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From polygamy to monogamy : Mormonism on gender, marriage, and the family

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**FROM POLYGAMY TO MONOGAMY:
MORMONISM ON GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND THE FAMILY**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Sonja Farnsworth

August, 1999

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ABSTRACT

FROM POLYGAMY TO MONOGAMY: MORMONISM ON GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND THE FAMILY

by Sonja Farnsworth

This thesis challenges the oft-repeated American truism that the “traditional” (nuclear) family is society’s moral foundation and that its preservation will ensure a moral society. Mormonism, Catholicism, and many Protestant denominations equate this “profamily” viewpoint with their own versions of Christian doctrine. Together, these religious communities promulgate a powerful “profamily” discourse that has spilled over into politics and helps to preserve certain inequities of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

Recently, however, Protestant scholars have acknowledged that “profamily” ideology has no basis in Protestant doctrine. This thesis offers a systematic rhetorical analysis of the authoritative family discourse of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism) and demonstrates that it too lacks a doctrinal basis for promoting the “traditional” family. The implications for those arguing against racism, classism, gender inequities, and heterosexism are considerable.

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Although this thesis challenges popular notions of "the family," I owe much to my own family--my mother and husband who suffered my passion for theology, and my four daughters who endured lousy meals, bad housekeeping, and endless hand-wringing over the computer. Amazingly, they all still love me. That alone should suffice as proof that God exists or at least that mercy and forgiveness are everlasting.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE RELIGION-FAMILY CONNECTION

“Family” may *seem* like an ordinary word but it is not. It occupies an exalted place in American speech, rubbing shoulders with other words and terms of preeminence such as “freedom,” “true Americanism,” and “equal justice for all” (Hart, 1990, p. 237). As a member of America’s most sacred lexicon, it has the ability to win arguments without the support of solid reasoning “as if the saying [of it] alone ends the discussion” (Hart, 1990, p. 237). It is, as Weaver (1953) has theorized, a “modern God [term] that makes us mentally genuflect” (Hart, 1990, p.237) whenever we hear it.

Thus worshipped, the word “family” is partnered with the word “religion,” for in American discourse, the two have an important and enduring relationship. At the root of their alliance is a virtually unquestioned national consensus that the family, like religion, has a spiritual (or at least quasi-spiritual) purpose and functions as society’s moral foundation. To repeat such sentences as “The family is the moral foundation of society” or “Religion is all about the family” is to deploy one of our culture’s chiefest and most beloved convictions. This national consensus has imbued the word “family” with so much moral authority it is unabashedly persuasive. Advertisers have long used it to promote their products, politicians to promote their platforms (Clapp, 1993), and religionists to promote their religions (Fletcher, 1982; Ryder, 1985; Carre, 1989).

Although the power of persuasion is not *inherently* dangerous, critics of rhetoric have expressed concern about “the potential for unscrupulous use of [such] ultimate

terms" (Hart, 1990, p. 238). The word "family," with its discursive link to the notions of religion (and therefore morality) is a case in point. Granted, the word "unscrupulous" is too harsh a description of the motives that govern proponents of the religion-family connection. Nevertheless, there is much to question in one of their basic assumptions--the belief that virtually all social problems are the result of the family's failure to fulfill its moral function (Lasch, 1977; Coontz, 1992). This belief is manifested in a discourse of blame that has, in this country, been mobilized to "dismant[le] nearly all the legal achievements of the feminist movement" (Faludi, 1991, p. 235), to limit the civil rights of homosexuals, and to target for censure single parents, working mothers, welfare mothers and anyone else whose existence is thought to be symptomatic of the breakdown of "the family." Of concern is the fact that practitioners of this discourse "have taken for granted" (Scanzoni, 1988, p. 126) that the religion-family connection is intrinsic to Christianity. Confident that the "doctrines of Christianity . . . explicitly link marriage, family life and religiosity" (Bahr & Chadwick, 1988, p. 57), they are unaware that faith in the family as a moral agent is based upon relatively recent ideological developments. According to Stephanie Coontz (1992), professor of history at Evergreen State College and author of *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*,

The idea that private values and family affections form the heart of public life is not at all traditional. It represents a sharp break with Enlightenment thought and the early republican tradition, which held that public values . . . were qualitatively different from and superior to private values of love and personal nurturance. "Every man in a republic," declared educator and physician Benjamin Rush, "is public property." John Adams argued that the foundation of a virtuous republic must be a

“Positive passion for the public good. . . . Superior to all private Passions [sic].” (pp. 96-97)

Not until the mid-19th century did an institution referred to as “the family” come to be seen as the “sole repository of standards of decency, duty, and altruism” (p. 97).

According to social critic Christopher Lasch (1977), Americans who bemoan the breakdown of “the family,” have done so assuming that they are on the cutting edge of social commentary, unaware that (regardless of the social climate) such complaints have been a feature of American discourse for well over a century. Few are cognizant of the fact that even during the 1950s—a time considered the halcyon days of family life—collapse of “the family” was considered a virtual *fait accompli*. Coontz (1992) agrees with Lasch that too many Americans simplistically blame “the family” for a myriad of complex social problems. Her research has confirmed that this habitual family-blaming is often little more than a series of impassioned pronouncements that are based upon myths, half-truths, misunderstandings, “wild claims [and] phoney forecasts” (Coontz, p. 18). She has observed that Americans assume that once there was a “golden age” (p. 2) of strong family life, when, in fact, “Families have always been in flux and in crisis; they have never lived up to nostalgic notions . . .” (p. 2):

The actual complexity of our history—even of our own personal experience—gets buried under the weight of an idealized image. On both a personal and social level, when things are going well, we credit our successful adherence to the family ideal, forgetting the conflicts, ambivalences, and departures from the “norm.” When things are going poorly, we look for the “dysfunctional” elements of family life, blaming our family problems on “abnormal” [family] experiences or [family] innovations. (pp. 1-2)

If, as Lasch (1977) and Coontz (1992) have reminded us, such discourse is miscontextualized, it should be of interest to scholars of communication, feminists, advocates of civil rights for homosexuals, and the targets of rhetoric bemoaning family breakdown, that it is presently undergoing a tremendous resurgence induced by the activism of conservative Christians. Propelled by the reasoning that without strong families America will decline into chaos, these activists promote “the family” as a symbol of social stability and morality with perhaps “unprecedented zeal” (Clapp, 1993, p. 10). Seeded during the 1970s (Bellah, 1992) and brought to fruition during the 1980s, their movement has focused upon the promotion of definitions of “the family” that were accepted uncritically prior to the 1960s, but now are widely contested (Clapp, 1993). As a group, conservative Protestants hope to end the controversy by eradicating all doubt as to the meaning of the word “family” and reaffirming “the family” as a moral agent.

Perhaps part of their zeal is the fact that they, themselves, feel victimized and diminished by an opposing discourse that, in their view, advocates tolerance of family breakdown and hence, immorality. One problem they have encountered is that this “liberal” discourse has achieved legitimacy within their own Protestant community (Scanzoni, 1988). To be sure, many Protestants *have* been critical of the conservative Christian equation of “the family” with Christian doctrine. They argue that the link between religion and “the family” is not transcendent but ideological and undermines the very goals of Christianity it is intended to promote (Fishburn, 1991; Clapp, 1993). An

understanding of the debate among Protestants over the definition of “the family” is crucial to this project.

Defining “the Family”

The “Traditional” Family: The conservative Christian perspective on family life resonates so deeply with many other religions and with Americans in general that it is difficult to distinguish between religion-based devotion to “the family” and reverence for “the family” that is present within the population at large. As Spickard (1988) explains:

Religious apologists frequently speak of the important relationship between religion and family life. “The family that prays together stays together” is an oft-cited--though occasionally ridiculed--cultural aphorism. The converse is often conceived to be true as well: strong family structure is supposed to provide an opening to the spiritual life. Despite the historic importance of monastic religion, most Americans believe that religion and traditional family life go together and are mutually reinforcing. (p. 324)

Moreover, both religionists and secularists have a common sense of how the discourse surrounding “the family” is defined. As conservative Christians promote “the family” as a cause, it is understood that for the most part their audience of Americans understands the word “religion” as referring to Christianity. They also know that the terms “family” and “traditional family life” do not refer to just *any* family. Rather, they identify a specific *model* of family formed on the basis of a legal marriage contracted between a man and a woman who ascribe to traditional gender roles, espouse white, capitalistic, middle-class values, and place great emphasis on the bearing and moral upbringing of children in a home perceived to be a private refuge from the heartless and dangerous public sphere beyond its doors. This model, and this model alone, often referred to as the “traditional”

or “nuclear” family, embodies the vision of the religion-family connection and is assumed to be the source of life’s true meaning, and the moral foundation of society (Clapp, 1993). Such a family, of-course, does not represent the average family but is an ideal which, *as an ideal*, advances certain values and assumes certain voids of representation.

It should be noted that the word “traditional” in this context is imprecise since (as detailed earlier) the ideal of “family” it embraces has existed for a relatively short time. What conservative Christians intend by using the adjective “traditional” is to describe “the family” in a way that places it in apposition to the non-traditional types of family and emphasis on individualism that emerged from the social movements of the 1960s (Scanzoni, 1988; Coontz, 1992). It is their belief that the “traditional” family, with its exclusive “opening to spiritual life” (Spickard, 1988, p.125) will be an effective antidote to the perceived decline of moral values that followed 1960s iconoclasm.

In promulgating their message, conservative Christians utilize a special set of terms and expressions. The term “profamily” describes the ideology favoring the “traditional” family, suggesting that other points of view may be “antifamily.” The expression “the breakdown of the family” is an allusion to divorce, as well as a phrase that problematizes lifestyles different from “traditional family life.” Same-sex marriage, single parent households, post-divorce blended families, homeless families, voluntarily childless marriages, and families in which both parents work and must send their children to day care providers, all lack the reputation for virtue attributed to “traditional” households. In fact, even though they resemble the “traditional” family in that they are small social groups

with biological ties and profound emotional commitments, non-“traditional” families do not come under the rubric “the family,” nor do the oft-used terms “family values” and “middle class values” apply to them. These terms refer to *moral* values because Americans see the middle class family (in contrast to other kinds of families, institutions and classes) as a locus of moral superiority (Hansen, 1994). Indeed, the contested issue in rhetoric on the family is the moral high ground and it is the moral high ground that is at stake for profamily advocates as unconventional or innovative kinds of families gain legitimacy within American culture.

To mitigate against the proliferation of non-“traditional” lifestyles, conservative Christians have tried to fortify the moral superiority of the word “family” by pairing it with auxiliary words intended to enhance its persuasive power. The term “traditional family” with its implications of the stability and order of an imagined past in contrast to the perceived instability and chaos of the present, exemplifies this fortifying process.

The Bible-based Family: The term “Bible-based family” is a similar case. Profamily advocates defend this label on the basis of the biblical story of Adam and Eve as recounted in the Book of Genesis. Pride (1985), for example, insisted that the “traditional” family was biblically decreed because

God gave Eve to Adam to be his helper. Why? Because Adam had been assigned a project. God told them to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” Without Eve, Adam could not possibly [do so]. Eve was needed for the couple to bear fruit. *The Biblical reason for marriage is to produce fruit for God.* (pp. 19-20)

Packer (1993a) made a similar argument:

The single purpose of Lucifer is . . . to corrupt . . . romance, love, marriage and parenthood. . . . Doctrines teach us how to respond to the compelling natural impulses [sexual feelings] which too often dominate how we behave. . . . Marriage was instituted, for Adam was commanded to cleave unto his wife and “to none else.” . . . God blessed Adam and Eve “and said unto them: Be fruitful and multiply” and so the family was established. (p. 21)

Redefining “the Family”

But reasoning such as this has been disputed. Christians who are themselves members of conservative, profamily denominations have criticized the way profamily ideology totalizes only one type of family. Ryder (1985) has labeled this problem “familyolatry” and expressed concern over its exclusionary tendencies:

Overemphasis on the family runs the risk of creating a division between those who are part of an apparently successful traditional family and those who for some reason are not, including the adult unmarried, the divorced, the single parent, the widow or widower, the parentless child, the childless parent, the parent with problem children, the child with problem parents, the poor and the sick, the needy and the afflicted. These people suffer under the heaviest financial, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual burdens. . . . [C]onstant overemphasis on the successful traditional family creates pressures and burdens on the very ones the Church [sic] is supposed to help and makes their association with the mainstream family-oriented Church [sic] a painful and sometimes unbearable experience that may alienate and estrange the very foreigners we should be embracing as fellow citizens in the household of God (p. 26).

Theologian Rosemary Radford Reuther (1983), and author Letha Dawson Scanzoni (1988), both Protestants, have expressed similar fears. They have pointed out that celebrated biblical families (with their multiple wives and concubines) hardly resembled the “traditional” family, and that historians have identified the genesis of the Bible-based

family in Victorian England, not the Book of Genesis. Both have affirmed that the Bible advances a broader interpretation of family than contemporary conservative Christians will allow, citing examples of prominent biblical families in which kin and non-kin “lived together under one roof” or formed “quasi-kin” relationships knit together with “family-like bonds” based upon mutual responsibility, caring and love (Scanzoni, 1988, p. 127).

Still, Ryder’s identification of “familyolatry” (1985, p. 24), and Reuther’s (1983) and Scanzoni’s (1988) critique of the “traditional” and “Bible-based” concepts of family did not challenge the religion-family equation *per se* but merely problematized it’s emphasis on one model of family. Later critics were to move beyond a mere acknowledgment of its philosophical inconsistencies within a Christian context and toward a review of its historical, social, and political roots. Their exploration revealed the religion-family connection to be far less than transcendent truth but a “knowledge that is posed as natural or generally applicable . . . [with] social origins [that] are suppressed” (O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery & Fiske, 1994, p. 140.)--in short, an ideology.

Literature Review

In 1991, Abingdon Press, a well-known and respected publisher of Christian books, published *Confronting the Idolatry of Family: A New Vision for the Household of God* by Janet Fishburn. Fishburn, a Professor of American Church History at the Graduate School of Drew University had previously authored *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family: The Social Gospel in America* in 1981, a book that received

positive acknowledgment in *Theology Today* (1991, p. 29) a Christian journal with an editorial council made up of scholars as prominent as Cornel West of Harvard University, George Lindbeck of Yale Divinity School, Stanley Hauerwas of Duke Divinity School, and the widely published feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

In *Confronting the Idolatry of the Family*, Fishburn (1991) debunked the religion-family connection by arguing that there was no necessary link between Christianity and the “traditional” family, and insisting that Christianity’s purpose was not the reinforcement of “traditional” family commitments but the spreading of the “good news of God’s gift of grace and salvation” (p. 19-36). She also criticized profamily ideology as hostile to the integration of people from other lifestyles into Christian communities, pointing out that Christian theology defined the church, not a biological kinship unit, as the primary family of its devotees.

Fishburn (1991) particularly challenged two beliefs deeply entrenched in popular American culture and promoted by numerous religious denominations: (a) that the breakdown of the family is the cause of both the moral decay and the decline of religion in America, and (b) that Christian families are “the building block[s] of civilization without which neither nation nor children would be moral” (p. 12). She performed this ideological deconstruction by revealing that both ideas were rooted, not in basic Christian doctrine, but in Protestantism’s 19th century movement to turn America into a unified Christian nation. As she explained it, Protestant missionaries proselytizing among the American

populace discovered that the interdenominational disagreements over what constituted Protestant doctrine left many people confused and unwilling to accept Protestantism as a viable religion. Refusing to abandon their commitment to Protestantize America, they solved the problem by consolidating their diverse theologies under an umbrella “doctrine” based on the domestic virtues of hard work, individual morality, purity, and patriotism--virtues that were already entrenched and revered aspects of American culture. This so-called doctrine (later identified by historians as “Domestic Protestantism”) glorified the home as a little church charged with the development of Christian character in children. Thus, a reconstitution of beloved American notions provided a point of entry into Protestant thought that Americans were not inclined to resist, with the result that idealized “traditional” family life and Christianity became synonymous in the American mind.

Fishburn (1991) posited that the contemporary moral panic about the breakdown of the family had arisen from the post-WWII re-emphasis on “traditional” family life, a morality-charged crusade that made alternate views of family emerging from the 1960s seem like a threat to the purpose and direction of Christianity itself. She advised Christian leaders to wean the church from its dependency on the Christian home because studies indicated that parents were overrated and unreliable as teachers of Christian values. Moreover, because Christians in non-“traditional” families felt excluded by profamily teachings, there was a need for programs that would be meaningful within a diversity of lifestyles.

Following Fishburn's (1991) book was another book similarly deconstructing the religion-family connection, by Rodney Clapp (1993). Clapp, a former associate editor at *Christianity Today*, and a contributor to such publications as the *Christian Century* and the *Wall Street Journal* was general books editor for InterVarsity Press, the book-publishing division of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a student movement active on campus at hundreds of universities, colleges, and schools of nursing in the United States. His book, *Families at the Crossroads: Beyond Traditional and Modern Options*, received the following review from prominent theologian Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University:

Rodney Clapp has quite simply written the best book we have on the family by a Christian theologian. Challenging both evangelical [conservative] and mainstream [liberal] accounts of the family, Clapp shows how the family has to be reconfigured in terms of basic theological convictions of the Christian church. (1993, back cover)

Clapp (1993) reprised Fishburn's (1991) argument that there was no fundamental doctrinal connection between Christianity and the "traditional family," criticized the conservative Christian pre-occupation with family values, and affirmed that the church, not "the family," was the most significant influence upon the formation of a Christian character. He further argued that the "traditional" family was not natural, universal, or biologically determined, but merely the product of modernity, and that its preservation in a postmodern world was pointless (p. 23). He also condemned the conservative Christian tendency to equate capitalism and the Christian life-style:

The church's key responsibility is to live as the church, in the light of the kingdom, within a given host society. Christians are free to be grateful for

the genuine blessings of capitalism. But we are also free--indeed called--to see and respond to its flaws. (p. 54)

His concern was that rather than strengthening families, capitalism leaves them to work out their survival within the context of an uncaring, economically insensitive marketplace, thereby fostering the very individualism and selfishness profamily Christians often blamed for family breakdown.

Affirming that the true family of Christian doctrine is not the "traditional" family but the church, Clapp chided profamily religionists for reducing "Yaweh to a household god, [and] Jesus to a domestic mascot" (Clapp, 1993, p. 154). He also charged that "traditional" gender roles were inimical to Christian marriage reasoning that Christian marriages are *covenants* meant to transcend role restrictions and endure through time rather than *contracts* built upon gender complementarity and therefore rendered invalid when these roles are not fulfilled. Finally, he praised Christianity as a vision much grander than that of "a little family fixated on itself and its emotional coddling" (p. 164).

Statement of the Problem

Fishburn (1991) and Clapp (1993), both of whom are pro-Christian writers, have resolved that there is no inherent religion-family connection. Moreover, they agree that belief in such a connection is problematic because it results in the promotion of the "traditional" family as though it were a fundamental Christian concept when, in fact, it is not. They are concerned that this, in turn, results in a rhetoric that is not only counterproductive to Christian purposes but has a demoralizing effect upon society in

general. And in this latter contention particularly, they are not alone. Secular scholars in the field of history, psychology, and social science not only offer direct and indirect support for their conclusions, but reveal additional concerns that the rhetoric emerging from the religion-family connection is misguided and does more harm than good.

History

Several historians have recognized that, contrary to popular assumptions, times of strong family values do not have a mitigating effect on social problems. Profamily advocates claim that domestic violence would decrease if “traditional” families remained intact, but Coontz (1992) has noted that national murder rates were higher in the 1930s than in the 1980s after divorce rates had greatly increased (Martelli, 1994). Her studies of 19th and 20th century Progressivism reveal that the idealization of the “traditional” family correlates with hatred of the poor, increased incidents of racism, the blaming and scapegoating of parents, and a move from debate to scandal-mongering and mean-spiritedness in the political arena. Noting that the contemporary profamily resurgence has resurrected and reinforced these same patterns, she has expressed concern that blaming national social ills on the decline of the “traditional” family will divert attention from real ills, inspiring the creation of domestic policies that ignore, rather than protect the needs of families (Martelli, 1994).

Thornton (1988) has argued that preoccupation with issues of family life by the clergy significantly weakens religious authority by setting up a scenario in which their credibility is at risk. Historically, religious leaders have issued official statements

condemning family-related social trends of tremendous practical consequence to families such as contraception, abortion, divorce, and maternal employment. Over time, however, as these trends became normative and their practical benefits more difficult to deny, the original pronouncements were retracted or severely compromised. As a result, many believers have come to view religious declarations, and religious authority in general, with a jaundiced eye. Sociologist Gordon Shepherd (1989) echoes Thornton's observation, observing that

The moral credibility of a church is impaired to the extent that its social teachings are spurned as irrelevant to the lives of its own members and not taken seriously or implemented in social conduct. Loss of credibility in one area of religious counsel, such as family morality and gender role expectations, may result in the deterioration of respect for religious authority on other issues as well. (1989, p. 51)

Hansen (1994) has noted that resurgences of interest in the "traditional" family are less the result of a concern over moral standards than a symptom of social and intellectual upheaval. He observes that during times of social unrest, people lose faith in public institutions. This leads them to conclude that *self* control rather than social and institutional control will stabilize "the frightening world" (p. 21) in which they live. Subsequently, people tend to fix the "burden of reform on the individual rather than on society . . . [so that] private sins [assume] an unprecedented, monumental significance" (p. 21). The result is a suspicion-laden surveillance of family life that creates a hostile environment for families.

Psychology

Some of this surveillance has been undertaken by the field of psychology.

Motivated by the theory that there is a strong correlation between a child's emotional adjustment and his/her environment, psychologists (while offering families much support) have generated an atmosphere within both psychology and popular culture that tends to highlight parental failures (Ehrenreich & English, 1978, p. 184). This, in turn, has fueled the profamily tendency to assume that social problems are caused by family breakdown, thereby creating a discourse that draws attention away from genuine social ills such as poverty and unemployment (Coontz, 1992).

Recently, however, the field of psychology has undergone a paradigm shift. One of "the longest and most thorough studies of child development ever attempted" (Paul, 1998, p. 46) has led to a significant re-evaluation of its theories of child development. According to Robert Plomin, Ph.D., a behavioral geneticist at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, "Family environment does have an effect upon personality development, but not in the way we've always thought." (Paul, 1998, p. 48). Davis Reiss, M.D., a psychiatrist at George Washington University and his collaborator, E. Mavis Heatherington, Ph.D., both agree with Plomin. The notion that there is a correlation between ideal family environments and well-adjusted children is being challenged by a theory based upon a more complex hypothesis acknowledging that heredity has more influence than previously thought upon a child's behavior:

As behavior geneticists understand it, the way heredity shapes who we are is less like one-way dictation [the “heredity equals destiny” assumption] and more like spirited rounds of call and response, with each phrase spoken by heredity summoning an answer from the environment. Scientists’ unwieldy name for this exchange is “evocative gene-environment correlations,” so called because people’s genetic make-up is thought to bring forth particular reactions from others, which in turn, influences their personalities. A baby with a sunny disposition will receive more affection than one who is difficult; an attractive child will be smiled at more often than a homely one. And the qualities that prompt such responses from parents are likely to elicit more of the same from others, so that over time a self-image is created and confirmed in other’s eyes. (Paul, 1998, p. 48)

This advances the possibility that the model of family in which a child is raised is far less important than “*how* a parent responds to a child’s genetically-influenced characteristics” (Paul, 1998, p. 49). Accordingly, Stanley Greenspan, M.D. a pediatric psychiatrist at George Washington Medical School and author of *The Growth of the Mind*, is actively applying the discoveries of genetics to theories of parenting. He explains that “Genes do create certain general tendencies, but parents can work with these by tailoring their actions to the nervous system of the child” (Paul, 1998, p. 78). This suggests that a divorced, lesbian mother who accommodates her child’s genetic tendencies is more likely to raise a well-adjusted child than more “traditional” parents who stress “traditional” values but who resist their child’s genetic tendencies. In other words, the production of a well-adjusted child is not as dependent upon the promotion of “traditional” values as it is upon the correspondence between a child’s environment and his/her genetic tendencies. As author Annie Murphy Paul (1998) explains,

[Poorly adjusted children are more likely to result] when children's abilities don't match their parent's expectations; when their genetically influenced temperament clashes with that of their parents; or when their environment offers them few opportunities to express themselves constructively, as often is the case with children who grow up in severe poverty. Research has shown that a poor person-to-environment match can lead to decreased motivation, diminished mental health, and rebellious or anti-social behavior. (p. 48).

