

Fall 12-6-2017

Nineteenth-Century American Religion and Politics in the West: Doctrinal Shifts in Mormonism and the Creation of Utah

Katherine Manning

Western Kentucky University, katherine.manning441@topper.wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Manning, Katherine, "Nineteenth-Century American Religion and Politics in the West: Doctrinal Shifts in Mormonism and the Creation of Utah" (2017). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 720.
https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/720

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE WEST:
DOCTRINAL SHIFTS IN MORMONISM AND THE CREATION OF UTAH

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts in Economics
with Honors College Distinction at
Western Kentucky University

By

Katherine T. Manning

December 2017

CE/T Committee:

Dr. Tamara Van Dyken, Chair

Dr. Alexander Olson

Dr. Christopher Keller

Copyright by
Katherine T. Manning
2017

ABSTRACT

American religion and politics have always been closely intertwined. Though America was founded on ideals of religious pluralism and tolerance, the actual landscape of American religion often resembled the opposite of these ideas. As a religious majority, Protestants in the nineteenth-century believed in a specific American identity—one which championed the “virtuous” family and a capitalist market system. Yet, some religious organizations challenged these norms, making them the object of intense persecution. One of the most famous of these examples is the Mormons. From their “peculiar” beliefs to their separatist goals, Mormons presented the American people with a religious group which defied cultural norms and advocated a disparate interpretation of the American identity. Two ideas central to the Mormon identity, Theodemocracy and polygamy, directly challenged Protestant ideas of virtue and capitalism. The Mormons’ direct efforts at obtaining political power and creating a separate state presented a serious threat to the Protestant American identity and sparked a fifty-year battle between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the United States Government. From a physical war in 1857 to the legal battle that followed, the Latter-day Saints discovered that the only way to exist and thrive in the United States was to embrace its norms and create an identity that would smoothly propel it into the twentieth century.

Keywords: American religion, Mormonism, Nineteenth-Century America, American politics

I dedicate this work to Dr. Tamara Van Dyken, who inspired this topic and believed in my scholarship abilities. I also dedicate this work to my parents, who support me fully in my academic endeavors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Tamara Van Dyken for her countless hours of support and advice on how to revise my work. I am indebted to her knowledge on the subject and her constructive criticism throughout the last two semesters. I would also like to thank Dr. Alexander Olson for his expertise in the American West and pointing me to valuable resources for my research. I am also incredibly grateful that he pushed me to apply for a FUSE Grant, without which I would not be standing here today. I would also like to thank the Honors College at Western Kentucky University for funding my research through a FUSE Grant and expanding my experiences as a college student. Lastly, I would like to thank the University of Utah Special Collections and Manuscripts for allowing me access to their collections, which substantially contributed to my research on this topic.

VITA

EDUCATION

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY B.A. in Economics – Mahurin Honors College Graduate Honors Capstone: <i>Nineteenth-Century American Religion and Politics in the West: Doctrinal Shifts in Mormonism and the Creation of Utah</i>	December 2017
Christian Academy of Louisville, Louisville, KY	May 2014

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

History Department, WKU Student Worker	May 2017- Present
Potter College Academic Advising, WKU Secretary/Desk Worker	August 2016- Present
Kentucky Museum Archives, WKU Intern	May 2017- August 2017
Pier 1 Imports, Louisville Sales Associate	May 2015- January 2017
Bates Runner Hall, WKU Desk Clerk	August 2016- May 2017

AWARDS & HONORS

Summa Cum Laude, WKU, December 2017
Finalist, Ogden Scholar Foundation Award, WKU, December 2017
Faculty Undergraduate Student Engagement (FUSE) Grant, May 2017
James H. Poteet Award, WKU History Department, May 2017
N. O. Taff Scholarship, WKU Economics Department, May 2017
James H. Poteet Scholarship, WKU History Department, May 2016
President's List, WKU, Fall 2014-May 2017

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Phi Alpha Theta (PAT)
Omicron Delta Epsilon (ODE)

PRESENTATIONS

Manning, Katherine (2017, November). *Louisville's Transition to a Service Sector Economy: An Analysis*. Poster presented at the WKU Economics Senior Conference to Economics faculty. Bowling Green, KY.

Manning, Katherine (2017, October). *Brigham Young and the Utah War, 1857*. Paper presented at the Ohio Valley History Conference. Murray, KY.

Manning, Katherine (2017, March). *Economics and Morality in the Civil War*. Paper presented at the Regional Phi Alpha Theta Conference. Williamsburg, KY.

CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Vita.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Section One: The Nineteenth-Century American Landscape.....	4
Section Two: Political Thought in Mormon Doctrine.....	13
Section Three: The Quest for Political Autonomy.....	23
Section Four: The Utah War of 1857.....	37
Section Five: Polygamy and the Law.....	44
Section Six: The Manifesto of 1890.....	58
Conclusion.....	65
References.....	67
Appendix.....	73

INTRODUCTION

American religion and politics have always been deeply intertwined. From the nation's beginning, Protestant Christianity has defined morality and cultural norms, leaving very little room for true religious pluralism. Christianity was essential in understanding the notion of American identity, nationality, and patriotism. However, its monopoly on American culture would not go unchallenged. One of the most famous of these challengers, and certainly one of the most successful, was Mormonism.

Mormonism presented the American people with a religious organization which blatantly challenged the norms of the nineteenth century. Instead of embracing the principle of monogamous marriage, Mormons practiced polygamy which Protestants considered to be an abomination to the "sacredness" of the institution of marriage in the nineteenth century. Instead of advocating capitalist values, the Mormons envisioned a socialist state with no division of classes. Instead of consolidating into mainstream Protestant beliefs, they aggressively asserted their religion's veracity and distinctiveness. This challenge of societal norms invited intense persecution, both political and personal, that followed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints until the early twentieth century. The American public viewed the Mormons as dangerous, unconventional, and inherently anti-American.

The Mormons themselves, however, believed they were the epitome of American patriotism and ideals. The stories in the Book of Mormon transpired on the American continent, and according to Mormon doctrine Christ had chosen America to be the place he would make his second coming. Mormons also emphasized the value of the American Constitution: they believed that the American government had corrupted its original

design and attempted to rectify this by endorsing a theocracy with republican values. Even so, Mormonism challenged the normative view of a moral Republic based on Protestant principles, making Mormonism an “outsider” religion to the American public. The paradox concerning the definition of a “true” American would become central to the growing conflict between the two parties.

As Mormonism gained ground in the East, middle class Americans fought hard to repress the growing religion. Joseph Smith, in an attempt to protect his followers, continued to move his saints westward—from New York to Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri. When Smith’s attempt to prove his loyalty to American ideals by running for President of the United States ended in assassination, the Mormons knew they would not be accepted as a religious group. Brigham Young, the new president of the Latter-day Saints, chartered a course to leave behind the U.S. for good: he would build a “Zion” in the West and restore the Constitution to its original design. As Brigham Young began politically maneuvering to establish his Zion, the threat of Mormonism transformed from theoretical to practical. Refusing to let these “fanatics” with their “peculiar” beliefs establish a rival nation, federal politicians took decisive action against the Mormon people.¹ Beginning with the Utah War of 1857, the U.S. Government waged an almost fifty-year battle with Mormon leadership in an attempt to conform Mormonism to American norms. From a physical confrontation to the legal battle that ensued between the two parties, the federal government was sending a clear message to Mormons: religious practices that violated the mainstream American norm would not be tolerated or protected under law. However,

¹The author is not using these terms subjectively; she is merely employing the language that was used to describe Mormonism in the nineteenth century. This in no way implies a personal judgement of Mormon beliefs.

the Mormons remained steadfast in their ideology, seeing themselves as suffering for Christ. They refused to comply with federal officials, believing that God would deliver them from their enemies.

Ironically, both sides were fighting for what they believed to be the true American identity—yet each had disparate definitions and means of achieving this vision. This is a critical observation: the Mormons and the American government had the same goal, but contrasting views on how to achieve this goal created such prolonged friction that it forced the “outsider” party to compromise. By 1890, the Federal Government had largely immobilized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through a series of litigation aimed at stopping Mormons from “rebellious” against the nation’s laws. Recognizing that the Church’s survival was uncertain, LDS President Wilford Woodruff issued a proclamation that would forever alter the church’s landscape—the Manifesto of 1890. By renouncing polygamy, the LDS Church relinquished its last vestige of open rebellion, reluctantly conforming to broader Protestant ideals of American nationalism. The modern LDS Church has dramatically transformed from its days under Brigham Young—the result of political pressure and persecution over the latter nineteenth century. It is now marked by an embrace of American Protestant norms, and the religion—though changed—has flourished. The conflicting interpretations of the true American identity not only transformed the Mormon Church but also inescapably influenced the formation of Utah. The political struggle to establish a separate nation and practice polygamy led to a fifty-year battle that resulted in the altering of the Mormon Church and signaled that only one definition of American identity and religion would be legitimated.

SECTION ONE: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

In order to understand the attitude of the American people towards Mormonism, it is necessary to look at the religious landscape of nineteenth century America. Protestant Christianity prevailed as the most dominant force of the nineteenth century political and religious landscape.² While the debate continues about whether America was founded as a Christian nation or not, John Fea asserts that “Between 1789 and 1865 Americans...understood themselves to be citizens of a Christian nation.”³ The idea that America was a Christian nation, correct or not, heavily influenced the way people thought about government. Ideas of nationalism and Christianity were intertwined, and parties like the Whigs firmly believed in the Christianization of America.⁴ After the First Great Awakening in the 1730s, Congregationalists and Anglicans shifted from dominant religious forces to minority denominations. The Awakening placed considerable emphasis on evangelicalism, which both Congregationalists and Anglicans rejected.⁵ The First Awakening, followed closely by the Second Great Awakening in the 1820s, created even further religious pluralism in America. This evangelicalism utilized Enlightenment ideology to put to death any notions of a state religion, and placed considerable emphasis on individualism in the practice of religious beliefs. In the words of John Murrin, “they believed that voluntaristic religion produced healthier varieties of Christian commitment

²John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 6.

³Ibid, 21.

⁴Ibid, 7.

⁵John Murrin, “Religion and Politics in America from the First Settlements to the Civil War,” in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Mark Noll and Luke Harlow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 29.

than any form of state support could generate.”⁶ This led to three new denominations rising to prominence in the 1820s: Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian.⁷ These denominations flourished because of their ability to attract followers voluntarily, while Congregationalists and Anglicans favored a state-supported religion. This movement set the stage for a Protestant majority to emerge in America.

Historian Nathan Hatch has extensively studied this phenomenon, terming it “the democratization of American Christianity.” He argues that during the First and Second Great Awakenings, other societal factors helped the surge of revivalism that swept through America. One of the most important of these is that the population was growing at an exponential rate—from two and a half million to twenty million over the range of seventy years.⁸ High birth rates and the availability of land spurred this population boom. With this immense increase in population came the demand for a religion for the masses. Instead of the traditional religions for the wealthy and privileged, the Great Awakenings brought religion to the common man. The empowerment of those who had little social standing became a hallmark of the expanding evangelical Protestantism. This was true for Mormonism as well: Joseph Smith, along with many of the founding leaders of the Mormon Church, grew up in poverty as an uneducated social outcast who never had any real power over his circumstances.⁹ Mormonism “used a virtual religious dictatorship as the means to return power to illiterate men.”¹⁰ The most important concept here is that Protestant, evangelical Christianity had become an almost mass commodity in the

⁶Murrin, 29.

⁷Murrin, “Religion and Politics in America from the First Settlements to the Civil War,” 29.

⁸Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 3.

⁹Hatch, 67.

¹⁰Hatch, 11.

American culture. These ideas of individualism and virtue became integral in the American identity—“the democratization of Christianity, then, has less to do with the specifics of polity and governance and more with the incarnation of the church into popular culture.”¹¹ As religion became a mass commodity, it began shaping ideas of virtue and family—creating a cultural norm which became synonymous with the American identity. These norms would be adopted by not only Protestants but also the vast majority of Americans and their representatives in government.

Another key aspect that informed broader cultural norms was the idea of Protestant Unity. It is important to note that the word “Protestant” encompasses a myriad of denominations. There was no one Protestant faith – the term is merely used as a distinction from its Catholic counterpart. In religions like Catholicism and Mormonism, the priest or President of the church possesses special authority over the congregation, and specifically in Catholicism, individuals do not have the power to go to God directly for things like repentance. These ideas contradict the individualistic aspect of Protestantism, where religious authority rests with the individual and religion is an inward, private practice. Even though many denominations existed in the early nineteenth century, religious leaders believed these manifold religious organizations would eventually consolidate into one, true Protestant faith.¹² They believed that God would eliminate religious pluralism to unify His people into one church, most accurately coined by the phrase “One nation, under God.” “Fringe” religions, or religious organizations that popped up during and after the Revivals, threatened this vision. Some of these groups,

¹¹Hatch, 9.

