's population identified as LDS? The Quorum responded with similar disgust they felt when Carrington admitted to his serial adulterous behavior. Joseph F. Smith lamented that he "never expected to...acknowledge...that the laws of the land were superior to the laws of God." Most men in the meeting agreed, and Grant left feeling relieved that they reached "a stopping point in the plan of yielding." After the Quorum's steadfast refusal to make the announcement and even though the Church paid the nation's largest newspapers \$74,000 to write positive articles about the Church, Congress, again, denied Utah's statehood.<sup>94</sup>

The strategies LDS leaders used to help them navigate around the Scott Amendment and Utah's 1887 Constitution illustrated how they undermined the argument that church leadership encouraged their people to violate the law. Publicly,

---

<sup>93</sup> *The Edmunds Act*, 64.

<sup>94</sup> Grant Diary, 20 Dec. 1887; Stanley S Ivins, "A Constitution for Utah" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 25 (1957): 99; Grant Diary 12 Aug. 1887.

LDS leaders emphasized that Gentiles persecuted members for their religious beliefs, rather than for their religious practices. The subtle change was a reactionary response to the *Reynolds v the United States* landmark case. In the 1879 Supreme Court decision, the court unanimously affirmed the constitutionality of anti-polygamy laws because although laws “cannot interfere with mere religious belief and opinions, they may with practices.” Any anti-polygamy law Congress developed from 1879 forward used that argument as the law’s justification. For example, during the House debate on the Edmunds-Tucker bill, the bill’s sponsor stated, “I do not care what the Mormon believes. But he must not...act upon his belief if it violates...laws for the peace and good order of society.”<sup>95</sup>

The Church adjusted accordingly, accustomed to making dynamic changes to suit the current circumstances. In the summer and fall of 1887, LDS leaders privately advocated for an anti-polygamy statute in Utah’s constitution with no intention of adhering to the law, and they secretly advised their people to vote for a law that violated their faith. At the same time, LDS leaders chose not to mention plural marriage or the constitution publicly for the sake of keeping up appearances. But within the Church’s inner circle, leaders adhered to their sacred practices. When Wilford Woodruff dedicated the St. George Temple in a private ceremony, he proclaimed, “we are not going to stop the *practice* of plural marriage until the Coming of the Son of Man.” Whether it was the religious practices or beliefs, the phrasing LDS leaders used reflected surface-level change to maintain the appearance of conformity. The duplicity encouraged a similar dynamic of the early days of the Church under Joseph Smith. Two

---

<sup>95</sup> Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 110; *Congressional Record Volume 18*, 593.

Churches existed simultaneously in a hierarchical structure, where the laity often received sanitized and misleading information from their leaders.

The LDS Church further weakened the argument that they were responsible for their members' lawlessness by instructing their members to "exercise their powers of reason and reflection" when navigating difficult circumstances. Through emphasizing individual free will, LDS authorities increased the distance between their words and their people's actions. If their members practiced polygamy, LDS authority was not liable for their members' personal choices. George Q. Cannon illustrated the perspective in an interview published by the *Salt Lake Tribune*. He acknowledged his belief that the refusal to practice polygamy led to damnation, but he reiterated that his personal convictions did not reflect the beliefs of other LDS members.<sup>96</sup> Cannon spoke as if a member of the laity, not as a member of the First Presidency with closer access to the Lord. His evaluation understated and ignored the Church's influence over their people's souls, a relationship nurtured during Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor's tenures as prophet. In the same space where they argued "light comes from the head," they also argued that their beliefs as high-ranking LDS leaders did not sway their people. The leaders were far too adept at managing their institution to not possess a keen awareness of their influence over their people. LDS leaders knew their instructions bore significant weight because they traveled Utah's vast territory to instruct their people how to vote. Therefore, the transition to defending the doctrine, rather than the practice, of polygamy, allowed LDS leaders to absolve themselves of responsibility

---

<sup>96</sup> "The Report," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 Sept. 1890.

when their members risked plural marriage or other unlawful behavior. Thereby, it weakened the argument that leaders encouraged socially unacceptable behavior.

### **Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto**

The psychological burdens LDS leaders carried intensified during the Church's repeated defeats from 1887 to 1890. Members all over the western U.S. territories still hid from marshals, sometimes in dangerous circumstances. For instance, President Cannon's son described a heart-wrenching account in his reflections of 1888; according to him, a plural wife he knew fled from home with her infant to protect her husband. They hid in the mountains, and her baby did not survive the journey.<sup>97</sup> Cannon's story was not unusual. Two of Grant's wives conceived and delivered babies in the underground. After facing social isolation and intense feelings of loneliness, both women relocated. Augusta fled to New England and Emily to England. Grant bemoaned, "no pen can picture the sufferings and heart aches our people have undergone." Apostle Brigham Young Jr. confessed that even his home's bell frightened him. With each ring, he thought it signaled that the marshals had finally found him. To raise morale, President Cannon surrendered to federal marshals and served time in Utah's penitentiary alongside his people.<sup>98</sup> While in prison, he posed for photographs with other men serving time for cohabitation in their prison uniforms. Amid this hardship, the First Presidency received a telegram reporting that Congress introduced a bill to disenfranchise Mormons living in Utah.<sup>99</sup> As a result, President Woodruff used

---

<sup>97</sup> Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J O'Higgins, *Under the Prophet in Utah* (Boston: The C. M. Clark Publishing Co: 1911) 25-26.

<sup>98</sup> Haslam, *Heber J. Grant*, 72-73; Grant Diary, 17 May 1888, 23 May 1888; Young Jr Diary, 15 May 1890, in *Minutes*.

<sup>99</sup> First Presidency Office Journal, 12 April 1890, in *Minutes*, 453.

polygamy to ease the Church's burdens in September 1890. Through appeasing his enemies with a document that advised his Saints to obey the law, Woodruff was, in his eyes, "acting for the Temporal Salvation of the Church."<sup>100</sup>

Wilford Woodruff published two manifestos within nine months of each other. The second, more famous, manifesto advised that Saints should avoid entering plural marriage. The first manifesto led to the circumstances that required the second manifesto. Issued in December 1889, the first manifesto responded to an 1889 Idaho law which disenfranchised Mormons on the basis that the Church promoted treasonous behavior.<sup>101</sup> The leaders' advice to disenfranchised Saints was similar to the strategies they used in 1887. To circumvent the law, the Quorum instructed their Idaho Saints to "withdraw from membership...and after the election to join again." The advice received intense criticism within the Quorum, displaying the fatigue they felt from withstanding federal pressure to compromise. After Idaho's election, the state court charged members with perjury when they temporarily withdrew from the Church to vote. Joseph F. Smith displayed the same perspective Cannon divulged in the *Tribune* article, rejecting any Church responsibility in the matter. He said, "the brethren in Idaho had done [it] on their own responsibility." To prevent further scandal he stated, "it would appear that some ecclesiastical action had been taken which we must not do." The Quorum acted on Smith's view, and "no action was taken."<sup>102</sup> Evidently, they believed it was their responsibility to instruct Saints about how to navigate a tumultuous situation but rejected responsibility for the outcome of the situation. LDS authorities sacrificed their

---

<sup>100</sup> Woodruff Diary, 25 Sept. 1890.

<sup>101</sup> First Presidency and Apostles, "Official Declaration" 12 Dec. 1899, in *Messages Vol 3*, 184-187.

<sup>102</sup> Grant Diary, 12 Oct. 1888; First Presidency Office Journal, 26-29 Oct. 1888, in *Minutes*.

members to maintain the image that Gentiles baselessly persecuted the Church. The myth was for appearances but also for themselves. Woodruff's conscience finally found solace when he received a revelation a month later—the Lord absolved the Quorum of responsibility in the fallout of their advice in Idaho. Two weeks later, he deplored, “the whole Nation seems to be united against ~~me~~ us.” The strikeout of “me” is especially telling because it reveals how Woodruff took the federal government's mounting pressure quite personally. At the end of the year, Woodruff reflected, “the Nation has never been filled with so full of lies against the Saints.”<sup>103</sup>

In May 1890, the Supreme Court upheld the Edmunds-Tucker Act; the Church's property remained seized and polygamous members remained disenfranchised. As a result, Woodruff felt discomfort granting plural marriages unless the requesting couple traveled to Mexico, but he stopped short of communicating a policy change with his First Presidency or Quorum. Mexico outlawed polygamy, as well, but Mexican authority did not enforce the anti-polygamy law.<sup>104</sup> Usually when the Church sanctioned polygamy, they were citizens of a country that outlawed the practice, so to LDS leaders, Mexico's anti-polygamy laws were inconsequential. Even though Mexico did not recognize polygamous marriages, it became the only safe place to send polygamous families, much in the same way as when Utah was the only safe place to practice polygamy until the 1870s. It was not until six months into 1890 that the First Presidency officially decided “that no person should, for the moment, be permitted to enter into plural marriage... [unless] the ceremony was performed in Mexico.”<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> Woodruff Diary, 24 Nov. 1889, 8 Dec. 1889, 31 Dec. 1889. Strikeout original to the 24 Nov. entry.

<sup>104</sup> Von Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 135-137; Quinn, “New Plural Marriages,” 36-40.

<sup>105</sup> George Q Cannon diary, 20 June 1890, in *Minutes*; First Presidency Office Journal, 28 June 1890, in *Minutes*.

Three months later, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed a summary of the 1890 Utah Commission Report to the Secretary of the Interior. Allegedly, the Utah Commission found that 41 men married plural wives between June 1889 and August 1890. Consequently, the Commission advised that Utah needed stronger legislation to “stomp this evil out.”<sup>106</sup> The article seemed to take the First Presidency and Quorum by surprise—neither diaries from multiple members of the Quorum nor meeting minutes mention a commission report before September 14. Cannon doubted the article’s integrity and exhibited anger because the attack would strengthen Congress’ resolve to strip LDS members’ voting rights.<sup>107</sup> His strong reaction speaks to LDS leaders’ mindset that they were infallible. The First Presidency’s decision to halt plural marriages occurred 12 months into the 14-month date range provided by the Utah Commission where they found evidence of new plural marriages.

Two days before the *Tribune* published the Commission Report, President Cannon met with Judge Morris M. Estee, the Republican National Chair, “as a friend.” The visit was one of many meetings Cannon and Woodruff attended to convince high-ranking Republicans it was in their best interest to reject the upcoming disenfranchisement bill.<sup>108</sup> In the meeting, Estee suggested that the only path forward involved “making some announcement concerning polygamy and the laying of it aside.” Cannon fought the advice, but Estee sympathetically reaffirmed an announcement “must be done sooner or later.”<sup>109</sup> Estee’s timely advice may very well have played a role in Cannon’s acceptance of Woodruff’s Manifesto less than two weeks later.

---

<sup>106</sup> “The Report,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 Sept. 1890.

<sup>107</sup> Cannon Diary, 22 Sept. 1890, in *Minutes*.

<sup>108</sup> Von Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 138.

<sup>109</sup> Cannon Diary, 12 Sept. 1890, in *Minutes*.



Woodruff wrote his second manifesto a week after the *Tribune* published its incriminating article. The Manifesto used the same duplicitous language LDS authorities used from 1887 to 1890. First, Woodruff denied that the Church granted plural marriages in the territory, but he left out that they instructed interested Saints to marry illegally in Mexico. Woodruff claimed in the Manifesto that he possessed no knowledge of marriages that occurred in the territory, a statement that scholars have concluded as exceptionally unlikely.<sup>110</sup> The Manifesto's last sentence stated, "my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the laws of the land." Apparently, Woodruff meant just the laws of just the United States. As prophet, seer, and revelator of the LDS Church, Woodruff possessed enough authoritative power to use the word "command," but instead, he used the word "advice." The much weaker word signified latitude in the message. The rhetoric and claims used in the Manifesto reflected the document's true purpose. The Manifesto meant to construct the appearance of compliance. In actuality, the First Presidency and apostles had no intention to comply at the time of the Manifesto's publication.