Clearly, findings to date demonstrating the important effect of biology upon child development suggest that the value of the "traditional" family and "traditional" values as a panacea for social problems are overstated and, at best, offer a significantly distorted view of the effect of parenting and family life upon child development.

Social Science

Proponents of the theory of "evocative gene-environment correlations" and the child rearing techniques arising from it could well encounter resistance from a large group of social scientists who have a stake in the "traditional" family. During the 1980s, numerous conservative Christian denominations began sponsoring a multitude of professionally administered social science projects to examine the interface between religion and family life (Thomas, 1988, p. 359). This has created a research dynamic within the profamily religious community in which social scientists conduct research with the tacit understanding that their findings will validate the religion-family connection. Sociologist Gordon Shepherd (1989), himself a member of a conservative religious organization, acknowledges that such in-house investigations do not result in "scholarship *per se*" (p. 52) nor arise from an authentic interest in social science. Rather, they are

prompted by misgivings among religionists about “the motives of detached [social science] investigators” (p. 52) and are more “committed to managing [a church’s] public image” (p. 52) as a champion of “the family” than to an impartial scrutiny of the religion-family connection.

An example of the kind of study that can arise within this research setting is *Religion and Family in Middletown, USA* (Bahr & Chadwick, 1988, pp. 51-65). The authors of this paper, who (respectively) hold Ph.D’s from the University of Texas, and Washington University, St. Louis, hypothesized that there was a direct relationship between religiosity and familism, defining familism as a lifestyle that eschews divorce, promotes marital fertility, and practices happy marriage. (It should be acknowledged that their work revealed a sophisticated comprehension of the history of family life and an acute understanding of the debate surrounding family breakdown and its relationship to religious observance.) To demonstrate their hypothesis, they combined data from multiple surveys, questionnaires, and interviews intended to gauge the correlation between church attendance and (a) marital status, (b) marital happiness, and (c) marital fertility. Moreover, they were careful to “obtain a sizable sample of married respondents with no religious preference” (Bahr & Chadwick, 1988, p. 59.)

The resultant data allowed them to conclude that religiosity correlated positively with all three variables, thus demonstrating that religion and familism were linked. This, in turn, validated the religion-family connection and enhanced the reputation of their

sponsoring institution. Nonetheless, in appraising the data, they were appropriately rigorous, carefully noting that

Having a religious preference and attending church are related to the disposition to marry and to stay married; or perhaps being divorced and/or separated is associated with low church attendance. The cross-sectional data do not allow us to clearly identify cause and effect. Justifiable rationales can be given for both interpretations. Religiosity does give greater value to marriage and family values, thereby reducing divorce. Likewise, those who divorce may find it less rewarding to attend church, thereby scoring lower on this measure of religiosity. (Bahr & Chadwick, 1988, pp. 59-60.)

Although this caveat briefly acknowledged that the religion-family connection might be self-creating or socially constructed, the authors did not state this directly. Instead, in their conclusion, they seemed to assert cause and effect nevertheless, stating that “the vitality of [religion and “the family” are] related [because] people often reaffirmed their religious faith and devotion to their families in the same conversation, many times explicitly linking the two (Bahr & Chadwick, 1988, pp. 63-64). They did not (and for obvious reasons, *could* not) consider the implications of such statements: Did these reaffirmations express the subject’s understanding of Christian theology or simply reflect a tendency of the faithful to echo profamily themes that are heavily stressed in their religious communities and which their religious leaders constantly urge them to exemplify? Thus, caught between profamily ideology and scientific method, Bahr and Chadwick were left to conclude only that in the public mind “there is little doubt . . . that the institutions are intertwined” (1988, p. 64). Ironically, this conclusion undermines rather than establishes their church’s profamily position.

Such limitations notwithstanding, social science studies funded by conservative Christians (propelled by an ardent movement) have received wide distribution and considerable media exposure (Scanzoni, 1988). In contrast, Fishburn's (1991) and Clapp's (1993) opposing perspective has been noticed by a small (albeit elite) segment of theologically oriented academia. In fact, the impact of Fishburn and Clapp upon public perceptions was so negligible that a year after Clapp's book appeared, the promotion of profamily ideology (already at an intense level) markedly surged. Perhaps its most notable success occurred during the 1994 national election when Republicans gained a majority of seats in Congress for the first time in 40 years. This was significant because it was a victory propelled by a dedicated conservative Christian political base who inspired the Republican Party to construct a profamily platform and use "Family Values" as their convention theme.

Institutionalized Racism, Sexism, and Classism

The uncritical acceptance of "Family Values" discourse has major implications for how we consider inequities of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. As Fishburn (1991) has shown, family rhetoric, with its foundation in 19th century Protestantism and American idealization of the middle class home, is poised to sanction only a limited range of identities and cultural readings. Its powerful reassertion of the "traditional" family as derived from the television situation comedies of the 1950s such as "Leave it to Beaver," and "Father Knows Best" (Coontz, 1992) does much to drown out "alternative familially-regionally-institutionally-politically-historically-processes of knowing" (Lee, Chung, Wang

& Hertel, 1995, p. 1) and thus underscores many traditionalist assumptions such as the second-class citizenship of minorities, women, and homosexuals.

An example of how profamily ideology tends to idealize “traditional” families and, by extension, problematize others, is found in the following biographical sketch identifying the author of an essay promoting profamily concerns:

_____ is of the “special women” of this world who had all choices at her fingertips. As a graduate of Harvard University she could have pursued a promising career, but chose to be an “at-home” mother. She and her husband, Dr. _____, are the parents of eleven children--bright, high achieving children. They live in Bethesda, Maryland.

Her resume also includes a long list of speaking and teaching experiences. But her special family will no doubt be her “crowning glory.” (Roylance, 1996, p. 144)

Note this reframing of patriarchy’s subjugation of women to the domestic/maternal role as something that is not only optional but that ought to be accepted cheerfully as women’s only moral alternative; note the implied correlation between “traditional” gender roles and the development of family’s that are “special” and create a master race of “bright, high-achieving children”; and note the suggestion that a woman’s *voluntary* intellectual and spiritual efforts within the public sphere (“speaking and teaching”) are hierarchically lower than her biologically-driven and therefore partly *involuntary* maternal function that is judged to be “her crowning glory.” These evocations of the sexism, hetero-sexism, racism, and classism that flourished prior to the civil rights movement, are reason enough to conclude that profamily ideology deserves the kind of scrutiny performed by Fishburn

(1991) and Clapp (1993) that distinguishes it from the realm of the sacrosanct and allows it to be examined in its sociohistorical context.

Clearly, many scholars in numerous fields have demonstrated that there are negative effects to having a general, national misunderstanding about “the family.” Given this, it ought to be of concern that Fishburn’s (1991) and Clapp’s (1993) ground breaking work applies only to Protestantism, leaving unchallenged the religion-family connection expressed in such manifestly profamily religions as Catholicism and Mormonism. (It will be explained in Chapter Two that contemporary Mormonism, while distinctly conservative and profamily, is not Protestant.) Therefore, the general problem with which this study concerns itself is the need for further deconstruction of the religion-family connection. A specific research question will be identified later.

Theoretical Grounding

Much of the problematic persuasiveness and moral authority of the religion-family connection rests upon the fact that as an ideology, it privileges certain groups over others and is assumed to be “natural or generally applicable” (O’Sullivan, et al., 1994, p. 140) when it is not. Exposition of the language structure that mobilizes this power imbalance has been a focus of the work of Foucault (1970). As Pearce (1989) explains,

The “deconstruction” of various language games can be an important means of social criticism. Foucault’s work, for example, is based upon the assumption that no society allows anyone complete freedom of speech, and appropriates unevenly the right to speak about particular things in particular ways. These restrictions and exclusions are in the service of power. His “archeological” work has shown how particular

conceptualizations of madness and sexuality have had major formative influences on Western society. (p. 80)

As we have seen, the work of Fishburn (1991) and Clapp (1993) embodies Foucault's theory. It was an archeological "dig" into the terminology and sociohistorical origins of the religion-family connection, uncovering them, revealing them to be neither natural reality *nor* transcendent truth, and identifying the groups they marginalized to the advantage of those in power. This project continues the "archeological" excavation of these ideological foundations.

Subjugated Knowledge

If we use the metaphor of archeology, a fitting analytical strategy for this project is grounded in Foucault's (1993) conceptualization of subjugated knowledge. Subjugated knowledge (for our purposes) refers to historical content that has been obscured by an *official* history that purports to be "pure, homogeneous, and devoid of shifts and discontinuities" (Lee & Wander, 1998, p. 154) that undermine its premises and that would unsettle the present power structure. Fishburn and Clapp exposed subjugated knowledge about the religion-family connection by "unearthing" historical data that the profamily version of history had discarded in order to maintain its status as incontrovertible reality. By thus placing the religion-family connection in context, they destabilized the reasoning with which profamily ideology privileges the "traditional" family over other lifestyles.

Their work could be extended by a more penetrating excavation of religious history that retrieves the record of its rhetoric--in this case, rhetoric on "the family" as

promulgated within a specific religious community. The twin concepts “discursive amnesia” and “discursive amnesty” (Lee & Wander, 1998, p. 154) are helpful in understanding how this can be accomplished.

Discursive Amnesia and Discursive Amnesty

“Discursive amnesia” is a term that has been coined to describe the human tendency to bury, forget, or lose track of, facts that challenge a society’s legitimated histories and in so doing, allow the negative labeling and oppressions they can hide to go undisputed. “Discursive amnesty” is a term referring to the recovery of this “disqualified” (Lee & Wander, 1998, p. 155) knowledge for the purpose of exposing and disabling (and thereby disputing) these negative labels and oppressions. To expose and uproot this disqualified knowledge, Lee and Wander (1998) recommend Sawicki’s (1991) method of organizing its “geneological history” (Lee & Wander, p. 155) by the application of a “grid of analysis that radically facilitates a ‘collective remembering’ of the forgotten” (Sawicki, 1991, p. 53).

In the case of this project, the construction of such a “grid of analysis” requires two stages. The first stage requires the identification of an appropriate sample of historical discourse in which there appears a “discontinuity (or shift or change) in discursive practices” (Lee & Wander, p. 155) that signals the existence of a forgotten perspective. The second stage scrutinizes the sample of historical discourse seeking to unveil “the forgotten sociopolitical contexts in which the [negative labeling and oppressive] terms once worked” (p. 155). Such an unveiling is relevant to the religion-

family connection because it would identify the sociohistorical forces and the attendant rhetorics that mark the gradual merger of the discourse of Domestic Protestantism with the larger universe of Christian discourse. This would bestow discursive amnesty upon the victims of profamily rhetoric and further unmask the religion-family connection by showing that its provenance is not transcendent but evolutionary, not fundamental but contrived, not natural but socially constructed.

Accordingly, the author has done a study of the religion-family discourse of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter referred to as the “Mormon” church, and its members by the designation “Saints” or “Mormons”). Mormonism is the religious tradition in which the author has spent most of her life. Familiarity with its theology, history and customs leads the author to believe that it would be an excellent focus for this case study. The reason? It is a major proponent of Domestic Protestantism and contains a clearly identifiable historical and discursive discontinuity in this regard. In its early years, and for over half a century after its origins, its adherents believed that the Old Testament model of family with its multiple wives (polygamy) was not only *essential* for salvation, but of “central importance” as a tenet of the faith (Compton, 1996, p. 11). In fact, the church’s highest leadership officially stated in 1885 that God would *never* allow it to denounce or discontinue polygamy because God “had revealed it and He had promised to maintain it” (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984, p.81). Yet, despite these assurances, Mormonism abandoned the polygamous family and now promotes the “traditional” family as “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children”

(Hinckley, Monson & Faust, 1995, one-page brochure) with virtually the same themes and vocabulary as profamily Protestantism. The church's present focus on the "traditional" family is so great that one Mormon writer expressed the following concern:

In recent decades the Church [sic] and its members have fallen prey to a new kind of idol: traditional family.

For the first time in the recorded history of Christianity and Mormonism we are introducing the gospel of Christ with the slogan "Families are Forever." In short, we are taught that the traditional family is the common denominator of the Church [sic]; and our religion and church activities have become primarily a family affair. (Ryder, 1985, p. 25)

Moreover, although there is some sense among Mormons that the discontinuity (discursive shift or change) from polygamous or plural families to "traditional" families was extremely painful, it is poorly understood and much of its history has been hidden from the faithful. This marks it as a distinct example of discursive amnesia and alerts us to the existence of subjugated knowledge within Mormon history.

Because the church has left a well-organized record of its official rhetoric during the transition, and Mormon and non-Mormon scholars have provided many reliable sources of unofficial Mormon history, it is possible to recover some of this subjugated information. Employing a genealogical framework--grounded in Foucault (1993), assembled upon the structure proposed by Sawicki (1991), and embellished by Lee and Wander (1998)--one can mark off discursive stages through which Mormonism evolved from the declaration of one unchanging and central version of "family" to the declaration of another without the expected acknowledgment that such a significant "doctrinal"

adjustment had occurred. Recalling Fishburn's argument that the religion-family connection is a tactical consolidation of Protestantism's diverse theologies that has crept up on America and reached a level of almost unprecedented sacrosanctity, this study examines a similar case of ideological "creep" as it occurred within a different religious tradition. It also answers the primary research question to which this project is devoted: How did Mormonism move from the endowment of one unchanging and eternal doctrine of family to another without specifically identifying a doctrinal change?

Description of Research Method

Applying the general concepts above, the author performed several steps, the first of which was to survey Mormon family rhetoric in order to identify a period of time in which Mormon notions of the family shifted from the polygamous to the "traditional" family. Having identified the general parameters of this period, the author chose two texts to serve (roughly) as markers of its beginning and end. Then, from the population of recorded speeches and statements that appeared between these two marker texts, she chose seven representative texts exemplifying Mormon family rhetoric at specific times within this evolution. The author then arranged these seven texts chronologically between the two "marker texts." This created a grid of analysis that consisted of a family rhetoric "time line." Her final task was to approach each text by describing its sociohistorical context and then conduct a rhetorical analysis that (i) identified the definition of the family it promulgated, and (ii) identified the rhetorics (available means of persuasion) that were used to justify it. It should be mentioned that texts for the time line were restricted to

those that (a) were produced by members of Mormonism's leading ranks, (b) were disseminated by means of publication in an official church magazine, distribution to every member in the form of a pamphlet, or through inclusion in the church's canon of sacred writings, (c) were in a discursive form of eminence such as canonized scripture or a sermon presented on an ecclesiastically significant occasion, and (d) manifested a change with respect to the manner in which previous ecclesiastical rhetoric defined and defended the Mormon family. The time line itself conveyed an impression of the frequency with which family rhetoric appeared within Mormon rhetoric as a whole. If samples of family rhetoric were plentiful, evenly distributed, or sparse within a particular span of time, the time line clustered them accordingly.

To clarify the analysis for those unfamiliar with Mormonism, Chapter Two explains Mormon history, doctrine, scripture, leadership structure, discursive practices, and describes Mormonism's original model of family. (Familiarity with this "original model" is essential because it is the platform from which the evolution of Mormon family rhetoric is launched.) Chapter Three analyzes the texts in the time line; and Chapter Four discusses the implications of this analysis for the legitimacy of the religion-family connection. The author hopes such a discussion will place the relationship between religion and the family into clearer focus and better inform many sincere participants in the debate over social policy now raging in America.

CHAPTER 2

MORMONISM: AN OVERVIEW

As Fishburn (1991) has clarified, the religion-family connection emerged from Protestantism's 19th century movement to make America a Protestant nation. At this writing, however, many Protestants distinguish themselves denominationally from conservative Protestants and their intense profamily inclinations (Scanzoni, 1988). A somewhat similar situation exists among Catholics. While Catholicism's uncompromising resistance to divorce and its opposition to birth control give it considerable allegiance to profamily ideology (Wrenn, 1980), its continuing tradition of monasticism does not (Spickard, 1988). Therefore, Catholics who marry and those who enter either seminaries or convents exemplify two different theological approaches to the significance of family life to the life of the spirit. Contemporary Mormonism, however, is monolithically profamily, and has become a major player within the largely conservative Protestant-driven American profamily movement. Its "award-winning, soft-sell Homefront television and radio spots which link Mormons with American middle-class family and Christian values [have been] given free to broadcast stations" (Carre, 1989, p.18) for roughly two decades, and have, as a result, reached audiences in the tens of millions yearly. These ads (the church refers to them as "public service announcements") are part of a serious, sometimes scientifically informed campaign. Many of them were created on the basis of marketing studies commissioned by church leadership to identify effective methods of attracting potential converts. One such study broke down the "target markets" of the

affluent in the United States into categories and found that three “key words” were highly effective in persuading people to investigate and join the church. The words were “Christ,” “purpose,” and “family.” (Le Fevre, 1994).

Mormonism’s profamily campaign has been so effective that contemporary Mormonism is virtually synonymous with the notion of the “traditional” family and gains much public esteem from the equation (Bradley, 1990). This esteem is highly valued for during much of the 19th century and a good part of the 20th, the church was so unorthodox and highly controversial that by 1890, the United States government felt compelled to bring it to the brink of destruction (Alexander, 1986; Bradley, 1990). This highly controversial nature combined with a less than diplomatic assertion in one of its sacred texts that God regards all other churches and their creeds “all wrong . . . [and an] “abomination in [His] sight” (*Pearl of Great Price*, 1981, Joseph Smith--History, 1:19) has inspired an anti-Mormon movement that has plagued Mormonism since its inception, and today, is a major enterprise among conservative American Protestants. Contemporary anti-Mormons vigorously denounce Mormon doctrine, charging, among other things, that it “is not Christian in any sense” (Shipps, 1985, p. x). For an institution named The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this is a frustrating appraisal and as a result, Mormons greatly appreciate their reputation as successful practitioners of the “traditional” family.

Nonetheless, Mormonism’s reputation as a staunch advocate of “traditional” family life is wildly and conclusively at variance with its early history and scripture. To begin

with, Mormon scripture does not recommend the “traditional” family as society’s moral foundation. On the contrary, it endorses the ancient Hebrew practice of having many wives (polygyny) as described in the Old Testament and in Section 132 of one of its own sacred text, the *Doctrine and Covenants* (1981). A review of early Mormon rhetoric indicates that the “central idea of early-day Mormonism” (Larsen, 1954, p. 85) was not the family but “the advent of the millenium” (Shipps, 1985, p. 128)--a cataclysmic event in which the Saints expected Christ to return and the earth to be transformed into a paradise. Moreover, there is no evidence that the church’s founder, Joseph Smith, viewed the “traditional” family as a foundational aspect of Mormon doctrine. The word “family” is not listed in the Index and Concordance sections of either of the two books of his compiled writings (Smith, 1976, p. 407; Ehat & Cook, 1981, p. 432). In fact, during Smith’s leadership, and for several decades after his death in 1844, his church rejected much of the profamily ideology it now vigorously advocates.

Between 1840 and 1890, as Americans embraced Domestic Protestantism’s religiously oriented, monogamous, “traditional” marriage and the female “cult of domesticity,” Mormonism moved in a radically different direction. Mormon marriage practices shifted from monogamy to polygyny (Shipps, 1985) and Mormon women entered such traditionally male-dominated religious activities as healing, prophesying, and the administration of blessings (Newell, 1985; Evans, 1992). In 1842, Joseph Smith established a women’s organization (Relief Society) over which female leaders had complete jurisdiction (Newell, 1985) and from which they independently administered

several significant programs of social outreach (Alexander, 1986). Thirty years later, with the support of church leaders, the women set up their own publications, thereby assuming the “prestigious role of social definer or producer of public information—a role otherwise reserved for men” (Evans, 1992, p. 50).

Only in the 20th century did Mormon leadership reduce female autonomy to the domestic sphere (Farnsworth, 1992; Newell, 1985) and emphasize the “traditional” family within Mormon discourse. The first significant discursive link between Mormon doctrine and the “traditional” family did not occur until the 1930s (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984). While 19th century Mormon leaders emphasized “Utopian experimentation and social reform” (p. 199) in their earlier speeches, their 20th century counterparts did not promote the “traditional” family and its related themes with regularity until the 1950s (p. 199).

Of enormous significance to this project is the fact that most contemporary Mormons are unaware of this history. The authoritative discourse they hear not only promotes “traditional” family life on a consistent basis, but treats it as if it has *always* been a centerpiece of Mormon theology. In 1966 a high ranking Mormon leader compiled a reference book of Mormon doctrine that is consulted by the general membership of the church. Under the heading “Family,” he declared that

Among the Saints the family [a husband and wife with children] is the basic unit of society, and its needs and preservation in righteousness take precedence over all other things. (McConkie, 1966, p. 273)

In 1987, another high-ranking leader taught that

The church, in large part, exists for the salvation and exaltation of the family. . . . No more sacred word exists in holy writ than that of mother.
(Benson, 1987, p. 1)

In 1993, another declared that “Lucifer’s single purpose” was to thwart the purposes of the family (Packer, 1993a, p. 21), and the church’s 1995 announcement entitled “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” defined what was by implication the “traditional” family, as “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (Hinckley et al., 1995). This reification of the “traditional” family strongly implies that when Mormonism was first founded, the mind of its founder was wholeheartedly fixed upon the “traditional” family. Since (as shall be detailed later) this was not the case, and since the church practiced polygyny for over half a century, it is natural to wonder why the church now endorses the “traditional” family when it once endorsed a model of family that was distinctly non-traditional.

As we shall see, the change occurred gradually, but not invisibly. The movement of Mormonism’s family “doctrine” from polygyny to Domestic Protestantism is visible in the recorded speeches and official pronouncements of church leaders. An analysis of these texts enables us to identify some of the steps by which this evolution occurred, indicating when, and in what stages, profamily philosophy became a prominent feature of Mormon discourse. To prepare the reader for such an analysis, an overview of Mormon history, doctrine, scripture, church leadership, and discursive practices follows.

History

Mormonism was launched during the early 1820s by Joseph Smith, Jr., a young man greatly affected by “the unusual excitement on the subject of religion” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 1981, Joseph Smith--History 2:5) that fomented in his upstate New York community. As Smith himself explained,

In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads “if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (Joseph Smith--History, 2:10-11).

Taking this scripture at face value, Smith prayed. Over a period of time he received visitations, first from God and Jesus Christ, and later from an angel named Moroni. In his first encounter with God and Jesus Christ, Smith asked them which of the many churches in the area he should join and was told to join none because they “were all corrupt” (*Pearl of Great Price*, 1981, Joseph Smith 1:19). Subsequently, the angel Moroni commanded Smith to locate and translate (with supernatural help) ancient records buried in a nearby hill. These records described the history of “the former inhabitants of [the American] continent” (*Pearl of Great Price*, 1981, Joseph Smith--History, 1:34), narrated their dealings with God, and recounted the post-resurrectional appearance and personal ministry of Jesus Christ among them. Because they were an abridgement of the writings of several ancient prophets by a “prophet-historian” (*The Book of Mormon*, 1981,

Introduction) named Mormon, these records were known collectively as *The Book of Mormon*. (A discussion of Mormon scripture will follow under the heading “Scripture.”)

In 1830, Smith published *The Book of Mormon*, touting it as an anthology of holy writings comparable to the Bible. Because it predicted that the Kingdom of God (or “Zion” as sometimes it is called) would be established on the American continent in the “latter days” after having been “gathered” from all the nations of the earth, Smith tried to facilitate that “gathering” (*Book of Mormon*, 1981, Introduction). On April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York, Smith and a small group of followers organized the “Church of Jesus Christ,”--the reference to “Latter-day Saints” was added later--and proselytized extensively. Their promotion of *The Book of Mormon* as supplemental to the Bible, garnered them the nick-name “Mormons,” and their religion the label “Mormonism.”

Although missionary efforts expedited the church’s rapid growth, antagonism often developed between the church and its host communities. Hostile groups uprooted it so consistently, and with such violence, it finally fled civilization altogether, seeking security in Utah’s Great Salt Lake Valley. Arriving in 1847, after a monumental trek across the Western Plains, the fledgling church finally established church headquarters in what is now Salt Lake City. Over the next century and a half, its tradition of dedicated missionary work turned Mormonism into a world-wide religion that, at this writing, has approximately 10 million members (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Web site:\\www.lds.com). These members, if they are “active members,” participate in the church through their local congregations or “wards” under the leadership of a lay pastor,

or “bishop” and when addressing each other formally, substitute the titles “Mr.”, and “Miss,” “Ms.,” or “Mrs.,” with the designations “Brother” and “Sister.”

During this gradual westward odyssey, Smith was murdered by an angry mob and Brigham Young assumed leadership. Young led the church from 1845 until his death in 1877, at which time Mormonism was well-established along the Wasatch Front of Utah’s Rocky Mountains (Shipps, 1985). One sign of its success is church-owned Brigham Young University, a fully accredited, well-equipped campus servicing over 28,000 students, the vast majority of whom are devout Mormons.