¹²R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3-4.

like the Shakers and Oneida Community, lost prominence and almost died out completely (or, in the case of the Amish, managed to maintain total political separation), but groups like the Mormons flourished and grew. This directly challenged what mainstream Protestants viewed as God's will: these groups were intentionally distinguishing themselves from the "true" form of Protestant religion, intentionally creating more religious sectarianism. According to this theory, groups that identified as non-Protestant or non-evangelical, like Catholics, Jews, and Universalists, would decline because they did not fit the definition of a proper church.¹³ These groups had rejected the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and inward religion. In specific regards to Mormonism, Joseph Smith's founding of the religion was fueled by Smith's confusion over the many denominations of Protestant belief. He asked God to reveal which one was the true authority of God's word, to which God responded that none of them were. Smith's desire to unify Christians into the true religious organization ironically resulted in even more fracturing of Christianity. When these "outsider" religions flourished instead of losing prominence, they would be persecuted through political, social, and physical means by the American public in an attempt to discredit their doctrine.

While religious freedom (and essentially religious pluralism) was guaranteed by the Constitution, historian Kathleen Flake points out that it "did not come naturally to Americans."¹⁴ As denominations fractured and other religions like Mormonism gained a substantial foothold in the nation, a largely Protestant population struggled with the idea of giving other religions the same influence and power they possessed.¹⁵ Other outsider

¹³Moore, *Religious Outsiders*, 7.

¹⁴Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 15.

¹⁵Ibid.

religions, like Catholicism and Judaism, were also seen as threatening to the predominantly Protestant American public. However, Mormonism sparked persecution that rivaled the intensity of anti-Catholic campaigns. The cultural norms of the century were seen as essential to fostering virtue and true republicanism.¹⁶ Because these religions each challenged this normative vision in different ways, Americans labeled them as dangerous to the nation's principles of government and virtue. As mentioned before, the American identity was deeply intertwined with Protestant values; the Mormons, then, were essentially challenging the foundation of the American republic.

Being the dominant religious force in America during the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that mainstream Protestantism shaped cultural norms. Protestant Christianity was deeply tied to nationalistic ideals that the Mormons would later challenge under theocracy. One important aspect of nineteenth century American culture was its definition of marriage, family, and gender roles. First, most women's primary duty was childbearing.¹⁷ By the doctrine of coverture, once women were married, they forfeited their legal identity and became meshed with their husband's.¹⁸ The post-marriage expectation imposed childbearing and childrearing duties onto the woman. Marriage itself was a religious institution in the eyes of Christians: it was a binding contract whereby the woman would submit to her husband, and she could not divorce her husband unless she could prove his infidelity.¹⁹ Marriage's main purpose was

¹⁶Ibid, 18.

¹⁷David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 98.

¹⁸Ibid, 98.

¹⁹Hendrik A. Hartog, *Marital Exits and Marital Expectations in Nineteenth Century America*, Georgetown University Law, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=hartlecture>, 96.

procreation. Ideas of birth control or family planning were taboo; sex was seen as only for the purpose of procreation. The family unit was seen as a sacred entity. This is where ideas of morality, virtue, and nationalism were bred.

If the family unit was corrupted, the culture and morality of the America identity was jeopardized. The definition of marriage, too, was essential to this idea. Marriage was defined by the union of one man and one woman. Monogamy was a standard adopted by Christianity after the Romans normalized the concept.²⁰ Though polygamy was practiced in portions of the Bible, theologians of the nineteenth century discredited this as God's will due to contextual studies of the stories where it is practiced.²¹ Even today, monogamy is considered by most to be the marital norm, and those who challenge that standard are seen as nonconventional. In addition to monogamy, homosexuality, and even celibacy, were seen as a perversions of sexuality because they did not fit the one man-one woman norm and did not advance procreation. The legal adoption of the Protestant Christian definition of marriage set the standard for acceptable structures of relations for decades to come; this has recently been called into question and even reversed in regards to homosexuality. However, in nineteenth century America, a heterosexual relationship in the form of a one man-one woman marriage was largely considered to be the only acceptable definition of marriage. This was a vital part of the "virtuous family" which Protestantism saw as critical to the American Republic.

²⁰Michael Price, "Why Do We Think Monogamy is Normal?" *Psychology Today*, September 9, 2011, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/darwin-eternity/201109/why-we-think-monogamy-is-normal>.

²¹Glenn Miller, "Is Polygamy Allowed by the New Testament?" *Christian Think Tank*, February, 2001, <http://christianthinktank.com/polygame.html>.

American religious norms largely shaped the political and cultural realm of nineteenth century America. However, even as Protestant Christianity shaped an overarching cultural theme of the nineteenth century, America was by no means unified in religious beliefs or national character. The ideas of Protestant Unity and evangelical religion help explain the intense persecution that the Mormons suffered, but they don't necessarily imply that all Americans were unified in their hatred of the Mormons. The nineteenth century American landscape was riddled with conflict – slavery, secession, war, religion. The struggle to create a persona of unity is crystal clear, but it is glaringly obvious that America has never been a homogenous nation in culture and values. While Protestant religion certainly shaped the majority of Americans' ideology, it did not create a unified American character.

While Mormons certainly took considerable grief over their religious beliefs and “peculiar practices,” R. Lawrence Moore argues that the Mormons intentionally crafted an identity that facilitated this persecution.²² He explains that not all persecution of the Mormons came from their identity, but the power struggle between what their identity meant for the larger American public—essentially, the Mormons' challenge of societal norms threatened to corrupt American virtue and republicanism. So, how did Mormons create this identity and what was the crux of it? First, Mormons fed on persecution. According to the Book of Mormon, the Saints would suffer for the cause of Christ and face trials and persecution. When the first hints at persecution began, the Saints interpreted it as validation that they were doing God's work and being obedient to His will. This kind of reaction only encouraged more persecution, resulting in a cyclical flow

²²Moore, *Religious Outsiders*, 31.

of action: as the Mormons were persecuted, they publicized the account to commend themselves, which only encouraged further persecution by enraged observers. Second, the Saints labeled all non-Mormons as “gentiles.” This language was used to label non-Mormons as “other,” unsaved, or not chosen by God to be saved. Third, the Saints believed they were righteously superior to all other religions. While this concept is common to many religions, not just Mormonism, Moore argues that the Mormons’ arrogance was a marked persona that followed them throughout the nineteenth century, intentionally crafted and proclaimed by church leaders.²³ Moore also contends that Smith understood the benefits of attracting attention, even if it was negative: “Opposition gives value to struggle and inculcates self-confidence.”²⁴

While Moore’s analysis does an excellent job of finding a major source of conflict between Mormons and Americans, his harshness in analyzing Mormon actions makes it difficult to use his analysis. His personal opinions about the Mormons cloud his research. However, what we can take from his work is that the Mormons’ distinctive identity created friction between them and the American public. While he firmly argues that the Mormons’ persecution stemmed from their identity alone, he neglects to seriously consider the role of their beliefs in this conflict. Other religious groups such as the Shakers and Oneida Community also preached “peculiar” notions that challenged societal norms, and while they were persecuted for them, these groups were not given nearly as much attention as the Mormons. Certainly, the Mormon identity created hostility between themselves and other religious groups. However, as the Mormons began suffering persecution in the East, it is specifically their beliefs on two issues that are called out and

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid, 34-35.

emphasized in anti-Mormon literature: polygamy and theocracy. While these ideas were not as prominent during Mormonism's inception and early persecution, they certainly fueled a massive conflict in the years following 1844. In other words, it was a combination of both the careful crafting of Mormon identity and their propagation of polygamy and theocracy that invited such intense persecution throughout the nineteenth century.

The Mormons' advocacy of theocracy and polygamy directly challenged the norms of the nineteenth century by disrupting the virtuous family and ideas of true republicanism, thereby inviting continual conflict throughout the duration of the century. However, it was the Mormons' deliberate engagement in politics to achieve and safeguard these practices that transformed them from a theoretical threat to a practical danger. Groups like the Amish achieved total separation, which was a goal of the Mormons, but the Amish made no effort to engage in politics or any activity outside their community. The Mormons' efforts to actively reform the American political system made them a practical threat to the virtues of the country. This conflict would only be resolved as Mormon leadership recognized the political significance of its decisions and the health of its church as it moved into the twentieth century.

SECTION TWO: POLITICAL THOUGHT IN MORMON DOCTRINE

In the words of Brigham Young, Mormons have always been “very political indeed...we will vote for the man who will sustain the principles of civil and religious liberty, the man who knows the most and who has the best heart and brain for a statesman...These are our politics.”²⁵ While most modern readers will recall the presidential campaign of Mitt Romney, a devout Mormon and Republican, most do not know that the earliest of Mormon attempts at politics began with the founder himself, Joseph Smith. While politics played little role in the initial growth of the church out of the Burned-Over District in New York, it became increasingly apparent that political power was necessary to continue their mission from God. In Patrick Mason’s analysis of Mormon theocracy, he contends that it wasn’t until followers had reached Nauvoo, Illinois that politics became a central focus of the religion. These years, he says, were the most transformative for the Mormons.²⁶ Because of the intense scrutiny and persecution they faced during these times, Smith felt urgency regarding the earthly kingdom of God. He wanted to prove to the rest of the world the legitimacy of his religious group by turning his beliefs about the Kingdom of God into a practical, well-developed plan. This is where the first hints at theocracy became much more developed in Smith’s mind, even manifesting in a campaign for the presidency.

In a recent piece on Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign, Mormon scholar Richard Bushman has pointed out that though politics was far from Smith’s mind in the

²⁵Brigham Young, “Political Government,” in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John Widstoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954), 549.

²⁶Patrick Mason, “God and the People: Theodemocracy in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” *Journal of Church and State* 53, no. 3 (2011): 354, <https://academic.oup.com/jcs/article/53/3/349/1022651>.

initial years of Mormonism's founding, it wasn't a stretch for Smith to begin developing political thought.²⁷ He argues that Smith's political ambitions grew from a necessity to protect the church from intense persecution. After petitioning the government several times for federal protection and receiving no response, Smith felt the only way he could protect his people was to get involved in U.S. politics himself.²⁸ This abandonment by the government heavily influenced both Smith and Young's perception of the role of politics in the state. The theory that Smith became involved in politics out of necessity is actually proved correct by later church actions: after the Utah War in 1857, church leaders laboriously petitioned for statehood in hopes of receiving political autonomy, thus attempting to protect themselves from persecution by the American people. However, persecution was not the only influencing factor that affected Smith's political thought. The role of religion in politics is a constant theme in the Book of Mormon as well: the role of church and state are always intertwined. Bushman argues, "The prophets were not always rulers themselves, but they always considered themselves the monitors of the nation's goodness...religion thoroughly infused thinking about the state."²⁹ He also notes that in the portions of the Book of Mormon where politics took a backseat, "the history floundered."³⁰

While Smith's avid endorsement of republican values strayed from the monarchies of the Book of Mormon, his republican values were still influenced by theocracy, which was imprinted in his political thought through stories in the Book of

²⁷Richard Bushman, "Joseph Smith's Presidential Ambitions" in *Mormonism and American Politics* ed. Richard Balmer and Jana Riess (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2015).

²⁸Bushman, "Joseph Smith's Presidential Ambitions," 4.

²⁹Ibid, 6-7.

³⁰Ibid, 6.

Mormon. Without righteousness, the nation could not flourish. Smith knew that involving himself in politics was essential to the future of the church, yet wasn't quite sure how to piece together his support of republican principles with his extreme religious conservatism—meaning, how could he combine his support for theocratic rule with his belief in a republic. This changed when he received the vision of God's plan for a new political order. In 1844, Joseph Smith shared with one of his disciples, Brigham Young, a revelation from God containing the details of establishing the "Kingdom of God" in America.³¹ While he never fully diverged all the details of how this Kingdom would emerge, Young claimed that Smith had shared with him the vision and the details relating to its implementation.³² The key aspect of this revelation was establishing a new Zion. In order to bring about Christ's return to America, the Saints were tasked with making a righteous nation aligned with the principles of God. This new system combined the American ideals of democracy with the supreme power of God: a theocracy by election.

For Smith, the opportunity to begin work on the "Kingdom of God" presented itself in 1844 – a presidential election. By announcing his candidacy, he proclaimed to the American public that he had the solution to the problem of the republic's corruption: God's sovereignty. While most religions, and certainly Protestant Christianity, believed in God's sovereignty, the American public feared that Smith's ideas of God and morality did not match theirs. Though religion was certainly closely tied to American government during the nineteenth century, Americans remained wary of theocracy, especially when advocated by the head of an "outsider" religion. Smith was unapologetic about his

³¹J. Keith Melville, *Conflict and Compromise: The Mormons in mid nineteenth-century American politics* (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Printing, 1974), 51.

³²Mason, "God and the People," 355.

religious beliefs, and his political vision included revising the current American system to match the standards set forth in the Book of Mormon. To the American public, it looked like Smith was attempting to legislate his idea of morality—a morality that was immorality because it threatened the values of republicanism by advocating a different version of marriage. This is what made Smith’s claim so egregious to the public – he openly, explicitly advocated not only a theocracy, but a *Mormon* theocracy. To Protestants and other non-Mormons, this was unthinkable. His platform openly challenged the norms of the American culture, making him an instant target for persecution.

