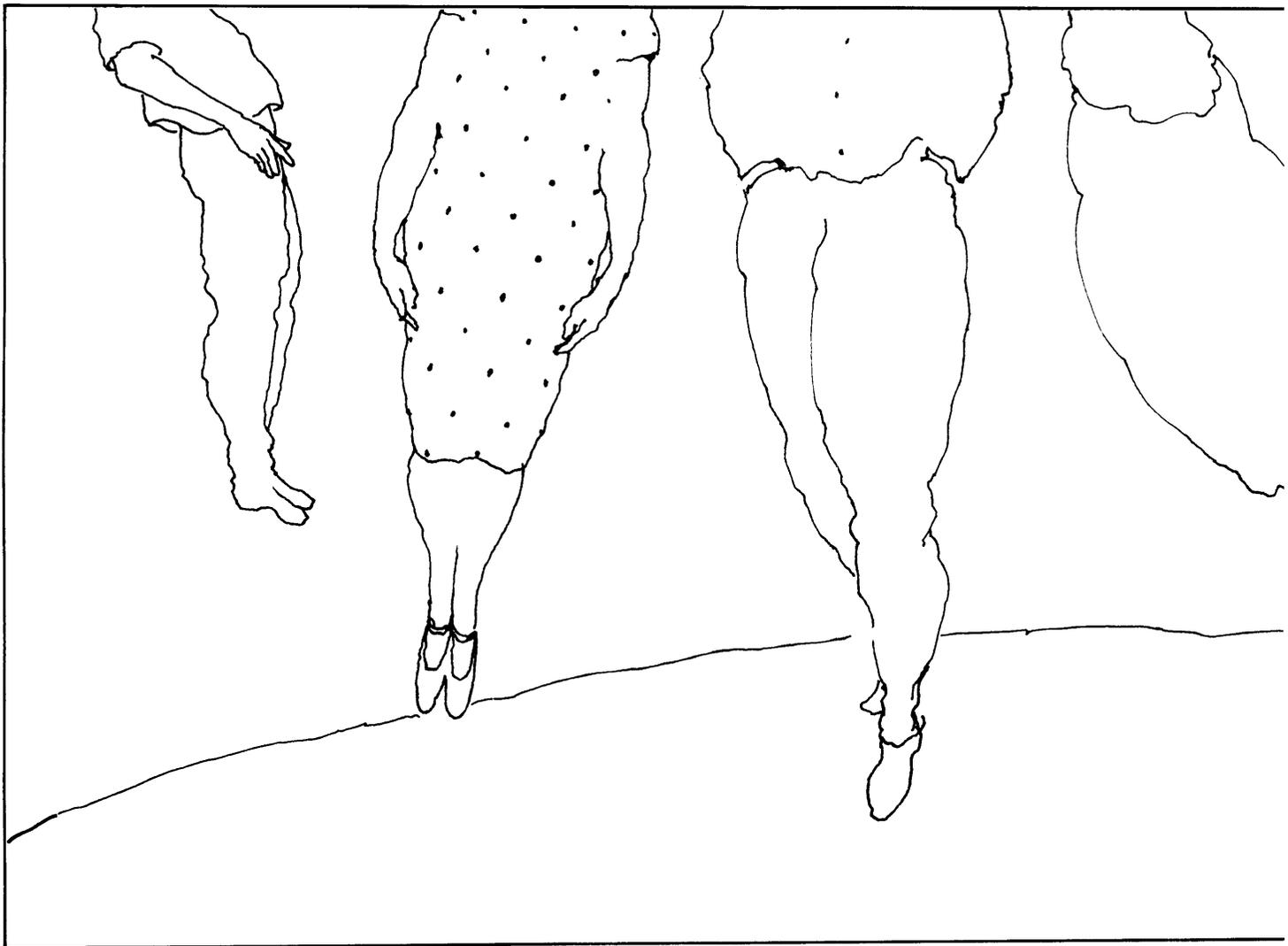
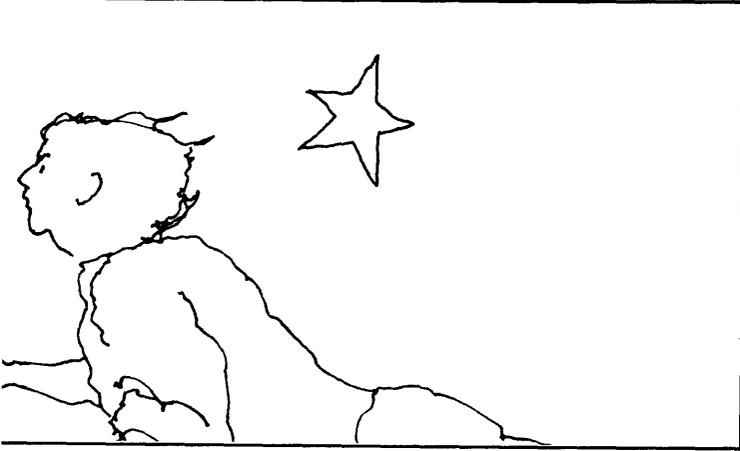