Before sending the Manifesto to the press, Woodruff met with his First Presidency and three senior apostles, seeking their approval of the document. Each member of the meeting interpreted the document differently, but each approved it.<sup>111</sup> The next day, Woodruff sent the Manifesto to Utah delegate John T. Caine, and he forwarded the Manifesto to the nation's largest newspapers.<sup>112</sup> After Woodruff

---

<sup>110</sup> Hardy, *In Solemn Covenant*, 139-140.

<sup>111</sup> First Presidency Office Journal, 24 Sept. 1890, in *Minutes*; Richards Diary, 24 Sept. 1890, in *Minutes*; Cannon Diary, 24 Sept. 1890, in *Minutes*; Marriner W. Merrill Diary, 24 Sept. 1890, in *Minutes*; Woodruff Diary 25 Sept. 1890; Quinn, *Solemn Covenant*, 130-132; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 139-140.

<sup>112</sup> Wilford Woodruff, "Official Declaration," 24 Sept. 1890, in *Messages Vol 3*, 192-193.

published the Manifesto, the Quorum and First Presidency met nearly every day until October's General Conference. Grant habitually wrote short diary entries because he did not enjoy writing, but his entries from September 30 to October 6 fill six pages. The entries detailed how the Quorum reconciled with the Manifesto, and each apostle affirmed the Manifesto was the Lord's will. In the same meetings, however, several apostles said they would continue living with their plural wives.<sup>113</sup> The leaders reframed the Manifesto in a way that allowed them to live the way they wished. According to at least two apostles present, the Manifesto was "simply the announcement to the world of what we were already doing," an interesting evaluation given they covertly advised Saints to travel to Mexico to enter plural marriage. During October's General Conference, LDS members accepted Woodruff's Manifesto unanimously, though several LDS diaries admit that a number of Saints chose to abstain from voting rather than to vote against the Manifesto.<sup>114</sup>

### **Public Abandonment of Polygamy**

Although the Church stopped preaching polygamy after the Manifesto, between 1890 and 1910, the LDS Church granted at least 262 plural marriages to at least 220 different men. Most marriages took place in Mexico, but they also occurred in the United States and Canada. Mormons who practiced polygamy after 1890 were not on the fringe of acceptable LDS society; of the 220 men, 60% were LDS leaders in a range of capacities. Even President Woodruff married his sixth wife seven years after he published the Manifesto. The marriages were, of course, extremely covert, so finding

---

<sup>113</sup> Grant Diary, 30 Sept. 1890; Richards Diary, 30 Sept. 1890, in *Minutes*.

<sup>114</sup> Woodruff, "Official Declaration," 6 Oct. 1890, in *Messages Vol 3*, 194-195; Grant Diary 6 Oct. 1890; Merrill Diary, 6 Oct. 1890, in *Minutes*; Hardy, *In Solemn Covenant*, 136-137.

extant evidence of every LDS approved plural marriage is difficult. After Hardy compiled his own list in 1992, he surmised, “the figure of 250 could easily be surpassed.”<sup>115</sup>

Leaders claimed that the Church dutifully left polygamy in the past while the same leaders sanctioned polygamous marriages. For instance, leaders reframed the 1843 plural marriage revelation to mean eternal marriage, or a marriage union that continued after death. Polygamy, they argued, was a small part of the larger revelation, minimizing its role in the LDS Church from 1843-1890. The Church also used silence as another method to abandon polygamy. Sermons in General Conference from 1894 to 1917 rarely discussed plural marriage except in cases where the Church refuted a scandal. Finally, LDS leaders framed nineteenth century persecution as resulting from unfounded Gentile bigotry. By omitting plural marriage from the narrative, the Church built a static and sacralized history: nineteenth-century Saints temporarily practiced polygamy, and Woodruff’s Manifesto ended the practice. Gentiles persecuted the Saints because the Saints were God’s people. Their distaste for the Saints did not directly target polygamy.

LDS leaders kept a united front for the Manifesto to ease the transition. In an 1891 interview with a non-Mormon newspaper, Cannon and Woodruff assured the public that, to their knowledge, LDS members did not practice polygamy. If an LDS member hypothetically entered plural marriage, “he would be considered a wrongdoer.” By the time of the interview, the First Presidency permitted seven LDS members to travel to Mexico to marry additional wives. Four months after their interview with

---

<sup>115</sup> Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II.

the *Salt Lake Times*, the First Presidency again denied evidence in a Utah Commission Report that found signs of new plural marriages.<sup>116</sup>

Wilford Woodruff's sermons in two different Stakes in 1891 illustrated the transition away from polygamy was more difficult than the united front presented. During the sermon, he stated he received a revelation that Saints were "sorely tried in their hearts" because the Church abruptly ended their support of polygamous marriage. At the end of the sermon, he rebuked any doubting Saints, "stop murmuring and complaining at the providence of God. Trust in God. Do your duty."<sup>117</sup>

In 1892, George Q. Cannon & Sons Co. published a *History of Utah* written by Orson F. Whitney. It contained an LDS perspective of their own history, an essential viewpoint when most histories about the Saints at the time were from non-Mormon perspectives. However, the misconstructions within Whitney's work revealed he wrote the history so that his patron, the LDS Church, remained an infallible protagonist. The summer before Woodruff's Manifesto, LDS leaders discussed the need for "a true history of Utah and her people" to counter the Gentile perspective. About three weeks later, they organized a search committee for a suitable author. LDS authorities initiated the project, so the author needed to present a history that earned their approval. They settled on Bishop Orson F. Whitney and committed to buying 200 copies of his book for \$6000. At the end of 1890, the First Presidency signed a letter indicating they would

---

<sup>116</sup> "Presidents Woodruff and Cannon on Politics" 23 June 1891, in *Messages Vol 3*, 214-216; Quinn, "New Plural Marriages," 57, Hardy, *In Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II; "Declaration," 6 Oct. 1891 in *Messages*, 219.

<sup>117</sup> Woodruff, "Remarks," 1 Nov. 1891, in *Messages Vol 3*, 225-228.

recommend the history to their people.<sup>118</sup> Thanks to the First Presidency, Whitney secured a publisher and an institution willing to mass order his book before he wrote it.

The First Presidency maintained their support of *A History of Utah* after Cannon & Sons Co. published it in 1892. They gifted Whitney's book, a narrative that framed Church leaders as law-abiding Americans hunted by the government, to at least two noted non-member visitors in 1899.<sup>119</sup> By 1899, the LDS Church covertly authorized over one hundred plural marriages. The need to keep the Church infallible required Whitney to repeat the misconstructions LDS leaders crafted over the course of the nineteenth century.

Whitney's interpretation of Joseph Smith's arrest reflected the Church's misconstructions. According to scholarly interpretation, the state arrested Joseph Smith after he ordered the destruction of a printing press that printed the *Nauvoo Expositor*. Because it published evidence about Smith's plural marriages, it threatened his autocratic rule in the city. In Whitney's *History of Utah*, the perspective differs radically. His perspective detailed that the *Expositor* published "filthy scandals" and that it inspired the Nauvoo Council to vote nearly unanimously that the paper caused a "public nuisance." The dissenting vote belonged to one non-member. Smith was a member of the council and Nauvoo's mayor, so he ordered the printing press's destruction as part of the Council's consensus. The state illegally demanded Smith's arrest, and he turned himself in willingly.<sup>120</sup> Whitney's narrative did not mention plural marriage, one of the root causes of the conflict. His perspective also failed to mention

---

<sup>118</sup> James E Talmadge Diary, 6 June 1890, in *Minutes*; Richards Diary, 30 June 1890, in *Minutes*; Woodruff Diary, 22 July 1890; Woodruff Diary, 21 Nov. 1890.

<sup>119</sup> Journal History, 3 April 1899, 24 Nov. 1899 in *Minutes*; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II.

<sup>120</sup> Orson F. Whitney, *A History of Utah* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Co: 1892), 225-227.

Smith's authoritative powers that expanded far beyond the typical powers of a town mayor. Nevertheless, Whitney's interpretation became part of the Church's sacralized history. In a Church-owned history database, a web-article described the events leading to Smith's death. It stated a "conflict that had simmered for years came to a boil when Joseph and the city council ordered the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* press."<sup>121</sup> The database referenced that the *Expositor* opposed plural marriage, but the article did not attribute plural marriage as one of the root causes for the simmering conflict.

To distance the Church from plural marriage, it was necessary to distance Joseph Smith from it, as well. Through sacralizing Smith's life and, more importantly, his death, the LDS Church removed polygamy from Smith's story, even though Smith maintained plural marriage as a critical part of his life from 1833 to his death in 1844. In the April session of the 1894 General Conference, President Woodruff preached about Joseph Smith's divine revelatory powers. The power from God enabled Joseph Smith to establish the Church before "he was martyred for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ." The phrase simplified his death by avoiding the political factors that contributed to his murder. Even though the events that led to Smith's death related to larger political conflicts, the tale of his martyrdom safely placed Smith's living memory in the religious realm. Eleven years later at an event commemorating Joseph Smith's birth, three different discourses given by LDS authorities used the phrase, "Joseph Smith sealed his testimony with his blood." The same phrase appeared on a monument to Joseph Smith that the Church dedicated in 1906. Carving the phrase into the monument's stone suggested the phrase was an integral component of

---

<sup>121</sup> "Who Killed Joseph Smith?" accessed 28 Sept. 2023, <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/museum/museum-treasures-powder-horn?lang=eng>.

sacralizing the Church's first prophet. In 2023, the LDS Church's contemporary history page contained a similar phrase: "Martyred for the Cause of Christ, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum sealed their work with their blood."<sup>122</sup> The phrase preserved throughout the twentieth century, displaying how a sacralized narrative about Smith's death occurred.

The Church published more perspectives that aided the sacralization process. In 1914, Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson published a chronological timeline of noteworthy LDS events. Impressively thorough and indicative of a decades-long intensive project, the timeline displayed Jenson's perception of noteworthy events. When Gentiles arrested or otherwise harassed Saints for their religious beliefs, Jenson added it to his timeline. For example, when one LDS leader, Daniel H. Wells, returned home after an alleged contempt of court charge, "there was a giant demonstration in his honor."<sup>123</sup> Placing the celebration in the timeline memorialized the community response which commemorated Wells's wrongful arrest. The LDS Church fought against anti-polygamy laws. The fight placed their people in dangerous situations during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the Church needed unity against persecution to serve as a critical part of LDS identity. Knowingly or not, Jenson aided the sacralization process with his timeline.

General Conference sermons also helped minimize plural marriage's significance to nineteenth-century Saints. From 1894 to 1917, plural marriage hardly surfaced; most speakers during General Conference did not mention plural marriage at

---

<sup>122</sup> "The Prophet's Legacy," accessed 28 Sept. 2023, <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/the-prophets-legacy?lang=eng>.

<sup>123</sup> Andrew Jenson, *A Record of Important Events* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News: 1914), 103.

all. Alternatively, most conferences featured sermons about eternal marriage. In April 1898's opening address, President George Q. Cannon implicitly referenced plural marriage when he highlighted persecution the Saints suffered in the past. He celebrated the better treatment Saints enjoyed now and acknowledged the hand of God as the sole cause of the change.<sup>124</sup> Even though President Woodruff proclaimed his Manifesto less than eight years prior, Cannon's reference kept plural marriage firmly rooted in the past, even as leaders continued to sanction plural marriage.

Between 1898 and 1904, only one speaker referred to polygamy in General Conference. A practicing polygamist and Wilford Woodruff's son, Abraham Woodruff mentioned polygamy at the April and October 1900 conference. In both instances, he identified why Gentiles opposed plural marriage: Gentiles opposed God's principles and, more specifically, large families.<sup>125</sup> Most American Protestants believed polygamy morally degraded an enlightened and free Western Civilization. There is no evidence that the American mainstream rejected plural marriage because the relationship begat too many children. In fact, plural wives tended to have the less children than monogamous wives. Also, although this would certainly mean the father would have more children than average, a plural wife tended to have her own home separate from other wives, where she raised her children as her own family unit.<sup>126</sup>

In 1907's conference, B.H. Roberts stated that while the Saints resided in Missouri in the 1830s, "no complaints were made on either score" that related to plural

---

<sup>124</sup> *Sixty-Eighth Annual Conference*, 5.