Doctrine

Mormonism is difficult to locate doctrinally. It is rooted in Judeo-Christian tradition, because it arose from Joseph Smith’s query to God as to which of all the contending Christian denominations in his locality were “true.” Yet, because it emerged from Smith’s supernatural experiences, and was not a spin-off of a Protestant denomination, it is not considered Protestant. Non-Mormon religious historian Jan Shipps (1985), a professor at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, has theorized that it is neither Protestant *nor* Judeo-Christian but “a new religious tradition” (p. x):

Despite the surprising similarity between some of the modern cultural manifestations of Mormonism and American evangelical Protestantism, Mormonism started to grow away from traditional Christianity almost immediately upon coming into existence. It began as a movement that understood itself as Christian, but as [it] . . . commenced . . . Latter-day Saints . . . embarked on a path that led to developments that now distinguish their tradition from the Christian tradition as surely as early Christianity was distinguished from its Hebraic context. (p. x)

Among these distinguishing developments are the beliefs that (a) Joseph Smith was a prophet in the ancient Hebrew tradition of Abraham, (b) Mormonism is the restoration of a pure form of religion taught to Adam in the Garden of Eden, (c) Mormonism's priesthood is the lone repository on earth of genuine authority to act for God, (d) revelation from God cannot be entombed in a complete and inerrant holy book (as the Bible is purported to be) but is continually available to the seeker on levels both personal and institutional, (e) *The Book of Mormon* augments the Bible's witness to the world of the resurrection, divinity, and salvific power of Jesus Christ, (f) God (assumed by the rest of Christendom to be a single, male, father figure) has a female counterpart or "wife" referred to as "Heavenly Mother" or "Mother in Heaven," (g) polygamy is a legitimate form of marriage, and (h) family relationships last beyond death "for time and all eternity" and are essential for the ultimate reward God can bestow upon His children--godhood (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 1981, Section 132, Verses 41-49).

Among the most significant aspects of Mormon doctrine is the manner in which it relates marriage and family life with salvation. Marriage for "time and all eternity" is an ordinance available to worthy Mormons who are allowed access to the temple--a building that functions as the church's inner sanctum. There, in symbolic rituals and ordinances, Mormons in good standing are taught the more esoteric aspects of Mormon theology (Homer, 1994; Owens, 1994). In temples, worthy Mormon couples may be married by means of an ordinance that binds them to each other both in life and in their eternal, post-mortal existence. This ordinance is called a "sealing." Children born to a couple thus

sealed are automatically sealed to their parents for eternity and those the couple adopts may be sealed to them by means of an ordinance especially suited to that purpose. These children, it is hoped, will reach adulthood and find a mate to whom they will be sealed also, producing (or adopting) offspring who are, in turn, sealed to them. Thus, ideally, each Mormon is linked to one familial succession at birth and another at marriage, creating a complex network of interconnecting “sealed” relationships.

Many Mormons see the sealing ordinances as an endorsement of the “traditional” family, focusing on the appealing notion of being linked to their immediate loved ones in marital and parental relationships that last even after death. Still, when pressed, they do not deny that it does far more than this. Indeed, the temple sealing ritual is the means by which Mormons hope to make it possible for each human being who ever was born (and who ever *will* be born) to be sealed together forming a single, measureless, interconnected family. They believe that only as part of this endless and eternal network of kin can one become “fellow citizens in the household of God” (Ryder, 1985, p. 26) and thereby achieve salvation. According to Mormon theology, salvation is available to each individual through Christ’s atonement. But salvation in the Mormon sense has several levels and the highest level--referred to as “exaltation”--is achieved only when humanity is comprehensively interconnected through the sealing ordinances. When one is excommunicated from the church for having committed “adultery, apostasy, rebellion, cruelty to wives and children and all crimes involving moral turpitude” (McConkie, 1966,

p. 258), one not only loses church membership but is disconnected from this eternal web of relationships and thus expelled from God's family. Because this is such a dreadful prospect, the lesser penalty of "disfellowshipment" (denial of full participation in meetings and sacred rituals [p. 199]) is often enforced instead.

It is not within the scope of this project to provide an in-depth explanation of the corporate vision of salvation engendered by the temple ordinances. It should be noted, however, that the symbolism of the temple does not illustrate the profamily belief that the "traditional" nuclear family is central to God's plan for humanity. Rather, it suggests almost the opposite: One is exalted not because one has *enforced* the boundaries of the "traditional" family but because one has *transcended* them to create the family of God. Thus, the message of the sealing ordinance is not that a particular model of family provides an opening to spirituality, but that true spirituality is based upon a vision of humanity in which all people are recognized as one's family. One might argue that this human network is representative of profamily philosophy because it is forged on the basis of marriage between a man and a woman (i.e. the "traditional" family). But this argument does not address the fact that numerous "plural families" based upon polygynous and polygamous (or "plural") marriages are sealed into its expansive web.

Familiarity with the peculiarly Mormon doctrine of plural marriage is critical to an understanding of this study since it is the first family doctrine that appeared in Mormon theology and practice. Because it is complex and because the terminology that has developed around it requires explanation, it is often misunderstood. Therefore, it is

discussed in detail in the best position to provide a launching pad for the review of Mormon family rhetoric in Chapter Three.

Scripture

Because Mormonism proceeded from Joseph Smith's intense and visionary response to the biblical admonition to "ask of God" (James 2:5), Mormons accept the Bible as scripture. Nevertheless, they believe that personal revelation offers wisdom superior to any text, and therefore limit biblical authority with the caveat that the Bible is true "as far as it is translated correctly" (*Pearl of Great Price*, 1981, Articles of Faith #8, p. 60). They also accept *The Book of Mormon* and several other scriptural records, among them *The Pearl of Great Price*, a collection of holy books that includes writings of Joseph Smith and his translations of certain ancient texts that are considered scriptural. All books that make up the Mormon scriptural canon are collectively referred to as "The Standard Works." This thesis analyzes several texts contained in the *Doctrine and Covenants* [hereafter identified in citations as [D&C].

The *Doctrine and Covenants* is a compilation of writings by Joseph Smith and two other Mormon prophets which records revelations they claimed to have received from God. Altogether, it contains two "Official Declarations," and 138 sections that (in standard scriptural form) are divided into numbered verses. The first "Official Declaration" is a public statement issued in 1890 announcing the church's intention to submit to recently passed laws forbidding polygamy; the second is the text of a 1978 press

release declaring that the church had just reversed its longstanding policy of withholding priesthood from black males.

Leadership Structure

Mormon leadership is molded loosely on the system of offices set up by Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament but also has retained some offices that were held in the Old Testament. Accordingly, the church is headed by a prophet, who (in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets Moses and Abraham) is believed to receive revelation and guidance directly from God. This prophet, who also holds the office of President of the Church, lives in Salt Lake City, in an official residence. Beneath the church president in rank is a “quorum” of twelve apostles. Each apostle is regarded as a “special witness for Christ” and remains in his apostolic office for life. The apostle with the most seniority holds the title “President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.” At the death of the President of the Church, this senior apostle is promoted into the office of Church President and the apostle just below him in seniority takes over and is known as the “President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.”

The President of the Church serves with two assistants who also hold the office of apostle and are referred to as his “First” and “Second Counselors.” These also are chosen from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Together, the president and his two counselors form a triumvirate called “The First Presidency,” which is “the supreme governing body of the church” (McConkie, 1966, p. 48). The vacancies left when apostles are called out of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to the office of Church President, or as a counselor to

to the President, are filled by men who are called from among the lower ranks of leaders. Leaders who are members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and The First Presidency are called “general authorities” because their duties are devoted to the church in general and their authority is not confined to any specific locale, as in the case of the Bishop of a ward (McConkie, 1966, p. 309).

The speeches and comments of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are accorded a significance within Mormon rhetoric not accorded the rhetoric of leaders of lesser status who live in neighborhoods spread out all over the world. For the purposes of this study, a detailed account of the leadership ranks below the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Apostles is not necessary, since this study deals only with highly authoritative rhetoric.

All the leaders in the hierarchy just described are male and hold the Mormon version of priesthood, a lay priesthood which is given to every worthy Mormon male at the age of twelve. (Women are not considered eligible to hold priesthood because their primary function is thought to be motherhood which, as mentioned earlier, was not exactly the case in the 19th century.) By the authority of this all-male priesthood, called the “Melchizedek priesthood,” Mormon men are authorized, by assignment, to preside over the day-to-day administration of church matters and to perform religious ordinances such as baptism, confirmation, the naming and blessing of infants and the blessing of the sick. They also are qualified to speak with authority on matters of doctrine according to their position in the hierarchy. In fact, the official utterances of church presidents and

apostles are considered virtually doctrinal. Lower ranks of leadership exert authority over those beneath them but only church leaders at the highest levels have the ability to shape doctrinal interpretations. As Shepherd & Shepherd (1984) explain,

To . . . comprehend the religion of the Latter-day Saints. . . [one must recognize] the essentially theocratic character of Mormon beliefs. The Mormons' claim to religious truth is based on the belief in modern revelation as the ultimate source of spiritual knowledge. The Latter-day Saints also believe that those who occupy positions of authority in the church have been called by divine inspiration. Not only do Mormons believe that their leaders are chosen by God, but also that they are guided by the "Holy Spirit" in the performance of their official duties in such a way that their leadership is a manifestation of God's will rather than their own. (p. 9)

The time and hierarchical position from which such a general authority speaks is considered should authoritative statements of one contradict another. For example, the statement of a church president takes precedence over that of an apostle and when doctrinal inconsistencies arise between the statements of two church presidents, there is an informal agreement that the most recent utterance governs.

Discursive Practices

The family rhetoric of Mormonism is located in the speeches of the church's general authorities, in its official pronouncements, in articles in church publications, in church advertisements, and in the speech of everyday Mormons. This thesis will consider only the speeches of general authorities and the church's official pronouncements (written by the First Presidency) in tracking the evolution of Mormon family rhetoric because (as stated earlier) the focus of this project is confined to Mormonism's *official* position on

family. To understand these official texts in context, it is important to understand how they proceed within Mormon discursive practice with respect to its settings and purposes.

Mormon congregations meet almost every Sunday in their local chapels. During these meetings, contemporary Mormons rarely see a leader of the rank of general authority although there was more contact with high ranking leaders when the church was newer and smaller. General authorities (who enjoy a celebrity status within the church and whose photographs appear in church publications and church buildings for identification purposes) normally speak at meetings supplemental to the regular Sunday schedule that are attended by large audiences of Mormons. In Mormon vernacular, these meetings are called “general conference,” “general Relief Society meetings,” and “church firesides.” (There are a few other occasions at which a general authority might address a Mormon audience, but they do not apply to this study.) Sometimes, also, the First Presidency addresses the entire world in a form of message known as a “Proclamation.”

General Conference: General conference is the most frequent event at which a general authority might speak. The church’s first general conference was held on April 6, 1830, in order to “comply with New York state regulations of the incorporation of the church as a legal entity and to formally announce [its] . . . organization and doctrinal basis” (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984, p. 14). Within ten years, these general, all-church meetings became an established ritual featuring several speakers and then expanded from an annual to a bi-annual basis. Today, they occur in the first weekends of October and

April, and featuring 30 to 40 speakers, are considered one of the church's "fundamental institution[s]" (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984, p. 15). According to Shipps (1985):

Gathered there . . . in the center of the Mormon world, Latter-day Saints participate in a direct and primary experience of community which, while corporate, is . . . often as powerful, meaningful, and profound as the spiritual experiences sometimes accompanying the performance of the most sacred temple rites, which center on individuals in the context of family and not on the congregation. (p. 136)

In general conference, Mormon general authorities have a regular opportunity to receive the membership's sustaining vote by raised hand, to announce the appointment of new general authorities, to acquaint the membership with new Mormon doctrine (should God have revealed any), and to preach to rank-and-file members who normally hear only the sermons of local members and leaders in their neighborhood wards. Noting that general conference addresses hold a distinct authority within Mormonism, Shipps (1985) has described their influence as follows:

While conference addresses are not put forth as revelation [from God], an informal "ex cathedra" infallibility inheres in them, almost as if by being delivered in the presence of the church assembled, [they] . . . are somehow distillations of the concentrated power of revelation and inspiration present in that time and place. Without being accorded status as Mormon doctrine, the words said in [general] conference carry more weight and impact than words said elsewhere. When such words are uttered by the church president--who as presiding officer over the church has the right to divine inspiration in matters concerning its members, and who . . . may receive revelation for the whole church--Latter-day Saints regard those words, quite simply and without question, as true. (p. 137-8).

For most of Mormon history, general conference has been held in Salt Lake City's Temple Square, in "the Tabernacle," a one-story rectangular building with a distinctive,

rounded, roof that is somewhat evocative of a turtle's shell. As mass media developed, church leaders arranged to have general conference proceedings broadcast on radio and television when feasible. At this writing, many Mormon wards receive general conference through their own satellite dishes. As a result, ward members can "attend" general conference merely by sitting in their local chapels and watching the proceedings on a screen. Because contemporary Mormondom is so large and so widely dispersed, attending an actual session of general conference in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle is a cherished and momentous experience. Mormons who do not attend general conference in the Tabernacle (and most do not) or watch it in their chapels, may read the contents of general addresses in the November and May issues of the official church magazine, *Ensign of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Prior to the magazine's initial publication in 1971, general conference addresses were made available to the Saints by means of a bi-annual publication entitled *Conference Reports of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

General Relief Society Meeting: The annual meeting of the general Relief Society is held in the Tabernacle specifically for Mormon women, and today is broadcast to all Mormon chapels in the same manner as general conference. At this writing, it is regularly held on the third Saturday in September. Earlier it was called the "annual general Relief Society conference." The Relief Society is the church's organization for women established in 1842 by Joseph Smith to "look after the . . . poor; search after

objects of charity and to administer to their wants; and to assist in correcting the morals and strengthening the virtues of the community” (Berrett, 1969, p. 349).

The Relief Society is directed by a female Relief Society General President, and two female assistants distinguished from each other with the designations “First Counselor” and “Second Counselor.” This three-person presidency oversees and directs local Relief Society organizations that operate in the separate congregations, or wards, of the church. These local Relief Societies meet each Sunday for an hour and function to socialize and instruct Mormon women under the direction of a local Relief Society presidency. Within this local framework, Mormon women have traditionally performed works of charity and maintained a vital and affectionate network of “sisterhood.”

There are usually four speakers at the general Relief Society meeting--the three members of the General Relief Society Presidency and a general authority. The general authority is either a member of the First Presidency or a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles who has been assigned to supervise the actions of the General Relief Society Presidency. Only the speeches given by male speakers at the Relief Society general meeting are considered authoritative.

Firesides: As occasions to hear an address by a church leader, a “church fireside” can be large or small and can occur as needed. The origin of the designation “fireside” is unclear. It may have evolved from President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s radio broadcast “fireside chats” during World War II. It may also be an expansion of a longstanding

Mormon tradition in which members of a ward gather in a local Mormon home to hear a noteworthy speaker expound upon religion. Presumably, during the church's earlier years --i.e. before central heating--these home meetings were held around the fireplace, hence the designation "fireside." Today, although a "church fireside" might still be held in a home, the term "fireside" is also used to describe events in which Mormons from many wards gather in a large auditorium (usually on a Sunday night after church services) to hear a noteworthy speaker expound upon religion. The doctrinal significance of a fireside address is dependent upon the heirarchical authority of the speaker.

Proclamations: On five occasions to date, the First Presidency has directed announcements to both the general church membership and the world at large. These come under the rubric "Proclamation," and while not considered part of canonized scripture, are assertions the church feels compelled to make with striking presentation to the membership of the church. For example, on January 15, 1841, after many Mormons were driven from their homes by angry mobs, the First Presidency issued a proclamation from church headquarters in Nauvoo, Illinois "To the Saints Scattered Abroad" (Ludlow, 1992). Other proclamations are directed to a wider audience. As a proselytizing organization feeling God's mandate to convert the world, Mormonism assumes that it appropriately may address all mankind. The First Presidency's most recent proclamation, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," issued in September 1995, sprang from an urgent concern over the decline of the "traditional" family in American society. Still, as

the next section illustrates, this concern was not reflective of the original Mormon doctrine of family.

The Original Mormon Doctrine of the Family

To establish a doctrine is to establish a clear teaching on a matter deemed crucial to salvation. For the most part, doctrines are established on the authority of either scripture or tradition, tradition being a law, regulation, or practice that (in the absence of a canonized statement) is validated by its very presence as a practice in the community through the generations of a church's existence. By this "presence" the practice is understood to be in harmony with a religion's foundational purposes and is therefore doctrinal (McConkie, 1966). In the case of Mormonism, both scripture and tradition (practice) identify the earliest, distinctly Mormon doctrines on family. There are, in fact, not one, but two original Mormon doctrines of family--the early prototype, or "family kingdom" set up and actually practiced by Joseph Smith, and the one described in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132.

The Family Kingdom

Initially, Mormon family practices did not differ from those of the surrounding culture. Converts to the church came from the New England neighborhood as did Joseph Smith, and like him, had embraced its cultural norms (Larsen, 1954). Within 11 years, however, Smith had ushered in a family model that was such a departure from the norm that Mormons themselves had trouble adjusting to it. Nevertheless, they did adjust,

perhaps because Smith taught them that if they did not, they would not achieve exaltation (Larsen, 1954; Shipps, 1985; Compton, 1996).

Smith's new family was a genuine religion-family connection if there ever was one—at least in the sense that it linked salvation directly to one's model of family. Moreover, as touched upon earlier, it crystallized around a kinship pattern so extensive, interconnected, and overlapping, it cannot be considered the same as the family style now endorsed by the church in its authoritative and public profamily rhetoric.

Smith initiated his new model of family secretly, in 1835, by declaring that all marriages not “solemnized by the authority of the everlasting [Mormon] Priesthood [sic]” were no longer binding (Larsen, 1954). By announcing this, however, he did not mean to create a wholesale end to existing marriages but to inaugurate new marriage arrangements. These new arrangements were to culminate in the formation of a family unit evocative of God's covenant with Abraham (an ancient Hebrew patriarch) to make of his posterity a “great nation” as plentiful as the “dust of the earth” (Genesis 13:15). As Benjamin Johnson, a close friend of Smith's, clarified in a letter,

The First Commandment was to “multiply” and the prophet taught us that Dominion & powr in the great Future would be Comensurate with [the] number] of “Wives Childin & Friends” that we inheret here and that our great mission to earth was to Organize a Neculi [nucleus] of Heaven to take with us. To the increace of which there would be no end [sic].
(quoted in Compton, 1996, p. 12)

In other words, Mormon men were to follow the pattern of the great patriarch Abraham and to construct a family kingdom which would follow them to heaven. Once in this

heavenly, postmortal existence, the number of people they procured on earth to constitute this family kingdom, would establish the level of exaltation they achieved within it.

Smith seems to have devised the notion of a family kingdom not only as a reaction to the Old Testament story of Abraham but in response to a verse in the New Testament's Gospel According to Matthew. In Matthew 22:30, Jesus is quoted as saying "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." Smith evidently interpreted this to mean that the marriage ceremony was an ordinance that could be performed *only* on earth. Given this restriction, he advised his followers that in order to construct a family unit that would follow them to heaven, they must gather the participants while yet on earth by means of reproduction, marriage and adoption (Compton, 1996)--but, as we shall see, only his perception of reproduction conformed to traditional understandings.

Marriage. Smith effected a considerable expansion of the "traditional" American way of marriage. He could have discarded his wife Emma by means of his new rule delegitimizing all civil marriages, but he did not. Instead, he remarried her by Mormon priesthood authority and then, by the same authority, took from 33 to 41 additional wives (Compton, 1996). The latest research into Mormon history shows that the extended family created by these additional marriages did not constitute a kind of harem (as might be expected) but was comprised of four different, simultaneous types of marriage:

- (a) polygyny, within which a man is married to two or more women concurrently,
- (b) polyandry, within which a woman is married to two or more men concurrently,

(c) polygamy, the simultaneous practice of both polygyny and polyandry within one marital unit, and (d) proxy marriage, whereby (in anticipation of a postmortal marital relationship) a man or woman is married to a deceased person represented by a proxy stand-in (Compton, 1996). Thus, it is apparent that Smith did not marry only single women (polygyny) as has been assumed by anti-Mormons and even those Mormons who are aware of his unusual marriage practices. While some of his additional wives were single when he married them, others were already married to other men--albeit in marriages that were invalid if not performed by the Melchizedek priesthood--thus creating a pattern of marriages both polygynous and polyandrous, and therefore, by extension, polygamous. At the time this complex familial arrangement was in existence, the Mormon community described it using the terms "polygamy" or "plural marriage." After Smith's death, when this polygamy lost its polyandrous aspect and became simply polygyny, these same two terms remained in use.

It is not likely that Smith approached plural marriage envisioning his additional marriages as merely platonic or spiritual liaisons. True, some have speculated that he consummated *only* his polygynous marriages and, in a practice referred to as "pseudo-polyandry," refrained from having sexual relations with those of his wives who remained married to (and still lived with) their first husbands (Compton, 1996, p. 30). Nevertheless, after a careful review of the record to date, Compton concluded that

There is no good evidence that Joseph Smith did not have sexual relations with his wives, single or polyandrous. On the other hand, there is evidence that he had relations with at least some of his wives, including one

polyandrous wife, Sylvia Sessions Lyons, who bore the only child of Joseph Smith for whom we have affidavit evidence. (p. 30)

Others have also speculated that Smith involved only one or two women in polyandry. This is unlikely because records indicate that he contracted no less than eleven polyandrous unions. Still others have speculated that for previously married women, an additional marriage to Smith functioned as a divorce from the first husband (Compton, 1996, p. 22). This is difficult to determine since most of the polyandrous wives continued living with their original husbands and none filed for divorce (p.22). Since Smith had delegitimized all civil marriages, the fact that none of his polyandrous wives filed for divorce cannot be considered evidence that the women considered their original marriages intact. Whatever the case, the secrecy surrounding early plural marriage leaves us with little surety regarding the consummation of Smith's marriages within the family kingdom.

Adoption. Smith did not stop at marriage as a method of expanding his family but also enlarged it by means of adoption. And here again, he took an uncommon approach. Instead of adopting children, Smith adopted his close male friends. The purpose of such adoptions was to make the adoptee and his relatives eligible for a share in his prophetic birthright. According to Larsen (1954),

The doctrine . . . was that Joseph Smith was the head of this Dispensation, so appointed from before the world was made. It was he who would give the [latter-day] Saints . . . their legitimate birthright through himself. Through the law of adoption, heads of families would be linked directly to [Smith] or him indirectly by being . . . adopted by one of the apostles, who, in turn, were adopted by [Smith]. When carried out fully, all the members of the Church [sic] would become a single family. (pp. 149-150)

A devout 19th century Mormon who was adopted by Smith's successor, Brigham Young, described the nature of this kind of liaison.

I was adopted by Brigham Young, and was to seek his temporal interests here, and in return he was to seek my spiritual salvation, I being an heir of his *family* (author's emphasis), and was to share his blessings in common with other heirs. (Lee, 1879, quoted in Larsen, p. 150)

Thus, the first distinctively Mormon family was not the private, self-contained, "traditional" model the church presently advocates. It was an extended familial organization that spilled beyond the "traditional" nuclear unit into a complicated web of interrelationships that was essential for exaltation primarily because it linked one directly to God's prophet, and thereby to God Himself.

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132

Initiated in secrecy because of its highly unconventional nature, plural marriage remained secret for approximately nineteen years. Only in 1852, eight years after Smith's death, did church leaders publicly confess their participation in multiple marriages (Shipps, 1985) and publish an authoritative mandate for them. This mandate was to become Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

Curiously, *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132 did not advocate adoption or prescribe the co-mingling of relationships that existed in the family kingdom constructed by Smith. Instead, it announced a "new and everlasting covenant" (D&C, Section 132, Verse 4) of marriage that prescribed polygyny as practiced by the Old Testament patriarchs Abraham and David, who had "many wives and concubines" (Verses 37-38).

37-38). Although there is no evidence that it permitted concubinage—a factor that has never been explained—its mandate for polygyny was apparently uncompromising. It warned the Saints that “no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into [God’s] glory” (Verse 4). It also explained that polygyny was not adultery, restricted polygynous wives to one husband, and asserted that women’s “exaltation in the eternal worlds” (Verse 63) was to glorify God through child bearing:

And again. . .if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse a second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then he is justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with what belongeth unto him and no one else.