In Smith’s mind, the establishment of the “Kingdom of God” would naturally envelope the federal government, which would collapse because of its malfeasance.³³ This new political order would in turn restore America to God’s standards. Only then would Christ return to America, bringing about the new millennia. The vision was thus termed, “Theodemocracy,” by Smith in his presidential run in 1844.³⁴ This became a critical belief for Mormon followers: Christ’s return depended on their obedience and success in establishing this new “Kingdom of God.” This belief became the core motivation for Mormon leadership and its resulting actions. Failure to establish this new order would result in, literally, a Biblical catastrophe. Young told his followers, “This American continent will be Zion; for it is so spoken of by the prophets. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and will be the place of gathering...”³⁵ This future Zion created serious concerns among the American public. In a theocracy, only one religion is sanctioned as true,

³³Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 39.

³⁴Mason, “God and the People,” 350.

³⁵Young, “The Last Days,” in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 184.

leaving little room for religious freedom. Historian Patrick Mason examines this issue in his work, citing that “critics expressed fears that theodemocracy could not tolerate genuine religious pluralism and would lead to oppressive restrictions on personal liberty.”³⁶ Ironically, it was this same right to religious freedom that Smith, and later Young, felt cheated of in the East. America in the nineteenth century was certainly not truly accepting of religious pluralism, either. Religious sectarianism, as discussed before, challenged the doctrine of Protestant Unity. Yet, the Constitution guaranteed religious freedom. Oftentimes, however, this right was ignored or violated when other religions threatened the power and influence of the Protestant church, thereby undermining the values of the American identity. To Smith, theocracy was the perfect solution to this problem—it was the only way to protect his people from those who violated their constitutional rights. However, theocracy challenged the republican values inherent to the American identity, signaling that each group had a contrasting view of a true republic.

When Smith realized that his followers would not be allowed to stay in the East, he felt abandoned by the U.S. government who stood by and did nothing as states continually persecuted the church and pushed them westward. To him and his saints, the Constitution, in its perfect enactment, would have sheltered them from the mobs of angry Protestants. When the mobs attacked the Mormons in Illinois and Missouri, the federal government was hesitant, to say the least, to come to Mormon defense. The political climate of the mid-nineteenth century also contributed to this hesitation: the issues of slavery and states’ rights were entangled so deeply that politicians were circumspect to make any decisions that might be construed as support for, or even opposition to, slavery.

³⁶Mason, “God and the People,” 350.

Whatever the motivations were for not aiding the Mormons, the Mormon people were left to fend for themselves. If government could not enforce constitutional rights or protect its citizens from those who violated them, then the government was not functioning in its original design, according to Joseph Smith.

Brigham Young, when he succeeded Smith as President of the LDS Church, felt personally slighted by the inaction of the government. To him, the failure of the government to protect his people produced a strong distrust of the federal government that continued throughout Young's life – an ideology that was only furthered solidified when Joseph Smith was murdered at the hands of a mob in Carthage jail in 1844. However, the vision of Zion would not end with Smith's death. The murder of Joseph Smith confirmed to Young that the government was corrupt, and it had lost its true purpose by straying from the fundamental principles of the Constitution. Young began making the vision of Zion his own, adding certain elements that Smith may or may not have originally envisioned. In the vision passed along by Smith, the new government set up by the Mormons in the West would be a true republic: a republic that would infuse the Word of God into the governing system. In this republic, God's word and will would be law, and all those in positions of power would be held accountable to church leadership. A government free of corruption – this was the main objective. Young described this system to his followers in his discourse on Political Government:

What do I understand by a theocratic government? One in which all laws are enacted and executed in righteousness, and whose officers possess that power which proceedeth from the Almighty...If the Kingdom of God, or a theocratic government, was established on the earth, many practices now prevalent would be abolished...But few, if any, understand what a theocratic government is. In every sense of the word, it is a republican government, and differs but little in form from our National, State, and Territorial Governments; but its subjects will recognize the will and dictation of the Almighty. The Kingdom of God

circumscribes and comprehends the municipal laws for the people in their outward government, to which pertain the Gospel covenants....³⁷

In 1857 while Young was governor of Utah, he demanded that government appointees “dismiss from the public service, every such person in your employ, as are guilty of whoring, drunkenness, gambling, using profane language, or any other vile, or idle practice...”³⁸ This shows how seriously Young believed in the government’s corruption. He felt that simply involving himself in the current political system was, in effect, useless. He stated, “[the Government of the United States] has calmly looked on and permitted one of the fundamental and dearest provisions of the Constitution to be broken; she has permitted us to be driven and trampled underfoot with impunity.”³⁹ Young desired total separation from the institution of the United States government. His Zion would still act as a theocratic republic, but no longer would Young try to work with the federal government unless it was a means to an end. Historian Kathleen Flake put it this way: “The Mormons were radically separatist and triumphalist....Their church was an instrumentality for building Zion, a here-and-now kingdom governed by the moral, political, and economic laws of God revealed to Smith and his successors, who each presided as prophet, priest, and king over the kingdom of God on the earth.”⁴⁰ To Young, the government was no longer acting in its original design, making it an illegitimate governing body, excusing him from all accountability to federal officials. Brigham

³⁷Young, “Political Government,” in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 543-544.

³⁸Brigham Young to Honorable Garland Hurt, 11 February 1857, Reel 4, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

³⁹Young, “Political Government,” in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 555.

⁴⁰Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity*, 18-19.

Young's theocracy sought not only to reassert Mormon power and rights as citizens, but to redeem the current political system in order to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

As the saints arrived in Salt Lake Valley in 1847, Young knew this was the opportunity he had been anticipating. Now that Smith was gone, it was up to him to make the vision of Theodemocracy a reality. He recorded in his diary, "we intedn [intend] to start a company of young men & some new families – perhaps within a few weeks This company will go until we can find a good location beyond the borders of the unified states & there stop..."⁴¹ It is important to remember that at this time, the borders of the United States had not been solidified in the West. California had not been admitted as a state, and the Missouri Compromise was the last act passed by Congress in regards to territories of the west. By setting out for the uncharted territory past the Rocky Mountains, Young was determined to distance himself and his people from the United States. His intention to pass the borders of the Missouri Compromise shows that his original plan for the Saints was to be wholly separate from the laws and sovereignty of the United States. He strategically picked this spot because the Rocky Mountains were a natural barrier, literally acting not only as a border but as protection from outside forces. It wasn't long after arriving, however, that Young realized the Federal Government had no intention of letting the Mormons escape their reach.

In 1849, Young concluded that he would have to obtain some sort of authority that was legitimated by the government until he could gain enough power to sever ties

⁴¹Brigham Young's Diary, 24 January 1845, Box 1, Folder 12, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library. Note: all text copied exactly as appeared in diary, no corrections to spelling or punctuation have been added by the author.

with them.⁴² For this reason, he consented to the necessity of being granted some sort of territorial designation from Washington officials.⁴³ While his original intentions were far from gaining status as a state, he eventually recognized his inability to command authority without it. Before being able to obtain this official authority from Washington, however, Smith and Young established the “Council of Fifty” in the early years of the 1840s, which acted as a governing and legislative body that overlooked all matters pertaining to the church and its followers.⁴⁴ This body of church leaders created and enacted laws to temporarily oversee the saints until a more permanent system could be established.⁴⁵ The Kingdom of God was beginning to take shape “with its own currency, flag, and army.”⁴⁶ To the American public, it looked like the Mormons were creating their own nation, challenging the authority of the federal government, and granting themselves power they didn’t legitimately obtain. This new nation was quickly growing as Saints from every state were packing up and moving west in search of Zion.

With the gold rush propelling Americans to California, a growing non-Mormon population in the west began challenging Mormon political sovereignty in Utah. Non-Mormons in the area were fed up with Young’s theocratic vision, as they were excluded from certain trading networks and were subjected to Mormon law in the area. They began voicing concerns of unfair monopolies and a territorial government run like a dictatorship, and the government of the United States listened.⁴⁷ One newspaper column

⁴²Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 44-46.

⁴³Ibid, 47.

⁴⁴Ibid, 39.

⁴⁵Ibid, 40-41.

⁴⁶John Turner, “Unpopular Sovereignty,” in *Mormonism and American Politics* ed. Randall Balmer and Jana Reiss (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2015), 20.

⁴⁷Note: These accusations had some truth to them, since the theocratic system described in the essay was extremely concerning to non-Mormon residents of Utah. However, it is clear that these

remarked: “Mormonism is theocracy, and involves not only a social gradation and inequality, but an anti-republican alliance between Church and State. No country can be free where polygamy prevails.”⁴⁸ A New York newspaper seconded these assertions: “[The Mormons] yield a nominal allegiance only to the Federal Government—the authority of whose officers sits so loosely upon them, that the High Priest openly declares he will be Governor of the people until the Almighty shall say to him directly, ‘You need be Governor no longer.’”⁴⁹ These concerns only confirmed the suspicions and fears of the American public surrounding the Mormons in the West; they could not be left to their own devices, as they were actively engaging in the political system to achieve their goals.

accusations had oftentimes been over-exaggerated. While the elections held in Utah were legally performed, the non-Mormons in the area knew that the Mormon majority would continue to reign for quite a while. Looking to get one of their own candidates into office, these petitions were sent with the idea that the government would appoint non-Mormon officials to positions of power, since voting alone couldn’t achieve that.

⁴⁸“The Mormon Polygamy,” Saturday Evening Post, Philadelphia, November 18, 1854, accessed through BYU Archives, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/12593>.

⁴⁹“Errors of the Head and Heart,” Moore’s Rural New Yorker, Rochester, July 5, 1856, accessed through BYU Archives, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/19CMNI/id/8918/rec/6>.

SECTION THREE: A DEEPING DIVIDE—THE QUEST FOR POLITICAL AUTONOMY

As the Council of Fifty met to discuss the future of Zion and the practical ways to achieve this new “Kingdom of God,” their first step was to create a civil government. In February of 1848, Young instructed his agents in Washington, D.C. to “draft a petition for territorial government in the Great Basin” and present it to Congress.⁵⁰ The Council hoped that this designation from Washington would help them gain a legitimate form of political sovereignty over themselves, allowing them to stave off persecution from other state governments while building the strength to eventually cut all ties with the United States. This territorial government would only be acceptable if Mormons were appointed to the governing positions; otherwise, Young felt that he could not effectively protect his people from persecution and corruption, though the larger reason was probably that his theocracy could not effectively work under non-Mormon leadership.⁵¹ “Corrupted” non-Mormon politicians could not be trusted to fairly and objectively rule the Mormons. In December of the same year, Young submitted names of church leadership that he felt were qualified for the position, stressing the importance that outsiders should not be appointed to govern the Saints.⁵² However, Congress works slowly, and with no developments on the legislation by February 1849, Young decided to take action himself. The Council of Fifty met and decided to hold an election in Salt Lake City on March 12 to fill the positions of territorial leadership; unsurprisingly, all members nominated were

⁵⁰Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 45.

⁵¹Ibid, 46.

⁵²Ibid, 47.

on the Council of Fifty, and no opponents ran against each nominee.⁵³ Though it was an election by name, voters only had one candidate to choose from.

Now that a date had been set for the election, the Council decided to create and adopt a constitution. The constitutional convention was attended by the candidates for election, and on March 10, two days before the election, the convention voted unanimously to adopt their drafted constitution.⁵⁴ Historian J. Keith Melville notes in his work that the state constitution mirrored, almost word for word, the Constitution of the United States, except for its references to the Kingdom of God which would be named “Deseret.”⁵⁵ This is important to note, especially since Mormons claimed to be the most patriotic of citizens. The fact that their state constitution mirrored that of the United States seems to prove this claim. Their only difference, that of explicitly acknowledging the role of their religion in the politics of the state, seemed minute to the Mormons. However, those outside the church saw this discrepancy differently. Mormon theocracy did not always advocate the same values as Protestantism. This, combined with the fact that Mormons were now taking political measures to ensure their goals, raised serious concerns over the intentions of the Mormons in the West.

On March 12, all candidates were elected by the people, and Young took the official office as Governor of Deseret. There were several discrepancies concerning the constitution and the actions of the newly elected leaders; for instance, the date of the election was wrong, but Young felt as if all actions taken were legal and in line with the process outlined in the U.S. Constitution. They sent a memorial to Congress in July and

⁵³Ibid, 49, 54.

⁵⁴Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 49.

⁵⁵Ibid, 50.

elected Almon Babbitt as their representative.⁵⁶ However, as newly elected Young corresponded with his agents in Washington, he soon realized that petitioning for territorial status came with a cost: if approved as a territory, territorial leadership would be directly accountable to Congress.⁵⁷ Therefore, Young realized that the best chance at political autonomy came from gaining statehood. A new Mormon lobbyist, John Bernhisel, was sent to Washington to aid Babbitt in moving their cause through Congress. These actions garnered concern from not only the American people, but also the American government. Instead of waiting for Congress to approve their actions, Mormons leaders in Salt Lake Valley were taking political action independently. People began fearing the consequences of Mormon involvement in American politics—believing they would corrupt it through their vision of a theocracy.