BETWEEN HEAVEN

MORMON THEOLOGY OF THE FAMILY IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE *A non-*



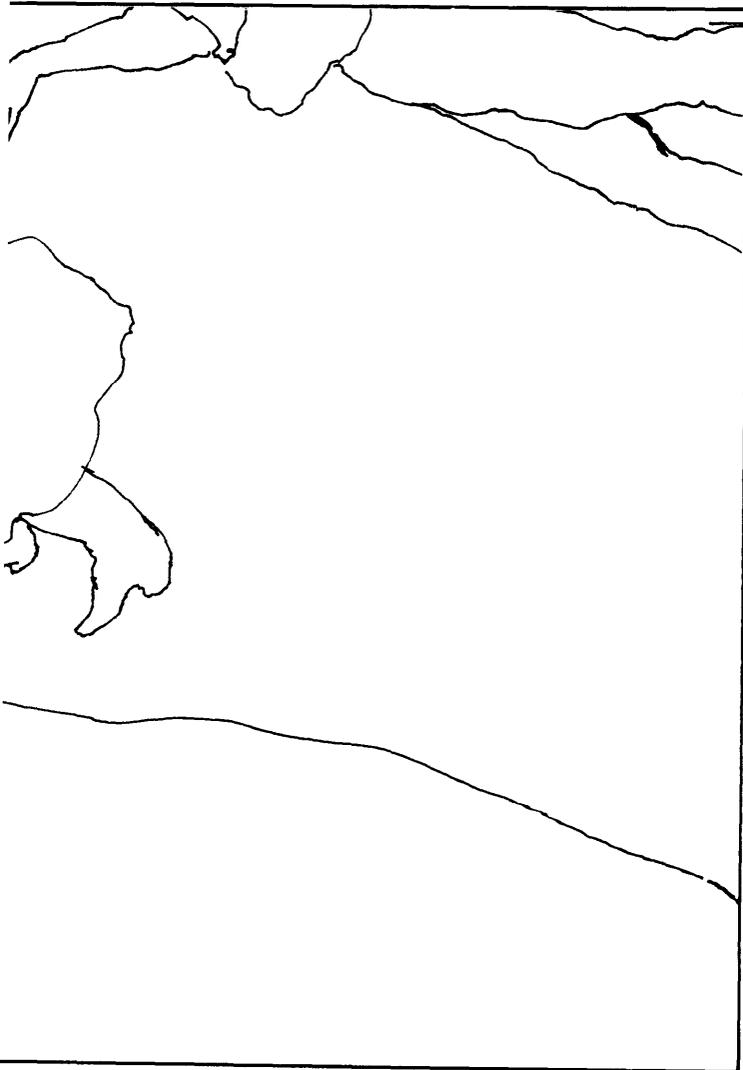


*I have looked upon the community of Latter-day Saints
in a vision and beheld them organized
as one great family of heaven,
each person performing his several duties
in his line of industry,
working for the good of the whole
more than for individual aggrandizement;
and in this I have beheld the most beautiful order
that the mind of man can contemplate,
and the grandest results for
the upbuilding of the kingdom of God
and the spread of righteousness upon the earth. . .
Why can we not so live in this world?
Brigham Young¹*

HEAVEN AND EARTH

How it compares the Shakers, Oneida Perfectionists, and Mormons

LAWRENCE FOSTER



BRIGHAM Young's sermon of January 12, 1868, eloquently underscores the importance of the concept of the family in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although the family has been an important topic of theological concern in nearly all religions, few groups have placed such extraordinary emphasis on the ideas as have the Mormons. Like many other groups, the Latter-day Saints have seen the family as the basic building block of social order, as well as the model for larger institutions such as church and government. Yet the Mormons have gone farther than have most other religious movements in seeing the family not merely as the basis of social order in this life, but also as the foundation for all growth and development in the afterlife as well. In a very fundamental sense, Mormonism is not simply concerned *with* the family, as are so many other groups; the Mormon religion in the last analysis really is *about* the family. The Church is conceived as the family writ large, with both the strengths and weaknesses that such an emphasis entails.²

To understand the development of Mormon theological approaches to the family, one must first understand the basic concerns of the Latter-day Saint religious movement as a whole. Western New York state, where Joseph Smith grew up and founded the Mormon church in 1830, was an area that was experiencing rapid economic growth, unstable social conditions, and sharply conflicting religious movements during the antebellum period. Much as California today serves as both a source and magnet for all manner of religious and social causes, western New York in the early nineteenth century was repeatedly "burned over" by the fires of religious revivalism and by crusades to transform society. Joseph Smith, a poor and uneducated but precocious and sensitive young man, was deeply disturbed by the cacophony of ideas and causes that surrounded him. How was he or anyone else to know

what was really true, he asked? Eventually Smith reached the conclusion that all existing religions were wrong and that God had specially called him to set up a new religious and social synthesis—both for himself and for others. Through what he described as the “translation” of a set of golden plates and a series of “revelations” from God, he began to create a set of beliefs and a religious organization that he conceived as a restoration of early Christianity and a synthesis of all previously valid human truth. The new faith, he believed, ultimately would usher in a millennium of earthly peace and harmony—the kingdom of heaven on earth.³