And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore he is justified. But if one or either of the ten virgins, after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery and shall be destroyed; for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandments, and to fulfil [sic] the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he [sic] may be glorified. (Verses 61-63)

It is not known why the “new and everlasting covenant” (Verse 4) of marriage did not include polyandry and adoption as had Smith’s family kingdom. The only hint of a resemblance between the two models of family appeared in Verse 55 which quotes God as follows:

I will bless [Joseph Smith] and multiply him and give unto him an hundred fold in this world of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds. (Verse 55)

Perhaps because Smith assembled his family kingdom in relative secrecy, and because Section 132 seems to limit a woman to one man (Verse 63), polyandry did not persist and polygyny became the standard form of multiple marriage. Nevertheless, the terms “polygamy” and “plural marriage” continued to be used in Mormon vernacular as the designation for polygynous marriage, and families based upon polygynous marriage continued to be called “polygamous families” or “plural families.”

Since doctrine is established upon either scripture or tradition (practice), the earliest and (therefore fundamental) Mormon doctrine of family--at least arguably--is either the family kingdom *practiced* by Smith, or the Old Testament polygyny (minus concubines) *canonized* as Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Admittedly, the fact that there are two different models that qualify as fundamental is somewhat baffling, but their discrepant nature is not at issue here. At issue is the fact that the contemporary church presently champions the “traditional” family, with no clear repudiation of either of these two original models. As historian Martha Bradley (a Mormon) confirms, “The doctrine of polygamy remains a part of [Mormonism’s] mythic historical past and a continuing [doctrine]” (1990, p. 26).

The Problem of Polygamy

The survival of the doctrine of plural marriage within Mormon theology is not without profound consequences. Because no official statement has clearly notified the Saints of a change from the doctrine of polygamy to the doctrine of the “traditional” family, the “problem of polygamy [has never] disappear[ed]” (Bradley, 1990, p. 27).

Since the turn of the 19th century, numerous polygamous groups have sprung up among the Saints, all of them believing that without an explicit denial of plural marriage from church leaders, they must become polygamists or forfeit their exaltation, and all of them viewed as the worst of heretics by the mainstream church (Bradley, 1990). The emotional distress this has created among church members on both sides of the controversy has been monumental. As Bradley has observed, "The schism between [Mormon polygamists and the Mormon church resembles] a bitter and destructive divorce in which both parties felt betrayed and misunderstood" (p. 31). In any case, it is from this painful and conflicted threshold of uncertainty and apprehension over what constitutes the genuine Mormon concept of marriage that Mormon rhetoric on "the family" commenced its evolution.

CHAPTER 3

MORMON RHETORIC ON THE FAMILY: AN EVOLUTION

The evolution of Mormon rhetoric on the family can be observed by means of nine documents selected according to the criteria outlined in Chapter One. This chronology covers a time span of 105 years and includes the following texts: (1) “The Manifesto” (D&C, 1981, pp. 291-292), the First Presidency’s 1890 public announcement (later canonized) promising to advise the Saints to “refrain from contracting” polygamous marriages’ (2.) “The Old Fashioned American Home” (Corcoran 1994, pp. 263-269), Apostle Stephen L. Richards’s 1935 radio address to a national audience, (3) “Home, [sic] and the Building of a Homelife” (Clark, 1952, pp. 790-795), Apostle J. Reuben Clark Jr.’s 1952 address to the annual general Relief Society Conference, (4) “No Other Success Can Compensate for Failure in the Home” (McKay, 1964, pp. 3-6), President David O. McKay’s 1964 general conference address, (5) “Home, the Place to Save Society” (Kimball, 1975, pp. 3-10), President Spencer W. Kimball’s 1964 address to Swedish Saints later published as a feature article in the church’s official magazine, (6) “Excerpts . . . Regarding the Manifesto” (D&C, 1981, pp. 293-294), President Wilford Woodruff’s 1890 remarks to the Saints as added to text of the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1981, (7) “To the Mothers in Zion” (Benson, 1987), President Ezra Taft Benson’s 1987 address to mothers at the “Fireside for Parents” distributed throughout the church as a brochure, (8) “For Time and All Eternity” (Packer, 1993a, pp. 21- 24), Apostle Boyd K. Packer’s 1993 general conference address, and (9) “The Family, A Proclamation to the

World” (Hinckley, et al., 1995), The First Presidency’s 1995 one-page brochure for easy public distribution proclaiming “the family,” by which it apparently means the “traditional” family, as “central” to God’s plan for humanity. As the rhetorical analysis of these texts proceeds, one can observe the relationship between sociohistorical influences, rhetorical strategies, and shifts in Mormon ways of explaining its notions of family.

The first document, represents the church’s initial, tentative move to distance itself from its established doctrine of plural marriage, and thus marks a change in how members of the church perceived the Mormon family. As such, it is an appropriate text from which to inaugurate this analysis of Mormon family rhetoric in evolution.

“The Manifesto” (1890): A Rhetoric of Appeasement

In spite of its canonization, “the Manifesto” is an oddly situated sample of rhetoric. Unlike other canonized writing, it is not an example of ecclesiastical law, church history, prophetic wisdom, or devotional literature. Rather, it is an effort to persuade the US federal government, its main audience, that Mormons were willing to abide by recently passed laws forbidding them from contracting new plural marriages. Familiarity with its sociohistorical context and the rhetoric that both preceded and followed it is essential to fully understand its significance with regard to the gradual transformation of Mormon expressions of its doctrines of family.

There is little doubt that Mormon family practices changed because Americans, in general, would not accept plural marriage as a legitimate lifestyle. Nineteenth century America’s Protestant majority considered the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

a “lascivious, radical, fanatic and dangerous” sect (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984, p. 36).

As a result, during the 1830s and 1840s, it subjected the fledgling church to the constant harassment of a hostile press and multiple, devastating physical attacks. In response, the entire church left New England and resettled in Illinois. When angry mobs murdered Joseph Smith in 1844, his followers undertook another westward migration, this time to an isolated Rocky Mountain region of what is now Utah. Here, feeling safe from further assaults, these Mormons established the foundation for what was to become an expansive religious and economic community centered in Salt Lake City (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984).

This new-found safety was not only short-lived but ultimately subjected the church to a new and more virulent form of anti-Mormonism. In 1850, Congress established Utah as a territory, appointing Joseph Smith’s successor, Brigham Young, as governor and filling government posts with both Mormon and non-Mormon appointees. When the non-Mormon appointees objected to the church’s unorthodox marriage practices they engaged Mormon leaders in a prolonged and heated debate over the morality of polygamy--a debate further inflamed by disputes over political and economic dominance of the area (Alexander, 1986; Lyman, 1991). Thus, Protestant-inspired anti-Mormonism resurfaced, this time augmented by federal pressure. The resulting state-driven religious hostility was so severe that the church barely survived. The fact that it *did* survive was probably due to several rhetorical strategies that mitigated against federal aggression and gave church members time to adjust to their changing political circumstances.

A Rhetoric of Resistance

During the public debate over plural marriage, Democrats and Republicans throughout the United States denounced polygamy as a “relic of barbarism” (Foster, 1987, p. 194). In response, both leaders and rank and file Mormons participated in a rhetoric of resistance condemning “traditional” marriage as the cause of such moral failings as prostitution, illegitimacy, and unhealthy children (Pratt, 1854), and insisting that polygamy offered “morality, blessings and advantages” (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984, p. 81) unavailable to monogamists. They also complained that government intrusion into their marital practices was a denial of their religious freedom, and denounced anti-polygamy legislation as unconstitutional (Alexander, 1986).

Summarily unpersuaded, the government imposed harsh legal sanctions against polygamists, informing church authorities that if Mormons continued to contract new plural marriages, Utah Territory would not be granted statehood (Lyman, 1991). Nevertheless, believing polygamy to be essential for exaltation, church leaders repeatedly assured the Saints that the church would never abandon it. When in 1862, 1874, and 1882, legislators passed increasingly harsh antipolygamy laws, the church continued adamant. As late as 1885, while enduring intense persecution, the First Presidency declared in general conference that they would never “withdraw or renounce [plural marriage for] God [had] revealed it, and He promised to maintain it” (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984, p. 81). Eventually, however--caught between God and government--these same leaders instituted a new rhetorical strategy.

A Rhetoric of Appeasement

By the new strategy, Mormon leaders assured federal officials that they would authorize no new plural marriages but continued to authorize them in secret (Quinn, 1985; Alexander, 1986). Unfortunately for the church, this policy of appeasement backfired. When federal agents discovered some of the clandestine marriages, the government became furious at the church's duplicity and redoubled its antipolygamy campaign. In 1887 it passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act, a law prescribing sanctions so severe that the church's polygamous membership became demoralized and the church itself faced outright extinction through the confiscation of its property and the imprisonment of its leaders (Alexander, 1986; Bradley, 1990)). As a result, the First Presidency issued "the Manifesto," a more convincing and official-seeming disavowal of new plural marriages. It was read and approved in the church's October 6, 1890 General Conference and canonized in 1908 when it was added to the *Doctrine and Covenants* under the title, "Official Declaration--1" (D&C, 1981, pp. 291-293).

The reading of "the Manifesto" had a devastating effect upon the membership for it was inconsistent with the church's earlier--and clearly remembered--rhetorical strategy of resistance. Having been convinced that God would sustain them against federal pressure they had difficulty absorbing the notion that Mormon leaders had actually capitulated. As Hardy (1991) has revealed,

When presented . . . the Manifesto took numbers by surprise, provoking sadness and disappointment. It was said that gloom filled the Tabernacle after the announcement of its approval. Some sobbed with regret. (p. 47)

As the shock subsided, however, a belief developed among many that “the Manifesto” had no doctrinal impact but was merely a declaration of compliance calculated to stave off further federal antagonism (Lyman, 1991). Consequently, many members continued to contract undisclosed plural marriages under the direction of several Mormon leaders who were willing to perform the ceremonies in secret (Cannon, 1983, p. 30).

A Rhetoric of Capitulation

But the clear divergence between public proclamations and private practice remained perplexing for the majority of Saints. Some (fearing the government’s swift punishment more than the less immediate loss of exaltation) chose to treat the Manifesto as if it were sincere; others chose to live polygamy and assure their exaltation in defiance of the government (Cannon, 1983). Subsequently, in 1904, law enforcement officers uncovered more clandestine polygamy within the community and church leaders issued yet another--and this time more stringent--public declaration. Referred to as the “Second Manifesto,” it not only reaffirmed the original Manifesto but stated that thereafter, all polygamists would be excommunicated (Alexander, 1986).

This reassertion of the rhetoric of capitulation marked an important change in the Mormon mindset. While the main body of the church stopped contracting new plural marriages altogether, many Saints reacted to the Second Manifesto by leaving the church and setting up isolated polygamous communities in Mexico, Utah, and its border states. From their perspective, the maintenance of polygamy marked them as the practitioners of “true” Mormonism. From the perspective of the mainstream church, they were a

continuing challenge to the authority of all post-Manifesto Mormon leaders. As a result, during the next two decades, post-Manifesto leaders eagerly sought some way to resolve the discrepancies that still lingered around the issue of plural marriage (Cannon, 1983).

A Rhetoric of Alteration and Amnesia

As mentioned in Chapter Two, 19th century Mormons believed that Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* taught that exaltation could be achieved only through a marriage (commonly referred to as “celestial marriage”) that was both *plural* and *eternal*. Consequently, when church leaders announced that those who entered into new polygamous unions would be excommunicated, there was considerable dissonance among the Saints. This dissonance was eventually assuaged by James E. Talmage, a leading church theologian who held the office of apostle.

In 1924, the First Presidency assigned Talmage the painful task of urging local church leaders to excommunicate all church members in their jurisdictions who persisted in contracting polygamous marriages. Talmage, however, remained alert to gentler solutions. While reviewing the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132, he noticed that its wording was inexact enough to leave open the possibility that celestial marriage might not *have* to be plural in nature but only *eternal*. Urging his fellow general authorities to take advantage of this semantic loophole, he persuaded them to alter the Saints’ understanding of the requirements for exaltation by reinterpreting the terminology that surrounded it. Soon, he and the other general authorities began teaching that the criterion for exaltation was not “celestial” marriage but “eternal” marriage, and gradually, the belief that plural

marriage was essential for exaltation became submerged in a kind of obligatory, and legally efficacious amnesia (Alexander, 1986, p. 72; Larsen, 1954, p. 168).

Because the rhetoric of alteration has continued to the present, and because it remains both legally and socially realistic, this amnesia has been enduring in spite of the fact that it has been thoroughly undermined by evidence preserved within indisputably legitimate historical documents (Larsen, 1954; Cannon, 1983, p. 27; Quinn, 1985; Alexander, 1986). Today's Saints learn about the church's early practice of plural marriage from officially approved texts that leave out many historically established but controversial facts. As one such revisionist text assures them, "It must constantly be borne in mind that the doctrine of marriage for time and eternity, contained in Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, with all the blessings promised therein, does not necessarily involve plural marriage" (Berrett, 1969, p. 182). As a result of this authorized (if not prescribed) amnesia, contemporary Mormons believe that monogamous marriage has *always* satisfied the requirements for exaltation and have no difficulty accepting the church's present stance as champion of the "traditional" family.

A Rhetoric of Appeasement Canonized

Nonetheless, this amnesia is fragile. Some historical facts remain incontrovertible and certain texts have not been erased. Because the Saints have "forgotten" their doctrine of plural marriage, the Manifesto's presence in the *Doctrine and Covenants* is perplexing. It arouses "memories" of plural marriage to Mormons who discover it in their scripture study. At the same time it makes no clear enunciation of polygamy's suspension either as

a doctrine or a practice. Rather (in the context of federal accusations to the contrary) it states only that church leaders had not “urged [its] continuance” or “permitted” and “solemnized” plural marriages within “the time specified.” It also affirms that Wilford Woodruff, in his capacity as president of the church, intended “to submit to [federal] laws [forbidding polygamy], and to use [his] influence with the members of the Church [sic] . . . to have them do likewise.” Thus, church leaders have created a situation in which the contemporary Saints are exposed to both the rhetoric of amnesia through official church history, and the rhetoric of appeasement through the Manifesto. Because these two rhetorics are somewhat discordant, plural marriage continues to spark controversy within Mormon communities. The issues raised by these clashing rhetorics are not merely a matter of competing textual interpretations. As noted in Chapter Two, the dilemma surrounding polygamy persists. As recently as 1994 a group of devout Mormons left the mainstream church and set up a new polygamous version of Mormonism--The True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days--in Manti, Utah (Johns, 1996).

In any case, because the Manifesto was created under federal duress, exhibited strategically ambiguous wording, and neither recommended the “traditional” family nor denied the plural one, it offers no doctrinal basis for the church’s move from the advocacy of polygamy to the advocacy of the “traditional” family. Historically speaking, it was merely one of several rhetorical strategies that church leaders employed to preserve the doctrinal integrity of plural marriage against the overwhelming pressure of Protestant-inspired federal assaults. A review of documents subsequent to the Manifesto charts the

movement of Mormon notions of family as they shifted away from polygamy and toward those of Domestic Protestantism.

“The Old-Fashioned American Home” (1935): A Rhetoric of Capitulation

After issuing the Manifesto, Mormon leaders stopped arguing that plural marriage was superior to monogamy but developed rationalizations for its discontinuation and issued admonitions to avoid it (Alexander, 1986; Bradley, 1990). Even so, the Saints did not immediately enter into the wholehearted advocacy of “traditional” lifestyles. Official Mormon discourse between 1920 and 1949 shows little evidence of the kind of family rhetoric dispensed so frequently today (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984).

One of the few examples of rhetoric recommending the “traditional” family existing within this time frame was Apostle Stephen L. Richards’ 1935 public address linking Mormonism with “the old-fashioned American home.” Richards, who then was administrator of missionary work, did not present this speech to an audience of assembled Mormons such as a general conference, but broadcast it nationally on CBS radio (Corcoran, 1994). That his remarks were directed to a non-Mormon audience is apparent in Richards’ reference to the church in the third person (“they have stood together” [Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, 1994, p. 267]), and the fact that he opened with the salutation “My friends” (p. 263) instead of the customary Mormon reference to “Brothers and Sisters.” His speech equating Mormon family life with ideal American family life was significant in view of the fact that Mormon family life previously had been seen as one that sharply deviated from American norms.

During the previous two years this deviation had been emphasized when (as discussed earlier) law enforcement agencies found “new polygamy” (Cannon, 1983, p. 27) among the Saints and in response to the subsequent negative press attention, church leaders had issued an official statement condemning the polygamists and reasserting the messages of the Manifesto and Second Manifesto (Corcoran, 1994). In this context, Richards’ radio address served two purposes—first, to improve the church’s reputation with the non-Mormon American public, and second, to persuade Mormons in general that standard American marriage practices were a legitimate expression of a moral life.

A Rhetoric of Regret

There is little doubt that members of the church needed a new way to perceive family life as meaningful in the context of Mormon theology. The periodic revivals of plural marriage were symptomatic of their continuing unease over the matter of polygamy, a feeling they expressed with a rhetoric of regret. As Hardy (1991) reveals,

The sense that a great cause had inexplicably been denied them afflicted some for years. Paraphrasing the sentiments of a plural family that he interviewed in the 1930’s, Kimball Young described the period following [OD--1] as the “hardest times.” Until then, those engaged in [polygamy] “had the consolation that they were doing right and living their religion. The persecution did not matter.” But with the renunciation of [plural marriage], he said, all that had given them a sense of cause was taken away. (p. 47)

Church leaders also exhibited this feeling of loss. In 1911, Apostle John W. Taylor was excommunicated, and Apostle Matthias F. Cowley disfellowshipped for promoting polygamy after the Second Manifesto (Alexander, 1986). Approximately two decades

later, Mormon theologian and apostle Brigham H. Roberts, published his *Comprehensive History of the Church*, a book in which he revealed his own doubts as to the Manifesto's theological propriety. Plainly, Mormons at all levels mourned the cessation of plural marriage and longed to regain a sense of conviction as to whether or not plural marriage was essential for salvation (Cannon, 1983). Richards' radio address may have been an attempt (conscious or instinctive) to provide some reassurance in this regard. He knew that even though it was addressed to non-Mormons, there was a great likelihood that Mormons would listen to it with great interest and regard his words as apostolic. Richards' task was to establish a new vision of the Mormon family that was acceptable to two distinct groups of people--the state-endorsed Protestant-American mainstream and the Mormon people who were caught in the incongruity that existed between their early doctrine and the two Manifestos. To do this he first affirmed the Protestant mainstream by asserting that the "old-fashioned American home" was the highest expression of morality:

You know that in an old-fashioned American home you will find a large family of happy boys and girls, for whom father and mother willingly, patiently, and lovingly devote lives of toil and service; not for ostentation and pride and the gratification of selfish desires but to fulfill high conceptions of duty and the laws of God. (Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, 1994, pp. 264-265)

He then affirmed his Mormon audience by declaring that this same moral foundation was also central to Mormon society (Corcoran, 1994, p. x) thus equating the Mormon home with the best tradition of American home life. To augment this equation Richards

employed images gleaned from Domestic Protestantism's perception of the home as a little church. As he expressed it,

The homes which produce real men and women must be presided over and maintained by men of strength and courage, of virtue and of vision. [sic] and by women of tenderness, unselfishness and infinite patience and love, endowments of God for the motherhood of the race. (Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, 1994, p. 266)

This transferred attention from the issue of which *model* of family--polygamous/Mormon or traditional/Protestant--was the morally superior, to the notion that morality was contingent upon a particular environment that was (by implication) shared by Mormon and Protestant families.

This change of focus from *model* to *locus* was emphasized by Richards' condemnation of apartment dwellers as the moral inferiors of those who lived in detached, single-family dwellings. In such homes, he opined,

Educated, cultured, and refined [girls], helped their mother with house work . . . [and] boys assisted in keeping up the place outside. They loved their home. It belonged to them all. The feeling of ownership and proprietorship was with them. It begat thrift, economy and industry. Their common interest stimulated mutual confidence and affection, that cement and enrich the natural ties of family. They were happy and content and they were splendid citizens. (Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, 1994, p. 265)

In contrast, apartment dwellers lacked the work ethic and lived meaningless lives.

Richards described their purposelessness and shallowness in the following paragraph:

The girls that lived in these apartments did not do housework. There was not much to be done and besides they had not time for it because it takes all the time of these girls to take care of themselves. It is a big job. The first task of the day is to present themselves for public presentation. I have

not time to describe the complexities of that operation. Suffice it to say that it requires a very great deal of labor and material to produce a finished product. There are the daily movies, the teas, the auto rides, the dances and cabarets all requiring constant rearrangement of toilet and appearance and involving an immense expenditure of energy. These girls of the apartment are really hard-working girls. . . . They have my sympathy. . . they do not have good homes and I fear they are not learning to be real women. (Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, p. 265)

This gendered denigration of the apartment appears to be a rhetoric common to the time. It could be an offshoot of ideas promulgated by the Reverend Horace Bushnell. A highly influential 19th century social critic, Bushnell had argued that prior to the Industrial Revolution when families worked together in their homes producing many of their own goods, children were better behaved and grew into better adults (Cross, 1958). It could also reflect French sociologist F. Le Play's theory of "ideal family types" (Harriss, 1991, p. 40). Le Play had condemned the "'new' smaller urban family as 'unstable' and idealized the large, peasant family of preindustrial times" (p. 40). Nonetheless, there is no connection between the denigration of apartment dwellers and Mormon doctrine. In the contemporary church it would offend and marginalize apartment-dwelling Mormons. Nor can it be supported by scriptural warrants. It served Richards best, perhaps, as a way of making home life seem a substantial moral and economic achievement and directed attention away from Mormonism's scandalous history of polygamy to one of mainstream America's common scapegoats--single young women (Banner, 1974).

A Rhetoric of Accommodation

Richards may have relished a chance to divert attention from the church's bad reputation. He was undoubtedly aware that during the 19th century American politicians had denounced polygamy as the "Mormon blot upon the civilization of our age" (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984, p. 266) and during the early 20th century Mormon women had been vilified for their "sexual impurity" (Alexander, 1986, p. 241), and Mormon theology dismissed as mere "modern phallic paganism" (p. 242). To avoid inciting the anti-polygamy sentiment that lay behind these scathing denunciations, he described the church's polygamous past with the following euphemistic language:

There is in this respect a traditional and rather well-advertised distinction which our people enjoy. They have been noted for their large families and had they been better understood they would be famous for their good families. Children have been our best crop and in the good homes there has been an abundance of them. Eight, ten, and a dozen in a family were common numbers. (Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, 1994, p. 267)

His reframing of plural families as merely "large families" with "eight, ten, and a dozen" children was surely an attempt to edit America's memories of Mormonism in the tradition of rhetorical amnesia practiced earlier by Talmage over the terminology of exaltation. It was also an effort to recreate the Mormon family in the image of the Protestant ideal.

This new image of the Mormon family was a major emphasis of Richards' address. The public's condemnation of the Mormon people had been so comprehensive that Richards staged their rehabilitation on a massive scale, pulling the entire church under the protective ideographs, or terms reflective of "the operating social consensus" (McGee,

1980, quoted in Hart, 1992, p. 405), of “home” and “family.” His praise of the church was effusive.

What *families* they have been! In days of privation and striving how they have stood together! The sacrifices they have made, one for another; the love, the service, the nobility which have come from these great *homes* will probably never be known to many, but those who know of it and speak of the accomplishments of our church in the first century of its existence mention first the noble fathers and mothers who in *log cabins* of the frontier or *mansions of luxury* have served faithfully as priests and priestesses of the temple of the *home* [all italics added]. (Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, 1994, p. 267)

However, in issuing this praise, Richards maintained a rhetoric of amnesia by, once more, avoiding the mention of plural marriage. He did, however, elucidate upon the more appealing and much less controversial Mormon doctrine that family life and relationships continue after death.

To the members of our church, the home has an enlarged significance that is subordinate to nothing else in life . . . [for it is] the foundation of our exaltation and glory in the life to come. . . . After all, it is essentially a religious institution. . . Its government is of a religious nature and the finest of its products are spiritual. (Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, 1994, p. 267)

In another he spoke specifically of eternal marriage:

We believe that the marriage compact is not for life only or until death doth part, but for all eternity; that when the covenant is entered into in the proper manner and place and sealed by the Holy Priesthood [sic], . . . it becomes an everlasting union, an eternal institution into which shall enter all children born into such wedlock, and that the ties so created are eternal ties recognized in heaven and earth. Our [Mormon] heaven is little more than a projection of the sacred institutions of our homes into eternity. We do not fear death because death does not break this bond. We must all go by way of it to find a place in the eternal family circle. (Richards, 1935, quoted in Corcoran, 1994, p. 268)

Note, however, his integration of Protestantism's notion of the home as a little church with Mormonism's doctrine of the family as eternal. The result was a kind of hybrid Mormon family that could be distinguished from the Protestant family only by virtue of its persistence after death into eternity. As if to emphasize this image of the Mormon family as more enduring than American families, Richards concluded by reminding his audience that Latter-day Saints "deplore[d]" divorce and had a very low divorce rate. Thus, his national audience had a moment to think of Mormons in terms of fewer divorces rather than many wives.