<sup>125</sup> *Seventieth Annual Conference*, 39; *Seventy-First Semi-Annual Conference*, 55.

<sup>126</sup> Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987): 35-36.



marriage.<sup>127</sup> Roberts's claim was baseless. Smith's rumors about extramarital relations emerged in Missouri. The same rumors resulted in Oliver Cowdrey's excommunication. The misleading and oversimplified explanations erased polygamy's central role in the LDS Church and federal government's battle over political dominance. Consequently, Woodruff and Roberts contributed to the sacralization of polygamy.

Finally, the LDS Church used eternal marriage to minimize polygamy's centrality to the gospel. In 1901, Abraham Woodruff taught about marriage—again. This time, however, he preached that celestial (but monogamous) marriage was one of the most vital and important principles of the religion. At the same time, he privately and enthusiastically upheld plural marriage, alongside Joseph F. Smith and John W. Taylor, as the only way to earn the highest level of exaltation.<sup>128</sup> The contradiction revealed the higher-ranking members of the Church operated under different privileges, rules, and beliefs than LDS laity.

Nonetheless, LDS leaders urged the importance of monogamous, eternal marriage throughout the beginning of the twentieth century. In the April 1917 session of conference, a Stake president taught that Doctrine and Covenants section 132 did not refer exclusively to plural marriage, as originally supposed, but that it “refer[ed] to the eternal or celestial order of marriage, including the plurality of wives, which has been done away.”<sup>129</sup> The Church encouraged that plural marriage had “been done away” by adding Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1908.<sup>130</sup> About

---

<sup>127</sup> *Seventy-Seventh Annual Conference*, 117-118.

<sup>128</sup> *Seventy-Second Semi-Annual Conference*, 54; Abraham Owen Woodruff Diary, 6 Jan. 1901, in *Minutes*; Angus M. Cannon, 6 Jan. 1902, in *Minutes*.

<sup>129</sup> *Eighty-Seventh Annual Conference*, 79-80. Celestial marriage used to exclusively refer to plural marriage in the nineteenth century. See Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 297-298.

<sup>130</sup> Hardy, *In Solemn Covenant*, 297.

twenty-five years passed since the Manifesto, and within those twenty-five years, LDS leaders spoke about plural marriage during General Conference six times. They discussed eternal marriage, on the other hand, over two dozen times. Through dismissing plural marriage as a minor part of the more important principle—celestial marriage—polygamy remained in the past of the Saints’ historical imagination.

### **Statehood, Smoot, and Scapegoats**

Congress admitted Utah into the Union in 1896 after six unsuccessful attempts. Utah now possessed more authority over its laws and could send representatives to Congress. As a result, post-Manifesto polygamous marriages increased from four instances in 1895 to over fifteen instances in 1897. The trend continued upwards. In 1903, LDS leaders granted forty new polygamous marriages. The trend indicated that LDS leaders felt safer granting plural marriages after they secured statehood.

Despite the Church’s feeling of security, Congress still mistrusted the Church. In 1898, Congress barred polygamist B.H. Roberts from securing a congressional seat due to his polygamist relationships. In 1902, apostle Reed Smoot was elected to serve as the next U.S. Senator. Reed Smoot secured Prophet Joseph F. Smith’s approval before he ran. Despite hesitancy from the Quorum, Joseph F. Smith believed it was the Lord’s will for Smoot to serve as a senator.<sup>131</sup> In contrast with Roberts, Smoot was a monogamist. Smoot contrasted in another significant way—Smoot was a member of the highest-ranking group in the LDS Church. As a result, Congress intended to prevent Smoot from serving in his elected position. The resulting conflict seriously endangered

---

<sup>131</sup> AO Woodruff Diary, 15 Jan. 1902, 5-6 Feb. 1902, in *Minutes*; Hardy, *In Solemn Covenant*, 251.

the Church's temporal salvation, and it required its leaders to use polygamous members as scapegoats.

An Associated Press interview with Joseph F. Smith highlighted popular concerns as well as the Church's strategy regarding Smoot's candidacy. The first question in the interview inquired whether the Church permitted plural marriage. Smith definitively answered, "Certainly not. The Church does not perform or sanction or authorize marriage in any form that is contrary to the laws of the land." By the time of the interview, the Church had performed, sanctioned, and authorized nearly 200 new plural marriages since 1890. Smith also downplayed the Church's role in local political affairs, stating that Smoot was merely engaging in "temporal pursuits" entirely separate from his Church leadership position.<sup>132</sup> However, Smoot only ran after he secured permission from Smith, an ardent Republican. For context, five years earlier, Smith rebuked another apostle for not seeking First Presidency approval to run as a Democratic candidate.<sup>133</sup> Smith's answers communicated that participation in the Quorum and First Presidency was wholly separate from secular affairs, one misconception among many in the Associated Press interview. Just four days after the interview, the First Presidency and Apostles met in the Salt Lake City Temple to strategize how to amend Idaho's constitution. They decided that the Church's attorney would craft a bill and "put into the hands of a friendly Gentile."<sup>134</sup> The LDS Church's strategy remained unchanged—creating misconstructions regarding polygamy was justifiable to protect the Church and its leaders.

---

<sup>132</sup> Journal History, 1 Dec. 1902, in *Minutes*.

<sup>133</sup> Michael Quinn, *Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 350-351.

<sup>134</sup> Journal History, 5 Dec. 1902, in *Minutes*.

In 1902, apostle Abraham Woodruff wrote to Heber J. Grant about the negative attention, “it will be a miracle if some very serious trouble does not follow.” Woodruff married another wife ten years after the Manifesto. He added, “I wish I could talk to you...and say some things it might not be wisdom to write,” revealing the dread and anxiety he felt.<sup>135</sup> Though not explicitly stated, it is not unreasonable to conclude Woodruff was concerned the hearing would reveal the hundreds of polygamous marriages the Church granted after 1890.

Smoot began senatorial duties in March 1903, but the hearing loomed over the Church’s heads.<sup>136</sup> LDS leaders frequently discussed reports which claimed the Church sanctioned new polygamous marriages, adding fuel to the country’s belief that Smoot’s election required a congressional hearing. John W. Taylor admitted he “had several applications to marry people in plural marriage, but had refused,” indicating that Taylor believed he possessed the authority to grant plural marriage. Seven other apostles believed similarly; eight apostles granted plural marriages between 1890 and 1909. In addition, Taylor entered plural marriage alongside nine other apostles and First Presidency members within the same period.<sup>137</sup>

The congressional hearing for Smoot began in January 1904. The abridger of Smoot’s diary classified the hearing “as much a public trial of the Mormon church as it was of Smoot.” Two months into the hearing, President Smith received a subpoena to appear before the investigating committee.<sup>138</sup> While under oath, Smith admitted he

---

<sup>135</sup> Abraham Owen Woodruff to Heber J Grant, 6 Dec. 1902, in *Minutes*.

<sup>136</sup> *Journal History*, 4-6 March 1903, in *Minutes*.

<sup>137</sup> *Minutes*, 5 Jan. 1904, in *Minutes*; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Table 2 and 3.

<sup>138</sup> Harvard S. Heath, *Diaries of Reed Smoot* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), xxvii; L. John Nuttall Diary, 24 Feb. 1904, in *Minutes*; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 164.

continued to cohabit with all five of his wives. He denied he had any knowledge of other leaders practicing polygamy, despite transparent evidence that he did possess such knowledge. To reduce the Church's responsibility in post-Manifesto plural marriages, he minimized his role as prophet in a similar way Cannon had in the 1890 *Tribune* article. Indeed, Abraham Woodruff's 1902 worries seemed prophetic. The hearing "left Mormonism never so much disliked in its history."<sup>139</sup> Joseph F. Smith's testimony was one among many that revealed LDS leaders knowingly granted plural marriages while publicly proclaiming they adhered to U.S. law.

The Church leaders' duplicity led to the hearing's outcome. In 1906, the hearing's committee found Smoot unfit to serve as senator because he was part of the leadership body that encouraged deception. However, the Senate failed to secure enough votes to remove Smoot from his seat. Optimistically, apostle George F. Richards wrote, "the church is vindicated at least."<sup>140</sup> For the LDS Church, though, Smoot's seat retention was a small victory. The public still held the Church in low regard. Consequently, President Smith simultaneously used Joseph Smith's living memory and the abandonment of polygamy to ensure LDS members appeared American to the American mainstream.

President Smith first attempted to regain credibility by addressing plural marriage in April's 1905 session of General Conference. LDS authorities avoided discussing the doctrine during General Conference after 1891, adding to the significance of Smith's declaration. Using a platform meant to communicate with every LDS member, Smith declared "no such marriages have been solemnized with the

---

<sup>139</sup> Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 252-253.

<sup>140</sup>George F. Richards Diary, 20 Feb. 1907, in *Minutes*.

sanction, consent or knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” He threatened any member deviating from the 1890 Manifesto with excommunication. Following his declaration, the conference attendees affirmed the proclamation with their unanimous vote.<sup>141</sup> This proclamation ended Church sanctioned plural marriage, even in Mexico. Six months later, apostles John W. Young and Matthias Cowley rendered their resignations for being “out of harmony” with the LDS Church over the doctrine of plural marriage. Although in 1901 Smith joined John W. Young in criticizing monogamous marriage as a “doctrine of Devils,” Smith accepted both resignations.<sup>142</sup> Nine apostles married additional wives between 1890 and 1905, but Young and Cowley served as sacrificial lambs to show how the Church punished their transgressors. Both men believed the Church would reinstate their positions when the scandal calmed. They were sorely disappointed. The LDS Church excommunicated Young and Cowley in 1911.<sup>143</sup>

After the excommunications, Joseph F. Smith reassured the world in yet another General Conference sermon, “there isn’t a man today in the Church, or anywhere else...who has the authority to solemnize a plural marriage.” The next day, the First Presidency issued a statement, using the same linguistic strategies the First Presidency and Quorum used since 1887. The First Presidency explained that individuals who traveled to Mexico to practice plural marriage misinterpreted Woodruff’s 1890 Manifesto. As such, they did not have Church approval to enter plural marriage. They accused members and leaders of “construct[ing] the language” of the Manifesto to suit

---

<sup>141</sup> *Seventy-Fourth Annual Conference*, 76.

<sup>142</sup> John W. Taylor to Council of Twelve Apostles, 28 Oct. 1905 in *Minutes*; Matthias F. Cowley to Council of Twelve Apostles, 28 Oct 1905, in *Minutes*. 6 Jan. 1891 Abraham Woodruff Diary, in *Minutes*.

<sup>143</sup> *Minutes*, 28 March 1911, in *Minutes*.

their personal desires.<sup>144</sup> The interpretation the First Presidency condemned in this 1911 announcement was the exact interpretation LDS leaders had when they sent Saints across the border to marry in secret from 1890 to 1905. In fact, it was the very interpretation of most apostles in the September and October 1890 meetings about the Manifesto shortly after its publication. But to appear that the Church did their due diligence, they blamed individuals within the Church for misinterpreting a document using their own free will. The First Presidency and Quorum ignored how the hierarchal structure of the Church played a central role when LDS leaders used their authority to sanction marriages after Woodruff's Manifesto.

Joseph F. Smith also continued the Church's sanitizing of Joseph Smith's living memory to distance the Church from polygamy. 1906 marked the centennial anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth. To commemorate the event, President Smith led a party of about fifty people on a cross-country trip which celebrated Joseph Smith's legacy. They made stops in Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Illinois. From the mid-nineteenth century to the start of the twentieth century, LDS leaders typically acknowledged two major anniversary church celebrations: the day the Saints reached the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 and the establishment of the LDS Church in 1830. Celebrating Joseph Smith's birthday with a tour that left Utah to commemorate events outside its borders indicated a shift about how Saints remembered their past. No longer did Saints need to perceive themselves as separate from the rest of the United States. Throughout the trip, President Smith and his entourage inspired as little controversy as possible and focused on American unity. For example, the party was comprised of

---

<sup>144</sup> *Eighty-First Annual Conference*, 8, 128-129.

monogamous members, apart from Joseph F. Smith. While other LDS leaders brought their wives, Smith did not bring any of his wives.<sup>145</sup> In addition, their tour did not stop in Nauvoo, Illinois, the center of polygamous scandals in the eastern United States. As an added precaution, their stop in Illinois was in a Church-owned building in Chicago with a predominately LDS audience. In contrast, in other locations of their tour, they held services in buildings or cities bearing American or LDS historical significance.<sup>146</sup>

Leaders also gave sermons that highlighted their faith's American characteristics. Apostle Francis M. Lyman established a connection between America's founding generation and the first generation of Saints: "For that [religious liberty] we went west. For that, your fathers and our fathers came west." When the tour stopped in Boston, George Albert Smith asserted that Mormons viewed America as "a promised land."<sup>147</sup> Instead of a peculiar people set apart from the Gentiles, the Saints were as American as any Protestant in the United States.