In December of 1849, Deseret's first bid for statehood was introduced to the Senate, and it was decided that the memorial would be allocated to the House Committee on Territories.⁵⁸ It was presented in the House in January of 1850, but in a surprising move an opposing petition from another sect of Mormons was read to the Committee.⁵⁹ The petition had come from the band of Mormons who followed William Smith, Joseph Smith's brother, upon Joseph's death in 1844. There had been much argument over the rightful successor to the Mormon Presidency upon Smith's death, and some Mormons split from the Brighamite group, believing Young was not the legitimate successor to Smith. About three different sects were formed, but the Brighamite group was by far the largest and is the focus of this paper as it went on to form the mainstream LDS Church

⁵⁶Ibid, 59.

⁵⁷Ibid, 64.

⁵⁸Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 71.

⁵⁹Ibid.

today. The William Smith group's document to the House accused Young of attempting to set up his own political kingdom full of moral atrocities like polygamy, and advised the House to take actions to prevent Young from doing so.⁶⁰ This was incredibly important—politicians now had proof from a group of Mormon believers that Young was a dictator and a tyrant—raising serious doubts about Young's intentions and actions in Utah. These accusations, combined with the less discreet practice of polygamy by the Mormons, began fueling an anti-Mormon campaign by the American public. The rumors surrounding the Mormon people and what exactly they were doing in the West began seriously impeding Mormon efforts at statehood. In fact, polygamy was stated as one of the reasons that Utah lost the bid for statehood in 1850. Slavery was also causing delayed statehood, as President Taylor did not want to upset the balance between free states and slave states. All of these issues delayed affirmative action on the statehood memorial, and it wasn't until September that the Compromise of 1850 was passed. These were the stipulations of the compromise:

1. California was admitted as a free state.
2. New Mexico was created a territory not subject to the Wilmot Proviso, and Texas was paid ten million dollars for claims to New Mexican territory.
3. Utah was created a *territory* not subject to the Wilmot Proviso.
4. More stringent provision was made for the rendition of fugitive slaves.
5. The slave trade was abolished in the District of Columbia.⁶¹

The Compromise, much debated in its inception, satisfied the interests of all the parties involved in deciding statehood. It was not the statehood Young was hoping for but it at least recognized the legitimacy of Young's authority and his government that was set up through the Council of Fifty.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 93-94.

The Compromise of 1850 was significant for several reasons. Mainly, it was the first major political achievement that Young and the Priesthood had received from their efforts to establish political sovereignty in Utah. This was also the first time the Federal Government had granted the Mormons any kind of political authority; in Missouri and Illinois government power was used to push the Mormons out and provide as little legal protection to them as possible. Here we see that the government, though still skeptical of Mormon power, was making a compromise. This would be one of few compromises made by the government in the years to come. Secondly, Mormon leadership was gaining a glimpse into the next forty years of their future as a church. The Mormons believed that even though public opinion was against them, they would still be able to obtain political power by simply following the legal guidelines for petitioning statehood. What they did not anticipate, however, was that the Federal Government would be so swayed by its constituents' voices. The long struggle to gain territorial status signaled to the Mormon people that gaining political power or autonomy would not be easy. In fact, it would take Utah an additional forty-six years to gain statehood, and it would only come after the LDS Church made significant compromises that altered the doctrine of the church. Third, the granting of territorial status to Utah turned into a semi-test to see how Mormon leadership would respond to outside rule. The ensuing conflict between Mormon and non-Mormon appointees highlighted that there was a growing divide between the two parties' ideas of republicanism and virtue. This divide could not be ignored, and it would become central to the conflict between the two parties in the decades that followed.

After attaining territorial status, Young turned his attention to retaining the elected officers the Council had placed in authority. As Bernhisel continued to lobby on the

Mormons' behalf in Washington, President Fillmore remained skeptical of the Mormon agenda. He granted Young the governorship, but replaced the secretary and two judges with non-Mormon appointees to oversee Young and ensure correct judicial proceedings.⁶² As the non-Mormon appointees arrived and settled into Salt Lake City, the beginning of a fifty year battle was brewing beneath the surface of political affairs. In the first of many clashes, Brigham Young exchanged in a heated public debate with Judge Perry Brocchus, the judge appointed by Fillmore, in September of that year.⁶³ Young's address criticized the United States government and accused them of the murder of Joseph Smith; Judge Brocchus, shocked and horrified at the allegations, attempted to defend the government, while adding at the end of his speech a comment directed towards the women, encouraging them to become more virtuous—referring to the practice of polygamy in the territory.⁶⁴ Greatly offended by the comment, Young retaliated by calling him corrupt and despicable. The two continued to feud over the next several weeks, yet clearly neither was willing to admit fault. Judge Brocchus finally expressed wishes to leave the conflict behind and returned to Washington, exasperated with the issue.⁶⁵ Young also clashed with the secretarial appointment, Broughton Harris, who was concerned that Young's hasty assemblage of a governing body was done outside of constitutional limits.⁶⁶ Harris also left the territory. To the American public, it looked like Young and the Priesthood were unable to cooperate with federal agents. Unphased and more than likely glad that the officials had fled, "the legislature [of Utah]

⁶²Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 98.

⁶³Ibid, 105.

⁶⁴Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 105-106. For a more detailed account read Melville's book.

⁶⁵Ibid, 112.

⁶⁶David Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847-1896* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), 57.

continued its legislative business...The laws of Deseret were enacted as the laws of the Territory.”⁶⁷

The first in a series of clashes between the Mormon Priesthood and the federal government, the debate with Judge Brocchus was a spark that would soon burst into fire. This first open confrontation foreshadowed the years to come: future clashes were inevitable as neither were willing to compromise on their definition of a “true” republic and “true” American. Young firmly believed he was establishing the Kingdom of God on earth and the federal government saw this as open rebellion to the principles of the United States. The United States Government believed Mormons would destroy the foundations of a virtuous society. Both sides were frustrated, yet neither was able to fully subdue the other. This trend continued, and as more federal appointees left Utah, more reports circulated about the Mormon agenda. To the America public, the Mormons were an oddity: they wanted nothing to do with the United States, yet claimed to be the most patriotic of citizens. They championed a return to moral principles, yet blatantly challenged the norms of conventional marriage. Yet, to Mormons the American Government was also a paradox: they preached freedom of religion, press, and speech, yet they were intolerant of any person or organization who challenged the norms of the century. The Government’s purpose was to protect the people, yet it passively observed Mormon persecution. Neither side understood the other, leaving no room for compromise.

As Young’s Zion grew, it became apparent that Theodemocracy encapsulated several problems with the practicality of his republican ideals. Under this system,

⁶⁷Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 116.

practically every voter was subject to the authority of the Mormon priesthood. Even though officials were elected by popular vote, the voters were wholly devoted to Mormon interests, and their views and thoughts were shaped by the teachings of the church. In this case, Young was unsurprisingly voted into office as territorial governor. Because Young simultaneously acted as Governor and Church President, coupled with the fact that practically every citizen voted in the same way, the system resembled more of a state religion or a benevolent dictatorship. When voting on laws during the early period of the Council of Fifty, “a variety of proposals, generally considered to be political in content, were presented to the camp and accepted *unanimously*.”⁶⁸ Dissenting voters would be chastised by the President of the Church for challenging or disputing ideology that came from a revelation of God. With the Council of Fifty essentially supporting every action or command from Brigham Young, the system of theocratic rule began more closely resembling the rule of a benevolent despot.

Even more antithetical to American norms, Young’s theocratic society included an economic system, which more closely resembled socialism than capitalism. All economic activity was overseen by church leadership, and each business was constrained by laws concerning what could or could not be produced or sold. J. Keith Melville asserts in his book that “the records adequately demonstrate that when the pioneers arrived in the Valley, all activities were sponsored by the Church.”⁶⁹ These laws even originally banned trade with non-Mormons. The Mormon territory would be totally self-sufficient, and each member of the church would be fully taken care of. The church would redistribute wealth

⁶⁸Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 40. The italics have been added by the author of this essay to emphasize the concept of priestly authority.

⁶⁹Melville, *Conflict and Compromise*, 40.

to ensure no member would be in poverty. Church leadership exhorted its members “to be a self-sustaining people...this is what the Lord requires of this people.”⁷⁰ By all means, this was a concern for the average American, as socialism presented them with a political system that did not meet their definition of freedom. Young describes his system not as a tyrannical, forced benevolence, but as the true meaning of freedom:

Put a community in possession of knowledge by means of which they can obtain what they need by the labor of their bodies and their brains, then, instead of being paupers they will be free, independent and happy, and these distinctions of classes will cease, and there will be but one class, one grade, one great family.⁷¹

If successful, this Mormon monopoly in the West could potentially take over all of American political life, forcing their religious agenda onto the public as a whole. This was especially concerning considering the already real threats of secession from the southern states who were not budging on slavery. It is also important to remember that the country was still relatively young at this point, only having gained independence from Britain some sixty to seventy years earlier. Now more than ever it was imperative to maintain a homogeneous unity within the United States of America. This “fanaticism” in the West was a serious threat to that.

Some inside the church recognized the contradiction of a theocracy and republic, even if they agreed completely with Young’s political views at the time. William Godbe, a Mormon pioneer later excommunicated from the church, observed:

Brigham Young’s aim was to preserve his people from the world, to have no intercourse with the outside world, to all intents and purposes. He said on one occasion in public that he wanted to make a wall so thick and high around the Territory that it would be impossible for the Gentiles to get over or through it...he

⁷⁰Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 450-451.

⁷¹Ibid, 548.

knew that contact with the outside world would be hurtful to him and his interests.⁷²

He commented again that the Mormon people “understand that everything is to come from the priesthood.”⁷³ Although he was excommunicated over disagreement on financial ventures for the church, Godbe’s account is very fair and objective. Though he understood the opinions and concerns of the broader American public (and agreed with them), he could also understand and empathize with those in the church who believed they were doing the work of God. Another member, Julie Ingeröed, emigrated from Britain after her conversion and left the church one year after arriving in Utah. She wrote an autobiography describing the horrors of life in Utah, outlining her personal experiences and observations about working for Brigham Young while dealing with the hardships and poverty of living in a pioneer town. While her account is clearly biased and exaggerated in parts, some of her statements are consistent with the realities of pioneer life. She specifically describes theodemocracy when she says, “Nevertheless, nine tenths of everyone’s income is given to the ‘Church,’ or to be more precise, to Brigham Young, who owns everything and rules everything through his priests and prophets.”⁷⁴

Though Mormons probably did not tithe ninety percent of their income (though they most assuredly tithed some portion), her observations concerning theocracy certainly addressed the contradiction of republicanism and theocracy. Even Young himself was openly unapologetic about the relationship between the Priesthood and territorial

⁷²Statement, 2 September 1884, Box 1, Folder 1, ACCN 1507, William S. Godbe Papers 1884, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library, pgs. 2-3.

⁷³Ibid, 18.

⁷⁴One Year in Utah or the Secrets of Mormonism: A True and Honest Account, 187, Box 1, Folder 1, ACCN 398, Julie Ingeroed Autobiography, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library, 35.

government, admitting that he would make his Governor submit to the Priesthood.⁷⁵ While Young denied being a dictator of any sort, as discussed earlier, his role as both Governor and Church President contradicted this claim. His sole authority, backed by the decisions of the Council of Fifty, disallowed dissenting voices to have political authority in the territory. In Mormon politics, “dissent led to breakdown; peace and harmony was the only stable state.”⁷⁶ When those who left the church wrote and publicized their accounts, it confirmed to the American public that Young really was a dictator and could not be trusted in positions of political power.

As Young approached the end of his term as Governor in 1854, tensions between Mormons and the government continued to build, resulting in changes of political policy towards Utah. President Franklin Pierce, already a skeptic of Mormon political power, did not officially reappoint Brigham Young as territorial governor, instead opting to find a replacement. He initially offered the position to Edward Steptoe, who declined.⁷⁷ Finding a non-Mormon to replace Young was difficult to find. Non-Mormon officials previously appointed to the duty rarely lasted, and most politicians were aware of the growing trouble in the West. The current non-Mormons serving in Utah, like Chief Justice Kinney, had complained to the President about the authority of the priesthood. Kinney also left his position later in 1856, fed up with the nearly constant conflict between Young and himself.⁷⁸ Though Pierce failed to find a new governor, he did appoint several non-Mormon Eastern judges to serve with him and keep an eye on his

⁷⁵Turner, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 23.

⁷⁶Bushman, “Joseph Smith’s Presidential Ambitions,” 10.

⁷⁷Turner, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 23.