It could be said that Richards' 1935 national radio address was an unwitting prototype for the modern church's Homefront "public service announcements" in its portrayal of the Mormon family as a model of American virtue. Certainly, its deft blend of Mormonism and Domestic Protestantism created the flattering impression that Mormon family values equated to Protestant family values and lasted longer. Still, it is important to note that in helping the Mormon family "pass" for Protestant, Richards did not endorse the "traditional" family as central to Mormon doctrine. In fact, whenever he used the word "family" or "families," he was referring specifically (albeit evasively) to the plural families of 19th century Mormonism. All his references to the moral foundation of society applied to the home. He identified "*the home* [italics added] as a fundamental institution of society," praised "the old fashioned American *home*," argued that "they are not truly poor who maintain a real *home*," asserted that "most of our delinquencies originate in bad or neglected *homes*," described the "exalted institution of

the *home* . . . [as an] opportunity and mission for men and women,” complained that “modern education had not always produced good *home* makers,” and affirmed that “to members of our church the *home* has an enlarged significance.” As his condemnation of apartment dwellers demonstrated, the moral foundation of society was not to be found in a particular *model* of family, but a *locus* Americans would come to refer to as a “detached, single-family dwelling.” Thus, the Mormon shift from polygamy to monogamy was accomplished via a single vehicle--the word “home.”

Home and the Building of a Homelife (1952): A Rhetoric of Transition

For all its idealization of Mormonism’s new hybrid Mormon/Protestant family, Richards’ 1935 radio address did not immediately lead the church to specifically champion the “traditional” family nor even to emphasize the family in its rhetoric. A survey of general conference addresses shows that the topic of “family” did not become a significant theme for another fifteen years (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984). Between 1920 and 1949, seven percent of general conference addresses treated subthemes of the topic “family,” while during the years between 1950 and 1979, the percentage rose to 28 percent (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984). A speech entitled “Home and the Building of a Homelife” delivered on October 2, 1952, by Apostle J. Reuben Clark to an audience of Mormon women at the Annual Relief Society General Conference, was representative of this gradual increase. Published in the *Relief Society Magazine* it was read by many devout female members of the church. For our purposes it suggests that in 1952, Domestic

Protestantism's "traditional" family, with its rigid gender roles, had *penetrated* but not yet *permeated* the church.

"Home and the Building of a Homelife," delivered by Apostle Clark, appeared during America's post-WWII return to domesticity, a time during which there were rampant postwar fears that communism would take over the world and that, subsequently, the state would take over the nurturing of children (Evans, 1986). This general return to domesticity was nothing less than the development of a new vision of American family life. The Depression and WWII had forced many to live in extended family enclaves that were not only crowded, but brought intergenerational conflicts to the fore. As a result, when post-war prosperity made other living arrangements possible, privacy became the order of the day. The purchase of single-family homes in the suburbs soared as Americans embarked upon a "nuclear" lifestyle that had no historical precedent (Coontz, 1992). As Historian Elaine Tyler May (1988) explains,

The legendary family of the 1950's . . . was not, as common wisdom tells us, the last gasp of "traditional family life" with deep roots in the past. Rather, it was the first, wholehearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members' personal needs through an energized and expressive personal life. (quoted in Coontz, 1992, p. 27)

This new perception of family as a locus of personal fulfillment was related to a change in how middle-class women saw their domestic contributions.

19th century [white] middle-class women had cheerfully left housework to servants while 1950's women of all classes created makework in their homes and felt guilty when they did not do everything for themselves. The amount of time women spent actually doing housework *increased* in the 1950's despite the advent of convenience foods and labor-saving

appliances; child care absorbed more than twice as much time as it had in the 1920's. (Coontz, 1992, p. 27)

With housework and mothering thus romanticized and glorified, the stay-at-home wife and mother replaced the domestic servant as the mark of prosperity and upward mobility.

Thus, the American Dream of the day became tightly tied to a model of family that required women to restrict themselves to the domestic sphere, a factor that Clark's rhetoric did not express—at least not in a tone reflective of the times.

A Rhetoric of Feminism

Clark had a more nuanced and less confined image of women at the time he delivered “Home and the Building of a Homelife” to his audience of women:

The sisters of the presidency came to me and asked me to speak and more or less gave me the topic. . . . They said it was my turn this time. . . instead of thinking of this as an address to you, I would like to think of it as a sort of counseling together with you about the subject which I finally picked as covering what the sisters wished me to say, “Home and the Building of a Home Life.” I am going to recall to you a number of elements that go into the building of home life. I repeat, you have heard them all before. (Clark, 1952, pp. 790-791)

This suggests that Clark did not perceive Mormon women merely in terms of domesticity but also as independent operators in the administration of the Relief Society—as public entities as well as private ones. Moreover, by dismissing his remarks as something with which the women were already familiar, he also portrayed them as persons who were as knowledgeable as himself in the art of creating a homelife.

Certainly, both Clark and the “sisters” *had* “heard [it] all before.” As noted in Chapter Two, the substance of his advice on domesticity had been entrenched in American

religious and secular rhetoric since the 1850s as part of a larger American body of discourse prescribing female domesticity and crediting the home with being a miniature church (Fishburn, 1991). By the 1950s, this perspective had invaded Mormon society as well, significantly diluting the church's original mid-19th century counter-cultural expansion of women's roles toward priesthood and organizational autonomy (Newell, 1985). What Clark's address reveals, however, is that in 1952 this expanded vision of womanhood had not yet entirely dissipated. His words did not portray women as *exclusively* maternal and domestic but also as significant actors within the world of church administration, even acknowledging that male administrators had unfairly restricted this institutional power in the past.

In portraying Mormon women as participants in the church's equivalent of the public sphere, Clark spoke of them both respectfully and protectively. First, he congratulated those who worked as Relief Society administrators for the fact that soon they would move into a new building for which they had raised the bulk of the funding. Second, he reminded them that a previous building for which they had raised money years before, had been taken unfairly by male administrators whom he likened to an invading camel:

You have heard the story of the camel, which, being on the outside of the tent . . . put his nose under the edge . . . and asked the master to let him keep his nose there. . . . Then the camel put in his head, and his ears, and then his front quarters, and finally his whole body, when he kicked the master out. (Clark, 1952, p. 790)

He concluded by admonishing male Mormon leaders--there were likely several presiding--to be aware of their past, unfair usurpation of the women's rightful property:

I charge the brethren who are younger than myself. . .[to] see to it that no such thing as that happens to this new building. . .but that when it is built, and you get into it, that they leave you alone and let you enjoy it. (Clark, 1952, p. 790)

A Rhetoric of Gendered Moral Domesticity

Although Clark depicted Mormon women as more than merely mothers he did not fail to endorse their maternal role:

You were created and placed on earth to be the mothers of the spirits that were created by our Heavenly Father to come to earth and prove themselves. . . . That is their great mission. Everything else is subordinate to that. (Clark, 1952, p. 791)

Clark also presented the women with a long list of maternal responsibilities. In rhetoric typical of Domestic Protestantism, he advised them to "Make [their] homelife as near heaven life as [possible]" and charged them to create homes that exemplified the highest standards of behavior:

Mothers in Isreal, in that home which it is in your power and which it is your duty to build, that home of bodily well-being, that home of love, and prayer and precept and example, of harmony, of seemliness and respect and education and culture . . . (Clark, 1952, p. 794).

He also expressed a tremendous sense of urgency about their moral duty to teach their children how to resist the sexual temptations that threatened to enter the sanctity of the home through external influences:

Many influences (more than ever before in my lifetime) are seeking to break down chastity and its divinely declared sanctity. The schoolroom,

the press, authors, poets, artists, dramatists, musicians, all consciously or unconsciously—are adding fuel to this flame of sexuality that is sweeping over the world. (Clark, 1952, p. 793)

A Rhetoric of Racism

To help fortify the home from these and other externally generated evils, Clark advised the “sisters” that their families should be formed according to two guidelines. Both had to do with heritage. The first referred to a mother’s duty to provide her child with a healthy body and seemed to apply to genetics:

I know that among the best, the most perfect homes, and from the most perfect bodies, there comes, sometimes, a malformation. . . Somewhere, I suppose, way back beyond the reaches of our memories . . . some mother or some father committed a wrong which passes down. . . . What comes from the past you cannot control; but what comes to the future, in that you have a large part. Do not forget the law of heredity. . . [and that] there is a very close relationship between the physical body and the spirit. I do not know the relationship but my observation teaches me that the debauched, polluted body almost never gives housing to a spirit that is not touched by pollution. (Clark, 1952, p. 791)

The second had to do with the avoidance of intermarriage between different races and religions for the maintenance of moral purity in the tradition of Christianity’s ancient Hebrew roots:

The Lord enjoined upon ancient Israel that they marry only among themselves, “For,” said the Lord, “Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God” (KJV, Deut. 7:6)

I have not seen where the Lord has released us . . . from that law. . . . This is the Lord’s decreed way. The same dangers that beset ancient Israel from intermarriage, the intermixing of blood with the nations among whom they lived, also beset us—the danger of infection with the heresies, the iniquities, and sinfulness that exist among unbelievers. (Clark, 1952, p. 793)

Thus, instead of identifying a God-preferred *model* of family, Clark identified God-preferred *genetic guidelines* by which the family was to be formed, even using a biblical warrant (KJV, Deuteronomy 7:6) to support them.

By 1952 the church had discarded plural marriage and been exposed to Richards' notion of a *hybrid* Mormon family that combined the Mormon doctrine of eternal families with the best of American family life lived out in that symbol of middle-class prosperity—a detached, single family dwelling. Thus, genetic purity, the home, piety, and middle-class sensibility (not a particular model of family) were the ingredients necessary for the good homelife his address promoted. Clark's concern over genetic purity revealed him to be a man consistent with his times. Contemporary Mormon leaders no longer advocate genetic purity in spite of scriptural foundations for it. Nevertheless, in 1952, laws against intermarriage by whites with minority races were still nationally enforced. Although Deuteronomy 7:6 did not recommend the kind of racism prevalent in America at the time, many Americans did not quibble over the distinctions between ancient concerns over intermarriage and their own (Mauss & Busch, 1984). Clark's attitude toward women, however, left him only partly consistent with the post-war era's unprecedented emphasis on female domesticity. His recollections and images of autonomous Mormon women participating competently in church administration would not have allowed him to hold with too much conviction that limiting women to domesticity, was "central" to Mormon notions of family. Rather, they suggest that the

church had not yet shed its early radicalism and settled upon the tradition-bound course it would ultimately take. Its notions of marriage and family-life were in transition.

“No Other Success Can Compensate for Failure in the Home” (1964):

A Rhetoric of Respectability

Emphasis on the home as the locus of virtue surfaced in an address delivered to an audience of assembled Mormons at general conference in April, 1964 by church president David O. McKay. This address is appropriate for the time line because it contained a statement--“No other success can compensate for failure in the home”--that has been so widely disseminated throughout Mormon discourse as to be a Mormon mantra. Subsequently, it marked a change in the church’s posture from one attempting to *accommodate* old-fashioned American family values to one *exemplifying* them.

A Rhetoric of Cultural Criticism

The early sixties was a time of serious concern among Americans in general over what has come to be called “the breakdown of the family” through divorce (Coontz, 1992, p. 3). McKay’s address, with its launching of the “No other success” maxim reflected this for it was frequently repeated by other Mormon leaders. Six months after McKay’s address, Apostle Richard L. Evans, said in general conference

My mind keeps going back to a sentence from the [previous] conference address of President McKay, in which he said “No other success can compensate for failure in the home.” (1964, p. 136)

Two and a half years later (also in general conference) Apostle Alvin R. Dyer said

Finally, in the words of our beloved President, which have echoed from this pulpit many times since he made this statement: No other success can compensate for failure in the home.” (1966, p. 135)

In fact, the number of times the quote appeared in various Mormon writings, both ecclesiastical and popular, was great enough that fourteen years later, a Brigham Young University professor wrote that it had “come to carry for concerned Church [sic] members an almost-scriptural authority” (Waterstradt, 1979, p. 501).

This estimation is interesting considering that the “No other success” maxim did not originate with McKay himself, but was a quote from *Home, the Savior of Civilization*, by J. E. McCulloch, a non-Mormon author. McKay originally had used it with proper attribution (garnering no discernable reaction) in a 1935 conference address (McKay, 1935, p. 116). When he reprised it in 1964, it appeared (without proper attribution) in the April, 1964 issue of *Conference Reports*, and (presumed to be McKay’s own statement) appeared thereafter without proper attribution in numberless other Mormon texts. Thirty years later, when it was quoted by then church president Howard W. Hunter in the general conference edition of the church magazine the *Ensign of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, an enterprising editor cited it correctly as McCulloch’s (Hunter, 1994, p. 30). (*Ensign* editors have made no reference to the fact that in correcting the church’s inadvertent plagiarism they had debunked—at least for Mormons alert to source acknowledgement—a longstanding assumption among the Mormon people. Nor have church leaders publicly discussed it.)

In spite of having inaugurated Mormonism's most famous truism on the family, McKay's speech was not specifically devoted to the *topic* of family. It began with several paragraphs about the evils of smoking--the most recent Surgeon General's Report had just linked smoking to lung cancer (Harriss, 1991, p. 166)--and ended with several about the relationship of national strength to individual integrity. The topic of family appeared in the middle, and then only in terms of the subtopic divorce.

Another threat to our society is the increasing number of divorces and the tendency to look upon marriage as a mere contract that may be severed at the first difficulty or misunderstanding that arises. (McKay, 1964, p. 5)

This characterization of Americans was an interesting contrast to the one put forth in Richards' 1935 national radio broadcast. Richards had portrayed Americans as highly committed to "old-fashioned . . . family life," but McKay portrayed them as increasingly prone to sever such commitments. In 29 years, Mormonism had shifted from a rhetoric endorsing the "old-fashioned American family" as a mediator of morality to one condemning it as a site of moral failure. This brought its family-related commentary into harmony with American family discourse in general. As noted in Chapter One, criticism of home and family life as a site of moral failure was an enduring American tradition (Lasch, 1977, Coontz, 1992).

A Rhetoric of Domestic Glorification

McKay's censure of American family life quickly developed into a glorification of homelife. Elements of Domestic Protestantism appeared in such statements as "Pure hearts in a pure home [were] always in whispering distance of heaven. . . . and the chief

school for human virtues” (McKay, 1964, p. 5). Still, like Richards, and Clark before him,

McKay did not endorse a particular *model* of family but referred to a residence:

When the club becomes more attractive to any man than his home, it is time for him to confess . . . that he has failed to measure up to the supreme opportunity of his life. No other success can compensate for failure in the home. The poorest shack in which love prevails over a united family is of greater value to God and future humanity than any other riches. (McKay, 1964, p. 5)

To be ideal, however, the residence, whether a “home” or a “shack,” had to contain a family unit that was “united,” a fact that McKay supported, not with a scriptural warrant, but with an *implication* of such:

In light of scripture . . . we are justified in concluding that Christ’s ideal pertaining to marriage is *the unbroken home* [italics added], and conditions that cause divorce are violations of his divine teaching. (McKay, 1964, p. 5)

Thus, McKay seemed to imply that God’s concern over the family was not so much that it be polygamous or “old-fashioned American” but that it be “unbroken” or “united.” He theorized that if Americans accepted the Mormon concept of eternal marriage, the divorce rate would decrease:

In order to lessen the breaking-up of homes, we should substitute the present tendency toward a low view of marriage by the lofty view which Jesus Christ gives it. Let us look upon marriage as a sacred obligation and a covenant that is eternal or that may be made eternal. (McKay, 1964, p. 6)

This suggested that McKay believed that the church had escaped its scandalous past and, having achieved a measure of respectability, could take its rightful place as a moral force in America.

McKay's "No other success" speech was a continuation of Richards' and Clark's identification of "the home" as society's moral foundation for it recommended no specific model of family as superior. Nevertheless, *unlike* Richards, McKay did not glorify American family life but condemned it as a site of moral decline. He also implied that the problem of "the breaking up of homes" (McKay, 1964, p. 6) could be solved if the Mormon perception of marriage and the parent-child relationship as "eternal" (p. 6) were applied. Therefore, McKay's speech reversed the dynamic Richards set up in 1935. The Mormon family ideal was no longer the "old-fashioned American family." It had *become* the "ideal American family"--a status that signaled the church's new-found sense of respectability within American culture. Certainly, the bestowal of "almost scriptural authority" upon the "No other success" maxim seemed to confirm the church's ripening sense of itself as an authority on how to keep families from breaking down and marriages from breaking up. That this beloved aphorism originated outside of Mormonism is ironic, but not altogether surprising since the Domestic Protestantism it represented was not of Mormon origin.

"Home, the Place to Save Society" (1975): A Rhetoric of Integration

The ripening sense among the Saints that Mormon doctrine held the key to family togetherness came to fruition within the next decade and was reflected in an address that fully integrated the "traditional" family into Mormon perceptions of family. The address, "Home, the Place to Save Society," delivered by church president Spencer W. Kimball at a conference of Swedish Mormons held in Stockholm, was intended for an audience of the

devout and, later, was published as a feature article in the church's official magazine, the *Ensign of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. It signaled a direct and specific change in the way Mormon rhetoric defined the family.

A Rhetoric of Integration

Important "family" matters had occurred during the eleven years between David O. McKay's mantra-launching address in 1964, and Kimball's "Home, the Place to Save Society" in 1975--in short, the church had absorbed "the traditional family" into its organizational structure. This assimilation, while creating a new rhetoric on "the family," was founded upon difficulties created by the church's continued growth.

As the church expanded and became increasingly difficult to manage, President McKay, Apostle Harold B. Lee, and other leading apostles sought to "simplify, economize, and centralize Church [sic] efforts" (Wiley, 1985, p. 20). The problem was that, over time, the church had developed several different auxiliary organizations with separate power bases and competing interests--the Relief Society for the women, the Mutual Improvement Association for the youth, and the Primary organization for the teaching of young children. In order to bring this cumbersome arrangement into some kind of coordinated functioning, McKay and Lee orchestrated a system of "priesthood correlation" (hereafter "Correlation") that placed all the auxiliaries (even the female-headed Relief Society and Primary) as well as the entire membership of the church, under the rule of the priesthood. This process of "Correlation" incorporated individual Mormon families into the church's structure making "the family unit . . . the integral unit in the Church

[sic]"(Wiley, 1985, p. 20) making "each household a little auxiliary unto itself under the individual priesthood leadership of the father" (M. Hanks, personal communication, August 11, 1996). Thus, priesthood authority could trickle down the church's "pipeline of authority" (Wiley, 1985, p. 20) reaching even into its smallest unit, and thus bringing the entire church into organizational synchronization.

The mechanism by which this priestly authority was to penetrate the home was "Family Home Evening"--a weekly family gathering during which parents spent time with their children to teach them moral lessons and join them in family activities such as games, singing, and reading the scriptures (Wiley, 1985). An innovative church leader had established it in his jurisdiction at the turn of the century and eventually the rest of the church had informally adopted it. Until 1964, Mormon families held these family-centered activities with uneven dedication on a week night of their own choosing (Alexander, 1986), but in the afterglow of McKay's "No other success" speech, McKay and Lee moved to emphasize it further.

They accomplished this re-emphasis in stages. In 1965 the church issued a weekly Family Home Evening lesson manual to all parents, and, in 1966, encouraged each stake to set aside a regular night devoted to Family Home Evening and to avoid scheduling church activities that would interfere with it (Alexander, 1986). In 1970, then church president Joseph Fielding Smith announced that Family Home Evening should be held churchwide on Monday nights under the direction of the priesthood-holding father in each home. This placed each household under priesthood jurisdiction, creating a system

whereby the entire church could be brought into “Correlation” by a unified system of priesthood-regulated authority. Kimball’s speech, four years later, was an attempt to teach individual Mormon families how to proceed within this schemata.

Unusually energetic and dynamic, Kimball was an extraordinary champion of Family Home Evening, and his address, “Home: The Place to Save Society,” was one of his many enthusiastic efforts to “sell” Family Home Evening to the Saints. As his son Edward Kimball (1987) recalls, “A large portion of his addresses . . . dealt with home and family and the training of youth.” (p. 8)

For six years, from 1974 to 1979, he was at his most vigorous, racing around the world at an exhausting pace, conducting more than forty area conferences . . . seeing to major changes in the Church’s [sic] administrative structure . . . (p. 8)

Nevertheless, factors other than Kimball’s personal dynamism helped make Family Home Evening a particularly Mormon custom. The church published several manuals to aid parents in planning effective Family Home Evenings; some church leaders counseled newlyweds to hold regular Family Home Evenings to insure that their children would remain faithful to the church (personal communication, C. LeFevre, August 11, 1997); and buttons, bumperstickers, refrigerator magnets and other paraphernalia with the slogan “Happiness is Family Home Evening” appeared in Mormon-affiliated bookstores. In 1975 the church launched its “Home Front” series of “public service announcements” on television and radio (Le Fevre, 1994) and in 1980 paid 12 million dollars for a conspicuous ad in *Reader’s Digest* equating Mormonism with idealized American family

life (Fletcher, 1982, p. 18). These Mormon-sponsored media images left many (in and out of the church) convinced that Mormonism was largely about “the family”--a factor that the church’s evangelizing arm quickly mobilized. The church-authorized series of lessons used by missionaries to proselytize among non-Mormons were changed in 1974 (the year Kimball became church president) so that Family Home Evening was the first “doctrine” of Mormonism taught to missionary contactees (personal communication, C. LeFevre, Aug. 11, 1997).

Kimball’s urgent tone in “Home, the Place to Save Society” was likely the result of the fact that Mormonism (along with conservative Protestantism) had become alarmed by the freedom movements of the 1960s and their implicit challenge to the traditional family’s function as society’s moral foundation. Evidence of their dismay is present in other addresses of the time period. Apostle Thomas S. Monson’s (1971) condemnation of feminism entitled “The Woman’s Movement: Liberation or Deception” is one example (pp. 20-22).

In “Home: The Place to Save Society,” Kimball promoted Family Home Evening with the argument that a strong, intact family in which parents followed traditional gender roles and had regular Family Home Evenings with their children would solve all the world’s problems. Adopting an uncommonly ecumenical attitude he urged Mormons to

[Take] this general panacea and heal our wounds and immunize our children against evil by the simple process of teaching and training them in the way of the Lord. Every father and mother in Zion, and every Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Mohammadan and all other parents have the same

responsibility: to teach their children to pray and walk uprightly before the Lord! (Kimball, 1975, p. 7)

Kimball's seriousness was reflected in the opening paragraph of the talk--a paragraph in which he established that society was falling apart:

These are turbulent times. The newspapers give front page coverage to ever-increasing acts of violence and magazines devote pages to the growing menace. Such stories are revolting in their worldliness and debauchery. (Kimball, 1975, p. 3)

He further maintained that this social chaos could be "neutralize[d]" (p. 4) if only the world would reinstate "true family life" (p. 5) in which fathers "returned to [their] rightful place at the head of the family" (p. 4), mothers came "home from social life and employment" (p. 4), children stopped living lives of "unlimited fun and frolic" (p. 4), and people would adopt Family Home Evening as a weekly ritual. This image of Americans as a nation of weak fathers, frivolous, materialistic mothers, and improvident children was evocative of McKay's 1964 reference to the divorced as those who had a "tendency to look upon marriage as a contract that may be severed at the first difficulty" (p. 5).

But more importantly in terms of this analysis, it was a distinct change from the positive image of womanhood offered in "Home, and the Building if a Homelife" (Clark, 1952.) While Clark had presented a respectful portrait of women as public as well as private individuals who had been wrongly victimized by male dominance, Kimball employed an unflattering image of female insubordination to dramatize his glorification of wifely domesticity and submission:

A woman need have no fear of being imposed upon or of any dictatorial measures or of any improper demands when the husband is self-sacrificing and worthy. Certainly no intelligent woman would hesitate to give submission to her own truly righteous husband in everything. We are sometimes shocked to see a wife take over the leadership, naming the one to pray, the place to be, the things to do. (Kimball, 1975, p. 5)

Having thus warned women against insubordination, he indicted them for materialism, saying "Today . . . many mothers . . . leave their children to work in business, teaching, or other occupations. Some mothers are required to work away from home, but many do so through choice" (Kimball, 1975, p. 7). He further blamed them for past social problems:

It is easy to see the resemblance between our modern-day situation [of social decay] and that of ancient Rome. According to Will Durant . . .