Discussions about LDS doctrine echoed the same central message. LDS leaders drew comparisons to Protestant faiths when they discussed their doctrine on the tour. Lyman professed, "we are all Christians, and we want to be saved." President Joseph F. Smith said that, along with the bible, the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's revelations were instances where God communicated with man. When he gave an example of Smith's revelations, he echoed the messaging of recent General Conference sermons. The revelation on plural marriage had been rebranded as a revelation on

---

<sup>145</sup> Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 111.

<sup>146</sup> *Proceedings at the Dedication of Joseph Smith Memorial Monument* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 1906) 9, 38, 54, 72.

<sup>147</sup> *Proceedings*, 17, 54-55.



eternal marriage.<sup>148</sup> Considering the importance of marriage and family to mainstream American Protestantism, the language shift marked that LDS authorities knew how to subtly transition their rhetoric to fit in with other Protestant faiths.

## **Conclusion**

From 1887 to 1917, the principle of plural marriage underwent significant changes, reflecting the flexibility of the doctrine when wielded by sanctioned LDS authority. LDS leaders used polygamy in a multitude of ways because they believed it ensured the Church's temporal salvation. Because they believed their strategies were the Lord's will, they felt justified to use polygamy as a bargaining chip in the political arena as well as an indicator of elite membership. Instead of duplicitous, LDS members who practiced plural marriage saw it as a sacred privilege. When the nation required the Church to keep their word about punishing members for practicing polygamy after 1890, they used polygamous leaders as scapegoats. The same leaders that celebrated polygamy's persistence in secret excommunicated the leaders that the federal government caught red-handed.

To cement the image that the LDS Church abandoned polygamy immediately after Woodruff's Manifesto, they emphasized eternal marriage, reframing the 1843 plural marriage revelation. In public, they seldom discussed polygamy except to repeatedly assert the LDS Church adhered to the laws of the land. LDS leaders highlighted the American characteristics of the LDS faith and removed polygamy from Joseph Smith's living memory to ease their church back into the mainstream. Absent from the sacralized narrative was the centrality of plural marriage to nineteenth century

---

<sup>148</sup> *Proceedings*, 17, 40.

LDS members. As the twentieth century progressed, Joseph F. Smith used his position of authority, his connections, and the pulpit to Americanize his Church in order to achieve the larger goal of securing the Church's temporal salvation.

### Chapter 3: Word of Wisdom, Prohibition, and Reed Smoot

*“We, as a people, should have been the first to lead this great reform.”*

Amidst Reed Smoot’s congressional hearing, the United States’ prohibition movement gained momentum. As bureaucratic prohibition organizations like the Anti-Saloon League pressured legislatures to enact dry laws in states across the Union, Joseph F. Smith revealed that the Church sanctioned polygamy after Woodruff’s Manifesto.<sup>149</sup> Like other Protestant branches, the Church taught temperance-inspired doctrine. Until Woodruff’s Manifesto, however, plural marriage was the faith’s main tenet. In the meantime, LDS leaders labeled their temperance doctrine, the Word of Wisdom, as optional. Once LDS leaders removed polygamy as a core LDS belief, the Word of Wisdom helped fill the void polygamy left behind. George Q. Cannon aptly stated, “our children should be brought up to be a new generation...that there will not be a tea drinker, a coffee drinker, a tobacco user, a liquor or beer drinker.”<sup>150</sup> The Word of Wisdom corresponded well with prohibition, so the doctrine showcased commonalities between the LDS faith and other American Protestant faiths. As a result, LDS leaders used the Word of Wisdom to secure the Church’s temporal salvation from 1906 to 1917.

Initially, Utah followed similar trends as other states that passed state-wide prohibition laws. At the turn of the twentieth century, LDS leaders diminished polygamy’s role in the faith and simultaneously increased emphasis on the Word of Wisdom. By 1908, LDS leaders openly declared their support for prohibition laws.

---

<sup>149</sup> Susan Harding, “American Protestant Moralism and the Secular Imagination: From Temperance to Moral Majority,” *Social Research* 76 no. 4 (Winter 2009): 1291-1294.

<sup>150</sup> *Sixty-Eighth Annual Conference*, 99.

However, Utah placed twenty-fourth in the country's race to ban intoxicating beverages. Utah did not pass a state ban on alcohol until 1917, mere months before Congress proposed the Eighteenth Amendment. Ardent prohibitionist Heber J. Grant lamented in 1916, "we, as a people, should have been the first to lead this great reform."<sup>151</sup>

To Grant's great frustration, the LDS Church did not lead the reform. Instead, the Church entered, left, and then rejoined the movement between 1908 and 1917. An ardent Republican, President Joseph F. Smith prevented public LDS leader support of prohibition until it aligned with U.S. senator and apostle Reed Smoot's political interests. As a result, all prohibition talks in public sermons ceased after October 1908.<sup>152</sup> They remained quiet as Utah's legislature passed a local-option prohibition bill in 1911. Church leaders waited until 1915 to emerge from the woodwork and encourage their members to vote for the prohibition ticket, and the outcome created a historic event. Prohibitionist Simon Bamberger won the 1916 gubernatorial election by a landslide. The Republican party lost their sixteen-year-long stronghold in Utah to the Democratic party.<sup>153</sup> Bamberger was the first Democrat and the first Jewish person to serve as Utah's governor. Making good on his campaign promises, Bamberger signed a statewide dry bill into law in February 1917.

Mormon authorities abandoned their public support of prohibition for political expediency from 1909-1915 as part of Joseph F. Smith's larger strategy to join the

---

<sup>151</sup> Heber J. Grant, "Prohibition," *The Young Women's Journal* 27, no. 7 (July 1916): 402.

<sup>152</sup> Brent G. Thompson, "Standing Between Two Fires: Mormons and Prohibition, 1908-1917," *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 44.

<sup>153</sup> Allan Kent Powell, "Elections in the State of Utah," in *Utah History Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), digitized by the Utah Educational Network.

American mainstream. Temporal salvation required American acceptance of the Church. After decades of basking in Gentile rejection because it signaled that they were God's people, LDS leaders left that identity in the nineteenth century and marched towards conformity. Senator and apostle Reed Smoot played a significant role in the Church's plan to enter the mainstream because his position allowed him to serve as an intermediary between the Church and the Gentile world. His ability to play politician and clergyman enabled him and Joseph F. Smith to project that the Church was as American as any other American branch of Christianity. As Smoot's prominence in the Senate rose, Smith found him irreplaceable. Thus, when Smoot worried the LDS Church's open support of the prohibition movement would spark anti-Mormon sentiment in 1909, Smith prevented prohibition messages from reaching the pulpit. After the state reelected Smoot in 1914, he believed the danger had passed. Consequently, LDS leaders once again urged their members to vote for the prohibition ticket as if the five-year radio silence never happened. Under the direction of Smith and Smoot, the Church influenced the political arena when it suited their best interests. The Church abandoned polygamy in the twentieth century, but they did not abandon their willingness to wield their doctrines as valuable tools to secure a desirable outcome. Mapping the Word of Wisdom's development from the nineteenth into the twentieth century showcases how, like plural marriage, LDS leaders used it to secure the Church's temporal salvation.

### **Optional Temperance to Outspoken Prohibition**

Until the twentieth century, LDS leaders struggled to standardize their interpretation of the Word of Wisdom. In contrast, when leaders wrote and spoke about

polygamy in the nineteenth century, they rehearsed the same interpretation—polygamy ensured the highest degree of salvation, avoiding polygamy led to damnation, and polygamy was the most important of Joseph Smith’s revelations. With the Word of Wisdom, apostles’ perspectives differed wildly.

Amid Ohio’s temperance movement in the 1830s, Joseph Smith received a revelation about dietary habits that included abstaining from “strong drink,” interpreted as alcoholic beverages.<sup>154</sup> Afterward, LDS leaders debated the doctrine’s electiveness. For example, an 1854 children's catechism taught that the Word of Wisdom “was not sent by commandment.”<sup>155</sup> George Q. Cannon republished the catechism in 1872, reflecting one LDS leaders perspective of the Word of Wisdom. Instructions for regional church leaders also illustrated the doctrine’s elective nature. In 1877, the First Presidency advised leaders to encourage members to avoid drunkenness. Repeat offenses, however, warranted strict intervention by the church court.<sup>156</sup> The same leaders who threatened damnation if their people did not practice polygamy seemed more tolerant of occasional excessive drinking. Indeed, President Woodruff noted that he and his apostles “have all more or less been negligent” in following the Word of Wisdom.<sup>157</sup> Leaders permitted an occasional lapse in judgment, though they discouraged drinking habitually. On the other hand, Heber J. Grant and Francis M. Lyman interpreted the Word of Wisdom as less elective. Lyman complained in 1894 that other leaders do “not seem to look upon it so seriously as some of us do.” In 1889,

---

<sup>154</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants*, 89:1-21; *Permanent Temperance Documents of the American Temperance Society, Volume I* (Boston: Seth Bliss and Perkins, 1835), 39, 345 in Welcome Collection.

<sup>155</sup> John Jacques. *Catechism for Children: Exhibiting the Prominent Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Liverpool: F.D. Richards, 1854), 61.

<sup>156</sup> Brigham Young, John W. Young and Daniel H. Wells to Beloved Saints, *Circular of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 11 July 1877, 1-2.

<sup>157</sup> Minutes, 28 Sept. 1883, in *Minutes*.

Grant thought only men adhering to the Word of Wisdom qualified for an apostleship. In sharp contrast, seven years prior, President Taylor stated that only men in polygamous marriages qualified for an apostleship.<sup>158</sup>

As the nineteenth century closed, the First Presidency and Quorum still debated how to enforce the Word of Wisdom. In one meeting, they failed to reach a unified decision. They advised, instead, that local leaders use “the direction of the Spirit” to enforce the Word of Wisdom. The debate’s tone reflected leaders engaged in a philosophical discussion rather than in an argument with high stakes.<sup>159</sup> The meeting also revealed two developments. First, the variety of interpretations caused an inability for leaders to compromise. Second, the leaders felt no urgency to standardize how the Church practiced the Word of Wisdom. The Church did not qualify the Word of Wisdom as an essential doctrine, a characteristic it did not share with the doctrine of plural marriage in the nineteenth century.

However, the Word of Wisdom and plural marriage shared one commonality—LDS leaders understood how the doctrines impacted political developments. When LDS leaders discussed strategies to ensure statehood in the state’s seventh attempt, apostle Francis M. Lyman considered the political implications of adding a prohibition measure to the proposed constitution. He warned that demanding prohibition “would get in the way of statehood.”<sup>160</sup> Congress still mistrusted the Church, so although Utah would approve a prohibition measure, Lyman worried that Congress might interpret the prohibition measure as evidence that the LDS Church maintained control of moral

---

<sup>158</sup> Francis M. Lyman, 18 Oct. 1894; Grant Diary, 26 Sept. 1889; Minutes, 14 Oct. 1882, in *Minutes*.

<sup>159</sup> Journal History, 5 May 1898, in *Minutes*.

<sup>160</sup> Francis M. Lyman Diary, 21 March 1895, in *Minutes*.

authority in the state and, thus, deny the bid. Five years after Woodruff's Manifesto, Lyman concluded the best path to statehood involved as little controversy as possible. As such, Utah entered the Union in 1896 without a prohibition provision but with a provision permanently outlawing polygamy.<sup>161</sup> Lyman's perspective reflected how LDS leaders still considered the political sphere in determining how LDS leaders led their people.