⁷⁸Turner, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 25.

activities.⁷⁹ Young simply continued acting as governor, using the absence of a replacement as an excuse to continue in his role.⁸⁰

In 1854, Young began implementing legislation that impeded correct federal court proceedings. He decreed that all laws had to be approved by the governor and the legislative assembly before becoming law.⁸¹ In addition, through the Legislative Assembly, Young oversaw the creation of “probate courts on the county level whose judges were appointed by the governor and themselves” in an attempt to ensure Priesthood supremacy even with the non-Mormon appointees.⁸² Only Mormons were allowed to legally own property, and a new alphabet created by Mormons was instituted in local schools in an attempt to keep outsiders from discovering Mormon preaching.⁸³ Each settlement with the Utah territory was required to send males between 18 and 45 to train in their military branch, the Nauvoo Legion, which had 7,500 able-bodied men by 1857.⁸⁴ The non-Mormon justices were concerned by what they observed, reporting back to Buchanan that “Young...ran the church and the territory like a single entity, ruling as a benevolent despot” while government meetings “consisted of preaching and calls for repentance.”⁸⁵ To America, it seemed as if the Mormons were not only acting outside of their legal authority, but that they were forming their own nation. The establishment of a military legion seemed to confirm suspicions that the Mormons were preparing to go to war and take over America. This tyranny in the West was escalating to a practical threat.

⁷⁹Richard Bushman, *Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 53.

⁸⁰Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 148.

⁸¹Ibid, 50.

⁸²Ibid, 51.

⁸³Ibid, 54, 56.

⁸⁴Ibid, 53.

⁸⁵Bushman, *Building the Kingdom*, 53.

In 1855, Utah legislators decided to petition for statehood once again. Instead of waiting for Congress to give them permission, they authorized a second constitutional convention in 1856.⁸⁶ The bid looked almost identical to the one before, and once again, Young hoped that receiving statehood would enable him to exercise more political autonomy over the Saints and those living in the Utah territory. This was just a step towards total independence as Deseret. When the convention unanimously voted on the constitution, Young sent it to their Mormon lobbyist in Washington, John Bernhisel, with instructions to present it as soon as possible to Congress. The President had just appointed Garland Hurt as Indian Agent of the West, displacing Young from that position in an effort to stop Young's power from growing. Young had been appointed to this agency when he was made Governor in 1850 but fearing that Young had too much authority, the President gave a non-Mormon the seat upon the end of the term. Young, fully aware of the political forces working against him, felt that statehood was the necessary step to gain more political power over his people. Bernhisel, warning Young that political action towards statehood would reflect poorly on the Mormons, informed Young that he would not be presenting a bid for statehood, as he feared it would worsen the standing of the Mormon people with the federal government.⁸⁷ He also knew that it was unlikely that Congress would grant this request anyway.⁸⁸ Bernhisel understood the growing public opinion that the Mormons were threats to the American Republic. The political struggles of the Mormons in Washington drew attention to the divide between

⁸⁶Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, pg. 101.

⁸⁷Ibid, 102.

⁸⁸Ibid.

the Mormons' understandings of virtue and republicanism and the American public's.

Bernhisel wrote to Young from Washington:

There seems to be a determination in both houses of Congress, and throughout the length and breadth of the land, never to admit Utah into the Union with her "peculiar institution," and I regret to say that within the last few months prejudice against us as a people has greatly increased, not only at the seat of the Central Government, but throughout this extended Republic. The "peculiar institution" is looked upon with a holy horror.⁸⁹

⁸⁹John Bernhisel to Brigham Young, 17 March 1857, Reel 7, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

SECTION FOUR: A PHYSICAL CLASH—THE UTAH WAR OF 1857

Shortly after this, more federal appointees fled the area, convinced that non-Mormon leadership could not co-exist peacefully with the Mormon Priesthood. Justice Drummond and Kinney fled the Utah territory after being stripped of their authority, reporting back to Buchanan all they had seen and experienced. Another federal appointee, C.G. Landon, was attacked in his hotel room, narrowly escaping murder by the Mormons. He spread his terrifying account across the country, warning that the Mormons were dangerous and actively seeking to kill those who challenged their agenda.⁹⁰ Bernhisel warned Young again, “Should a collision take place between the good people of Utah, and the detachment sent therein, the news of such an event would produce the most intense excitement throughout this vast confederacy and the tide of the public sentiment would set against us with tremendous force.”⁹¹

President Buchanan, hearing the news from C.G. Landon, decided it was finally time to take action against the tyranny in the west. He sent General William Harney to Utah with twenty-five hundred troops with the aim of restoring a secular, law-abiding government.⁹² The President did, however, warn Harney not to attack unless it was self defense.⁹³ He informed Young that his time as governor was over and that his last three years as governor had been illegitimate since he had not been reappointed in 1854. Like Pierce, Buchanan also struggled to find a willing replacement for Young, but at last, Alfred Cumming agreed to the job.⁹⁴ When Young heard the news about his replacement

⁹⁰Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 134, 136

⁹¹John Bernhisel to Brigham Young, 2 November 1857, Reel 7, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

⁹²Bushman, *Building the Kingdom*, 55.

⁹³Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 141.

⁹⁴*Ibid*, 146.

and the military forces on their way to Utah, he told the Saints to prepare for war.

Governor Cumming, in an attempt to separate truth from fiction, questioned Young regarding the turnover of federal appointees in Utah. When questioned by federal authorities, Young responded:

These and other facts which have come within your observation, together with the well-known important position I am understood to occupy with the citizens of this Territory, compel me...to frankly inform your Excellency that I cannot be responsible for the safety of certain Government appointees, such as Dr. Garland Hurt, H.F. Morrell, C.L. Craig, and, perhaps, others which your better judgement will probably dictate, should they venture to come into our settlements, where the history of their strenuous efforts and desires to bring on a collision between the us and the Federal Government is understood. Governor Cumming will observe that I do not discuss or entertain the question of the amount of danger these parties would incur in the Valley; but whether I as an individual will assume the responsibility of encouraging them to expose themselves at this time.⁹⁵

The troops set out in July; this was late in the season to be travelling west, so the army sent Captain Van Vliet to scout camping spots and talk to Young about possible negotiations.⁹⁶ Upon arrival, Young told Capt. Van Vliet that the U.S. army would not be allowed to enter Salt Lake City, and there would be no negotiations.⁹⁷ Van Vliet left the city on September 15, 1857, and Young issued a proclamation to his followers that they were now under martial law.⁹⁸ When Capt. Van Vliet arrived back in Washington, he “had an interview with the President, and made his report. He informed his Excellency that Gov Young had stated that the United States Troops should not enter Salt Lake Valley, and that he should prevent them from doing so by force of arms.”⁹⁹

⁹⁵Brigham Young to Governor Cumming, 8 May 1858, Reel 4, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

⁹⁶Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 147.

⁹⁷Ibid, 147.

⁹⁸Ibid, 148.

⁹⁹John Bernhisel to Brigham Young, 2 November 1857, Reel 7, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

As federal troops advanced towards Salt Lake City, Young began organizing his Nauvoo Legion. Young commanded his troops not to kill any federal troops if they could avoid it but to sabotage their supplies and livestock in any way possible.¹⁰⁰ The Legion used every tactic other than direct combat to weaken the U.S. forces making their way towards Salt Lake Valley, including guerilla tactics, burning land, and capturing animals from the troops' herds. Young showed no fear, believing that "...this thing will be just as the Lord wants if It we wants them to come & get killed it will be so if he wants them to go north south or east he will have it just as He wants and this I am thankful for and I feel perfectly easy about it all. You will find that when the Lord sees that we are willing to fight & get just ready to shoot that He will fight our battles."¹⁰¹ Believing that God would indeed deliver them, Young made no effort to compromise with Buchanan. The Kingdom of God would be sovereign, and the actions of the federal government could not stop it. Young's belief that he was doing will along with his definition of "true" Americanism were resolute in his mind. Compromise was not an option. In the case that the Saints were forced to burn Salt Lake to the ground, Young planned a new establishment on the Blackfoot River that would replace Salt Lake Valley as the stronghold of the Saints.¹⁰²

As federal troops neared the valley, Young wrote to E.B. Alexander, Commander of the 10th Infantry of the U.S. Army:

As you officially allege it, I acknowledge that you and the forces under your command have been sent to this Territory by the President of the United States, but we shall treat you as though you were open enemies, because I have so many times seen armies in our country, under color of law, drive this people, commonly styled "Mormons," from their homes; while mobs have followed and plundered at

¹⁰⁰Bushman, *Building the Kingdom*, 55.

¹⁰¹Wilford Woodruff Journal, 28 October 1857, Box 1, Folder 1, Volume 2, MS 373, Wilford Woodruff Papers 1807-1898, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library. Note: alterations of punctuation and spelling have not been altered in any way.

¹⁰²Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 151.

their pleasure which is now most obvious by the design of the General Government, as all candid thinking men know full well.¹⁰³

While Young truly believed in his mission to establish Zion, his distrust of government also contributed to his lack of compromise. Still embittered by the lack of support the Mormons received in Illinois and Missouri, Young refused to cooperate with a government that was illegitimate in his eyes. His aim, as discussed earlier, was to fix this issue by establishing a new government, and to him, the U.S. government and its army would not be able to stand against the Kingdom of God. In fact, in the first few months of the conflict it looked like Young was right. The Nauvoo Legion had successfully held off the U.S. army for several months, and as winter quickly approached, a new commander replaced General Harney in an effort to reorganize the U.S. troops.¹⁰⁴ However, the U.S. Government was not going to compromise either. The Mormon people had now made themselves a serious threat to American virtue and identity. Their refusal to compromise meant that the Government needed to take decisive action to protect their Republic. Again, these conflicting interpretations of the “true” American identity kept the two opposing parties engaged in war, both refusing to compromise on their ideals.

At the same time the U.S. was reorganizing, another event, soon to become infamous in the history of the Mormons, was unfolding on the plains. In September of 1857, a Mormon battalion and their Indian allies murdered a group of pioneers leaving Arkansas in search of California. The Meadow Mountains Massacre saw few survivors—only children under six were spared. The rest, including men, women, and children over

¹⁰³Brigham Young to E.B. Alexander, 16 October 1857, Reel 5, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

¹⁰⁴Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 153.

six, were killed.¹⁰⁵ Humiliated by the ordeal, Young attempted to hide the news from his followers in Salt Lake Valley but word eventually got out. Young simply responded by saying that the only reason it was a tragedy was because women and children were killed.¹⁰⁶ While this event did not directly impact the war, it signaled to Young that he had other issues than the Utah War to deal with. With battalions of men spread over the territory, Young might have begun to feel the weight of the battle creeping in. As winter passed, the U.S. troops were desperately low on supplies. General Johnston received word that they would receive reinforcements in the spring which would bolster the army's numbers to 5,600.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Young received even more devastating news: the settlement on Blackfoot River had been attacked and raided by Indians.¹⁰⁸ Fort Limhi, Young's back-up plan for relocation if the Saints were forced to abandon Salt Lake Valley, was now destroyed. Without the Fort's security, Young had nowhere to move his followers as the U.S. army advanced. Deciding it would be best to make a gesture of peace, he offered General Johnston supplies to last the U.S. troops through winter. Though Johnston was offended by the offer, the new Governor Cumming quickly accepted.¹⁰⁹

When President Buchanan received the news, he sent Ben McCulloch and Lazarus Powell to negotiate peace with Young.¹¹⁰ Buchanan's wish was to end the war quickly, not wanting to shed any blood over the conflict as the looming Civil War drew closer. Full pardon of the Utah territory's leadership was offered in exchange for total

¹⁰⁵Ibid, 174.

¹⁰⁶Ibid, 176.

¹⁰⁷Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 183.

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 186-187.

¹⁰⁹Ibid, 187.

¹¹⁰Ibid, 188.

surrender. The new governor would peacefully assume his position and conduct a thorough investigation of the actions of Young's government in exchange for the removal of federal troops.¹¹¹ Young accepted the deal, realizing that protecting his people was more important than the immediate sovereignty of the Kingdom of God. So, God did not deliver the Saints as Young had anticipated. What did this mean for Zion? Young's beliefs were not shaken by the compromise; the Kingdom of God would still be established, but the immediate needs of the Saints had delayed the implementation of his vision. This became a critical point in the history of the Mormon church: here we see the first hints of political influence in the decisions of church leadership. This trend would continue over the next several decades.

Though no bullets were fired in the Utah War of 1857, this event signaled a growing, deepening divide between federal authorities and Mormon leadership. The suspicion and fear of the American people had manifested itself into a physical confrontation with the religious group. This skepticism and fear penetrated even into the highest office of government, the presidency, showing the magnitude of concern the American people possessed over Mormon practices and power. These people were threats to America – they flouted American principles, and they were willing to war with federal troops to uphold their ways. Concern also spread surrounding a possible Mormon takeover of government, a way for Mormons to force their beliefs and practices on the American public. The Utah War, then, began a battle with Mormonism that lasted until 1896; this political power struggle revealed that only certain religious ideology would be accepted and legitimated in America. The American people would not accept

¹¹¹Bushman, *Building the Kingdom*, 55.

Mormonism as a true religious group until it assimilated with American culture, values, and political and economic systems. No longer would the public merely stand by in horror of Mormon practices, but the federal government was ready to act on these fears; authorities were ready to either expel these outsiders or conform them to American culture. Mormons wouldn't comply without a fight. To the Saints, they were answering to a higher calling, one which they believed was backed by a God who would not let them be defeated by the mere forces of man.