If Smith was concerned about the religious disorder in the “burned over district,” he must also have been disturbed by the disruption of family life, marriage, and sex roles in the area. Western New York was a hotbed of competing sexual attitudes and experiments, ranging from the celibacy of the Shakers to the promiscuous sexual activities that came to be known by the pejorative catch-all term, “spiritual wifery.”⁴ Joseph Smith was an active and inquisitive young man who was coming of age himself. It is thus surely no accident that concern for a restoration of proper family ties was implicit in the commission Smith said had been given him in his vision of September 21, 1823—when, according to his account, the angel Moroni told him that he would eventually bring forth the Book of Mormon. It was said then that Elijah would restore to Joseph Smith the priesthood powers of the true church before the Second Coming. “And he shall plant in the hearts of children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.”⁵ The Book of Mormon itself similarly included discussions of the “fornication and lasciviousness and every kind of sin” that were running rampant in its time.⁶ Such excesses, and the family disharmony with which they were associated, were denounced in no uncertain terms, although no detailed blueprints for overcoming such problems were offered.

It was one thing to be disturbed by the family disorder in western New York during the antebellum years, and quite another to do something about it. In attempting to develop principles upon which order could be reestablished in family relations as well as in religious life, Smith could draw on many sources. One of the most important of these undoubtedly came from his New England heritage. In many respects Mormonism was, as Emerson described it, “an afterclap of Puritanism”⁷—both in its approach to religion and to the family. The Puritans who emigrated to Massachusetts were attempting to overcome the religious and social disorder they had experienced in England by creating a cohesive new “Bible Commonwealth” in which the good of the community would take precedence over individual self-interest. The family for them served as a model for other social institutions, with its hierarchical relations between husband and wife, parents and children fitting into a larger hierarchy of relationships extending up to God. The Puritans strongly opposed fornication and adultery, as well as other less common sexual transgressions. Yet given their Calvinistic belief in the innate depravity of human nature, Puritans anticipated that

lapses from ideal standards would occur. They therefore took careful and realistic steps to restrain such behavior as much as possible. On the other hand, and contrary to the popular stereotype, the Puritans were certainly not sexual prudes. They held very positive attitudes toward sexual expressions *within* marriage, which they considered part of the natural blessings and expectations of God. Although Puritan society faced many challenges, during the seventeenth century it was characterized by stability, hierarchy, and a strong emphasis on achieving consensus.⁸



THE CHURCH IS CONCEIVED AS THE FAMILY WRIT LARGE, WITH THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THAT EMPHASIS.

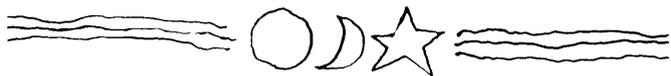
The descendants of the Puritans with whom Joseph Smith came in contact during the nineteenth century had changed in many ways, both theologically and socially, from their forebears. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, the intensity of Puritan religious commitment had begun to wane (this was true in other groups as well) and by the time of the American Revolution, church membership in the American colonies as a whole had dropped to between 5 and 8 percent, the lowest level in American history. In addition, by the aftermath of the American Revolution the rate of premarital pregnancies in America had climbed from earlier relatively low figures to over 25 percent of the first born children, suggesting a breakdown of previous forms of social control.⁹

Following the American Revolution, religious groups concerned about the weakness of the churches in America began a concerted evangelical campaign against religious “infidelity.” New revivalistic techniques—including dramatic preaching styles, mass meetings, and exhortations to total commitment—were pioneered to bring in new members and money. The Calvinistic emphasis on human depravity and helplessness when contrasted with a distant and all-powerful God, gave way increasingly to a more optimistic Arminian view which stressed the active role that individuals could play in achieving their own salvation.¹⁰

With regard to family ideals and practices, the evangelical counterthrust also had a profound impact. Although initially concerned with specifically religious issues, many revivalists eventually began to apply religious principles to pressing social problems as well. Using arguments similar to those of the revivalists, temperance crusaders denounced the drinking of alcohol as a sin and stressed the devastating effects of drink on family life. Criticizing the widespread experimentation and uncertainty in family and sexual matters in the

1830s and 1840s, ministers and secular reformers alike by the 1850s were advocating more restrictive attitudes toward sexual relations, even within marriage. This developing Victorian ethos, with its "cult of true womanhood," stress on domesticity, and sentimentalized view of the family, placed enormous, even cosmic emphasis on the importance of "the home." The home for many became a retreat from the unbridled competition of the rapidly developing capitalistic society outside, a way of preserving cooperative values in the face of excessive individualism. Writers such as Horace Bushnell in his *Christian Nurture*, Catherine Beecher in her *Treatise on Domestic Economy*, and innumerable others, all in their various ways stressed that the home and the nuclear family could play an essential part in holding society together in an age of increasing fragmentation.¹¹ Sermons and hymns further emphasized such themes using explicitly religious metaphors.