LDS leaders solidified their interpretation of the Word of Wisdom between 1898 and 1909, shortly after securing statehood and eight years after Woodruff's Manifesto. Gradually, they unified their stance on temperance into a position that followed most Protestant sects in the United States—prohibition was a logical solution that eliminated the country's social ills.

At the start of the twentieth century, instructions from the First Presidency regarding the Word of Wisdom reflected mistrust towards non-member temperance organizations. In a 1902 letter to a Brigham Young Academy faculty member, they advised him to deny a request from the Women's Christian Temperance Union to join their coalition as a committee member. The WCTU offered the position because they wanted LDS support in encouraging Provo, Utah's public schools to "promote temperance societies among the children." The First Presidency stated that although temperance was a "part of our religion," the WCTU wanted to use temperance societies to indoctrinate their children and lead them away from "the faith of their fathers."<sup>162</sup> The leaders acknowledged that the Church's beliefs correlated with temperance, but the mistrust of non-member institutions remained powerful enough to prevent joint

---

<sup>161</sup> Utah State Constitution, Article XXIV, Section 2.

<sup>162</sup> First Presidency to Joseph B. Keeler, 30 Oct. 1902, in *Minutes*.



coordination efforts. The letter reflected how temperance ideas were developing and spreading in the LDS Church, but it was not motivated by a desire to integrate with other temperance groups.

In 1903, LDS leaders considered administering the sacrament with water rather than with wine but again deferred until a later time when they might reach a consensus. By 1906, they reached a consensus and permanently transitioned to using water in their sacrament service.<sup>163</sup> The change marked a public transition towards strict temperance. Even in a religious service, the Church did not permit alcohol. The timing of the outward display of temperance bears significance. A year earlier, Joseph F. Smith admitted that the Church granted plural marriages after Woodruff's Manifesto as a witness in Smoot's congressional hearing. The same year, he assured in General Conference that the Church did not sanction plural marriage, and he accepted the resignations of two polygamous apostles. The events of 1905 destroyed the Church's image as a virtuous people. To repair their identities, the Church needed a visual display that emphasized purity of character. The Word of Wisdom helped craft that image.

During the 1906 tour that celebrated Joseph Smith's centennial birthday, Joseph F. Smith urged LDS missionaries to abstain from "intoxication, [and] the use of tobacco... Why? Because it was revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith that tobacco was not for man. It is a poison."<sup>164</sup> Smith's sermon illustrated the Word of Wisdom found sturdier ground in the gospel. The reasoning for following the Word of Wisdom resembled the reasoning why Saints practiced plural marriage—because Joseph Smith

---

<sup>163</sup> Minutes, 7 Jan. 1903, in *Minutes*; Thomas Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 no. 3 (Autumn, 1981): 79.

<sup>164</sup> *Proceedings*, 84-85.

revealed it. Linking the Word of Wisdom to Joseph Smith increased the Word of Wisdom's significance. Just as members entered plural marriage because they believed in Smith's divine revelations, the Saints adhered to the Word of Wisdom.

The most dramatic show of absolute temperance and prohibition occurred during the 1908 General Conferences, sixteen months after the centennial celebration tour. In April's conference, five speakers explicitly mentioned prohibition's popularity, and they affirmed their support of laws prohibiting saloon presence in the state. Nine different sermons encouraged members to strictly follow the Word of Wisdom. Prophet Joseph F. Smith and the president of the Quorum gave two of the nine sermons, cementing the conference's theme. The presence of prohibition and the Word of Wisdom was surprising, especially when comparing the theme with earlier conferences. Between 1900 and 1906, leaders spoke about prohibition one time. In the same date range, LDS leaders mentioned the Word of Wisdom less than two times per conference.<sup>165</sup> The sharp increase in prohibition advocacy in 1908 did not go unnoticed; The *Salt Lake Tribune* published an uncharacteristically moderate front-page article detailing prohibition's focus in April's conference.<sup>166</sup> The article summarized the conference without sensationalizing LDS power. The *Tribune* typically published negative press about the Church; it regularly published evidence of LDS members practicing plural marriage in the early twentieth century, for instance.<sup>167</sup> The *Tribune's* neutral tone illustrated the paper's tilt towards the temperance movement as well as their support of the Church's stance on the movement.

---

<sup>165</sup> 1900-1905 *Semi and Annual Conferences*.

<sup>166</sup> "Latter-Day Saints go on Record for Local Option," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 5 April 1908, 1.

<sup>167</sup> Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 288-290.

Speakers gave even bolder sermons about the Word of Wisdom and prohibition in the October 1908 session of conference. Joseph F. Smith opened the conference with a sermon devoted to the Word of Wisdom, setting the theme for the coming days. Out of the thirty-six sermons given over the course of three days, sixteen characterized the Word of Wisdom as paramount to the faith. Given the breadth of LDS doctrine, almost half of the conference's speakers preaching about the Word of Wisdom revealed that the leaders wanted their Saints to wholeheartedly accept the Word of Wisdom as a critical part of their religious identity. Two speakers spoke frankly about prohibition—Francis M. Lyman and Heber J. Grant, two well-known supporters of the movement. At the end of Grant's sermon, he introduced a resolution that asked members to “do all in their power...with lawmakers...to close saloons...and enact what is known as the ‘Sunday Law.’ The Sunday Law Grant referenced was a resolution to close saloons on Sundays. According to the conference report, the audience “proclaim[ed] ‘aye!’ in a unanimous shout.”<sup>168</sup> The vote reflected the energy of the 1908 conference; the Sunday Law passed in 1908.

The *Tribune* classified the conference as the “Mormon resolve on the liquor question.”<sup>169</sup> Days after October's conference adjourned, the Anti-Saloon League asked the Church to appoint “some prominent representative” to join the League. By 1908, the Anti-Saloon League had captured the country's attention as an organization that effectively lobbied for prohibition laws. Significance of the League aside, the request mirrored the WCTU request in 1902. This time however, the Church agreed, and they

---

<sup>168</sup> *Seventy-Ninth Conference*, 64-65.

<sup>169</sup> “Mormons Resolve on the Liquor Question,” *Tribune*, 5 Oct. 1908, 1.

sent Grant as their representative.<sup>170</sup> The Church joined a non-member organization in the march towards an alcohol-free future. The Church eased into the mainstream, at least on a bureaucratic level. Of the twelve apostles in the Quorum, one served as a U.S. Senator, and one served on the Anti-Saloon League's national board. Mormons and Gentiles alike interpreted the messages in the 1908 conferences to mean that the LDS Church stood firmly in support of prohibition, willing to work alongside other Protestant organizations to pass prohibition laws.

LDS authorities displayed unity behind closed doors, as well. Lyman wrote in his diary that the First Presidency and the Quorum "unanimously agreed" to advocate for prohibition, and "not a breath of opposition was manifested." Apostle George F. Richards corroborated Lyman's account, also using "unanimous" in his entry.<sup>171</sup> The unified push for prohibition helped resolve some of the disharmony that plagued the Quorum since Woodruff's Manifesto. Ten days later, Lyman disclosed that one of Utah's Senators asked for First Presidency and Quorum support for prohibition measures. Lyman unequivocally gave it, describing his fellow apostles as "a unit in favor of prohibition."<sup>172</sup>

### **Word of Wisdom as a Political Tool**

With nearly 80% of Utah's population identifying as LDS and with LDS leadership support, Utah seemed likely to join other states in the Union in passing a prohibition law during 1909's legislative session. Like clockwork, Utah's House overwhelmingly passed a prohibition bill on February 11. However, when the bill

---

<sup>170</sup> Journal History, 14 Oct. 1908, in *Minutes*.

<sup>171</sup> Francis M. Lyman Diary, 3 Jan. 1909, in *Minutes*; George F. Richards Diary, 3 Jan. 1909, in *Minutes*.

<sup>172</sup> Lyman Diary, 19 Jan. 1909, in *Minutes*.

reached the Senate, it failed to secure enough votes for Senate consideration. In March, the legislature tried again, and the Senate approved a local-option prohibition bill. To the prohibitionists' dismay, Republican Governor William Spry vetoed it.<sup>173</sup> The state failed to pass a prohibition bill in 1909's legislative session.

By April, surely many anticipated the 1909 LDS conference to condemn recent legislative action that failed to enact a prohibition law. However, only apostle Hyrum M. Smith mentioned prohibition. Not even national board member of the Anti-Saloon League, Heber J. Grant, mentioned prohibition.<sup>174</sup> The *Tribune* published a contemptuous article illustrating the shock and confusion in response to the apparent radio silence. According to the article, the blame belonged to back-stabbing Republican US senator, LDS apostle, and close friend to the prophet, Reed Smoot.<sup>175</sup> Although the *Tribune* was not far off from assuming Smoot caused the marked change, the reality is far more complex than the angry one-sided editorial contended.

Understanding the complicated relationship between state politics and the LDS Church requires context about Utah's Republican Party. Before Utah entered the Union, the LDS-supported People's Party dominated most territory politics. The same Republican leader who offered advice to Cannon shortly before Woodruff's Manifesto, Morris M. Estee, suggested that the Republican Party would advocate for Utah statehood if there was evidence that LDS members could "vote according to their political convictions" and not according to their obligation to follow their church

---

<sup>173</sup> Thompson, "Standing Between Two Fires," 40.

<sup>174</sup> *The Seventy-Ninth Annual Conference*, 90, 110.

<sup>175</sup> "It Was A Tame Conference," *Tribune*, 7 April 1909, 6.

leaders.<sup>176</sup> In essence, the Republican party required Utah to conform to the mainstream two-party system and abandon the People's Party. LDS Church leadership long enjoyed the benefits of the territory's interconnected church and state relationship and hesitated disbanding it in 1890. In 1891, however, LDS leaders evaluated it as a worthy sacrifice. The First Presidency directed the People's Party to disband, though they told the press they did not play a role in the move.<sup>177</sup>

Utah's first election after statehood indicated its voters favored the Democratic party, unsurprising given the Republican party originally spearheaded the national movement to rid the country of polygamy as a "relic of barbarism." LDS leadership divided fairly neatly into Democrats and Republicans. Apostles Heber J. Grant, Moses Thatcher, and President Cannon voted with the Democratic party, for instance, and Joseph F. Smith and Reed Smoot voted with the Republican party. However, under the direction of Joseph F. Smith, the Republican party took hold of Utah and dominated state politics from 1900 to 1916.<sup>178</sup> Smith used his influence to sway the Republican party in similar ways the LDS leaders swayed the People's Party before disbandment. The strategy showcased how LDS Church still maintained political power in the state, and more importantly, how Smith understood the Church's position as an institution wielding political power.

Because of the rising popularity of prohibition, Gentile businessmen allied with the Republican party in 1908 because they feared the economic effects of state bans on

---

<sup>176</sup> Edward Leo Lyman, "Mormon Leaders in Politics: The Transition to Statehood in 1896," *Journal of Mormon History* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 40-41.

<sup>177</sup> First Presidency Office Journal, 31 March 1890, in *Minutes*; Franklin D. Richards Diary, 5 April 1890, 28 May 1891, 10 June 1891, in *Minutes*; "Presidents Woodruff and Cannon on Politics," in *Messages Vol* 3, 21.

<sup>178</sup> Powell, "Elections in the State of Utah."

alcohol. In return, Utah's Republicans agreed to defeat prohibition efforts in the upcoming legislative session. Smoot agreed to the alliance, but he did not inform Joseph F. Smith about the agreement. Because of the prohibition-inspired conferences of 1908, Republicans voted in favor of prohibition, instead of the original plan.<sup>179</sup> The alliance explains why Republican Governor Spry vetoed the local-option prohibition bill even though Utah's Legislature displayed so much support for prohibition.