SECTION FIVE: A SECOND CONFLICT—POLYGAMY AND THE LAW

As tensions between the American people and Mormons rose, another tenet of Mormon doctrine only furthered the divide between the two opposing parties—polygamy. In 1843, Joseph Smith began sharing his vision of plural marriage with other Mormon leaders. He referred to it as a return to the practice of the Old Testament patriarchs. As discussed at the beginning of this paper, polygamy directly contradicted the one man-one woman norm of 19th century America. In 1852, Brigham Young announced to his followers that the rumors were true—polygamy, or “celestial marriage,” was officially a new tenet of Mormon faith.¹¹² Though he claimed it had been instituted long ago, he had waited to officially announce it because the time had not been right. He told his followers, “...we believed in having many wives...the revelation was received by Joseph Smith and written a year before his death.”¹¹³ Celestial marriage, or the practice of polygamy, was required of all men in leadership who wanted to attain the highest level of Heaven upon death.¹¹⁴ This confirmation from Young set the foundation for the church’s practice of polygamy for the next forty years. However, this was appalling to non-Mormons. America was not “barbaric” like uncivilized societies where polygamy was practiced, and there wasn’t a shortage of men to marry and take care of women.¹¹⁵ Americans believed that polygamy was a corruption of the family unit, and therefore threatening to the central base of the American Republic.

¹¹²Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 61.

¹¹³Young, “Trials and Persecution,” in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 536.

¹¹⁴Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 61.

¹¹⁵Again, this word choice does not reflect personal judgements by the author but rather employs language used to describe polygamy in the nineteenth century.

Several American newspapers during this time express this fear and disgust – an attitude that was widespread and was voiced by high profile politicians and legislators. *The Independent*, a New York newspaper, called polygamy a “relic of barbarism” and “a practice barely tolerated even in half civilized countries.”¹¹⁶ A Louisville newspaper urged President Arthur to deal harshly with the Mormons and their “virtually legalized prostitution on a large scale which now flourishes defiantly in Utah.”¹¹⁷ Another newspaper spoke of Mormonism as “a festering sore, a corrupting disease, and that we have allowed it to gather force...this Mormon temple of devilment, and forever after close the public ear, the youthful ear and heart of the rising age...from the abominable orgies that have spread over the land from terrible and detestable Utah.”¹¹⁸ The article later went on to say:

...and pray we do, to our beautiful countrywomen—the intelligent and pure women of America, whose cause is most at stake in this abuse—to come forward, and by an expression of their united detestation and reproach, call upon the Administration to expunge from the bosom of our land, the incubus that thus pollutes it—the Mormon licentiousness, that degrades the character of woman, brutalizes that of man, and ignores the existence of God.¹¹⁹

These are all perfect examples of the nineteenth century American norm, as discussed earlier, because they display the relationship between the virtue of the family and the virtue of the nation. Allowing Mormonism to flourish would mean jeopardizing the foundation that America was established on: virtue and republicanism. The American

¹¹⁶“The War on Mormon Polygamy,” *The Independent*, New York City, Aug 6, 1885, accessed through BYU Archives, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/8683>.

¹¹⁷“The Mormon Abomination,” *The Louisville Commercial*, Sept 29, 1881, accessed through BYU Archives, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/10673>.

¹¹⁸“A Woman’s Question—The Mormon Monstrosity,” *Porter’s Spirit of the Times*, New York City, April 25, 1857, accessed through BYU Archives, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/11902>.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

public genuinely feared the implications of allowing Mormonism to remain within the nation's borders. If it was to stay in America, it would have to embrace the ideals that formed the nation. If Mormonism continued to challenge these norms, it would have to be eliminated.

After a bloodless but incredibly tense Utah War ended, Lincoln had other issues on his mind. With the Civil War looming and taking up most of his attention, he simply chose not to bother with the Mormons in the west. He famously compared them to a log “too hard to split, too wet to burn, and too heavy to move, so we plowed around it.”¹²⁰ Seeing no easy solution to dealing with Brigham Young and his polygamist followers, Lincoln simply left them alone. Other members of the government weren't as passive. In 1862, Republican Congressman Justin Morrill headed efforts to pass an anti-polygamy bill; this act, known as the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act, paved the way for a thirty-year legal battle with Mormonism. The Morrill Act had actually been introduced to Congress in 1857, but Congress was wary of supporting the bill because of its implications in regard to states' rights.¹²¹ The Mormons themselves were aware of anti-polygamy legislation since July of 1856; John Bernhisel wrote to Brigham Young, telling him:

On the 26th of June the House Committee on Territories reported a bill ‘to punish and prevent polygamy in the Territories of the United States,’ a copy of which I transmit you herewith. I opposed the bill before the Committee and endeavored to prevent its being reported, but I soon discovered that nothing would avail and that it was a foregone conclusion. The probability is that it will pass the House but I think it cannot pass the Senate.¹²²

¹²⁰Jamie Lawson, “Lincoln and the LDS Church,” *LDS Living*, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.ldsliving.com/Lincoln-and-the-LDS-Church/s/74283>.

¹²¹Turner, “Unpopular Sovereignty,” 24.

¹²²John Bernhisel to Brigham Young, 17 July 1856, Reel 7, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

Bernhisel's prediction proved true. The legislation could not pass in 1856 because of its ramifications on slavery. By supporting an anti-polygamy bill, politicians were essentially supporting the federal government's authority to trump state rights. If they voted for this bill, they would create a conflict of interest – no longer could Southern states use the argument of territorial sovereignty to continue legalizing slavery. By 1862, the Civil War had begun, and no longer did Congressmen of the Union forces have to seriously consider taking a stance on states' rights or slavery. Once passed, the act made bigamy, defined as “unlawful marriage or multiple marriage at the same time,” illegal, as well as limited LDS Church ownership of property to \$50,000.¹²³ This legislation was incredibly significant: because polygamy had not been illegal until this point, the passing of this law signified that Americans and their government were taking steps to stop Mormons from “corrupting” the American Republic. Federal officials were not going to sit passively and watch as the Mormons defied cultural norms; the Mormons had to be conformed to the “true” American identity. This was also the first time that the standard of monogamy was explicitly put into law—revealing the influence of Protestant values on marriage. Unfortunately for lawmakers, however, Lincoln's passivity towards the Mormon problem prevented the legislation from having any real power. While he signed the act into law, he did not provide funds or officers to enforce it. Thus, the significance of this legislation lay mostly in the fact that the federal government was now taking direct aim at Mormon doctrine and practice, rather than the lack of successful convictions that resulted from it. Another downfall of the legislation was its three-year statute of limitation. If a marriage was contracted three years before prosecution, then the case

¹²³“Morrill Anti Bigamy Act,” *US Legal*, accessed March 22, 2017, <https://definitions.uslegal.com/m/morrill-anti-bigamy-act/>.

could not be tried. Aware of this limitation, Mormons would evade this law by going on three-year missions or hiding out for the first three years of their marriage to multiple individuals.¹²⁴

When Judge McKean was appointed governor to the territory of Utah in 1870 by President Grant, prosecutions intensified. The first case the non-Mormon judge would hear did not involve polygamy, but rather Brigham Young's vision of Theodemocracy in the west. As discussed earlier, in an attempt to remove secular influences from their area, Salt Lake City had imposed a tax on alcohol in an effort to discourage merchants from selling it. Without paying the tax on alcohol, a business would be unable to obtain a license to sell it. So, when non-Mormon Paul Englebrecht and his associates stocked \$20,000 worth of alcohol without paying the tax and thus not obtaining a license, the police decided to enter the shop and destroy the entire stock. The police department felt completely justified in doing so, since the merchants did not have a license; however, Englebrecht was incensed that it was not merely confiscated but destroyed. Englebrecht sued the police department for damages. McKean controversially selected a non-Mormon jury who consequently ruled that the city police owed Englebrecht damages of \$59,063.25.¹²⁵ The city police then filed for a series of appeals, which each ended with the same verdict until the case finally reached the Supreme Court in 1872. In this case, the Supreme Court overturned the original ruling under the pretense that the jury was selected outside of normal legal proceedings.¹²⁶

¹²⁴Edwin Brown Firmage, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 147-148.

¹²⁵Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 289.

¹²⁶*Ibid*, 294.

Though Mormons rejoiced over the decision, seeing this ruling as a win for their people, the federal government was determined this win would only be temporary. Non-Mormons witnessed the limitations of newly passed legislation and devised ways to overcome these obstacles, determined to defeat them once and for all. This case, though not directly pertaining to polygamy, is important because it challenged Mormon political power. Though polygamy was one practice that Americans detested, Mormon political power was viewed as especially threatening because of its success in resisting the federal government's forces. While the Mormons had political power only in the Utah territory, Americans feared it would make its way to the East as well. The Mormon priesthood was essentially ruling all inhabitants of Utah—allowing Mormon leadership to enforce its “biblical” beliefs onto the general population. These beliefs left little room for religious pluralism, which as discussed earlier drastically contradicted the idea of religious liberty in a country founded on these ideals. In addition to legislating personal piety, Mormon attempts to legislate business practices to discourage what they deemed as “gentile industries” outraged the general public. This was blatant discrimination, and it presented the American population with legitimate grounds to continue raising public alarm over the situation. What would happen if Mormon political power grew? This case heightened fears of a larger Mormon agenda—one that could easily unfold despite federal efforts to defeat it, as witnessed in the Utah War of 1857.

At the same time the Englebrecht case was gaining national attention, the first successful lawsuit against polygamy was taking place in Utah. Under a territorial law prohibiting adultery, a first wife unhappy with her husband's marriage to a second woman charged her husband, Thomas Hawkins, with adultery. The wife testified against

her husband on the charge, and the jury convicted him. On October 28, 1871, Judge McKean sentenced Hawkins to two years in prison and a \$500 fine – making Hawkins, in effect, the first Mormon jailed for polygamy.¹²⁷ This case is significant for several reasons. Most importantly, it was the first successful conviction of polygamy in Utah. This was mostly thanks to the testimony of Hawkins' first wife; however, this conviction signaled that the federal government, who placed Judge McKean in Utah, was serious about subduing Mormon resistance to federal law. In the following years, the federal government's continuance of anti-polygamy legislation sent a clear message to Mormon subscribers: polygamy was a corruption of family virtue and a threat to the American Republic. Second, non-Mormon leaders were finding ways to circumvent Mormon evasion of federal law. A significant fact of this case lies in its conviction under a territorial ordinance. The conviction did not result from a federal law; rather, Judge McKean used a local statute against adultery prosecute and convict Hawkins. This brought attention to another issue – if polygamy was considered adultery by non-Mormons, what was the Mormon definition of adultery? To the rest of America, plural marriage was adultery because any kind of sexual union outside monogamous marriage was considered cheating on a spouse. To the Mormons, adultery meant sex with anyone outside of marital partners, monogamous or not. As long as you were married to them, you could have sex with multiple individuals. This again raised attention to the growing divide between what the broader American public and the Mormons considered “virtuous.” This contrasting view of the American identity continued to create conflict, and neither side was willing to budge.

¹²⁷Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 291.

Amidst the Englebrecht and Hawkins cases, Utah legislators again decided to petition for statehood in 1872.¹²⁸ This was not the first time the territory sought statehood, as examined earlier. However, the bids were all denied based on the premise of their non-conformity to American standards. Mormons were again trying to gain political sovereignty over themselves, confidently including in their bid the description of territorial government that would be implemented: “colonial” and “anti-republican.”¹²⁹ Mormon leaders also had a name for their territory – Deseret, a religious term found in the Book of Mormon meant to properly convey the theocracy Mormons envisioned. Though Deseret had been replaced with the name “Utah” in the Compromise of 1850, Mormons were not giving up on their original plans. The name Deseret, though not important in and of itself, represented to the Saints their unwavering devotion to the Kingdom of God. The belief that Congress would allow them territorial sovereignty was mistaken. Non-Mormons of the territory put forth their own petition, opposing the bid, telling Congress that Mormon theodemocracy was “antagonistic to the fundamental ideas of free government.”¹³⁰ Not surprisingly, the bid was rejected, and federal authority began looking for ways to enforce Mormon cooperation with American law.

The American people, initially appalled at the practice of polygamy, grew increasingly agitated that plans of Mormon theocracy were so boldly advocated by LDS authority. This confirmed that enemies of American democracy existed within American borders. President Grant, an avid foe of Mormon evasion of federal law, urged Congress to pass legislation prohibiting territorial government from selecting jurors in an attempt to

¹²⁸Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 292.

¹²⁹Ibid, 293.