"Women won the free administration of their dowries, divorced their husbands or occasionally poisoned them, and doubted the wisdom of bearing children in an age of urban congestion and imperialistic wars. Already by 160 Cato and Polybus had noted a decline in population and the inability of the state to raise such armies as had risen to meet Hannibal . . ." (Kimball, 1975, p. 10)

Kimball next embarked upon a promotion of the "traditional" family that was energetic, effusive, and thick with persuasive devices. The thrust of his argument was that scriptural authority posited a link between God, Family Home Evening, and traditional sex roles:

Had every Roman father been teaching his sons righteousness instead of war, and every mother making a home for her children; . . . would Rome still be a world power? (Kimball, 1975, p. 6)

In the divine scheme, every soul has been given a father whose responsibility it is to sire and provide for the necessities of life but also to train for mortality and life eternal. (p. 4)

It is apparent that Enos [a righteous character in the Book of Mormon] received his greatest inspiration from his own faithful father. And the teachings were frequent and powerful concerning eternal life.(p. 4)

Had every father in Babylon, assisted by the mother, taught and trained little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, would that great city have been covered with sand and its corruption buried in the earth, its springs dried up, its temples toppled? (p. 6)

He also quoted directly from the Bible and the *Book of Mormon* to make the same point:

An early American prophet [from the *Book of Mormon*] said, “I Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore was I taught somewhat in the learning of my father; . . . yea, having had great knowledge of the goodness and mysteries of God, therefore I make a record. . . .” (1 Nephi 1:11). (Kimball, 1975, p. 4)

Enos [a *Book of Mormon* prophet] records:

Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.” (Enos 2-3) (Kimball, 1975, p. 4)

The Lord punished the temple worker, Eli, charging him with the serious sins of his sons. And the Lord whispered through Samuel: “. . . I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning this house. . . .” “Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” (1 Samuel 3:12-13) (Kimball, 1975, p. 6)

In the command of Moses to the wanderers, certainly there were the elements of [Family Home Evening]:

“And these words . . . shall be in thine heart:

“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto my children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

Certainly here was family worship. (Kimball, 1975, p. 5)

Using both the *implication* of scripture coupled with *direct* scriptural warrants, Kimball built a powerful case to show that Family Home Evening was already an established aspect of God’s will and that the “traditional” model of family was absolutely essential to the

physical and spiritual survival of the world. It is noteworthy that none of the families he cited in his proof-texts *were* traditional, since (as noted earlier) the “traditional” family did not emerge until the Industrial Revolution.

Moving beyond theological claims, Kimball further buttressed his case with arguments unrelated to scripture. He used several lengthy passages from *The Story of Civilization* by Will Durant, and read a letter written by a babysitter condemning the working mother who employed her and stressing the importance of stay-at-home mothers. He also offered the following paragraph citing statistics about single-parent families:

The real tragedy is the large number of innocent children who live with only one parent after a divorce or family breakup. In a [nearby] city, . . . 38 percent of all children under eighteen are short of parents. . . . When children drop to a one parent basis, that is the announcement of the failing civilization. (Kimball, 1975, p. 10)

Kimball also embellished on the theme McKay had only hinted at in 1964—that Mormonism’s doctrine of the eternal family ought to be an inspiration to divorce-ridden America—by offering examples of secular institutions that now emulated the church’s focus on the family. He noted that the governor of Arizona had declared the week of Sunday, June 2, 1974, as “Family Week,” and that the mayor of a California city had “called upon his people to observe the family evening [sic]” (Kimball, 1975, p. 7). This vision of Mormonism as a religion admired enough to be imitated and celebrated for its pious “traditional” families may have been irresistible to the membership at large. Those members who knew the church had once been denounced and sanctioned for its “depraved” polygamous families could not have failed to appreciate the pleasure of some

positive public relations. At any rate, Kimball's image of Mormons as a moral example to Americans is one that (as will be detailed later) expanded far beyond the confines of Kimball's address.

With Kimball's words on record, "The Mormon Family" was firmly established as the "traditional" family. Had the 19th century Saints who mourned the loss of a "cause" in polygamy still been alive, "Home, the Place to Save Society" may well have given them a new "cause" in its potent image of Mormon families poised to save the world. Both the context and rhetoric of "Home, the Place to Save Society" suggest that the latter half of the 1970s was the time during which the equation of Mormonism and "traditional" family life gelled in the Mormon consciousness. Moreover, the designation "Family Home Evening," with its juxtaposition of the words "home" and "family," indicates that the church's perception of what constituted the moral foundation of society was no longer merely a *locus*. The *locus* of "home" now had merged with a particular *model* of "family" that was clearly the "traditional" family.

"Excerpts . . . Regarding the Manifesto" (1981)

A Rhetoric of Paradox Propagandized

With a new cause to celebrate, church leaders moved to secure a place for the "traditional" family in Mormon doctrine. Subsequently, in 1981, they included selections from a number of Wilford Woodruff's post-Manifesto speeches to the *Doctrine and Covenants*. These were included under the text of the Manifesto ("Official Declaration--1") and titled "Excerpts From Three Addresses Presented by President Wilford Woodruff

Regarding the Manifesto" (D&C, 1981, p. 292-293). (Hereafter "Excerpts.") As such they were directed to two different Mormon audiences, the original 19th century audience and a new audience of contemporary Mormons. Their canonization in 1981 suggests that they were part of an effort by general authorities to certify contemporary Mormon teachings on "the family" by down playing the church's former association with polygamy.

Although ninety years had passed since the advent of the Manifesto, controversy over the legitimacy of plural marriage still quietly simmered. The independent polygamists--now known within the Mormon community as "Fundamentalists"--had helped keep the debate alive by informally proselytizing among mainstream Mormons with a message that purposefully contradicted the rhetoric of alteration and amnesia carefully set in place during the 1920s by James B. Talmage. Because Talmage's alteration of the terminology of exaltation had been sustained by a revisionist history, mainstream Saints in 1981 had little awareness of the 19th century church's theological dilemma over plural marriage. They knew that plural marriage had existed within the 19th century church because the canonization of the Manifesto as "Official Declaration--1" in the *Doctrine and Covenants* was stark evidence that it had. Nevertheless, they did not know that Joseph Smith had taught that it was essential for exaltation; that church leaders at the highest levels had predicted its survival against federal sanctions; that the Manifesto had not decisively ended it; and that the Saints had entered into numerous post-Manifesto plural marriages (Alexander, 1986; Bradley, 1990). As a result, when Fundamentalists revealed these facts, mainstreamers were an audience caught unawares, and Woodruff's "Excerpts"

represented the leadership's attempt to launch a pre-emptive strike against the Fundamentalists' unexpurgated account of Mormon history.

Initially, the "Excerpts" were Woodruff's attempt to reestablish his credibility after the Manifesto had contradicted his assertions (and those of earlier leaders) that plural marriage would outlast the federal government's severe assault. He had argued that

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme [sic]. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that the Lord would remove me out of my place. . . .

The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would take place if we did not stop this practice. . . . all the ordinances would be stopped throughout the land . . . Confusion would reign throughout [Mormondom] and many men would be made prisoners. This trouble would have come upon the whole Church [sic], and we should have been compelled to stop the practice [anyway]. . . .

But I want to say this: I should have let all the temples go out of our hands; I should have gone to prison myself, and let every other man go there, had not the God of heaven commanded me to [capitulate to federal law] . . . (D&C, 1981, pp. 292-293)

Since Woodruff made these statements to justify the fact that he and others had earlier "led [the church] astray" by predicting polygamy's permanence and endurance, he was asking the Saints to accept a paradox as a cure for the contradiction inherent in the two conflicting messages. To understand how he did this one first must have a clear understanding of what constitutes a contradiction and what constitutes a paradox.

A Rhetoric of Paradox

To institute a paradox as a cure for a contradiction is not to heal the gulf between contradictions but to make the gulf so overwhelming one is virtually trapped within it. Contradiction occurs when two incongruous commands exist on the *same level of abstraction* such as would arise if two traffic signs “Stop” and “No Stopping Anytime” were to appear together at the same intersection. A reader would not be trapped between the texts of their antithetical messages but could choose which command to obey. This choice would not be available in a situation of paradox (Watzlawick, Bavelas & Jackson, 1967).

A paradox is a contradiction that occurs between *different levels of abstraction* as in the statement “I am lying.” The first level of abstraction is the text (“I am lying”); the second level of abstraction is the context (the speaker’s identification of him/herself as a liar). Thus, listeners cannot choose whether or not the speaker is either lying or telling the truth. They are trapped within the unwieldy reality that if the speaker is telling the truth, s/he is lying, and if the speaker is lying s/he is telling the truth and therefore can conclude nothing at all (Watzlawick, et al., 1967). Likewise, when Woodruff asserted that God would never allow him to lead the church “astray,” it was impossible to tell whether in making such a claim he was not, in fact, doing just that.

Woodruff’s assertion that “The Lord will never permit me or any man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray” has two levels of abstraction. The first level of abstraction is the text asserting that “presidents of the church can never lead it

wrongly.” The second level of abstraction is the context in which Woodruff felt compelled to issue such a text: the indisputable reality that by making predictions that did not come true, he *had* led the church wrongly. Thus, Woodruff offered the Saints the following paradoxical construct: Wherever the president of the church leads the church, it is by definition *not* astray, therefore it is of no consequence where he has led you in the past and where he will lead you in the future.

Woodruff’s paradox can be understood further in light of what Branham & Pearce (1985) identify as a “strange loop”—a “text-context relationship . . . in which a reversal of meaning at some level occurs when one follows the chain of implications from context to text and back to context” (p.25). A visual metaphor of this construction is the M.C. Escher drawing of a staircase in which, whether one moves one’s eyes up or down the steps, one returns to the same step (Locher, 1971, quoted in Branham & Pearce, 1985, p. 25). In Woodruff’s suggestion that as long as he was president of the church he could not lead the church astray, the “chain of implications from context to text and back to context” was equally fraught with reversal: When presidential infallibility (context) failed because the presidential statements (text) proved wrong, Woodruff did not resolve the discrepancy by stating what had occurred. Instead, he created a “reversal of meaning” between the text and context that was so profound it rendered them indistinguishable. Thus, by this “metacommunicative leap of thought” (Branham & Pearce, 1985, p. 30) he re-established his prophetic authority by issuing a rhetoric that allowed the faithful to

embrace text and context simultaneously. By this measure, his statements were true because he uttered them and he uttered them because they were true.

It should be noted that paradox and the meta-communicative leap of thought are not elements of the faith-based suspension of rationality that is accepted as part of Christian faith. Admittedly, Christian faith may *seem* paradoxical in the sense that it requires belief in matters that are *unbelievable* such as Jesus of Nazareth's resurrection from the dead three days after his death and burial. Nevertheless, faith is not a true paradox because it does not trap the religionist within an undifferentiated amalgam of text and context in which the two alternatives offered are ultimately identical. Rather, it sets up a situation in which one may choose to think logically or envision existence in terms of certain mythopoetic or magical possibilities. One is not required to deny objective reality as were the Saints when Woodruff asked his followers to accept his infallibility in the face of indisputable contradictory evidence. The Christian "leap of faith" proposes an alternative to linear thinking, not a state of denial or an entanglement between text and context.

The Rhetoric of Paradox Propagandized

In 1981 when the "Excerpts" were added to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, the need to deny objective reality was only necessary for those Saints who were confronted by the Fundamentalist's unexpurgated version of Mormon history. Therefore, to assist these Saints as they performed the leap of faith between text and context (meta-text), church leaders enhanced Woodruff's paradoxical claim of prophetic infallibility by situating it

within a framework of propaganda. To understand why this is so, one must first have a clear understanding of what constitutes propaganda.

Propaganda is “any conscious and open attempt to influence the beliefs of an individual or group, guided by a predetermined end and characterized by the systematic use of irrational and often unethical techniques of persuasion,” (Smith, 1989, p. 80).

Within this definition it is important to know what constitutes a means of persuasion that is “irrational” and “unethical”: An “irrational” means of persuasion is one that could not “survive the scrutiny of reasonable men” (p. 81); an “unethical” means of persuasion is one that tries to “induce belief in an audience without providing adequate support” (p. 81).

By this standard, Woodruff’s assertion of prophetic infallibility was almost fully propagandistic *before* its inclusion as part of the “Excerpts.” It “conscious[ly] and open[ly]” argued for predetermined faith in Woodruff’s infallibility regardless of his evident fallibility; it was “unethical” because it was an effort to persuade the Saints that the Manifesto was not contradictory “without offering adequate support” (Smith, 1989, p. 81) for doing so; and it was “irrational” because its indisputable denial of objective reality would not allow it to “survive the critical scrutiny of reasonable men” (p. 81). Its only deficiency as propaganda was its failure to be systematic and that failure was eliminated as soon as it was canonized in 1981. As part of the *Doctrine and Covenants* Woodruff’s paradox became *systematically* available to any Saint who sought answers to questions about the propriety of Wilford Woodruff’s decision to surrender to federal power in the matter of plural marriage.

Since Woodruff's effort to re-establish his prophetic authority was made in the context of justifying the church's abandonment of plural marriage, its 1981 resurrection in the *Doctrine and Covenants* can be considered part of the church's continued justification of the church's move toward the "traditional" model of family. Therefore, Woodruff's paradox, propagandized under the title "Excerpts," suggests that ninety years after the Manifesto, the church still felt uneasy about its abandonment of plural marriage and was searching for new ways to justify it.

"To the Mothers in Zion" (1987): A Rhetoric of Anti-feminism

If Kimball's establishment of Family Home Evening sustained by Woodruff's "Excerpts" had helped to integrate the "traditional" family into the organizational structure of the church, an address delivered by Kimball's successor, Ezra Taft Benson, identified some areas in which that integration was an uncomfortable fit. Benson's address, "To the Mothers in Zion," was presented in 1987 to a large audience of Mormons at a "Fireside for Parents" held in a large auditorium on the campus of Brigham Young University and broadcast via satellite to each chapel in the church. It urged Mormon women who worked outside the home to quit their jobs, and return to their god-ordained role of motherhood, thereby manifesting a change from Kimball's (albeit somewhat misogynous and conflicted) characterization of women as good soldiers in the Family Home Evening war on moral chaos, to one that portrayed working mothers as virtual deserters in the battle to save society.

Though many of Benson's arguments were statements lifted from addresses of earlier church presidents that at the time had aroused little attention, in reprising them Benson incensed a significant number of women. This atypical response (for Mormons generally revere the words of their leaders) can best be understood in terms of three events that had preceded it--the Utah International Women's Conference held June 24-25, 1977, in Salt Lake City, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the economic inflation of the 1970s (Henetz, 1997). They, together, constituted an anti-feminist rhetoric that materialized within the church as Mormons approached the 1980s.

During the mid-1970s, the United States federal government earmarked funds for statewide conferences to mark the International Women's Year of 1977. These conferences were to provide a forum at which women could contemplate and vote upon current social issues. Consequently, in 1976, Utah governor Calvin Rampton appointed a Mormon woman, Jan Tyler, to head a committee to plan for a gathering of Utah women in Salt Lake City, in a large conference center called the Salt Palace, on the weekend of June 24-25, 1977. Tyler, a professor of education at Brigham Young University and a member of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, selected thirty-two women to help her. She and her committee organized and attended numerous meetings with local women in Utah's various political districts to learn which issues concerned them. As it turned out, these concerns co-incided with many of the concerns voiced within the popular feminism of the day (it was then referred to as "the women's movement") such as tax

breaks for non-profit child care, and equal access to education, employment protections, bank credit, and health care research (Henetz, 1997).

A Rhetoric of Anti-feminism

As the date of the conference drew near, however, Mormon leaders closely reviewed the International Women's Year resolutions, and concluded that they reflected a feminist perspective and, thereby, were a threat to the stability of the family. Publicizing this concern throughout Utah by means of church-wide statements made by the general President of the Relief Society (Brabara Smith), and the church-owned newspaper, the *Deseret News*, they called upon Mormons to defend the state from anti-family political influence. Then, on June 6, 1977, the First Presidency distributed a letter to the bishop of each Mormon ward advising local Relief Society presidents to send at least ten women to the convention in the company of a male priesthood leader and (under his guidance) to vote down all anti-family proposals. This publicity ignited the interest of Utah's right-wing conservative groups such as the John Birch Society, the Eagle Forum, and the Conservative Caucus, and subsequently, these groups also organized against the presumed anti-family agenda of the Utah Women's Conference. The tone of their public rhetoric, however, was a departure from the Mormon leadership's restrained advice to vote against proposals that might "harm hearth and home" or "not really represent [Mormon] beliefs" (Henetz, 1997, p. A1). For example, Conservative Caucus leader Dennis Ker, a Salt Lake City businessman and Mormon who held the office of bishop, circulated rumors that the International Women's Year was a "lesbian plot," that pornographic films would be shown

at the Utah conference, and that the voting on social issues would be rigged in favor of a lesbian agenda (Henetz, 1997, p. A1). Because many political conservatives were also Mormons, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between the church's point of view and the inflammatory speech of some conservative right-wing activists (Henetz, 1997).

Although estimates based upon attendance levels in the local political districts led Tyler's committee to expect only 3,000 at the conference, the involvement of both the church and the conservative groups brought 14,000 women to the Salt Palace (Henetz, 1997). As Patty Henetz of the Salt Lake Tribune reported,

Within hours, bedlam reigned. Women screamed at each other while men with walkie-talkies roamed the Salt Palace halls announcing when it was time to vote "no" on one measure or another. It was hot, overcrowded, and forever too late to separate politics from religion, to rescue the conference from the melee it had become. . . .

That night, as Friday bled into Saturday, the throng refused to let the organizers adjourn.

"We were tired and wanted to go home," recalls Lynne Van Dam, then-President of the state's Equal Rights Coalition and co-ordinating committee member. "But they wouldn't let us. There were 14,000 women pounding their feet and yelling 'No, no, no.' They went to the microphone and said they weren't going to let these lesbians pass any laws. They were a mob. And they could have done some real damage." (Henetz, 1997, p. A1)

It was only in the aftermath of the conference that many Mormon women assimilated their reactions to the church's involvement and its apparent politically conservative bias.

Several on Tyler's committee saw their church affiliation in a new light. As Kathryn B.

Jenkins commented, "It was hard for me as a conference planner to be looked at darkly, to

be called a lesbian, to be suspected of the worst motives. . . I love the [Mormon] Church [sic] and will remain active in it. But that weekend, for the first time, I was a little embarrassed by it" (Henetz, 1997, p. A1). Other women who had attended the conference as representatives of the church felt dismay when they realized that in voting down the proposed national legislation of an "anti-family" agenda they had (a) opposed women's equality in terms of leadership, credit, education, and health care, (b) affirmed that marriage was *not* an equal partnership with important implications for meeting children's needs, (c) favored leaving elderly women vulnerable to losing their homes as they approached infirmity, (d) dismissed laws that would encourage the news media to portray more realistic images of women, and (e) discouraged the election of women to public offices and judgeships (Henetz, 1997).

Although not all Mormon women reacted with distress at these realizations (Sprouse, 1997; Lee, 1997), there is little doubt that the experience eroded some Mormon women's sense of comfort within the Mormon ecclesiastical community. A final report stored in the University of Utah's Marriott Library, consisting of assembled newspaper articles, tapes of conference sessions, official and unofficial histories, reveals that both Mormon and non-Mormon women reacted with hurt and sadness to the entire episode (Henetz, 1997). Further evidence of their discontent surfaced during the following summer when a small group of faithful Mormon women acted with unusual independence with regard to the church's official position on the Equal Right's Amendment (hereafter the ERA).

The church's official position on the ERA (a proposed amendment to the Constitution mandating legal equality between the sexes) had surfaced during the mid-1970s as the church lobbied to block its passage. Mormon leadership believed that legalized equality which would take women from their God-ordained female role, posed a threat to the "traditional" family, and by implication, challenged their profamily teachings. Unexpectedly, they encountered some significant political opposition from a small number of church members (largely female) who had formed a group called "Mormons for the ERA."

"Mormons for the ERA" was made up of devout members of the church who were familiar with feminist theory and who opposed the church's belief that the ERA threatened "the family." In a brochure entitled "Another Mormon View of the ERA" distributed by the Equal Rights Coalition of Utah, they maintained that the ERA was no threat to "the family" because "Commitment to the family can be as strong or stronger in marriages where the man and woman are afforded legal equality as in marriages where the state gives legal advantage to either spouse at the expense of the other" (Johnson, 1978).

The leader of "Mormons for the ERA" was a woman named Sonia Johnson. On August 4, 1978, Johnson brought Mormonism to national attention by testifying in favor of the ERA before the United States Senate Constitutional Rights Subcommittee. In her statement she spoke against the church's official anti-ERA position, arguing that it was not only inconsistent with 19th century Mormonism's expanded vision of womenhood, but

symptomatic of a tendency among the church's all-male priesthood to treat Mormon women like second-class citizens (Johnson, 1978).

Johnson's appraisal of Mormonism angered Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, a member of the subcommittee who was a devout Mormon and held the Mormon priesthood. Insisting that her criticism of the church was unwarranted, Hatch engaged Johnson in a heated discussion (Johnson, 1981, pp. 133-136) using arguments and a tone of voice that tended to confirm her allegation that Mormonism could be misogynous. Alert to the irony of the situation, reporters in attendance filed numerous newspaper and magazine articles about the exchange. Unfortunately for the church, they portrayed Senator Hatch as a bully and exaggerated Johnson's critique of Mormonism (Johnson, 1981, p. 202).

Later that year, church leaders excommunicated Johnson, an event also covered in the national press and which she discussed at length on a popular television talk show of the time, "The Donahue Show." She subsequently wrote a book entitled *From Housewife to Heretic* in which she related her life story, provided a feminist critique of the Mormon culture, and described her excommunication as an abusive and somewhat corrupt process (Johnson, 1981.) The book sold well, establishing Johnson as a significant feminist.

An articulate woman with a doctorate in education, Johnson vigorously protested her excommunication, believing that her devotion to Mormonism ought not to be impugned over a mere political difference with church leaders (Johnson, 1981). Church leaders insisted that her excommunication was justified because her support for the ERA

constituted a breach of morality. In a twenty-three page booklet entitled “The Church and the Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue,” they stated their position:

The basic concern of the Church [sic] with regard to the ERA as a moral issue is that women will be treated less favorably in many fundamental regards; and also that the family unit--in the Mormon sense of a sacred and eternal relationship--will be denigrated, causing great and substantial damage, not only to the Church [sic] but also the nation and the basic ideals which have made this country great. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, p. 8)

They further argued that gender roles were a crucial aspect of Christian theology:

The Church [sic] does not seek to alter physical and emotional differences set by God. . . .

At the time of the Creation [sic] the responsibility of bearing and nurturing children was assigned to the mother. The primary role of providing was assigned to the father. There is nothing in all of scripture that alters this fundamental understanding; . . .

Therefore, it is with this understanding of God’s instructions that we have noted the negative impact that ERA could have on present laws protecting mothers and children from fathers who do not accept legal responsibilities for their children, and on present laws protecting family structure and relationships between husbands and wives. The proposed ERA challenges this entire scriptural understanding . . . and portends tragic consequences for individuals and society. (pp. 11-12)

The booklet was distributed to members of the church as an insert in the church magazine

Ensign of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Certainly, with distinct male/female gender roles “married” into its organizational structure, the church was hard-pressed to support a Constitutional amendment insisting that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged . . . on account of sex.” While many Protestant denominations had decided that Christianity need not be

interpreted as an endorsement of gender roles and had thus opened their priesthood to women (Zikmund, 1986), Mormon leaders thought differently. The vigorous public debate over ERA had introduced these men to less “traditional” notions of family and left them with what one Mormon apostle called a “lingering, ominous belief that the proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment [had] paid little, if any, attention to the family at all” (Packer, 1977, p. 8). Their natural reaction was to protect the “traditional” family from anything that might disturb its application of gender roles. “To the Mothers in Zion” was part of this general tendency.