Out of this social milieu, and in reaction to it, evolved Mormonism, as well as several other restorationist groups which looked toward the literal establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Some of these groups were dissatisfied with the narrowness of the antebellum emphasis on the nuclear family and instituted



INTENSE BIBLICISM AND COMMITMENT TO ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ON EARTH LEAD MORMONS TOWARDS A NEW FAMILY THEOLOGY.

religious practices which, they insisted, did not reject the family ideal, but raised it to a higher level. The Shakers, who practiced celibacy, and the Oneida Perfectionists, who engaged in complex marriage, both felt that an expanded family would prove superior to the more constricted nuclear family union.

Interpreting the New Testament passage that "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage" to mean that the afterlife was celibate, the Shakers attempted to realize what they took to be that heavenly model on earth.¹² By the 1830s they had established some 60 semi-monastic communities or "families" stretching from Maine to Indiana, governed under an hierarchical and oligarchic family-style paternalism.¹³ Within each communal family, individual Shakers referred to each other as "brother" and "sister," and especially beloved adult members were addressed as "father" and "mother." Family imagery is particularly pronounced in Shaker hymns, which speak, over and over again, of the love of their foundress Mother Ann

Lee for her loyal children and of her children's love for Mother and for each other. Even more than the revivalistic songs of the larger society, Shaker hymns convey a sense of childlike simplicity, delight, and yearning for unity. Only the sexual and individualistic attachments of normal family life were eliminated so that total loyalty could be devoted to their community and to God.¹⁴

The Oneida Perfectionists, who established their chief community in central New York state in the late 1840s with a system of complex marriage or group marriage, dealt even more skillfully and explicitly than did the Shakers with the problem of how ideal family relations were to be realized. John Humphrey Noyes, the founder of the Oneida Community, described it over and over again as an "enlarged family," and he vehemently rejected the claim that he was breaking the family apart. Rather, he declared that he was securing for all individuals in the community the benefits of a larger group. Noyes argued, in contrast to the Shakers, that while monogamous marriage would not exist in the afterlife, sex would. The Saints would all love each other equally, and this would include expression of sexual love between men and women. At Oneida, therefore, where an attempt was made to realize this heavenly pattern on earth, "each was married to all" in a complex marriage. In the words of the community hymn, they "all [had] one home and one family relation." The entire community lived under one roof in the large, sprawling "Mansion House"; they joined in the daily religious-and-business meetings at which Noyes often delivered his didactic "Home Talks"; and they participated in the full range of communal work, rather as though they were living under a feudal manorial system. Like the Shakers, their elimination of the exclusive sexual, emotional, and economic attachments of the nuclear family allowed them to develop a more inclusive loyalty to the community and to God.¹⁵

How did Mormon attitudes toward the family compare with these other restorationist groups and with the ideals developing in Victorian America? In the 1830s, as Klaus Hansen has suggested in his provocative analysis in *Mormonism and the American Experience*, the Latter-day Saints initially seem to have looked back primarily toward earlier more "traditional" approaches to the family such as those of the Puritans.¹⁶ On the one hand, Joseph Smith, like the Puritans, rejected celibacy. In his revelation to the Shakers in March 1831, Smith sharply criticized them, both because of their celibacy and because they were founded by a woman.¹⁷ On the other hand, early Mormons appear, like the Puritans, to have accepted the idea of sex within marriage as a good thing, a part of the natural blessings and expectations of God. While records of their attitudes on this point are scarce, there is little evidence that they accepted the nascent Victorian notions that even within marriage sexual relations should be strictly limited. Finally, like the Puritans, the early Church was strict in punishing lapses against conventional sexual morality, including excommunicating unrepentant offenders, yet they viewed such sins as only one among a number of sins rather than as a uniquely dangerous threat to "purity" as the Victorians would later. In short, Mormons of the 1830s gave little public indication that their family and sexual ideals differed significantly from those of their

Puritan forebears.