¹³⁰Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 293.

overcome the issues presented in the Englebrecht ruling.¹³¹ In 1874, Grant got his wish with the passage of the Poland Act. The Poland Act changed the procedures of jury selection, giving the federal government and its appointees the power to select juries while revoking territorial control over the judicial process. This effectively overturned the Supreme Court ruling in the Englebrecht case, revoking the temporary Mormon victory of 1871. Non-Mormons rejoiced. While this act addressed the territorial court system, it could not solve the issue of Mormon leadership in political positions because that required a substantial population of Liberal Party members in Utah – a quite unlikely feat. However, now that Mormons could not stack a Mormon jury in cases involving a conflict of federal law and Mormon teaching, prosecution of polygamists would begin to increase. Unfortunately, while passage of the Poland Act signaled a step in controlling Mormon authority, the act did not address an increasing issue in convicting polygamists – evidence. Since practically no documentation of marriage existed at this point in the western provinces, witness testimony was essential in getting a conviction.¹³² In the two most prominent cases, the Hawkins lawsuit and *United States v. Miles*, testimony from one or more of the plural wives was necessary in proving that their husbands were involved in polygamous marriage. But under Utah territorial law, it was illegal for wives to testify against their husbands in a court of law.¹³³ So, the only way for a wife's testimony to be used in the case would be to prove that she was not his legal wife because of his marriage to other women. This logic was used to convict Hawkins in 1871, though it caused significant confusion in prosecuting polygamists. This led to the Supreme

¹³¹Firmage, *Zion in the Courts*, 147-148.

¹³²*Ibid*, 149.

¹³³Firmage, *Zion in the Courts*, 149.

Court's intervention, once again, to say that a person may be convicted on circumstantial evidence rather than witness testimony.¹³⁴ Federal officials were finding new ways to convict polygamists, learning from the obstacles they had been encountering in previous legislation. The issue of polygamy was making its way even to the Supreme Court—showing the importance of the issue to Americans and their politicians.

The Poland Act would shortly be put to the test in one of the most controversial cases involving polygamy, *Reynolds v. United States*. In 1874, Reynolds was convicted of polygamy by witness testimony.¹³⁵ However, he claimed that the jury was not selected properly, stating that the jury consisted of twenty three members instead of the usual fifteen. The Utah Supreme Court upheld this claim, and the decision was overturned. Shortly after this, he was re-indicted in 1875 since his polygamy was now officially recorded through court documentation. This time he was convicted under a lawful jury, consisting of half Mormon and half non-Mormon jurors.¹³⁶ He appealed to the Utah supreme court again but they upheld the conviction. He then appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States, claiming that under the First Amendment he was guaranteed the right to practice his religion. The Supreme Court, in a landmark ruling, affirmed that claims of religious duty do not excuse the infraction of federal criminal law.¹³⁷ This ruling sent a clear message to Mormons from the Federal Government: polygamy is illegal, and the Federal Government will enforce this law no matter your religious beliefs. The logic behind the ruling contended that even though the Mormons were technically free to believe in whatever they wished, there was often little distinction between belief

¹³⁴Ibid, 150.

¹³⁵Ibid, 152.

¹³⁶Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 304.

¹³⁷Firmage, *Zion in the Courts*, 154.

and practice. Therefore, believing in polygamy often led to the practice of polygamy. Since the practice of polygamy was illegal, polygamy should not be preached as a tenet of Mormon religion. The federal government was now taking aim at not only Mormon theocracy but specifically, polygamy. Polygamy threatened the American “virtue,” and had to be eliminated to avoid the corruption of the American identity.

The federal government intensified the game. In 1882, the Edmunds Act took square aim at Mormon political power while also taking measures to secure more polygamy convictions. The Act defined polygamy as cohabitation or marriage to more than one wife. Cohabitation now opened the door to a much greater number of indictments, since marriage was difficult to prove. In addition, potential jurors who were polygamists were not allowed to be on the jury. Polygamists were also banned from voting or holding any kind of political office. The Act also established a Utah Commission, in charge of overseeing elections in Utah to account for fair, secret ballots in an attempt to weaken Mormon control of territorial offices. Controversy surrounding election legitimacy had been swirling since the 1850s when non-Mormons were upset that their votes were essentially useless against the Mormon majority.

Right as the Edmunds Act went into effect, the Utah legislature decided to put in another bid for statehood. This 1882 bid removed the name “Deseret” and replaced it with “Utah” in order to remove the religious connotations Deseret carried. It also replaced the “colonial” form of government with a more republican form, aligning its governing ideology more with American ideals of separation of church and state.¹³⁸ Here we see the church moving farther away from the theocratic form of government that

¹³⁸Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 319.

Brigham Young envisioned. Realizing that a theocratic Mormon state could not peacefully coexist with American government, the Mormons began making concessions on things that were considered non-negotiable by Young. The bid also made no mention of polygamy. These attempts to appease federal government standards can clearly be connected with the increasing legislation aimed directly at Mormon practices. This is in striking contrast to only ten years earlier, when the Mormons did not feel threatened by their disobedience to federal law and in fact confidently stated their opposition to a secular form of government. In 1872 they declared their firm stance on polygamy, whereas the 1882 bid simply failed to mention it. Even though their views on polygamy remained unchanged, they realized the political implications it brought with it – a rejection of statehood. This statehood was vital to the Mormon church because of two things: it signaled acceptance by the American public, and the Mormon priesthood believed this would quell federal prosecutions. Second, it would grant territorial government a certain amount of sovereignty from the federal government. However, federal authorities had no intention of giving any power to Mormon officials. Even without a declaration supporting polygamy, the bid promptly died in Congress, where it failed to even make an appearance on the agenda.¹³⁹

Even as prosecution of polygamy dramatically increased after the passage of the Edmunds Act, Mormons still held fast to polygamy. Believing it to be an unwavering tenet of their religion, Mormons continued to contract secret marriages, and when brought to trial, many wives refused to testify against their husbands.¹⁴⁰ In addition to refusing cooperation, believers formed an Underground in an effort to decentralize

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 323.

church organization and to play “a grim game of hide and seek” with authorities.¹⁴¹ The church president at the time, John Taylor, steadfastly preached to his congregation that God “revealed unto us certain principles pertaining to the perpetuity of man and of woman. He has told us to obey these laws.”¹⁴² If the church was unwavering on polygamy, so too was the federal government. Interestingly, a New York newspaper even predicted that Mormons would “find it convenient to obtain a new revelation from Heaven, informing them that celestial marriages are not absolutely essential to salvation, and under the current circumstances, had better be discontinued.”¹⁴³ In only eight short years, the church would renounce its most sacred practice.

In 1887, federal legislators stood poised to defeat Mormon polygamy. With the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, plural wives could no longer choose not to testify against their husbands. It removed the right to vote from women in Utah, required that all marriages be documented and registered with the government, gave U.S. marshals the right to enforce all federal and territorial law, labeled marriage to cousins as “incest,” and most importantly, it disenfranchised the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁴⁴ In the wake of this new law, Utah once again put up a bid for statehood. This time, in addition to disavowing any marriage of church and state, it also acknowledged that polygamy contradicted with republican values and therefore banned it. At this point in Utah’s political makeup, members of its Liberal Party were in office, so it is not quite as surprising that they concede on polygamy in this bid.¹⁴⁵ However, one must still pause to

¹⁴¹Ibid, 328.

¹⁴²John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, 26:152, Feb 1, 1885.

¹⁴³“The War on Mormon Polygamy,” *The Independent*, New York City, Aug 6, 1885, accessed through BYU Archives, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/8683>.

¹⁴⁴Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 335.

¹⁴⁵Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 336.

examine this measure. At this point, theocracy was losing prevalence as an integral part of Mormon theology. Having already made concessions on this idea earlier, it makes sense that the logical political step in gaining approval from the federal government would be to subscribe to the same form of Protestant republicanism. However, the fact that Utah gave up the ideal that was so critical to Brigham Young's leadership is significant. It shows the shift of Mormonism from a fundamental, isolated "Zion" to a more socially acceptable form of private religious subscription. However, the bid was vetoed by Congress under the presumption that merely stating opposition to polygamy in no way translated to its abandonment by Mormon leaders and followers.¹⁴⁶

The final blow came to polygamy when the United States sued the LDS Church in 1890 for its violation of the Edmunds-Tucker Act. It upheld the Reynolds ruling, stating that religious belief cannot excuse any person from violating federal law. The most important ruling that the court made was its decision to disincorporate the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The court argued that the church was incorporated in violation of the laws of the country because it was founded on principles that broke federal law; therefore, the church could not legally be recognized as a religious body and could not legally own property.¹⁴⁷ This defeat signaled the end of a legal battle with polygamy. The United States had now proved to the Mormon Church that its authority was supreme, and the country would end the rights of the church if it continued in direct opposition to its laws – Mormons would have to embrace the ideals of virtue that shaped the Protestant American identity if the Church wanted to survive there.

¹⁴⁶Ibid, 338.

¹⁴⁷"Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints v. United States 136 U.S. 1 (1890)," *JUSTIA: U.S. Supreme Court*, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/136/1/>.

SECTION SIX: THE END OF AN ERA—THE MANIFESTO OF 1890

Shortly after the decision in *Latter-day Saints v. United States* and under intense political pressure from President Harrison, LDS President Wilford Woodruff made an official church proclamation.¹⁴⁸ This declaration, named the “Manifesto of 1890,” officially ended the doctrine of polygamy in the Mormon Church. It was astonishing for several reasons. First, the document is void of any sort of religious language. The announcement made no reference to any divine reasons behind this shift in ideology, and there was no mention of God, Joseph Smith, or the passages in *Doctrine and Covenants* which it rejected. He even plainly stated in the opening sentence that “press dispatches having been sent for political purposes, from Salt Lake City, which have been widely published...” thereby acknowledging the political forces surrounding this declaration.¹⁴⁹ Secondly, he not only failed to make any reference to religious revelation, but Woodruff also blatantly lied about several things in the manifesto. In response to the allegations that the church had been contracting plural marriages, he stated, “I...do hereby, in the most solemn manner, declare that these charges are false.”¹⁵⁰ When he denied that plural marriages were taking place, he put himself in a precarious situation because plural marriages were, in fact, being contracted in the years leading up to 1890 and in 1890 itself. Until 1887, official documentation of marriage was not required by law.¹⁵¹ Mormons who did document their marriage did so through the Endowment House or Temple ceremonies; these documents still remain

¹⁴⁸See Appendix A

¹⁴⁹Wilford Woodruff, “Official Declaration 1” in *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991), 291-292.

¹⁵⁰Woodruff, *Official Declaration 1*.

¹⁵¹Firmage, *Zion in the Courts*, 149.

secret and unavailable to non-Mormons. However, we can confidently assume that they were taking place by looking at legal convictions of cohabitation, church records, and church leadership's teachings and writings. Even well-respected Mormon historians, like Richard Bushman, acknowledge plural marriages were occurring during this time.¹⁵²

In another clear contradiction of truth, Woodruff also denied that the Church taught polygamy, stating, "There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy...."¹⁵³ However, just a few pages before Official Declaration 1 appears in Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith instructs Mormons otherwise when he says in Section 132: 61-66,

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood, if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the 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 that that belongeth unto him and no one else.¹⁵⁴

In addition to this command from the religion's founder, only one year earlier in 1889, Woodruff had gone to the Lord in petition asking whether or not to continue the practice of polygamy. God's response to him followed: "I cannot deny my word."¹⁵⁵ This sealed the teaching of polygamy in Mormon doctrine.

Thirdly, Woodruff did not declare that polygamy was against God's will but rather acknowledged that "inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriage...I declare my intention to submit to those laws." Here we see Woodruff

¹⁵²Bushman, *Building the Kingdom*, 70.

¹⁵³Woodruff, *Official Declaration 1*.

¹⁵⁴Joseph Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991), 132:61-62.

¹⁵⁵Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 352.

urging members to abide by federal law for the sake of acceptance by the American government. Federal authorities had made it clear to church leadership that it would not stop until the church renounced polygamy. So, Woodruff recognized the importance and necessity of abandoning its practice so that the church could not only stay in the west but also be accepted by the American people as a legitimate religious group. Yet only a few years earlier, when asked if there would be a compromise in the practice of polygamy, former LDS President John Taylor responded, "...we cannot barter away, or compromise with men in relation to any principles that God has given us; and while we esteem it good policy, so far as practicable, to meet all reasonable requirements, yet the eternal truths of God, and the laws given us by Him, must not be compromised."¹⁵⁶ The church had already conceded on their "Theodemocracy" over the thirty-year legal battle with federal authorities, and by 1882 they had completely abandoned the idea of a theocratic and socialist state, as stated in their bid for statehood. Yet monogamy was one last principle that the church had not adhered to, until now. It didn't seem as if God had changed his mind concerning polygamy, but LDS leadership was considering the immeasurable fallout of not giving it up. After the Church was disincorporated, Woodruff knew he had to act to save the future of the LDS Church in America. This shift overcame the last major barrier between the Mormons and the American people. The leaders' embrace of monogamy signaled that the church was ready to fully embrace American norms, even if it was reluctantly.