Adding to the church’s sense that the “traditional” family was under attack by pro-ERA forces was its growing awareness that increasing numbers of American women had entered the workforce in the 1970s and 1980s (Coontz, 1992). Since the 1970s, economic inflation had made two incomes necessary for the purchase of a single family dwelling, and as those who most needed them were families with children, many mothers had begun working outside the home. Mormon women, a group with larger than average numbers of children, had taken outside employment at a rate that was slightly above the national average (Anderson, 1988, p. 104). Moreover, Mormon women (both national and international) dealt with cost-of-living situations that reflected tremendous regional differences. As a result, pain and anger were common reactions to Benson’s uniform mandate to be stay-at-home mothers while *still* producing large numbers of children (Anderson, 1988). As Hanks (1992) summed up, the events of the mid-eighties left Mormon women with “scars still evident to the present” (p. xviii).

Anecdotal evidence indicates that Benson's address "To the Mothers in Zion" generated an atmosphere of criticism, derisiveness, and despair among the rank and file of Mormon women. One Mormon bishop was "beseiged during the week following the address by women full of hurt and resentment" (Anderson, 1988, p. 105). The wife of the bishop of a student ward said that for a month following, many wives who were working to put their husbands through school came to her "privately in tears and pain" (p. 105). During a local Relief society meeting, some women "strident[ly]" condemned the working mothers in attendance for "violating" Benson's instructions (p. 105) and several intense discussions occurred at Brigham Young University ("Prophet's Talk Prompts Examination of Women's Role", 1987, p. 41). At the annual Brigham Young University Women's Conference (held the following March) a panel discussion featuring mothers seeking academic degrees "elicited angry comments from the audience, including accusations that the panelists were not following [Benson's] counsel to stay home" (p. 42)--this in spite of the fact that conference leaders had anticipated hostility and stressed the importance of maintaining public civility in remarks to those in attendance (p. 42).

Because of this unusual level of controversy, Benson's speech received press attention far greater than the obligatory mention in the Salt Lake City newspapers reserved for most speeches by high ranking Mormon leaders. *Network*, a liberal tabloid newspaper for Utah women, featured an editorial entitled "Back to the Future" (Shepherd, 1987) and an article detailing the personal reactions of 26 men and women (Hilton, 1987). The conservative *Latter-day Woman*, published an article called "LDS and

Liberated” defending Benson’s words as inspired and urging working mothers to leave outside employment (Allen, 1987). *Sunstone*, a magazine geared to Mormon liberal intellectuals, published an article under the header “Prophet’s Talk Prompts Examination of Women’s Role” (1987, pp. 41-42). It summarized the speech’s content, described the controversy it had aroused, and included several statements of reaction by leading Mormons. The scholarly *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, published an essay analyzing Benson’s rhetoric, enumerating women’s aggrieved responses, and suggesting reasons why the speech had caused such a furor among Mormon women (Anderson, 1988). The reason was fairly clear. “To the Mothers in Zion” wedged Mormon women with disturbing tightness between the rock of their religion and the hard place of economic reality.

A Rhetoric of the “Traditional” Family and Anti-feminism

As pointed out earlier, Benson’s remarks “To the Mothers in Zion” did not *change* the church’s model of family from one model to another. Rather, it made Mormon family life (already profoundly linked to the “traditional” model) seem a lifestyle bounded by impossible restrictions for women. Just as hard-hitting levels of inflation were making it ever more difficult for many women to be stay-at-home mothers, Benson emphasized that stay-at-home mothering was a ordained by God and cited scripture (directly and indirectly) to authorize it as such:

In the eternal family, God established that fathers are to
provide, to love, to teach, and direct. But a mother’s role is also God-

ordained. Mothers are to conceive, to bear, to nourish, and to train. So declare the revelations [of God]. (Benson, 1987, p. 2)

In section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord states that the opportunity and responsibility of wives is . . . “to fulfill the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the worlds, that they may bear the souls of men: for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified.” (D. & C. 132: 63) (Benson, 1987, p. 3)

For Benson, this meant that women should not postpone having children or work outside the home and he advised them accordingly:

Do not use the reasoning of the world, such as, “We’ll wait until we can better afford having children, until we are more secure, until John has completed his education, until he has a better paying job, until we have a larger home, until we’ve obtained a few of the material conveniences,” and on and on. . . (Benson, 1987, p. 4)

The Lord clearly defined the role of mothers and fathers in providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam--not Eve--was instructed to earn bread by the sweat of his brow. Contrary to conventional wisdom, a mother’s calling is in the home, not in the marketplace. (p. 5)

Having thus established that virtually any variation from female domesticity was a violation of God’s law, he went on to give reasons why a woman should not work outside the home--reasons that showed almost no conception of the economic situation faced by most American or Mormon families in the 1980s. As Anderson (1988) extrapolated,

[His] prescriptive language virtually ignore[ed] the economic realities that [had] shelved or underemployed large numbers of men, plus the rising cost of living and education that [had] made one-salary families a minority. [He] seemed to envision the “marketplace” for men as a farm where harder work would invariably produce more food. The situation was no longer the case in our monetized society. (p. 107)

In addition, to widows and divorcees, he said, “We realize that . . . you [may] out of necessity . . . [be] required to work for a period of time. But these instances are the exception, not the rule. . . .” Still, as Anderson trenchantly observed, there are “virtually no widowed or divorced mothers who can look forward with any confidence to a time when [they] will not be required to work” (p. 108). Invoking the words of his predecessor, Spencer W. Kimball, Benson also stated,

Remember the council of President Kimball to John and Mary [that] it was never intended by the Lord that married women would compete with men for employment. . . . (Benson, 1987, p. 7)

But Kimball had said this in 1949, during the prosperous, post-war return to domesticity. In spite of his status as an infallible and beloved former president of the church his words rang hollow to women of the 1980s whose employment was a response to extraordinary cost-of-living increases.

Having failed to address the situation of mothers who worked out of economic necessity, Benson (probably unintentionally) portrayed the life of a stay-at-home mother as one of unrelenting responsibility and toil. As Anderson (1988) noted, Benson’s list of “ten ways to spend time with children” was “vast, encyclopedic, and comprehensive” (p. 109). For example, he advised mothers to be present whenever their children “were coming or going--when they leave and return from school, when they leave and return from dates, when they bring friends home . . . whether [they are] six or sixteen . . . for a child left to himself [sic] bringeth his mother to shame” (Benson, 1987, p. 8). Considering that many Mormon women had five or more children, and were kept constantly busy outside their

homes with church-related work, this seemed an impossibly difficult mandate. The advice to mothers in J. Reuben Clark's 1952 speech had been much less overwhelming, leaving the women room for interpretation and adaptation to their own situations. As he expressed it,

There must be seemliness in the home, and by seemliness I mean that the home conversation must not be on low and vulgar levels. . . . Bring into your home the best of culture, of education. . . . Keep track of the recreation and amusement of your children. I know I am proposing a very difficult thing. (Clark, 1952, p. 792)

If Benson's advice on proper mothering was too demanding and specific, it was also somewhat nebulous in that it "lack[ed] any standard of 'enough'" (Anderson, 1988, p. 110). Benson seemed to be making the assumption that doing everything on the list would *guarantee* that one's children would turn out well. But what if they did not? The "implication [was] clear" (p. 110) that the mother must have failed to perform one or more of the duties outlined in the list, and since the list was so large, it seemed inevitable that such failures would occur.

As if to balance this accusatory subtext, Benson took pains to emphasize the absolutely irreplaceable nature of each individual mother and the rewards of ideal motherhood:

Yes, mothers, teach your children the gospel in your own home at your own fireside. This is the most effective teaching that your children will ever receive. This is the Lord's way of teaching. The Church cannot teach like you can. The school cannot. The day care center cannot. But you can, and the Lord will sustain you. Your children will remember your teachings forever, and when they are old, they will not depart from them. They will call you blessed--their truly angel mother. (Benson, 1987, p. 11)

For obvious reasons, this did not soften the speech's negative impact and "To the Mothers in Zion" left a significant number of Mormon women in moods ranging from perplexed to seething.

Few earlier speeches directed toward mothers were as stressful to women as this one (Anderson, 1988). It differed from other authoritative speeches on motherhood in that it was the first to portray the Mormon family as a demanding, mini-auxiliary of the church in which lurked impossible tasks upon which all of eternity depended. Kimball's 1975 address ("Home, the Place to Save Society"), in spite of its tendency to blame women for social problems, had been more positive. It had defined women as crucial players in the very institution destined to save the world--in other words, as part of the *solution*. In Benson's speech women were the *problem*. In the aftermath of Sonia Johnson's much-publicized claim that Mormon women were second-class citizens in their own church, "To the Mothers in Zion" rang true to many devout Mormon women. This sense of Mormonism as oppressive to women was to fester over the next decade and create forces that would alter authoritative Mormon discourse on the family

"For Time and All Eternity" (1993):

A Rhetoric of Anti-feminism and Homonegativity

The simmering discontent that emerged among some Mormon women during the late 1980s and early 1990s sparked a feminist reaction of sufficient magnitude that Mormon leaders felt compelled to respond to it in their public speeches. "For Time and All Eternity," a general conference address presented by Apostle Boyd K. Packer was an

example. It brought into play two additional aspects of Mormon conceptualizations of family, the notion of gender roles as *eternal*, and a new warrant for the “traditional” family known as “The Parable of the Keys.”

Since religions aligned with profamily ideology are opposed to feminism, most people consider the label “feminist Mormon” an oxymoron. Nonetheless, historians have found much feminism in Mormon culture. Hanks (1992) has described its appearance in four waves:

Each of Mormon feminism’s four waves had different rally calls: for first wave liberal/cultural feminism (1840-1900), it was women’s equality and suffrage; for second wave social feminism (1910-1940), it was social reform; third wave Mormon feminists rallied to women’s history and the ERA (1972-1982); fourth wave Mormon feminists seek women’s authority and discourse (1987-1998). (p. xix, dates included with M. Hanks’ approval, personal communication, June 11, 1996)

The six years between “To the Mother’s in Zion” in 1987 and “For Time and All Eternity” in 1993, corresponded to the fourth wave of feminist Mormonism, and it would be hard to argue that “To the Mothers in Zion” did not help fuel it. There is also little reason to doubt that “For Time and All Eternity” was a response to issues brought to the fore by fourth wave feminist Mormons.

These fourth wave feminist Mormons not only created a movement that was “broader and more stable” (Hanks, 1992, p. xix) than the third wave, but, in the early 1980s, attracted the attention of church leaders when they began a public critique of contemporary, androcentric interpretations of Mormon theology. They did this on three fronts. First, they resurrected and emphasized Joseph Smith’s nearly forgotten teaching

that God had a female counterpart referred to as “Mother in Heaven” (Pearson, 1992; Wilcox, 1992). Second, they publicized evidence that they themselves had recently uncovered—to wit, that Joseph Smith had not limited women’s spiritual role to motherhood (as Mormon leaders insisted), but that he had intended priesthood to be shared between men and women (Toscano, 1985; Quinn, 1992). Third, they detailed how this understanding had gradually been forgotten and replaced by the notion that priesthood was an exclusively male prerogative (Newell, 1985; Farnsworth, 1992.)

To gain support for their ideas among the membership of the church, feminist Mormons organized, establishing Mormon Women’s Forum in Salt Lake City with chapters throughout the United States and a chapter of the feminist organization, VOICE, on the campus of Brigham Young University. In 1992, feminist author Maxine Hanks, hoping to help establish a feminist Mormon discourse that was totally autonomous, produced an anthology of essays entitled *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*. The book was designed specifically to demonstrate and continue a 150 year-old tradition of feminist discourse that had existed within, parallel to, and independent of the larger male-dominated discourse of the Mormon community.

A Rhetoric of Anti-feminism

There is little doubt that fourth wave feminist Mormons nettled church leaders for several years and that some feminist critiques of the church were unduly harsh (Scarlett, 1993). In 1993, believing that it was necessary to discourage feminist activism, church authorities excommunicated Maxine Hanks, the author/editor of *Women and Authority*:

Re-emerging Mormon Feminism, disfellowshipped Lynn Whitesides, the president of the Salt Lake City chapter of Mormon Women's Forum, and denied tenure to Dr. Cecelia Conchar Farr, the Brigham Young University VOICE advisor. Church leaders also excommunicated a male contributor to *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, D. Michael Quinn. Quinn was a much-published former Brigham Young University professor of history with a Ph. D. from Yale University. Although he did not identify with feminist Mormonism, his essay, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843" had argued in accordance with its provocative title.

A Rhetoric of Homonegativity

But feminist Mormons were not the only ones challenging the church's assumptions about the meanings that ought to be ascribed to biological sex. Homosexual Mormons also had made themselves known to the church hierarchy. Over the last two decades, Mormon gays and lesbians had organized a support group called Affirmation, published pamphlets and newsletters describing their situation within the Mormon community, and lobbied for full church fellowship. Several had contributed to a collection of essays entitled *Peculiar People: Mormon Essays and Same-Sex Orientation* (Schow, Schow & Raynes, 1991). A few months before Packer delivered "For Time and All Eternity," advocates for homosexual Mormons had written to him seeking ways to initiate further discussion of the issues surrounding same-sex orientation with general authorities. The apostle revealed this himself (even quoting from one of the letters) in remarks made on May 18, 1993 to the All-Church Correlation Committee. His response to their letters

was a growing fear that homosexuals, feminists, and intellectuals had made significant inroads into the contemporary church. It is clear that the church (and Packer himself) felt attacked from different quarters in gender and sexuality as the final decade of the 20th century commenced.

A Rhetoric of Anti-feminism and Homonegativity Amalgamated

Packer's remarks were a typical profamily text in their promotion of Domestic Protestantism with the standard mention of Adam and Eve's reproductive imperative, the usual homage to the "divine service of motherhood," and routine reminders of parental responsibility. They were also a direct response to the arguments of feminists and homosexuals, for they began by refuting the major challenge that feminist and homosexual Mormons had leveled against the church--that gender roles and sexuality were socially and historically constructed rather than divinely ordained. As a result, it was necessary that Packer argue for immutability and predeterminism over social constructionism:

Dear brethren and sisters, the scriptures and the teachings of the Apostles [sic] and prophets speak of us in premortal life as sons and daughters, spirit children of God. Gender existed before, and did not begin at mortal birth. (Packer, 1993a, p. 21)

Interestingly, Mormon discourse contained at least two previous (and heretofore largely forgotten) authoritative quotes that would have suited Packer's needs perfectly because they did more than merely *pre-determine* gender--they *essentialized* it. In 1912, the First Presidency had published a statement in a church magazine affirming that prior to birth each individual had "a pre-existent, spiritual personality, as the sons and daughters of

the Eternal Father” (Smith, Lund & Penrose, 1912, p. 417). Similarly, in 1922, Apostle James E. Talmage had similarly essentialized gender roles in an article that had appeared in the official church newspaper of the time under the title “The Eternity of Sex.” It contained the following statement:

The distinction between male and female is no condition peculiar to the relatively brief period of mortal life; it was an essential characteristic of our pre-existent condition, even as it shall continue after death, in both the disembodied and resurrected states. . . .

There is no accident or chance, due to purely physical conditions, by which the sex of the unborn is determined. The body takes form as male or female, according to the sex of the spirit whose appointment it is to tenant the body. (Talmage, 1922, p. 539)

Apostle Dallin H. Oaks (1993), also answering feminist challenges, had cited the Talmage quote in general conference the year before, but evidently Packer had not noticed.

Nevertheless, Packer did his best to essentialize gender without these quotes by arguing that it was so closely linked to salvation and priesthood, it was a principal facet of Mormon doctrine:

Except Adam and Eve by nature be different from one another, they could not multiply and fill the earth. The complementing differences are the very key to the plan of [salvation].

Some roles are best suited to the masculine nature and others to the feminine nature. Both the scriptures and the patterns of nature place man as the protector and provider.

Those responsibilities of the priesthood, which have to do with the administration of the church, of necessity function outside the home. By divine decree, they have been entrusted to men. It has been that way since the beginning, for the Lord revealed that “the order of this priesthood was

confirmed to be handed down from father to son. . . . This order was instituted in the days of Adam. (Packer, 1993a, p. 21)

With gender predetermined and *virtually* essential, Packer then answered the feminist claim that gender roles were immutable and socially constructed:

Natural and spiritual laws which govern life were instituted from before the foundation of the world. They are eternal, as are the consequences for either obeying them or disobeying them. They are not based on social or political considerations. They cannot be changed. No pressure, no protest, no legislation can alter them. (Packer, 1993a, p. 22)

Since only feminists (both men and women) had protested established sex roles, it is unlikely that his message was meant for anyone else.

Packer had preceded his indirect attempt to answer feminist Mormons with a similarly indirect attempt to answer homosexual Mormons:

[God] requires the righteous union of male and female, man and woman, husband and wife. Doctrines teach us how to respond to the compelling natural [sexual] impulses which too often dominate how we behave.

A body created after the image of God was created for Adam, and he was introduced into the Garden. At first Adam was alone . . . but alone he could not fulfill the purposes of his creation.

No other man would do. Neither alone or with another man could Adam [fulfill his potential]. Nor could Eve with another woman. It was then; it is so today. (Packer, 1993a, p. 21)

Since he had opened his remarks by affirming that “romance, love, marriage and parenthood” (p. 21) were crucial aspects of salvation and redemption, the statements “No other man would do [for Adam]” (p. 21) and “Nor could Eve [fulfill the purposes of her creation] with another woman” (p. 21) were manifestly homoerotic--at least for those who

had ears to hear them. As such, they constituted a coded message to homosexuals that the church could not indulge same-sex relationships without defying fundamental doctrine.

With “traditional” gender roles fully integrated into the church’s ecclesiastical structure through the Family Home Evening program, Packer’s role was to defend them against the unprecedented critiques of feminist and homosexual Mormons. To accomplish this he did something unprecedented for a Mormon general authority—he composed a parable specially suited to the occasion. Although among the orthodox Packer’s parable became known as “The Parable of the Keys,” among some feminist Mormons it was nicknamed “The Terrible Parable” (Nadine R. Hansen, personal communication, September 16, 1996).

“The Parable of the Keys/The Terrible Parable” had one purpose—to warn that unless people adhered to “traditional” gender and sexual roles, they could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Its plot centered on a male protagonist who “had received as his inheritance” two keys, the first of which would open a vault and the second of which would open a safe within the vault that contained a “priceless treasure” (Packer, 1993a, p. 23). As the story progressed, the male protagonist opened the outer vault and tried his key on the safe within, only to find that the safe had two locks, and his key fit only one. This left him perplexed because he had been told that the treasure was “rightfully his” (p. 23). Nevertheless, his dilemma was resolved when

In due time, there came a woman into the vault. She too, held a key. It was noticeably different from the key he held. Her key fit the other lock.

It humbled him to learn that he could not obtain his rightful inheritance without her. (Packer, 1993a, p. 23)

With the safe open and the treasure theirs, the man and woman “made a covenant” (Packer, 1993a, p. 23)--a process suggesting that they married each other and set up housekeeping--and agreed that the man would “watch over the vault and protect it [while the woman would] watch over the treasure within it” (p. 23). This meant, of course, that they would adhere to “traditional” gender roles.

To close the parable, Packer made veiled and derisive references to feminist and homosexual Mormons. To feminist Mormons he directed the following characterization of their assertion that Mormon women had a claim on equality within the church’s male-dominated ecclesiastical structure:

[The woman] was not concerned that, as guardian of the vault, he held two keys, for his full purpose was to see that she was safe as she watched over that which was most precious to them both. Together they opened the safe and partook of the inheritance . . .

With great joy they found that they could pass the treasure on to their children . . .

There came in due time, among their posterity, some few who were deceived or jealous or selfish because one was given two keys and another only one. “Why,” the selfish ones reasoned, “cannot the treasure be mine alone to use as I desire?” (Packer, 1993a, p. 23)

Thus, he portrayed good Mormon women as “not concerned that [the man] held two keys,” dismissed feminist arguments about the social construction of gender as the reasoning of “some few who were deceived, or jealous or selfish,” and identified feminists themselves as “the selfish ones” (Packer, 1993a, p. 23).

To homosexual Mormons, Packer offered an argument that repudiated the claim that same-sex orientation was a legitimate lifestyle:

Some tried to reshape the key they had been given in order to resemble the other key. Perhaps, they thought, it would then fit both locks. And so it was that the safe was closed to them . . . and their inheritance lost.
(Packer, 1993a, p. 23)

This was meant to suggest that homosexuals are guilty of trying to “reshape” their male genderedness so that it is the same as female genderedness and vice versa, but that because gender is predetermined (and therefore unchanging) this is impossible. (No doubt this reasoning doubled as a dismissal of the feminist notion that women could expand beyond traditional gender roles.)

Because feminist and homosexual Mormons have no forum as comprehensive as general conference by which to disseminate their message, their concerns are not known to the Saints at large. Consequently, Packer’s use of a parable was suitable in an ironic way. As with all parables, its allegorical nature was meant to camouflage the truths it taught so that only the discerning could understand them (McConkie, 1966). Thus, Packer successfully invoked a covert rhetorical technique that allowed him to address feminist and homosexual Mormons subversively, without having to dignify their activism with public acknowledgment or promote it with free publicity. Moreover, by failing to specifically identify them as his target audience, he created a text that was ambiguous enough to be adaptable to multiple future discursive situations.

Another significance of Packer's use of the parable was its tacit acknowledgment that the usual ways of protecting and endorsing the "traditional" family were no longer enough. As demonstrated by "To the Mothers in Zion," reinforcing the "traditional" family through scriptural proof-texts, declarations of women's divine role, and denunciations of working mothers had not only proven inadequate, but had inflamed women and failed to answer to the issues raised by homosexuals. Moreover, arguments against "traditional" gender roles had proven to be more substantial than Packer had expected. Only four months earlier, he had warned church officers that the reasoning of feminists and homosexuals was especially dangerous primarily because it seemed sound and sensible (Packer, 1993b). The rhetorical authority of the parable, coupled with its unmistakable connection to the narrative style of Jesus of Nazareth--Christianity's central figure--was an effective tool in Packer's efforts to argue for the theological validity of male and female gender roles. Facing the deficiencies of these earlier rhetorical strategies, Packer sought a way to undercut the feminist and homosexual assertions that gender was socially constructed. He affirmed, instead, that it was mandated by "natural and spiritual laws which govern life that were instituted before the foundation of the world" (Packer, 1993a, p. 22).

As issues of gender became larger and more controversial within both Mormon and American culture, church leaders felt compelled to stiffen the boundary between male and female roles in order to sustain the "traditional" family's integral place within Mormon theology. They did so by trying to infuse the "traditional" family with doctrinal

implications. “For Time and All Eternity” was a reflection of this process--a process that was to move rapidly beyond the proclaiming of gender differences to the establishment of what would at least *purport* to be hard doctrine on the “traditional” family.

“The Family, A Proclamation to the World” (1995):

A Rhetoric of Family and Homonegativity

Even as Packer’s (1993a) parable validated the “traditional” family, the homosexual community was pursuing its own version of family values. In May 1991, three same-sex couples filed a lawsuit against the State of Hawaii for denying them licenses to marry and seeking marriage rights in the state of Hawaii (*Baehr v. Lewin*). Because the church was aware that a legal victory for these couples could change the legal definition of marriage as a contract between a man and a woman they perceived *Baehr v. Lewin* as a threat to the “traditional” family’s preferred status in American society. Subsequently, in September 1995, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles issued a proclamation entitled “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (Hinckley, et al., 1995, p. 1) at the annual general Relief Society meeting. Although it did not mention the Hawaii case, it was linked to *Baehr v. Lewin* and marked a change in how the church defined and defended the family.

If Packer’s (1993a) parable was a new rhetorical strategy aimed at buttressing earlier defenses of the “traditional” family against the assault of feminists and homosexuals, the 1995 Proclamation was yet another--this time directed specifically at the matter of homosexuality. In *Baehr v. Lewin*, the complainants had charged that the state’s

refusal to grant them marriage licenses violated their right to privacy and equal protection under the Constitution of the State of Hawaii. Although the court dismissed their complaint on the right to privacy, it admitted that the state's marriage laws denied equal protection to same-sex couples and therefore *could* be discriminatory. It further argued that since this possible discrimination pertained to an individual's gender (and gender was a "suspect category") the Hawaii marriage law must be subjected to a "strict scrutiny" test in order to determine its capacity to grant equal protection. This placed the burden on the State of Hawaii to show that compelling state interests *required* the maintenance of marriage laws that discriminated on the basis of gender (State of Hawaii Report of the Commission on Sexual Orientation and the Law, 1995).

In response, the Hawaii Legislature held public hearings throughout the state in late 1993 and early 1994, and created an 11-member Commission on Sexual Orientation and the Law to report on the matter. Of the eleven commission members, four were representatives of religious organizations--two Catholics and two Mormons. In December 1994, however, a federal lawsuit was filed protesting the presence of religious representatives on the commission as a violation of the separation of church and state. When the court upheld the lawsuit, all four religionists were dismissed and, in August 1995, the Governor of Hawaii selected a new commission using criteria that avoided the church/state issue, and did not include a member of the Mormon church (Hawaii Report, 1995).