The chief factors that would lead the Mormons of the next decade towards a new family theology and unorthodox family practices grew out of their combination of intense biblicism and their millennial commitment to establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth. Like the early Puritans, the early Church looked back toward Old Testament Hebrew models for many of their family ideals and considered themselves in some sense literally a "New Israel," replicating earlier Hebrew tribal practices. Like many of his nineteenth century contemporaries as well, Joseph Smith immersed himself in the Bible and conceived of the whole of human history within the context established by biblical record. Yet Smith and the early Mormons went beyond conventional biblicism, either of the Puritans or of their



ARE THE SPECIFIC, LIMITED, EARTHLY PRACTICES OF THE SAINTS DIVINELY ORDAINED AND IMMUTABLE?

own day. The Book of Mormon, for example, purported to be a continuation of scripture, and Smith claimed continuing revelations, asserting that the direct influx of the divine into human history had not ceased with New Testament days. As he reflected on the lives of the Hebrew patriarchs whom he admired so much, Smith could hardly have helped but wonder why the Lord apparently sanctioned their taking of plural wives. If the millennial dispensation was to be a "restoration of all things," a synthesis of all previously valid human truth, might it not also include a restoration of polygamous marriage? These and other family-related concerns had remained in the background during most of the 1830s as the Latter-day Saints attempted to establish their religious faith on a firm foundation. But during the early 1840s in Nauvoo, Illinois, family and kinship concerns came to the fore as the Mormons increasingly devoted themselves to the effort to establish their political kingdom of God, an autonomous, self-sufficient organization which they expected to govern the world during the millennium.¹⁸

The period between 1839 and 1844 which the Latter-day Saints spent in Nauvoo, Illinois, under Joseph Smith's leadership proved to be pivotal in their history in almost every respect, including the development of a new family theology. Nauvoo saw the climax of an earlier phase of Mormon development and set the pattern of new doctrinal, social, and political approaches which would be further developed and tested in Utah. From one perspective, Nauvoo was a typical Jacksonian boom town, representative of the raw potentiality, enthusiasm, crassness, and tensions that characterized the era. Yet at a more fundamental level, the Mormons in Nauvoo were attacking and attempting to overcome

the rampant, exploitative individualism which surrounded them. They were seeking a total solution, more akin to medieval ideals in which religious and social life were inextricably intertwined and the good of the community took precedence over individual self-interest. Mundane secular life would be re-sacralized and integrated into a new organic unity which in turn had its place and meaning in the cosmic order.

During this period, Smith moved vigorously to present new doctrines that had long been germinating in his mind, doctrines designed to reestablish social cohesion not only on earth, but also throughout all eternity.¹⁹ Basic to these new doctrines was an elaboration of Church authority through ceremonies viewed as indissolubly linking the living and the dead. Smith claimed the keys of St. Peter, with the power to bind and to loose, on earth and in heaven. This was the basis for the doctrine of baptism for the dead, which was designed to allow dead relatives to accept the Mormon gospel in the afterlife. The material and spiritual worlds were described as a continuum. God was seen in anthropomorphic terms—once a man, he had progressed to godhood, as man could too.

The most important of these new doctrines were special marriage sealing ceremonies designed to give permanence to earthly marriage after death. In contrast to Shaker or Oneida Perfectionist doctrine, Mormon modern revelation declared that while no marriages would be *performed* in heaven, marriage and the social cohesion provided by family and kinship ties would be the basis for all growth and progression in the afterlife.²⁰ Earthly marriage itself was an ephemeral state; unless marriages were properly sealed by the Mormon priesthood on earth, in the light of eternity, they would not continue. Those who were not married for eternity would be the lowest class in the afterlife—solitary "ministering angels," a sort of perpetual servant class unable to progress further. Sealings for eternity, on the other hand, made possible progression toward godhood, as men became great patriarchs who ruled over an ever-increasing posterity and moved on to settle whole worlds. There was a sense of the awesome power of sexuality and procreation in human development.

Most controversial, Smith revealed that polygamous marriage was a particularly exalted form of eternal or celestial marriage. If marriage with one wife, sealed under the authority of the Priesthood, could bring ultimate godhood for men, then having more than one wife merely accelerated the process, in line with God's promise to Abraham that his seed eventually would be as numerous as the stars in the sky or the sands in the seashore. Furthermore, polygamy made possible the reuniting of all family members around their patriarchal leaders in the afterlife. Even if a man had lost a wife and remarried, those wives would be his again after he died. Though giving few details of exactly how polygamy was to be practiced, the revelation on plural and celestial marriage repeatedly stressed that any unauthorized liaisons established outside the bonds of Church supervised law were heinously sinful and required drastic measures for atonement. Once again, total loyalty to the Church was put forward as the supreme principle.²¹

These Nauvoo doctrines represented a sharp departure from normative Judaic and Christian belief.