Furious that the LDS Church's use of the pulpit derailed their alliance with the businessmen, Republican party leaders rebuked Smith with "hot words" in a letter Smith received a few weeks after the First Presidency and Quorum agreed to advocate for prohibition. Smith sent a letter back on official First Presidency letterhead the very next day. He beseeched them to avoid interpreting LDS *members* advocating for prohibition as the *institution* supporting prohibition.<sup>180</sup> October's conference presented LDS leaders as united for prohibition, and Smith wanted Republican leaders to separate Church leaders from the institution, as if conference sermons did not impact their deferential audience. True, Smith himself did not discuss prohibition in his sermons, but as prophet of his church, he bore responsibility over the subjects of the sermons in special events like General Conference. Furthermore, many conference speakers spoke about the Word of Wisdom or prohibition, and the likelihood that LDS leaders did not organize a specific theme is unlikely. It was also unlikely that the resolution Grant introduced, which asked members to join the prohibition movement, escaped Smith's preapproval. Grant's diary reflected he idolized Smith and respected Church hierarchy.

---

<sup>179</sup> Thompson, "Between Two Fires," 37-40.

<sup>180</sup> Joseph F. Smith to E. H. Callister, James H. Anderson, Thomas Hull, 16 Feb. 1909, in *Messages Vol 4*, 196-197. Italics added for emphasis.

Additionally, Grant understood the political arena as a prohibition advocate himself. He simply would not have urged a resolution without Smith's approval.

Regardless, even if Smith did not know about Grant's resolution, October's conference overwhelmingly supported prohibition through the interweaving of Word of Wisdom and prohibition-themed sermons. To illustrate the clarity of the message, in early 1909, a prominent LDS member identified prohibition—and not the Word of Wisdom—as LDS doctrine.<sup>181</sup> Saints now saw the two ideas as virtually inseparable. After October's conference, Democrats, Republicans, Mormons, and Gentiles believed the Church supported prohibition because they believed in the Word of Wisdom. Smith's assurance to the Republican Party leaders that the Church did not support prohibition modeled the strategies LDS leaders used amidst polygamy battles. Smith's letter illustrated he wanted to protect the Church's influence by downplaying the authority LDS leaders possessed, rather than correct a reasonable misunderstanding. In reality, during October's General Conference, leaders used their influence as high-ranking members in a centralized institution to instruct their Saints during an event marketed for every LDS member. The intention was unmistakable.

Because of Smith's response to the Republican leaders and the complete absence of prohibition and the Word of Wisdom in April's 1909 Conference, Smoot convinced Smith to table LDS support of prohibition between February and March. Smoot revealed his primary concern in his diary—he feared the rise of the anti-Mormon party. A far greater menace than liquor, he believed the American Party threatened the Republican stronghold in Utah. The party gained momentum during Joseph F. Smith's

---

<sup>181</sup> "Blaming it all on the Gentiles," *Tribune*, 18 Jan. 1909, 12.



first few years as prophet, and they eventually won some local Salt Lake City elections between 1905 and 1912.<sup>182</sup> Smoot worried that if the Church led the prohibition fight in Utah, anti-prohibitionists would flock to the American Party, the only party in the state who advocated for liquor interests. Smith listened to Smoot's advice. April's 1909 conference "went off smoothly and prohibition was not discussed."<sup>183</sup>

Consequently, Smoot's influence on the Prophet irritated other members of the Quorum. Days after the state-wide prohibition bill failed to secure enough votes for Senate consideration, Smoot received an angry telegram from apostle Hyrum M. Smith, "complaining and charging that I [Smoot] was not in harmony with the Quorum in securing state prohibition."<sup>184</sup> The phrasing of Hyrum M. Smith's message bears consideration; LDS authorities excommunicated two apostles who practiced polygamy in 1911 for being "out of harmony." When Smoot eventually returned home after months away in Washington, he remarked that three apostles were "rather cool," although President Smith greeted him "warmly." Smoot also mentioned a report where prohibition advocates Hyrum M. Smith and Heber J. Grant were described "as mean as ever." Smoot may have possessed Smith's ardent approval to "let prohibition rest," but the rest of the Quorum resisted the strategy change.<sup>185</sup> In their eyes, after prioritizing the Word of Wisdom, why not advocate for laws that they believed aligned with the spirit of the doctrine?

The next month, Smoot pled his case to the Quorum. During a September meeting, Smoot "did not mince words" when he explained the projected outcomes if the

---

<sup>182</sup> Thompson, "Between Two Fires," 35.

<sup>183</sup> Smoot Diary, 27 Aug. 1909, 20 Feb. 1909, 6 April 1909.

<sup>184</sup> Smoot Diary, 15 Feb. 1909.

<sup>185</sup> Smoot Diary, 10 Aug. 1909, 18 Aug. 1909.

Church supported prohibition. He stated that prohibition laws ought to be “through political parties as it does in all other states and not based on conference resolution.” Smoot’s jab at Grant’s 1908 resolution reflected his irritation. He believed the resolution threatened the Church from joining the mainstream. He just wanted Utah to act like “all other states.” According to Smoot’s entry, “most of the Quorum [saw] the question in a different light than they did last winter.”<sup>186</sup>

A meeting with Smoot, Smith, Governor Spry, and Republican party leader Ed Callister illustrated how the blend between Church and State prevailed even after the state split into Republican and Democratic parties. Smoot, Spry, and Callister were representatives elected by their constituents, but Smith, clearly, was not. His very presence indicated LDS institutional involvement in Utah’s political sphere. During the meeting, they agreed on a Republican strategy for the next year: the “local option is all we should seek for the next campaign.” As a result, the 1911 Utah Legislature passed legislation that allowed towns to hold popular elections over whether they allowed alcoholic beverages.<sup>187</sup>

Two years after tabling prohibition rhetoric, Grant complained bitterly to two apostles that Smoot was the only one unwilling to fight for prohibition. He resented that Smith did not value his perspective as a member of the Anti-Saloon League’s board in the same way that he valued Smoot’s position. He failed to understand why the LDS Church halted prohibition support when the Word of Wisdom supported prohibition measures. Yet, Grant decided to “say nothing when Reed returned,” indicating he felt

---

<sup>186</sup> Smoot Diary, 29 Sept. 1901.

<sup>187</sup> Thompson, “Between two Fires,” 43.

that voicing his frustration would leave Smith's perspective unchanged.<sup>188</sup> Grant continued to keep his resentments to himself. Smoot reported after a Quorum meeting in October 1911, "it was voted unanimously not to work for Statewide prohibition until some future time when the *President* would decide it should be tried."<sup>189</sup> It is important to note that journals from three different apostles and minutes from Quorum meetings did not contain evidence of this unanimous vote, an interesting discrepancy given the extant records in January 1909, which stated that the Quorum voted unanimously to advocate for prohibition. The silence speaks volumes; many in the Quorum empathized with Grant.

Smith remained unwilling to change the Church's position until after 1914, Smoot's reelection year. Despite Smoot's opposition to prohibition, a minority position in Utah, he won reelection (albeit by a slim margin). In a telling entry written nine days after his victory, Smoot wrote that he hoped the Republican party would "take the lead in providing for future statewide prohibition."<sup>190</sup> By 1916, his hopes were realized, a hope he acquired after securing his Senate seat for another six years.

In January 1915, the Quorum formally requested the First Presidency's permission to work for a prohibition bill alongside Utah's legislators. By March, Lyman collaborated with politicians lobbying for prohibition, illustrating that the First Presidency granted the Quorum's request.<sup>191</sup> In February, the Quorum and First Presidency discussed a report about a recent regional church conference. The members

---

<sup>188</sup> Grant Diary, 12 July 1911.

<sup>189</sup> Smoot Diary, 4 Oct. 1911. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>190</sup> Kenneth L. Cannon and Geoffrey E. Cannon, "Separation of Prophet and State? The 1914 Reelection of Senator Reed Smoot," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 325; Smoot Diary, 13 Nov 1914.

<sup>191</sup> Journal History, 7 Jan. 1915, 11 March 1915 in *Minutes*.

of the conference passed a resolution that voiced LDS support of prohibition. Neither the Quorum nor the First Presidency quelled the support the way Smith compelled them to from 1909-1914. By April, the First Presidency and Quorum grumbled about how a statewide prohibition law had yet to successfully pass, a pronounced change from before Smoot's 1914 reelection.<sup>192</sup> In April's conference, President Smith spoke on prohibition ambiguously. Francis M. Lyman reported that Smith said "he has always stood for and advocated temperance ...[but] he did not declare for prohibition." The ambiguity gave Smith time to decide how to lead the Church during the nation's prohibition movement without declaring his position one way or the other. Prohibitionist and apostle Lyman, for instance, believed the statement meant Smith opposed prohibition. On the other hand, Smoot thought Smith "had no criticism to offer" concerning the prohibition movement.<sup>193</sup>

One year later, the Church returned to the prohibition pulpit with seven sermons urging prohibition in the April 1916 conference. Like clockwork, the *Tribune* reported, "Speakers Urge Prohibition at Conference."<sup>194</sup> Clearly the President decided that it was time for the Church to encourage prohibition—again. The 1916 gubernatorial election yielded astounding results—Utah elected a Democrat Jewish governor over a well-known Republican Mormon candidate in a landslide victory, 78,000 to 60,000. With the LDS Church's blessing, many LDS voters crossed party lines over the issue of prohibition. Their new governor, Simon Bamberger, promised prohibition in his campaign. Finally, Utah joined her prohibitionist states; Bamberger signed a statewide

---

<sup>192</sup> Journal History, 11 Feb. 1915, in *Minutes*; Smoot Diary, 2 April 1915.

<sup>193</sup> Francis M. Lyman Diary, 5 April 1915; Smoot Diary, 5 April 1915.

<sup>194</sup> "Speakers Urge Prohibition at Conference," 8 April 1916, *Tribune*, 1.

prohibition bill in early 1917, a year before Congress passed the eighteenth amendment. Although the LDS Church did not lead the prohibition reforms in Utah, Joseph F. Smith certainly did all in his power to ensure his church impacted prohibition reform at politically expedient moments.

### **The Duality of Reed Smoot: Communications Liaison, Senator, and Apostle**

Smith was an ardent Republican, but party affiliation alone does not decisively explain Smith's willingness to reassess the Church's public position on prohibition based on Smoot's advice. Highlighting Smoot's contributions to the LDS Church made possible through his senate seat reveals how Smith believed Smoot's position in the Senate was necessary to secure America's acceptance of the Church. His senatorial duties provided a tie between the federal government and the LDS Church that remained unsevered as long as Smoot kept his seat. The People's Party disbanded in 1891, so Smoot's position helped the Church preserve its political influence that otherwise might have diminished without a liaison to rejoin the two worlds together.

As a senator, Smoot tirelessly advocated for the Church's image. His hand in planning William Howard Taft's presidential visit to Utah in 1909 showcased his willingness to put the Church on public display to warm their relationship with the federal government. Smoot suggested to Taft that he should visit Utah shortly after his presidential inauguration. The President agreed. Smoot played a critical role in planning Taft's visit, and according to Smoot's diary, the trip earned Taft's approval. During the visit, Taft spoke in the Church's tabernacle—the same tabernacle where the Church held General Conference—and attended events with the Prophet and the Quorum.<sup>195</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> Smoot Diary, 8 March 1909, 31 July 1909, 14 Aug. 1909, 16-17 Sept. 1909.

Smoot understood the influence the U.S. president possessed over the American people. A successful event where the nation's president amicably visited with LDS authorities communicated that the LDS Church was not America's enemy. Smoot also advocated for increased accessibility to LDS history. He proposed for an LDS exhibit at Seattle's Alaska-Yukon Exposition in 1908 and for an LDS exhibit in the Smithsonian Institute prior to its opening in 1911.<sup>196</sup> Smoot's value went far beyond his senatorial seat in the nation's legislative body.