Undoubtedly disappointed at their loss of a place on the commission and believing that same-sex couples *must* be denied equal protection under the law, local Mormon leaders sought permission from the court to help the state attorney gather evidence to prove the case against same-sex marriage. Their petition for permission to intervene was denied and a trial date was set for September 1996 (Hansen, 1996). It was during this effort to influence the outcome of *Baehr v. Lewin* that church leaders produced the document it titled “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

Ironically, the Proclamation failed to proclaim Mormonism’s unique vision of the family, for it did not touch upon the complex and interconnecting web of relationships advanced in the temple or mention Mormonism’s history of unorthodox marriage practices. Rather, it was an attempt to codify the church’s growing insistence that the “traditional” family and Mormon theology were inseparably linked and (by an appeal to American fears that the definition of an acceptable family unit was at stake) to try to halt the increasing progress of homosexuals toward the creation of legal families.

No doubt, the interest of Mormon leaders in *Baehr v. Lewin* centered on the fact that, under the Full Faith and Credit clause of the Constitution of the United States, each state is bound to recognize all legal marriages performed in any other state. This meant that should Hawaii extend equal protection to same-sex couples, a homosexual couple married in Hawaii would have a marriage that was lawful anywhere in the nation. This, in turn, would legalize something that in the Mormon paradigm not only violated God’s law but posed a serious threat to the strength of the “traditional” family. Accordingly, the

First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles turned their attention to the public and issued their Proclamation.

A Rhetoric of Family and Homonegativity

Church President Gordon B. Hinckley first read the Proclamation at the general Relief Society meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah. It was later printed on a single sheet of paper for ease of distribution throughout the church and when possible, to the general public. Its political purpose was made plain in the concluding paragraph, although it contained no mention of the Hawaii case nor did it contain the word “homosexual.” It stated:

We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society. (Hinckley, et al, 1995)

Like Packer, whose parable in “For Time and All Eternity” addressed homosexuals only by implication, in the Proclamation, the First Presidency promoted images of the “traditional” family and rendered homosexuals invisible.

The Proclamation was an attempt to codify the church’s position on homosexuality and thus create an official document that could be circulated handily should the church want to argue its position on the matter in future political debates. Mormon fears that the Hawaii State Court would rule in favor of same-sex marriage emerged clearly in the Proclamation’s definition of marriage as a contract between “a man and a woman” and gender as eternal:

Marriage between *a man* and *a woman* [italics added] is ordained of God and . . . the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

All human beings--male and female--are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. *Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal and eternal identity and purpose* [italics added]. (Hinckley, et al., 1995, p. 1)

Note that this is an advancement from Packer's earlier identification of gender as *virtually* essential (Packer, 1993a, p. 21) to the identification of gender as *fully* essential. Note, too that in defining gender as "an essential characteristic of . . . premortal, mortal, and eternal identity," the Proclamation almost replicates Apostle James E. Talmage's 1922 statement describing gender as "an essential characteristic of our pre-existent condition" (Talmage, 1922, p. 539). Evidently, Apostle Dallin H. Oaks's resurrection of the quote had been duly noted and utilized by the authors of the Proclamation, although it is not known if church leaders understand the implications their use of the word "essential" in this way. In any case, at this writing there is no acknowledgement by church leaders that the notion of "essentialism" is used within academia in a way similar to the way it was used by 19th century Mormon leaders in assigning gender roles to pre-mortal life and subsequently used in the Proclamation.

By thus defining gender in a way that supported traditionalist views of family, the Proclamation seized command of sex-role terminology and thereby fortified a crucial part of its portrayal of the "traditional" family as "central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of his children" (Hinckley, 1995). This fortification was necessary to counteract a

growing popular awareness that authorities on gender from the academic community defined gender in ways that severely undermined the church's position. For social scientists and anthropologists, the word "gender" is defined as the meaning that a "particular society and culture attaches to sexual difference" (Kerber & De Hart, 1995, p. 11) and is "arbitrary" rather than static (Wood, 1984, p. 59). As Wood explains:

Gender...is neither innate or stable. It is acquired through interaction in the social world, and it changes over time. . . . [It] is a social construction that varies across cultures, varies over time within a given culture, and in relation to the other gender. (p. 26)

Although in December 1996, the Hawaii State Court ruled that in *Baehr v. Lewin* the state had failed to prove that a compelling state interest required the preservation of discriminatory marriage laws, church leaders remained optimistic. They still hoped that laws could be established so as to bypass the requirements of the Full Faith and Credit Clause. Continuing to promote the Proclamation with vigor, they admonished the membership to become intimately familiar with its wording, place a copy of it on the household refrigerator, and distribute copies within the community (Nadine R. Hansen, personal communication, September 19, 1997).

In this effort to conform to American norms and win the battle against same-sex marriage, the Proclamation advocated "traditional" heterosexual unions by presenting the following sanitized version of Mormon family doctrine:

The divine plan of happiness [salvation] enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally. (Hinckley, et al., 1995, p. 1)

The word “sanitized” is appropriate because in so stating its doctrine of family the church did not acknowledge something the public would find almost as unappealing as same-sex marriage—the fact that the church continues to accept polygamy as a legitimate form of marriage. Not in the original sense practiced by the church’s founders, to be sure, but in a spiritual sense related to the hereafter.

Because there has been no definitive end to the doctrine of plural marriage, it is commonly understood in Mormon circles that plural marriage will be practiced after death. In the Mormon cosmos, if the wife of a faithful Mormon man dies, and he subsequently remarries, he is entitled to enter eternity with both wives. If the second wife dies and he again remarries, he is entitled to enter eternity with three wives--and so on. The Proclamation made no mention of this peculiarly Mormon amendment to the “traditional” family.

The Proclamation was also somewhat misleading as a statement of Mormon doctrine. For example, although the Proclamation is the first of the texts in this study to seem to declare that the family (which it knows the general American public understands to be the “traditional” family) is “ordained of God” (Hinckley, et al., 1995, p. 1) it also makes the following brief acknowledgment: “Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed” (Hinckley, et al., 1995, p. 1). This suggests that the “traditional” model of family is *not* a requirement for salvation, since those who must live in other models are not denied it.

This is made clear in Boyd K. Packer's 1993 address "For Time and All Eternity" when he said that

Any soul who by nature or circumstances is not afforded the blessings of marriage and parenthood or who innocently must act alone in rearing children, working to support them will not be denied in the eternities any blessing--provided they [sic] keep the commandments. (1993a, p. 23)

Such acknowledgments that other models of family are common in this lifetime and those who must live in them "will not be denied in the eternities any blessing--provided they keep the commandments"--were fleeting in both the Proclamation and Packer's address "For Time and All Eternity" so as not to draw attention to the way they deflate the presumably central importance of the "traditional family." This suggests that the church's true position on the "traditional" family is that, technically, it is not a crucial for salvation but, as a symptom of moral decline, it must be held up as an ideal, or the world will lack a moral foundation and move toward chaos. As the Proclamation reiterates: "We warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets" (Hinckley et al., 1995, one-page brochure).

The church's present effort to make the "traditional" family seem crucial in an authoritative theological context is noteworthy in view of its authoritative 19th century promotion of plural marriage as crucial for salvation. But, as recognized earlier, the Proclamation (with its special status as an announcement to the world) only *appears* to represent codified Mormon doctrine on the family. Since it is not canonized by inclusion

in the church's Standard Works, it does not. Moreover, like the Manifesto, its words are slippery on the issues of both plural marriage and the "traditional" family. By defining marriage as a union between "a man and a woman," it negates same-sex marriage but because it fails to restrict marriage to *one* man and *one* women, what it does *not* negate is more revealing. By this verbal maneuver it manages to give covert approval to plural marriage. For a document that is part of an effort to "maintain and strengthen the [presumably "traditional"] family as the fundamental unit of society" (Hinckley, et al., 1995, p. 1), this is good evidence that its authors have some sense of its contradictory posture and the church's rhetorical predicament regarding its doctrine of family.

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World" resembles the Manifesto of 1890 in that it contains similar obfuscations. The Manifesto was not an expression of Mormon theology but a response to government pressure. Likewise, the Proclamation was less an attempt to express Mormon theology as it was a response to secular and religious homosexual activism. Moreover, both the Manifesto and the Proclamation (though calculated to gain public approval by association with the approved American model of family) remained true to the doctrine of plural marriage by using strategic ambiguity and oiling their way around popular connotations. Thus, the Proclamation did not make a genuine doctrinal statement on the family but shrewdly reprised many aspects of the federally-approved voice it had debuted, over a century earlier, with the Manifesto.

It is from this deliberately malleable foundation that the Proclamation presents itself as not only solidly profamily in its ideology but the most rock-solid evidence to date

that the Mormon church has an actual *doctrine* that the “traditional” family that is fundamentally bound to the Mormon concept of salvation. That this is a correct interpretation of its text is evident in a recent statement made by Gordon B. Hinckley, the present church president.

A Rhetoric of Polygamy Propaganized

On September 8, 1998, Hinckley appeared on CNN’s nationally broadcast television show, “Larry King Live” and spoke in a way that made it seem as though Mormonism no longer had a connection to its earlier doctrine of plural marriage. When the show’s host asked questions about polygamy, Hinckley answered as follows:

When our people came west they permitted it on a restricted scale . . . In 1890, [it]was discontinued. The president of the church . . . went before the people, said he had, oh, prayed about it, worked on it, and received from the Lord a revelation that it was time to stop . . . That’s behind us. (Hinckley, 1998)

As were some statements in the Proclamation, this statement was not untrue but significantly misleading on three points. First, Hinckley’s remark that polygamy did not start until Mormons “came west” implies that it did not start until they reached Utah. In reality it started when the Saints moved from Upstate New York to Nauvoo, Illinois . Since Illinois is west of Upstate New York, this attempt to minimize the length of time Mormons practiced plural marriage is misleading, but not a direct lie. Second, polygamy could hardly have been “permitted on a restricted scale” if, as we have learned, it was considered essential for the achievement of the highest level of salvation. Third, although Hinckley noted correctly that “the President of the church [Wilford Woodruff] . . .

received a revelation that it was time to stop,” this “revelation” did not (as his commentary suggests) “stop” polygamy as a doctrine of Mormonism and replace it with a doctrine of the “traditional” family. As revealed in both the Manifesto and the “Excerpts”—documents with which Hinckley is familiar--Woodruff said only that

. . . the Utah Commission, in their recent report to the Secretary of the Interior, allege that plural marriages are still being solemnized . . . [and that] in public discourses the leaders of the Church [sic] have taught, encouraged, and urged the continuance of the practice of polygamy--

I, therefore, as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, do hereby, in the most solemn manner, declare that these charges are false. . . .

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, . . . by the court of last resort, . . . I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the church . . . to have them do likewise. (D&C, 1981, pp. 291-292)

The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would take place if we did not stop the practice. (Excerpts, D&C, p. 293)

In short, God warned the Saints to “stop” practicing polygamy as a matter of survival but did not nullify Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Hinckley’s claim (“[Polygamy is]behind us.”) that the church had ended polygamy referred only to the *practice*. The doctrine of polygamy as outlined in Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* is not “behind” the church but remains within the church’s official canon.

At this writing there are repeated rumors that the Proclamation will be canonized.

An e-mail message received on as early as December 1, 1996 is an example:

This past Sunday at ward Conference [sic] our SP [stake president, a leader over several bishops] announced that Elder Carmack [a general

authority] . . . in [a meeting with him] . . . said, the “Proclamation on the Family” would be added to the [*Doctrine and Covenants*] and presented to the members of the church for their sustaining vote. (Name withheld, copy in author’s possession)

Ironically, if the above report proved true, the church would have two recorded doctrines that each advocated a different model of family—Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

Numerous social and historical forces have guided the journey of Mormon rhetoric from the Manifesto’s reluctant and purposefully misleading agreement to limit Mormons to “traditional” models of family to its enthusiastic endorsement of the (apparently) “traditional” family in the Proclamation. For orthodox Mormons, however, this interpretation of events is unsatisfactory in that it seems to disallow the possibility that, powerful social and historical forces notwithstanding, the church’s statements on the family still reflect God’s inspiration. This thesis will not diminish their belief in the importance of a spiritual interpretation of events, deny that God’s ways are inscrutable, or suggest that revelation from God can be quantified by the application of scientific scrutiny. Yet, this “archeological” approach to Mormon rhetoric on the family is, as promised in Chapter One, a *revelation* of “ideological ‘creep’” and opens up a scientifically inspired vision of *some* aspects of the development of the church’s present expression of its notions of family. Chapter Four considers the implications—with respect to the theoretical framework described in Chapter One—of what this scientific kind of revelation proposes

about the religion-family connection in terms of Mormonism and American perceptions of the family at large.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY TO THE RELIGION-FAMILY CONNECTION

Fishburn and Clapp both reveal that there is no fundamental Christian doctrine preferring the “traditional” family or linking it to salvation. This thesis validates and expands the scope of their work to include Mormonism by showing that (contrary to Mormon insinuations) Mormonism also has no fundamental doctrine declaring the “traditional” family pivotal to salvation. As the rhetorical analysis of the nine Mormon texts reveals, the church’s original doctrine of family as recorded in *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132 was gradually superceded by a discourse that arguably reflects the church’s forced capitulation to Protestantism.

A Synopsis of the Rhetorical Analysis

To review, let us observe the progression of rhetorics that track this gradual shift. In 1890 the First Presidency issued the Manifesto, a document denying that it had contracted illegal plural marriages, reluctantly promising to restrict itself to monogamy, and offering no denunciation of the doctrine of plural marriage. It was a rhetoric of appeasement.

2. In 1935, Apostle Stephen L. Richards addressed Americans in a national radio broadcast. He tried to reframe American memories of polygamy by advancing a more appealing version of the Mormon family that was a hybrid of the “old fashioned American family” and the Mormon *eternal* family. It was a rhetoric of accommodation.

3. In 1952, Apostle J. Reuben Clark Jr. addressed Mormon women about their moral imperative to build a “homelife.” He expressed views of gender that were not exclusively domestic and therefore were too progressive to meet the criteria required for the “traditional” family. It was a rhetoric of transition.

4. In 1964, church President David O. McKay argued in a general conference address that the Mormon doctrine of eternal marriage could solve the problem of divorce in America. This reflected the church’s new-found sense that it was no longer disgraced for its polygamous past. It was a rhetoric of respectability.

5. In 1975, church President Spencer W. Kimball integrated the Mormon lifestyle with “traditional” notions of gender and “true family life” by announcing that if married couples everywhere participated in the new, gender-based Family Home Evening program, the world’s current social decline could be reversed. It was a rhetoric of integration.

6. In 1980, church leaders further distanced the church from its former practice of polygamy by canonizing paradoxical explanations for the cessation of polygamy. It was a rhetoric of paradox propagandized.

7. In 1987, church President Ezra Taft Benson strongly endorsed “traditional” female gender roles as crucial to the salvation of children in response to rising rates of maternal employment. It was a rhetoric of anti-feminism.

8. In 1993, Apostle Boyd K. Packer responded to feminist and homosexual challenges to “traditional” notions of marriage, announced that gender was predetermined,

immutable, and *virtually* essential. It was a rhetoric that was profamily, anti-feminist, and homonegative.

9. In 1995, the First Presidency, fearing the legalization of same-sex marriage, issued a Proclamation to the world fully essentializing gender and affirming that “the family” (by which it appeared to mean the “traditional” family) was “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.” It was a rhetoric that was profamily and homonegative.

In terms of an evolution, it appears that Mormon family rhetoric shifted from the endorsement of plural marriage to the endorsement of reluctant monogamy (1890), to reserved identification with monogamy (1935) to endorsement of “the home” (1952, 1964), to a vision of the church as an authority on how to preserve marriages in order to preserve “the home” (1964), to the endorsement of “traditional” gender roles in order to preserve “the home” and/or “the family” (1975, 1987, 1993), to proclaiming the centrality of the (apparently) “traditional” family to God’s purposes. Observable in this pattern of transition are the various reversals it uncovers. For example, there is a reversal of attitude to American family norms of monogamy from reluctant endurance (1890) to wholehearted endorsement (1995), a reversal in attitude to plural marriage from one that avoids disavowing it (1890) to one that appears to disavow it (1980), and a reversal in social posture from one that resists “traditional” kinship models and patterns (1890) to one that increasingly defends and finally centralized them (1975, 1987, 1993, 1995). Certainly these discontinuities suggest a rhetoric that evolved from the endorsement of polygamy to

the endorsement of the “traditional” family, thereby again revealing that the religion-family connection (as described in Chapter One) is not *fundamental* to Mormon doctrine but was rhetorically constructed over a hundred years. Contemporary Mormon family rhetoric did not emerge from Mormon doctrine. The church’s present profamily stance emerged only after hard doctrine on plural marriage was made soft by Protestant-inspired federal pressure so unforgiving that it threatened to render the church impotent.

Discursive Amnesia

The theoretical framework of discursive amnesia/amnesty in which this study is nestled is an apt one for examining the implications of this evolution to Mormonism as a religion. It lends itself to a better understanding of the church’s gradual “forgetting” of its original doctrine of marriage as reflected in its revisionist history, its subsequent step-by-step construction of a new doctrine of family, and its replacement of the lost “cause” of plural marriage with a new “cause,” the preservation of the “traditional” family. Just as amnesia often is acquired as a result of some trauma, the church “forgot” its original doctrine of family after the trauma of a prolonged federal assault that threatened it with destruction. Just as amnesiacs must recreate their understanding of the world around them based upon information that is available from the larger community upon which they must interact, the church “learned” a new concepts of family from the larger, Protestant-dominated community in which it was situated, and whose approval it courted as a proselytizing religion. Moreover, just as victims of amnesia have occasional memory flashbacks, the church is subject to these as its membership encounters canonized

documents such as the Manifesto, and the “Excerpts,” or are approached by the polygamous Fundamentalists and those who write unexpurgated versions of Mormon history such as feminist Mormons. Because the church is dependent for survival upon its socializing agents in the larger society and must meet their approval, sudden recollections that threaten this approval can be disconcerting. As a result, the official church tends to punish those who facilitate the resurrection of its subjugated memories as it did (and continues to do) in the case of the Fundamentalists and of feminist Mormons. Indeed, the church’s memory loss is, in this sense, deliberate. It vaguely recollects that those upon whom it presently depends were once its abusers (the Protestant-inspired federal government), and so its amnesia can also be construed, at least partially, as a case of repressed memory.

Under these conditions, Mormonism has survived by practicing its amnesia discursively to indicate its respectability to the larger community. The 1935 radio address by Apostle Stephen L. Richards was an amnesia feigned for purposes of survival after evidence of the church’s 19th century “depravity” resurfaced and threatened to ruin its reputation with the public at large without whose approval it cannot fulfill its mission to convert the world. After some time, the church’s revisionist history created a situation in which amnesia no longer had to be affected, because the membership had genuinely “lost touch” with its past. Richards’ address was an early manifestation of a survival strategy the church would later adopt--the repetition of society’s already accepted notions of family.

In facilitating these repetitions, Mormonism's amnesia seems to have led the church into a process to which one might refer as theological ventriloquism. In its desire to survive by squelching its own unique concepts of the family, it has, sometimes purposely, taken on the role of a ventriloquist's dummy by repeating words "thrown" to it by a federal government (1890) in the role of ventriloquist. When federal involvement diminished, after the 1930's (Alexander, 1986) a new ventriloquist (the general public) is first manifest through general authority addresses that reveal the use of public discursive trends such as Stephen L. Richards's gendered disregard for apartment dwellers and emphasis on "the home." Later, the dummy/ventriloquist relationship is emphasized as the church purposefully researches discursive trends through public relations surveys. These reveal the public's affinity for (and expectations of) the ideograph "family." Through this accommodating stance in the role of dummy to the federal government's ventriloquist, the church has kept itself relatively safe in the lap of America's approval and through this subterfuge, purchased its own survival. From this protected vantage point it has joined the Protestant profamily movement and thus engages in a rhetoric that opposes those who now propose notions of family that are less radical than its own original doctrine of family: mothers who break with "traditional" gender roles by working outside the home, feminists who deconstruct the "traditional" family's rigid gender roles, and homosexuals whose support of same-sex marriage is an attempt to replicate, as far as possible, "traditional" notions of marriage.

But as the expression goes, the church “is no dummy.” It is noteworthy that ventriloquist’s dummies, with their perpetual wooden smile, have a quality that makes them seem eerily alive and implacable. In the case of Mormonism, this subversive vitality and implacability is, metaphorically speaking, real. Behind its cordial public decorum of respectability the church conceals a history of considerable subversive activity and creative resistance toward its oppressors. Its original rhetorical resistance to federal laws against plural marriage was dedicated and creative, and its original doctrine of family is preserved in its canon as *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132, as well as the temple ritual, and is presently being excavated (albeit unofficially) by some Mormon scholars (Quinn, 1985; Toscano, 1985; Compton, 1996). There is evidence of an effort by the church’s First Presidency to acknowledge the existence of such subjugated knowledge by failing to clearly identify “the family” as monogamous or “traditional” in the Proclamation—a subterfuge it knows it can perpetrate because Americans who read it *assume* that “the family” equates to the “traditional” family. Perhaps, gradually, as more subjugated knowledge is brought to remembrance, Mormonism will grant itself the discursive amnesty that is its right under the Constitution, and abandon such survival strategies.

Discursive Amnesty

Discursive amnesty in relation to “the family” is possible for the church only if it is willing to re-identify with its original doctrine of plural marriage. Such a re-identification would provide amnesty to those members of the church who have encountered a negative effect from the church’s amnesia. This would include Mormon Fundamentalists who are

excommunicated for practicing what has never been properly repudiated as Mormon doctrine, Mormon scholars who have been punished and silenced for retrieving the church's subjugated history of non-"traditional" family practices such as the family kingdom and Old Testament polygyny (Quinn, 1985), non-"traditional" roles for women (Toscano, 1985), and members of the church who feel marginalized and excluded by the church's present insistence on glorifying the "traditional" family (Ryder, 1985).

There are major barriers to the granting of discursive amnesty within Mormonism on the matter of "the family." First, the general membership of the church no longer feels comfortable with the idea of plural marriage and feminist Mormons themselves tend to disapprove of it. Second, the church has made such a strong political stand on the moral superiority of the "traditional" family that any departure from it would seem ridiculous. Third, church leaders have little to gain from discursive amnesty. They suffer no negative effects from promotion of the "traditional" family. As males operating in the public sphere they conform to "traditional" gender roles, and (as in 1890) promotion of "traditional" lifestyles expands rather than contracts their power base. Moreover, their prominence protects them from being marginalized by "traditional" family rhetoric as are many of the anonymous general membership (Ryder, 1985). Given these factors, discursive amnesty is not likely to appear within Mormonism until the "traditional" family has become so demystified that the church can see some advantages in the public acknowledgement of its polygamous past and Joseph Smith's early experimentation with the family kingdom. Only if religious conservatives relinquish their "traditional" notions of gender will Mormonism

see an advantage in publicizing the expanded concept of womanhood developed by Smith and manifested in the 19th century church.

Implications of this Study to the Religion-Family Connection

There is little doubt that Mormon rhetoric on the family has significantly changed direction, and that the Mormon family kingdom, launched from “here to eternity” by Joseph Smith, has, at least rhetorically, been relaunched from “eternity to here” by the potent forces of secular-inspired Domestic Protestantism. Moreover, while the tracking of Mormon family rhetoric thickens Fishburn’s and Clapp’s description of what lies at the roots of the religion-family connection, it also suggests something disturbing. The ideal of the “traditional” family is not only disingenuous, but has long been exploited by those who most claim to champion it. Protestants used it to convert America to Protestantism, and Mormonism used it to survive against Protestant umbrage. This latter realization invites us to see how a powerful ideology can intersect with a culture as vital as Mormonism, first devastating, and finally distorting it. Also demonstrated is philosopher Louis Althusser’s theory of ideological state apparatuses (ISA’s) as private institutions that “perform regulatory functions and reproduce ideology ‘on behalf of the state’” (O’Sullivan et al., 1994, pp. 143-144). Indeed, the Protestant community now reproduces the rhetoric of American family values rather than Christian notions of family; Mormonism now reproduces the rhetoric of the Protestant community and thereby has a greatly diminished opportunity to share its rich and provocative family doctrines, even among its own. Thereby two Christian church’s serve the purposes of an American ideological state

apparatus rather than Christianity, and in so doing each mobilizes a religion-family connection that is not a genuine expression of its religion and has little new to say about family.

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