Yet Latter-day Saint concepts such as the close linkage of matter and spirit, an anthropomorphic god with a plurality of other originally human gods progressing toward the achievement of similar divinity, baptism for the dead, and, above all, an afterlife in which the relationships of this life could continue in some literal sense, had much potential appeal in the nineteenth century. What were the reasons for that appeal? How well did these doctrines "meet the needs of the human family?"²²

In examining and evaluating the effects of these doctrines of continuing family ties, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between a basic principle, which may be viewed by believers as eternal, and the specific and often highly variable ways in which that principle may be realized in practice. The underlying principle behind the Nauvoo doctrines was the effort to achieve cohesion by strengthening and extending kinship ties and loyalties, but the precise *ways* in which such increased cohesion could be achieved varied greatly. For example, both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young (as well as the RLDS and Strangite Mormons) attempted at different times to set up the Order of Enoch or United Order, yet in each case they backed off from such efforts when those efforts failed to strengthen the group as had been hoped. Similarly, during the exodus to Utah Brigham Young attempted to introduce a form of the law of adoption in which all Mormon men would ultimately be sealed to the leaders of the Church and each other, thereby indissolubly linking all members together in an enlarged family. In practice, however, the adoptionary system contributed to jealousy and tension rather than unity and so it was largely abandoned by the late 1840s.²³

Keeping in mind this distinction between principle and practice, let us look at the strengths and weaknesses of the Mormon emphasis on the importance of the family. For a group which in the nineteenth century was heavily persecuted, moved frequently, and could not rely fully on normal legal channels for redress of grievances, family and kinship ties could provide an essential source of strength and cohesion. The tribal sense of being a chosen people, a New Israel, produced a feeling of special pride and commitment. The belief that valued earthly relationships could be eternal was a comfort in the face of long absences of missionary husbands, as well as the struggles, sickness, and death that were experienced by so many Mormons.

Plural marriage, both in theory and in practice, could further extend such loyalties. As only one example, by his death at age 88, the Mormon patriarch Benjamin F. Johnson was related by blood or marriage to over 800 people.²⁴ Furthermore, marriage, plural or otherwise, provided experience in cooperative action and subordination of individual desires to larger group goals which could carry over into the cooperative Mormon effort to achieve rapid settlement and development of the intermountain West. As Leonard Arrington has observed, initially "only a high degree of religious devotion and discipline, superb organization and planning, made survival possible."²⁵ Mormon family experiences and commitment to a family model played an essential role in this larger settlement effort.

Yet there were problems with the Mormon family system, especially with polygamy. Although the Latter-

day Saints, like the Shakers and Oneida Perfectionists, found that their divergence from conventional monogamous belief and practice could be useful as a means of developing group cohesion and sifting out the fainthearted, in the long run all three groups found that their unorthodox family systems contributed to severe internal and external tensions.²⁶ As the largest and most aggressive of the three movements, the Latter-day Saints were seen as a serious threat to accepted family patterns and were the most heavily persecuted by the external society. In addition, although the evidence has not yet been fully explored, there also appears to have been a strong undercurrent of unhappiness with plural marriage among many Church members. A combination of external pressure and internal tensions ultimately combined to result in the issuance of the Manifesto of 1890, which withdrew public sanction for any further plural marriages in the United States.²⁷ During subsequent years, especially following the so-called "Second Manifesto" of 1904 which led to the excommunication of recalcitrant polygamists, Mormonism began a major transformation which would ultimately bring it closer to mainstream American values and practices.

Today there are several paradoxes in the Mormon concept and practice of family life that continue to create tensions for the devout. The fact that plural marriage is still viewed as an eternally valid principle while strictly discouraged in practice causes intellectual confusion and uncertainty for some Latter-day Saints.²⁸ More far-reaching and less apparent to average Church members is the important shift that appears to have taken place in Mormon family life and sexual attitudes, changes which



THE FAMILY IDEAL HELD UP FOR MORMONS CONVEYS THE GUSH AND CLOYING SENTIMENTALITY OF A HALLMARK GIFT CARD.

began in the late nineteenth century but which have increasingly accelerated since World War II with the rapid influx of new converts, many of whom hold beliefs divergent from earlier Mormonism. Nineteenth-century Mormonism under leaders such as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young was heavily influenced by pragmatic Puritan notions of the conduct of family and sexual relationships and critical of the hyper-sentimentality of Victorianism. Brigham Young's support of the functional Bloomer-style Deseret Costume, his criticism of sentimentalized Victorian novels as trash, and his forthrightness in dealing bluntly and directly in public with family and sexual issues that polite Victorian society thought should be kept strictly private, if discussed at all, were characteristic of the approaches of many other early Church leaders. With the encouragement of the Church, nineteenth-century

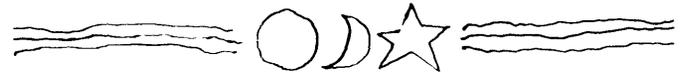
Mormon women developed their powerful Relief Society, voted earlier than women in any other state or territory in the United States, established a distinguished woman-managed, -edited, and -written newspaper of their own, the *Woman's Exponent*, and exercised a remarkable degree of real power, influence, and independence. There was no hesitation in dealing fully and frankly with a host of important issues that affected women and family life.