¹⁵⁶John Taylor to George Cannon, 18 January 1879, Box 2A, Folder 18, MS 50, John Taylor papers 1844-1994, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

A fourth note of interest resides in the Mormon response to the declaration – one of confusion and sadness. Bushman, a notable Mormon historian, addresses this issue, noting that followers were shocked at the announcement, while some refused to believe it and broke away to form the fundamentalist sect.¹⁵⁷ While many were upset by the decision and continued practicing polygamy until 1896 when a second manifesto was published, the majority of Mormons took the declaration at face value. They responded with obedience to the Manifesto, and they trusted Woodruff’s decision, as he was a prophet and had access to direct communication with God. The reaction of Mormons is understandable: while the reversal of a tenet of Mormon faith came as a surprise, a believer would be left with two logical options – to believe Woodruff (and the former presidents included) was a liar or to accept that Joseph Smith was a liar. In September of 1886, John Taylor, the then current president of the LDS Church, went to the Lord in petition and returned with this response from God: “I the Lord do not change and my word and my covenants and my law do not...I have not revoked this law *nor will I* for it is everlasting and those who will enter into my glory must obey the conditions thereof.”¹⁵⁸ Woodruff himself went to the Lord in petition regarding polygamy, asking God if they should make concessions on behalf of the legal situation of their state. The Lord’s response was as follows: “Let not my servants who are called to the presidency of my Church deny my word or my law...”¹⁵⁹ If these statements were truly revelations from God, then one must conclude that either God is not unchanging or Taylor and

¹⁵⁷Bushman, *Building the Kingdom*, 79.

¹⁵⁸Fred Collier, *Unpublished Revelations of the Prophets and Presidents of the Church*, “A revelation on Celestial Marriage given through Prophet John Taylor at Centerville, Utah” (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing, 1979).

¹⁵⁹Collier, *Unpublished Revelations*, 146.

Woodruff did not actually receive these visions from the Lord. This is a critical area of theological dilemma. The ramifications of this switch meant a crisis of belief for Mormon followers who subscribed to the doctrine of polygamy.

If confirmation from God did come over the switch, then the Mormons could no longer claim that God was unchanging and constant.¹⁶⁰ This religious and philosophical dilemma can only be reconciled with their faith if they chose the fundamentalist path – rejecting the word of Woodruff and placing God and Joseph Smith as the ultimate authority on truth. Those who did not choose the fundamentalist path, therefore, must either believe that God changed his mind (contradicting basic Mormon teaching) or that Smith made a mistake in propagating the practice of polygamy (another contradiction of Mormon belief). The third option, which is the most likely case, is that political necessity called for the church to conform to American cultural norms in order for the Church to thrive in America. After an almost fifty-year fight against American cultural norms, the LDS Church finally gave in. Even if their understanding of American virtue differed from that of the American public, the Mormons knew that it was unwise to continue to cling to polygamy and theocracy.

Following the announcement of the Manifesto, however, leaders of the Latter-day Saints began claiming divine justification for the reversal in an attempt to rectify the political move with a confirmation from God. In one newspaper circulated shortly after the manifesto was published, an article published an address from President George Cannon.¹⁶¹ Where the manifesto lacked religious language, Cannon's address made up

¹⁶⁰Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 20:17, 88:133, 104:2, 121:46.

¹⁶¹“The People Accept the Manifesto,” *Salt Lake Herald*, October 7, 1890, accessed through BYU, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/RelEd/id/3883>.

for it. The tone of the piece is one of persecution; he laments that “the work of God was being assailed in various directions” and “they had to pass through scenes which had tested their faith, integrity, and fidelity. The elders who had been faithful in preaching the gospel had not neglected to tell the people whom they baptized the character of the difficulties which they would have to encounter when they espoused the will of God.”¹⁶²

In fact, Woodruff himself began using this divine justification just shortly after announcing the Manifesto; later that day he addressed leaders of the church, stating:

...I should have gone to prison myself, and let every other man go there, had not the God of heaven commanded me to do what I did do; and when the hour came that I was commanded to do that, it was all clear to me. I went before the Lord, and I wrote what the Lord told me to write....¹⁶³

One thing is clear from these observations: religious language was absent in the original proclamation but it appears in later documents where the Manifesto is discussed. Of course there could be many reasons for this, but the main point is that there was a shift in Mormon doctrine after the Manifesto of 1890 which then aligned Mormonism with the broader American values that provided the foundation for a virtuous Republic. The switch signaled to the American public that the Mormons were ready to embrace American norms: they were giving up the second main object of dissidence between them and the American people. So, the Federal Government had, in a sense, won the battle. The amount of time it took to achieve this landmark was considerable—showing just how important it was to maintain a certain a definition of a “true” republic, founded on virtue. The Mormons were certainly treated with hostility in the East, but when Brigham Young actively engaged in U.S. politics in an attempt to achieve his vision of Zion, the Mormon

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ “Official Declaration 1,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, accessed April 22, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1>.

threat became a practical reality. Not only did this prompt intense persecution, it set the pattern for future LDS leaders and Presidents—a high level of political involvement which is still true today. In 1896, Utah finally achieved statehood—the ultimate signal that the Mormon Church had at last become American.

CONCLUSION

As the church began the transition to monogamy, it signaled to the nation the end of Mormon opposition to American values and norms. After almost a century of persecution and hardship, the Church realized it would not be allowed to exist if it continued to resist Americanization. It is interesting to note, then, that the modern LDS Church has become the pinnacle of American values. Not only did the church embrace the norms of American society, but as seen with presidential candidate Mitt Romney, they now advocate these values, joining with conservative Protestants in the Religious Right of modern politics. The contemporary branch of Mormonism condemns the fundamentalist sect as antithetical to their values and to American progress—showing how the church has drastically altered from the original visions of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. This is a natural response when a religious group splits: each sect claims legitimacy as the only authentic branch of religion. This raises attention to another issue for the modern LDS Church – what is the true Mormon orthodoxy? Where do the fundamentalists get it wrong? Before 1890, all Mormons were fundamentalists. The theological crisis of polygamy altered the church forever. According to the official LDS website, “The Bible and the Book of Mormon teach that monogamy is God’s standard for marriage *unless He declares otherwise.*”¹⁶⁴ A modern response to a theological crisis, it acknowledges its past yet speaks to its present and future. The Church now embraces the standard of monogamy and often aligns with religious conservatives in politics as well. If asked about marriage and politics, the modern Church would respond with the same

¹⁶⁴“Official Declaration 1,” *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, accessed April 22, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1>.

answers as many conservative, evangelical Protestant denominations. Former enemies now fight for a common cause, one which divided them in the nineteenth century.

Even as the modern branch has emerged and thrived, as Romney's presidential run demonstrates, Americans are still skeptical of Mormons. Many Republicans expressed concern over voting for a Mormon president; Americans are still leery to give Mormons political power, as their religion is sometimes viewed as "strange" and "eccentric," even appearing in satirical popular culture productions like "The Book of Mormon." Perhaps our fascination with Mormonism will never fully vanish, but their integration into American society has been more than successful. This integration did not come naturally, and Mormons fought these efforts from the founding of their religion until the late nineteenth century. Conflicting interpretations of the "true" American identity fueled this fifty-year battle between the Latter-day Saints and the Federal Government. The Mormon example highlighted the paradoxical views of two parties: a nation that preached religious pluralism, yet didn't actually allow it, and a religious group which preached polygamy and theocracy, yet claimed to be patriotic and virtuous citizens. As the two parties continued to clash over the latter nineteenth century, LDS leaders realized the only way to flourish in America was to fully embrace its definition of the American identity, and that's exactly what it did.

REFERENCES

- Bigler, David. *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005.
- Bushman, Richard. *Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Bushman, Richard. "Joseph Smith's Presidential Ambitions" in *Mormonism and American Politics*, edited by Richard Balmer and Jana Riess. New York City: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- Collier, Fred. *Unpublished Revelations of the Prophets and Presidents of the Church*. Salt Lake City: Collier's Publishing, 1979.
- Fea, John. *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.
- Firmage, Edwin Brown. *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001.
- Flake, Kathleen. *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Hartog, Hendrik A. *Marital Exits and Marital Expectations in Nineteenth Century America*. Georgetown University Law. Accessed May 1, 2017.
<http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=hartlecture>.
- Hatch, Nathan. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

- Lawson, Jamie. "Lincoln and the LDS Church." *LDS Living*. Accessed March 23, 2017.
<http://www.ldsiving.com/Lincoln-and-the-LDS-Church/s/74283>.
- Mason, Patrick. "God and the People: Theodemocracy in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism." *Journal of Church and State* 53, no. 3 (2011): 354.
<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/article/53/3/349/1022651>.
- Melville, J. Keith. *Conflict and Compromise: The Mormons in mid nineteenth-century American politics*. Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Printing, 1974.
- Miller, Glenn. "Is Polygamy Allowed by the New Testament?" *Christian Think Tank*. February, 2001. <http://christianthinktank.com/polygame.html>.
- Moore, R. Laurence. *Religious Outsiders and the Making of America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Murrin, John. "Religion and Politics in America from the First Settlements to the Civil War," in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, edited by Mark Noll and Luke Harlow. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Price, Michael. "Why Do We Think Monogamy is Normal?" *Psychology Today*. September 9, 2011. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/darwin-eternity/201109/why-we-think-monogamy-is-normal>.
- Sehat, David. *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Smith, Joseph. *Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991.

Taylor, John. "Journal of Discourses 26:152, February 1, 1885." *Journal of Discourses*.

Accessed March 20, 2017. <http://jod.mrm.org/26/148>.

Turner, John. "Unpopular Sovereignty," in *Mormonism and American Politics*, edited by

Randall Balmer and Jana Reiss. New York City: Columbia University Press,

2015.

Woodruff, Wilford. *Official Declaration 1 in Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991.

Young, Brigham. "Political Government," in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, edited by

John Widstoe. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954).

"Morrill Anti Bigamy Act." *US Legal*. Accessed March 22, 2017.

<https://definitions.uslegal.com/m/morrill-anti-bigamy-act/>.

"Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints v. United States 136

U.S. 1 (1890)." *JUSTIA: U.S. Supreme Court*. Accessed March 1, 2017.

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/136/1/>.

"Official Declaration 1." *LDS Church*. Accessed April 13, 2017. [https://www.lds.org/scr](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1)

[iptures/dc-testament/od/1](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1).

Newspapers:

"The People Accept the Manifesto." *Salt Lake Herald* (Salt Lake City, UT), October 7,

1890. <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/RelEd/id/3883>.

"The War on Mormon Polygamy." *The Independent* (New York City, NY), August 6,

1885. <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/8683>.

"The Mormon Abomination." *The Louisville Commercial* (Louisville, KY), September

29, 1881. <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/10673>.

“A Woman’s Question—The Mormon Monstrosity.” *Porter’s Spirit of the Times* (New York City, New York), April 25, 1857. <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/11902>.

“Errors of the Head and Heart,” *Moore’s Rural New Yorker* (Rochester, New York), July 5, 1856. <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/19CMNI/id/8918/rec/6>.

“The Mormon Polygamy,” *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), November 18, 1854. <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/19CMNI/id/12593>.

University of Utah Special Collections:

Brigham Young to Honorable Garland Hurt, 11 February 1857, Reel 4, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

Brigham Young’s Diary, 24 January 1845, Box 1, Folder 12, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

Brigham Young to E.B. Alexander, 16 October 1857, Reel 5, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

Brigham Young to Governor Cumming, 8 May 1858, Reel 4, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

John Bernhisel to Brigham Young, 17 March 1857, Reel 7, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

John Bernhisel to Brigham Young, 2 November 1857, Reel 7, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

John Bernhisel to Brigham Young, 2 November 1857, Reel 7, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

John Bernhisel to Brigham Young, 17 July 1856, Reel 7, MS 566, Brigham Young Papers 1837-1893, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

Statement, 2 September 1884, Box 1, Folder 1, ACCN 1507, William S. Godbe Papers 1884, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

One Year in Utah or the Secrets of Mormonism: A True and Honest Account, 187, Box 1, Folder 1, ACCN 398, Julie Ingeroed Autobiography, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

Wilford Woodruff Journal, 28 October 1857, Box 1, Folder 1, Volume 2, MS 373, Wilford Woodruff Papers 1807-1898, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

John Taylor to George Cannon, 18 January 1879, Box 2A, Folder 18, MS 50, John Taylor papers 1844-1994, University of Utah Libraries and Special Collections, the J. Willard Marriott Library.

APPENDIX: OFFICIAL DECLARATION 1

To Whom It May Concern:

Press dispatches having been sent for political purposes, from Salt Lake City, which have been widely published, to the effect that the Utah Commission, in their recent report to the Secretary of the Interior, allege that plural marriages are still being solemnized and that forty or more such marriages have been contracted in Utah since last June or during the past year, also that in public discourses the leaders of the Church 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. We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice, and I deny that either forty or any other number of plural marriages have during that period been solemnized in our Temples or in any other place in the Territory.

One case has been reported, in which the parties allege that the marriage was performed in the Endowment House, in Salt Lake City, in the Spring of 1889, but I have not been able to learn who performed the ceremony; whatever was done in this matter was without my knowledge. In consequence of this alleged occurrence the Endowment House was, by my instructions, taken down without delay.

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

There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy; and when any Elder of the Church has used language which appeared to convey any such teaching, he has been promptly reproved. And now I publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.