Because Smoot spent months out of every year in Washington, his immersion in the Gentile world helped him understand the world outside Utah far better than the rest of the Quorum. The perspective helped Joseph F. Smith avoid potential scandals that he might not have anticipated otherwise. For example, Smoot opposed the initial candidate for a Church authority position in 1909 because the candidate had married a second wife after Woodruff's Manifesto. When he explained that the American public would react negatively, President Smith "agreed it was unwise to make the appointment." The Quorum appointed a monogamous LDS member instead.<sup>197</sup> Smoot also criticized the perspective where "officers of the church... seem to think that the fact that the church has not approved or sanctioned the marriages [that] it cannot be held responsible for them." As a result, Smoot believed that the Church bore some responsibility to honor their promise that they would excommunicate members who practiced plural marriage, especially after Smith's 1905 General Conference declaration.<sup>198</sup> His perspective aligned with most congressional representatives in Washington. Smoot voicing his

---

<sup>196</sup> Journal History, 23 Dec. 1908 in *Minutes*.

<sup>197</sup> Smoot Diary, 14 Sept. 1909, 29 Sept. 1909.

<sup>198</sup> Smoot Diary, 4 May 1911; Smoot to Smith, Feb. 1908, in *Minutes*.

perspective added clarity to the Quorum's meetings, helping them ease the Church into the mainstream.

Smoot's role in aiding Mormon colonies in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution also rendered him invaluable to the Church. He began communicating how the revolution would impact LDS members living in Mexico with the First Presidency in late 1910.<sup>199</sup> Smoot communicated often with apostle Anthony W. Ivins, who oversaw the Church in Mexico at the time. The established connection between Smoot and Ivins helped both men advocate for their people caught in the revolution's crossfires. Smoot delivered information from Ivins to any number of people who could help, including the secretary of state and the U.S. president.<sup>200</sup> Concurrently, the Quorum and First Presidency were holding trials for John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley for granting plural marriages after the Woodruff Manifesto, so Smoot advocated for the Church in Washington on their behalf.

After several unsuccessful attempts to deliver arms to the Mormon colonies in Mexico, Smoot worked to move his people out of Mexico. The day after Smoot received word members had evacuated their colony, Smoot prepared a Senate resolution which would grant supplies for the people crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. It passed in the Senate unanimously, reflecting how the Mormon plight in Mexico reached sympathetic ears. One week later, the Senate agreed to appropriate one million dollars "for transportation of Americans forced out of Mexico." Fifty years after the Republican party declared that Mormon people supported a relic of barbarism and seven years after Smoot's hearing found him ineligible to serve as a senator, the Senate

---

<sup>199</sup> Smoot Diary, 4 Dec. 1910.

<sup>200</sup> Smoot Diary, 3 Feb. 1911, 3 March 1911, 3 April 12, 14-16 April 1912, 20 April 1912.

provided government relief for LDS members displaced by the Mexican Revolution.<sup>201</sup> The votes of affirmation to help the displaced LDS members reflected how the Senate viewed LDS members as American citizens. As such, they believed they bore responsibility to aid the Saints.

## **Conclusion**

Smoot felt that prohibition efforts needed postponement to prevent the rise of anti-Mormon fervor, but Smith tabled prohibition because he could not afford losing Smoot, regardless of other LDS apostles or Church members' moral beliefs. When Smoot inquired whether he should run for reelection in 1913, Smith simply replied, "we could not do otherwise."<sup>202</sup> Smith continued the tradition of considering the Church's temporal salvation before allowing his apostles to join a movement that the Word of Wisdom supported. In Smith's eyes, Smoot secured the Church's temporal salvation. The Church's main legal counselor from 1879 to 1934, Franklin S. Richards, contended, "the fact that Senator Smoot holds such a high position in the Church has been a strong factor in making people [Americans] believe in the honesty and integrity of the people [Mormons]."<sup>203</sup> Along the same lines, Smoot's biographer asserted that Smoot "gradually legitimized the church's presence in the United States," signaling that the scholarly community agreed with Smith and Richards' evaluations.<sup>204</sup> It is unclear whether the LDS church could have achieved the level of acceptance they secured in the twentieth century without their intermediary, especially considering the nation's view of the Church in the nineteenth century.

---

<sup>201</sup> Smoot Diary 28-29 July 1912, 6-7 Aug. 1912.

<sup>202</sup> Smoot Diary, 25 March 1913.

<sup>203</sup> Franklin S. Richards, "President Lorenzo Snow" and "President Joseph F. Smith," in *Minutes*.

<sup>204</sup> Heath, *Diaries of Reed Smoot*, xxxiii.



Smith prioritized political expediency over moral values during the Prohibition Era, using the pulpit and its doctrine to suit the current circumstances. If Smith chose to ignore Smoot's fears about the American Party's rise in popularity, Heber J. Grant's wish for his people to "be the first" to demand prohibition reform may have been realized, but at the risk to Smoot's political position—a risk Smith was unwilling to take. The rise of the Word of Wisdom's significance to the Church's identity also indicated the Church's willingness to join the American mainstream. The way Smith balanced his Church's support of prohibition while retaining Smoot as an apostle-senator reflected his perspective—the Church's temporal salvation required Smoot. Through wielding the Word of Wisdom as a political tool, the LDS Church successfully aided their state in passing a statewide dry law after Smoot secured his seat. In aiding the state, they marched alongside other Protestants in the fight for a future without poverty and crime, a future prohibition guaranteed. In waiting for the opportune moment to march alongside their Protestant counterparts, they guaranteed Smoot kept his irreplaceable role as intermediary between the federal government and the Church.

## **Measuring Success: A Comparison of the LDS Church and the Anti-Saloon League**

Thanks to Smith and Smoot's efforts, the LDS Church functioned similarly to other Protestant institutions of the early twentieth century. Although chronic misconceptions of the Mormon faith certainly existed—and still do—the Church possessed the highly bureaucratic organization that enabled it to enter mainstream society effectively, misconceptions aside. LDS leaders were appointed through divine authority, so the nature of their position reduced backlash within the fold. As a result, LDS leaders possessed enough influence and authority to use their Church's doctrines to suit their central goal without risking their position.

The institution's use of their doctrines on plural marriage and the Word of Wisdom between 1874 and 1917 showcases the doctrines' fluidity in their leaders' hands. Plural marriage helped unite the Saints against their Gentile oppressors, and the abandonment of plural marriage helped the Saints unite with American Protestants. The Word of Wisdom offered an opportunity for the Church to find commonalities with American Protestants during the country's Prohibition movement. Through abandoning polygamy and adhering to the Word of Wisdom, the Church became a church that American Protestants tolerated. LDS leaders, indeed, ensured the Church's temporal salvation. However, the Church's evolution from 1874-1917 was not a transformation of the Church, but a transformation of circumstances. The circumstances differed dramatically between 1874 and 1917, but LDS leaders continued to use the same strategies as their predecessors had. In 1874 and in 1917, the Church made calculated decisions with calculated costs to guarantee its survival. At its core, temporal salvation

drove the Church, explaining how quickly and effectively the Church transitioned in the twentieth century.

We can measure LDS success in joining the American mainstream through a comparison with the Protestant-backed Anti-Saloon League. The Anti-Saloon League's organizational structure prioritized unity over democracy. It possessed impressive knowledge of their target audience and used that knowledge to communicate persuasive rhetoric heavily influenced by ethos arguments. The League's organization enabled its leading members to centralize their messaging, which kept their ideas consistent across the Union. By appealing to their audience's emotions, their target audiences voted reactively. The LDS Church possessed these same characteristics and enacted similar strategies at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Anti-Saloon League used a bureaucratic structure like the LDS Church. The structure enabled the organization to successfully lobby for widespread legislative changes that nineteenth-century temperance organizations could not. Temperance organizations in the 1890s varied in purpose, strategies, and target audiences, so they "could not agree on acceptable public policies." On the other hand, the Anti-Saloon League promoted one goal under the direction of one central office. The organization did not rely on volunteer support like previous temperance organizations. It boasted its own full-time professional staff divided into specialized departments with one common goal—to add a prohibition amendment in the U.S. Constitution.<sup>205</sup> For instance, the Agitation Department of the League arranged an event named "Anti-Saloon Sunday." Across the nation, the League sent employees to preach for prohibition at local

---

<sup>205</sup> K. Austin Kerr, "Organization for Reform: The Anti-Saloon League and Innovation in Politics," *American Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 42-43.

community church pulpits. The strategy to blend prohibition with Protestantism nationwide crafted a unified movement backed by their perception of morality. In addition, the League's leaders hosted annual meetings to communicate the League's messages with the general public. The meetings were not democratic; individuals attended to join the movement, not direct the movement.<sup>206</sup>

The bureaucratic structure of the LDS Church also unified the Church's central messaging, and the Church did not value democratic procedures. Although Church meetings often included voting, voting against measures earned social rejection. Members seldom voted against measures in such public spaces.<sup>207</sup> Because the leaders of the Church were divinely inspired, voting against measures was not in a member's best interest. In a similar way the LDS Church selected local leaders that would be in harmony with the existing administration, the League selected local leaders to serve their cause. The chain of command continued seamlessly to the League's president, just as the Church's chain of command continued up to the Prophet. Local leaders and representatives in the League and in the Church served as the institutions' mouthpiece rather than as individual influencers within an institution.

Both the League and the Church educated their audiences through accessible media. For instance, the League published an "Anti-Saloon Yearbook" annually. The Yearbook was a national comprehensive record for liquor laws and temperance reforms; it served as a guide for "active temperance activists." The Yearbook provided standardized messages from the League's central office, local contacts to connect with

---

<sup>206</sup> Kerr, "Organization for Reform," 47-48.

<sup>207</sup> Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 136-137.

to help spread the League's messages, and statistics about the dangers of alcohol.<sup>208</sup> Standardizing the material accessible to the League's supporters assured that its supporters disseminated League ideas without significantly changing them. The Utah section of the League's 1913 Yearbook listed the League's central goal in no uncertain terms: "101 saloons were swept of the state [in Utah]. Only 235 are left."<sup>209</sup> The League's ability to centralize their messaging and their goals enabled their widespread success. By 1910, up to "two-thirds of the American population found it difficult or impossible to buy liquor legally."<sup>210</sup> Considering the temperance movement found difficulty uniting in 1890, the success the League enjoyed twenty years later was all the more impressive.

For the LDS Church, their bi-annual General Conferences served as their central messaging board. Typically, sermons during General Conference contributed towards a larger theme for their members' consumption. April and October's 1908 conference themes, for example, centered on temperance. As discussed in chapter three, the temperance emphasis was one strategy by which LDS leaders highlighted commonalities between the Church and the American mainstream. The 1908 conference motivated LDS legislators to enact legislation that banned alcohol locally. Even though Governor Spry vetoed the bill, the veto did not weaken the legislators' resolve to ban alcohol. The 1916 gubernatorial election also illustrated this trend. The conferences during the election year encouraged prohibition. When the voters went to the polls that October, the prohibitionist candidate won with nearly 60% of the vote. In comparison,

---

<sup>208</sup> Ernest Hurst Cherrington, *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book* (Westerville: The Anti-Saloon League of America: 1913), 2.

<sup>209</sup> *Yearbook*, 223.

<sup>210</sup> Harding, "American Protestant Morality," 1294.

during the Church's radio silence, no candidate received a majority vote in the 1912 governor's race. William Spry won the election, though he secured only 46% of the votes. In another example, the Church did not address Reed Smoot's reelection campaign in the 1914 General Conferences. Smoot won by a slim margin of 3,000 votes. The Church's centralized messaging undoubtedly impacted election results similarly to how the League's messaging increased the number of dry laws in the United States.

The rhetoric that the LDS Church and the League used appealed to their audiences' emotions and identities as individuals devoted towards building a virtuous future. The League asserted that any "worthwhile" Protestant should support "the crusade."<sup>211</sup> In the same way, Joseph F. Smith declared in the October 1908 conference that "No member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints can afford to do himself the dishonor...of crossing the threshold of a liquor saloon...God will judge him according to his works."<sup>212</sup> In both instances, the message left the audience with two choices—join the crusade and be a good Christian or relinquish your status as a morally upright member of your church. Members who considered their faith pivotal to their identity would feel compelled to join the movement because of the dichotomous options that the institutions provided.

At the same time, both institutions used negatively charged rhetoric about liquor that made it incompatible with someone living a morally righteous life. One of the Superintendents for the League, Reverend Fuller, stated that liquor has done nothing but "debauch, demoralize and ruin...It is the liquor traffic that has made our politics like a

---

<sup>211</sup> *Year Book*, 32.