By contrast, today popular Church literature and exhortations appear, if anything, to be more Victorian than the Victorians. Almost everywhere, from the visitor's center display lauding family home evening to the exhortations in the *Church News* section of the *Deseret News*, the family ideal held up for Mormons conveys the gush and cloying sentimentality of a Hallmark gift card. The images that are suggested for emulation tend to be those of pasteboard saints, supermen and superwomen whose blemishes as well as humanity are blotted out. While high standards and ideals are certainly desirable, unrealistic views of what constitutes perfection and the extent to which it may be achieved can produce severe problems. Some highly committed Saints come to feel great inadequacy at their inability to fully achieve impossible standards that they feel they somehow *ought* to be able to achieve. Others eventually become inactive altogether or develop a deep-seated cynicism about a faith which otherwise might offer them much. Ironically, more realistic and less propagandistic portrayals of the tensions and challenges of daily life and how Saints have tried to meet them might well be more "faith promoting" in the long run than the Church's public relations literature which tries to give the impression that all is unrelieved sweetness and light if only one has sufficient faith. There are a few examples of more candid and appealing styles of writing, such as the superb biography of President Spencer W. Kimball, but much more remains to be done to develop realistic and appealing models of what family life can and should be.²⁹

In short, the intense Mormon emphasis on family life and kinship ties has both strengths and weaknesses. During the nineteenth century, such an emphasis could provide a powerful source of cohesion for the Church, helping to call forth almost herculean efforts at building up the "kingdom of God" in an arid and initially hostile environment. More recently, however, even Mormonism itself and some of its other fundamental doctrines appear at times to be overshadowed by the preoccupation with a sentimentalized ideal of family life which Latter-day Saints have chosen to emphasize in their proselytizing efforts to the world.

Whenever overriding importance is given to any human institution, whether family, state, or even church, there is always the danger of idolatry, of worshipping that institution and losing sight of God who stands above and beyond all human institutions and whose mystery is ultimately beyond direct human comprehension. Edmund Morgan's classic study, *The Puritan Family*, concludes with a cautionary chapter on "Puritan Tribalism" which suggests some insights that may apply to the Latter-day Saints as well. Morgan begins the chapter by stressing the overriding importance that the family had for seventeenth-century

New England Puritans: "the family metaphor seems to have dominated Puritan thought so completely as to suggest that the Puritans' religious experience in some way duplicated their domestic experience." Indeed the Puritans almost had a tendency to "domesticate the Almighty." "Puritans of course thought of their God as the one God of the universe, but they made him so much their own, in the guise of making themselves his, that eventually and at times he took on the character of a tribal deity." Morgan observes that as the seventeenth century progressed, the New England Puritans began to lose sight of the original "errand into the wilderness" that had brought them to the New World to set up "a city upon a hill." Instead, they increasingly turned inward and developed "a defensive tribal attitude." Morgan



MORMONS MAY LOSE SIGHT OF THE LARGER CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY WHICH UNDERLIES THE FAITH.

concludes: "The Puritans had, in fact, committed the very sin that they had so often admonished themselves to avoid: they had allowed their children to usurp a higher place than God in their affections. . . . When theology became the handmaid of genealogy, Puritanism no longer deserved its name."³⁰

Do Morgan's observations about New England Puritan attitudes have anything to say to Mormons today? Certainly the comparison is not exact; lack of evangelical zeal, for example, is definitely not a problem in either of the main branches of the Mormon movement at present. But in more subtle ways, Morgan's analysis causes us to reflect on disturbing tendencies within Mormonism toward idolatry and insularity. The Mormon church, more than many other religious movements, has made God literally theirs. Often it has been all too easy in Mormonism to assume that the specific, limited, earthly *practices* of the Saints, developing originally because of pragmatic earthly reasons, were really divinely ordained and immutable rather than being subject to progressive change due to continuing revelation or insight. With regard to the family, for example, it seems possible that by focusing on certain specific and limited present-day family patterns as though they were fixed and eternal truths, Mormons may in fact sometimes lose sight of the larger concept of the family and its importance that underlies their faith. Particularly as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reaches outward across the world in an attempt to become a truly universal church rather than an intermountain American sect, a progressive openness to truth wherever it may be found will be essential. Principles may be eternal, but their application must always remain flexible and open to new insight.

LAWRENCE FOSTER is associate professor of history at Georgia Institute of Technology and author of the book *Religion and Sexuality* (Oxford University Press, 1981).

Notes

1. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, Eng.: F.D. Richards and others, 1854-1886), 12:153.
2. The importance of the family in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been frequently discussed. A valuable Mormon analysis is found in Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979). For a non-Mormon perspective, see Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957). On the idea that the Mormon religion really is about the family, see Melvyn Hammarberg, "An Ethnographic Perspective on Mormon Marriage and Family" (unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Chicago, 1971). A detailed analysis of early Mormon family concerns is found in Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), especially pp. 123-225. Portions of that study have been used here by permission of the copyright holder, Oxford University Press, Inc.
3. A starting point for understanding these events is the edited version of Smith's own account of his early experiences in volume 1 of his *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Brigham H. Roberts, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1951.) Among the important secondary accounts, see Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, pp. 1-43; O'Dea, *The Mormons*, pp. 2-40; Mario S. De Pillis, "The Quest of Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (March 1966): 68-88; Marvin S. Hill, "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New York," *BYU Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 351-372; and Jan Shipps, "The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith," *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 4-20.
4. Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950).
5. Doctrine and Covenants 2:2-3.
6. For example, see Jacob 2:31, 35.
7. Quoted in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 384.
8. For an introduction to Puritan conceptions of the family and family life, see Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). On Puritan sexual attitudes, the most revealing analysis is Edmund S. Morgan's "The Puritans and Sex," *New England Quarterly* (December 1942): 591-607.
9. Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, "Premarital Pregnancy in America, 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5 (Spring 1975): 538.
10. For discussions of these issues, see Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and their Impact on Religion in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle 1966); and Cross, *Burned-Over District*.
11. An entree into the scholarly literature on these topics is provided in Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-174; Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); and Ronald G. Walters, ed., *Primers for Prudery: Sexual Advice to Victorian America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974).
12. The three variants of the Biblical story are found in Matthew 22:15-22, Mark 12:18-27, and Luke 20:27-40. The Shaker interpretation of this story runs throughout almost all of their writings as an underlying theme. For an early account, see *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations, and Doctrines of Our Ever Blessed Mother Ann Lee and the Elders With Her* (Hancock, Mass.: J. Talcott and J. Deming, Junrs., 1816), p. 17.
13. There were eighteen Shaker community sites at the high point of the group's expansion, but many of those sites contained three or four semi-autonomous Shaker communities.
14. For one of the most accessible sources for Shaker imagery, see Edward Deming Andrews, *The Gift to Be Simple: Songs, Dances, and Rituals of the American Shakers* (New York: Dover, 1962). Also see the more detailed treatment of the Shakers in Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, pp. 21-71.
15. See John Humphrey Noyes, *History of American Socialisms* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1870), pp. 623-640. The most readily accessible source for the Oneida Community hymn is Charles Nordhoff's, *The Communist Societies of the United States* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875), pp. 299-300. Also see the treatment of Oneida in Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, pp. 72-122.
16. See the chapter, "Changing Perspectives on Sexuality and Marriage," in Klaus J. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 147-178.
17. The revelation is printed in *History of the Church* 1: 167-169, and in Doctrine and Covenants, section 49. For a detailed account of the Shaker reaction to the revelation and Mormon proselytizing of their community at North Union, near Cleveland, Ohio, see Robert F.W. Meader, "The Shakers and Mormons," *Shaker Quarterly* 2 (Fall 1962): 83-96.
18. See Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, pp. 128-139. A pathbreaking analysis of the Mormon effort to achieve political and cultural autonomy is Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967).
19. Five revelations—and four other statements now accepted as revelation by the Utah Church—were given between January 19, 1841, and July 12, 1843. These revelations are now printed as sections 124 through 132 of the Utah Mormon version of the Doctrine and Covenants.
20. For a comparison of the Shaker, Oneida Perfectionist, and Mormon interpretations of these New Testament passages on marriage, see Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, pp. 15-18.
21. The revelation on plural and celestial marriage was originally printed in the *Deseret News Extra* for September 14, 1852, and was reprinted as a supplement to volume 15 of the *Millennial Star*, in 1853. It currently appears as section 132 of the Utah Mormon version of the Doctrine and Covenants. Although the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has questioned whether Joseph Smith delivered the revelation, that linkage has been conclusively established by Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1914).
22. Supplement to volume 15 of the *Millennial Star*, p. 63.
23. For a treatment of Mormon communitarianism, see Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976). The early form of the law of adoption is analyzed in Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830-1900," *BYU Studies* 14 (Spring 1974): 291-314.
24. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, Mo: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1947), p. 94.
25. Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 38.
26. A comparative treatment of the difficulties that these alternative sexual systems caused these groups is found in Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, pp. 243-245.
27. For an overview of the persecution, see Gustive O. Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library, 1971).
28. A thorough scholarly analysis of these tensions and how they developed remains to be written. Insights into the strains of life in polygamy after the Manifesto of 1890 are suggested in two semi-fictionalized accounts by Samuel W. Taylor, *Family Kingdom* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1951), and *I Have Six Wives* (New York: Greenberg, 1956).
29. The biography is Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977). A detailed analysis of changes in Mormon ideals of the role of women and the family and why they occurred is found in Lawrence Foster, "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979): 3-21. Also see Marilyn Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics: The Plight of the Mormon Woman* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), and Sonia Johnson, *From Housewife to Heretic* (New York: Doubleday, 1981).
30. Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, pp. 161-186.