<sup>212</sup> *Seventy-Ninth Annual Conference*, 7.

viper in the eyes of all people.” In a similar way, Heber J. Grant proclaimed in the April 1916 conference, “But how under the heavens any man with the ordinary intelligence...believes...that empty barrels and empty bottles will bring wealth into this community...is one of the untold mysteries to me.” Even the *Tribune* noticed the similarities between the Church and the League; after Fuller preached in the LDS tabernacle, the *Tribune* reported on the commonalities between Fuller and Grant’s sermons.<sup>213</sup>

Both institutions also affirmed that prohibition solved social problems with misleading data, and they concocted wide-sweeping conclusions based on conjecture. The institutions did not prioritize transparent data or logical reasoning; they prioritized using information that would motivate their audience to support their central goal. Francis Lyman predicted during the April 1916 conference that “if the...liquor and the beer that are used in our state, were let alone...everybody would be suitably clothed, suitably housed...and we would not be in debt.” Grant said in the same conference that Kansas’s lower death rates compared to the rest of the United States illustrated that prohibition increased life expectancy (Kansas passed a state-wide prohibition law in 1881).<sup>214</sup> Lyman and Grant ignored other variables that could impact their conjectures, such as accessibility to healthcare or the rise of urbanization. In the same way, the Anti-Saloon League published a study that concluded that drinking caused higher divorce rates. The study ignored other variables, like poverty rates, that could impact the data. However, because both institutions used data to back up their prohibition stances, their

---

<sup>213</sup> “Prohibition Slogan is Sounded from the Pulpit of the Tabernacle,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 11 Jan. 1909, 3; *Eighty-Sixth Annual Conference*, 38.

<sup>214</sup> *Eighty-Sixth Annual Conference*, 28, 97.

evaluations appeared reliable.<sup>215</sup> Ultimately, the purpose of the data was to persuade, so the efficacy of the data was trivial.

The commonalities between the LDS Church and the Anti-Saloon League bears enough significance to merit discussion. One scholar noted that the Anti-Saloon League functioned as “the most powerful influence on American national politics save the national two parties” during the Prohibition Era. Discussing the influence of Protestant-supported organizations, like the Anti-Saloon League, helps contextualize the influence the LDS Church possessed because in using the same strategies to motivate their audience, the League and the Church were wildly successful in achieving their goals. Classified as one of the first “modern pressure groups,” analyzing the Anti-Saloon League also provides insight about other groups not affiliated with political parties that emerged after the League’s reign ended.<sup>216</sup> The next generations of American pressure groups, such as pro-life organizations, encouraged single-issue voting campaigns with moral rhetoric and bureaucratic functionality. Pro-life organizations found success using the same strategies as the League when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe vs. Wade* in 2022.

The LDS Church underwent significant changes in the twentieth century, but the Church’s institutional structure remained the same. Studying the commonalities across Protestant-backed organizations provides understanding about how non-partisan groups enter and influence the political sphere through motivating their target audience by appealing to their moral values. Even though their target audience does not influence the institution, they often answer the institution’s calls because they trust that the

---

<sup>215</sup> *Year Book*, 19, 257.

<sup>216</sup> Kerr, “Organizing for Reform,” 38; Harding, “Protestant Moralism,” 1293.



institution represents their best interest toward building a morally upright future. But when the institutions assert that “light comes from the head,” the institution may not represent their target audience as much as they presume. In the case of the LDS Church, the leaders’ quest for their institution’s temporal salvation superseded any other priority.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### LDS Sermons, Public Announcements, Reports, Scripture:

Annual Conference Reports, 1880, 1897-1917.

*Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013.

Jacques, John. *Catechism for Children: Exhibiting the Prominent Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Liverpool: F.D. Richards, 1854.

*Journal of Discourses Volume 6*.

*Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Volume 2-4*. Edited by James R. Clark. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1975.

*The Pearl of Great Price*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

Smith, Joseph Jr. *History of the Church Volumes 3,6*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978.

Whitney, Orson F. *History of Utah in Four Volumes*. Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Co, 1892.

Young, Brigham John W. Young and Daniel H. Wells to Beloved Saints, *Circular of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: to the presidency of the various stakes of Zion: to the bishops of the different wards: and to all the offers and members of the Church*. Salt Lake City: The Church, 1877 in BYU Digital Archives.

Grant, Heber J. "Prohibition" *The Young Women's Journal* 27, no. 7 (July 1916): 402-406.

#### LDS Records:

Jenson, Andrew. *The Historical Record: Volume Five*. Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson, 1889.

----- . *A Record of Important Events*. Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1914.

History.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

*Minutes of the Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: 1835-1951*. Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2020.

*Proceedings at the Dedication of the Joseph Smith Memorial Monument.* Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 1906.

Government Documents:

*Congressional Record: Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the Forty-Ninth Congress, Second Session Volume 18.* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), 585-596.

*The Edmunds Act, Reports of the Commission.* Salt Lake City: Iribune Printing and Publishing Company, 1884.

Gov Bogg's Extermination Order, 27 Oct 1838; Governor Bond's Rescission Order, 25 Jun 1976,

<https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/findingaids/miscMormonRecords/eo>

*Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of The Protests Against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, A Senator From the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat* Volumes 1-4. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904-1906.

Utah State Constitution.

Diaries:

Clawson, Rudger. *A Ministry of Meetings: The Apostolic Diaries of Rudger Clawson.* Edited by Stan Larson. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993.

Grant, Heber J, *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880-1945, abridged.* Edited by Davis Bitton, Scott G Kenney, Michael D Quinn. Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2015.

Lund, Anthon H. *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890-1921.* Edited by John P. Hatch. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006.

Smoot, Reed. *In the World: The Diaries of Reed Smoot.* Edited by Harvard S. Heath. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997.

Ivins, Anthony W. *Cowboy Apostle: The Diaries of Anthony W. Ivins, 1875-1932.* Edited by Elizabeth Oberdick Anderson. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013.

Woodruff, Wilford. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1933-1898 Volumes 7-9,* edited by Scott G. Kenney. Midway: Signature Books, 1983.

Newspapers:

Accessed through Utah Digital Newspapers sponsored by University of Utah:

*Millennial Star*, 1853.

*Salt Lake Tribune*, 1890-1917.

*Deseret News*, 1878.

*Deseret News Weekly*, 1878, 1884.

Acquired through BYU Digital Archives:

*Women's Exponent*, 1882, 1883.

Miscellaneous:

Cannon, Frank J and Harvey J O'Higgins. *Under the Prophet in Utah*. Boston: The C.M. Clark Publishing Co, 1911.

Cherrington, Ernest H. *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book: 1913*. Westerville, Ohio: The Anti-Saloon League of America.

*Permanent Temperance Documents of the American Temperance Society, Volume I*. Boston: Seth Bliss and Perkins, 1835.

---

**Secondary Sources:**

Alexander, Thomas G. *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints 1890–1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

----- "To Maintain Harmony": Adjusting to External and Internal Stress, 1890-1930." In *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past*. Edited by Michael Quinn, 247-266. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992.

----- "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 78-88.

Bigler, David L. and William Bagley. *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War, 1857-1858*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011.

Bitton, Davis. *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Brooks, Juanita. *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950.

- Brodie, Fawn, M. *No Man Knows My History*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945.
- Bushman, Claudia L. "Edward W. Tullidge and *The Women of Mormondom*." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no 4 (2000): 15-26.
- Bushman, Richard Lyman. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2005.
- Cannon, Kenneth L. "After the Manifesto: Mormon Polygamy 1890-1906." *Sunstone* 8 (Jan-April 1983): 27-35.
- Cannon, Kenneth L. and Geoffrey E Cannon. "Separation of Prophet and State? The 1914 Reelection of Senator Reed Smoot." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 86, no 4 (2008): 315-349.
- Daynes, Kathryn M. *More Wives than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840-1910*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.
- Embry, Jessie and Linda King Newell. *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987.
- Flake, Kathleen. *The Emotional and Priestly Logic of Plural Marriage*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2010.
- , *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Fluhman, J. Spencer. "*A Peculiar People*": *Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Foster, Lawrence. *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Gordon, Sarah Barringer. *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Gordon, Sarah Barringer, and Jan Shipps. "Fatal Convergence in the Kingdom of God." *Journal of the Early Republic* 37, no 2 (Summer 2017): 307-347.
- Hales, Brian C. "'Denying the Undeniable': Examining Early Mormon Polygamy Renunciations." *Journal of Mormon History* 44, no. 3 (2018): 23-44.
- Hanson, Kondon Smith. *Frontier Religion: Mormons and America, 1857-1907*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019.

- Harding, Susan F. "American Protestant Moralism and the Secular Imagination: From Temperance to the Moral Majority." *Social Research* 76, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 1277-1306.
- Hardy, B. Carmon. *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- . *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy: its Origin, Practice, and Demise*. Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2007.
- . "Polygamy, Mormonism, and Me." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 41, no 2 (2008): 85-101.
- Harline, Paula Kelly. *The Polygamous Wives Writing Club: From the Diaries of Mormon Pioneer Women*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Haslam, Matthew J. *Heber J. Grant: Exemplar to the Saints*. American Fork: Covenant Communications, 2003.
- Ivins, Stanley S. "A Constitution for Utah" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 25 (1957): 94-116.
- Kern, Louis. *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981.
- Kerr, K. Austin. "Organization for Reform: The Anti-Saloon League and Innovation in Politics." *American Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 42-43.
- Lyman, Edward Leo. "Mormon Leaders in Politics: The Transition to Statehood in 1896." *Journal of Mormon History* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 30-54.
- . "The Political Background of the Woodruff Manifesto," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24, no 3 (1991): 21-39.
- Mason, Patrick Q. *Directions for Mormon Studies in the Twenty-First Century*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2016.
- . "God and the People: Theodemocracy in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," *Journal of Church and State* 53 no. 3 (Summer 2011): 349-375.
- Mason, Patrick Q and John G. Turner. *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism Since 1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Mauss, Armand L. *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- Nelson, Larry E. "Utah Goes Dry." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41, no 4 (1973): 340-357.

- Neilson, Reid L. *Exhibiting Mormonism: The Latter-day Saints and the 1893 World's Fair*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Nichols, *Prostitution, Polygamy, and Power*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 2002.
- Paulos, Michael Harold, and Konden Smith Hansen. *The Reed Smoot Hearings: The Investigation of a Mormon Scholar and the Transformation of an American Religion*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2021.
- Phipps, Kelly Elizabeth. "Marriage and Redemption: Mormon Polygamy in the Congressional Imagination, 1862-1887." *Virginia Law Review* 95, no. 2 (April 2009): 435-487.
- Porter, Eugene O. "An Outline of the Temperance Movement." *The Historian* 7, no. 1 (Autumn, 1944): 54-67.
- Powell, Allan Kent. "Elections in the State of Utah." *Utah History Encyclopedia*. Edited by Allan Kent Powell. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994.
- Quinn, Michael D. "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 1 (1985): 9-105.
- *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997.
- *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994.
- *The Mormon Hierarchy: Wealth and Corporate Power*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2017.
- *The New Mormon History: Revisionists Essays on the Past*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992.
- Sillito, John. "Shaping Mormonism's Public Image and Building the Faith: B. H. Roberts's Mission to the Midwest, 1896." *Journal of Mormon History* 45, no. 1 (2019): 53-85.
- Thompson, Brent G. "Standing Between Two Fires: Mormons and Prohibition, 1908-1917." *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 35-52.
- Turner, John. *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012.
- *The Mormon Jesus: A Biography*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016.

----- . “Unpopular Sovereignty: Brigham Young and the U.S. Government, 1847-1877.” In *Mormonism and American Politics*, edited by Randall Balmer and Jana Reiss, 14-31. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2016.

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2017.

Van Wagoner, Richard S. *Mormon Polygamy: A History*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989.

Whittaker, David J. “Mormon Studies as an Academic Discipline.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism*, edited by Terryl L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow, 92-120. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Young, Kimball. *Isn't One Wife Enough?* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1954.