

## UPDATE

BIG LOVE IN BIG TROUBLE  
WITH MANY MORMONS

CONTROVERSY RAGED IN PRINT, TELEVISION NEWS media, and the Internet as the HBO series *Big Love* aired an episode depicting parts of the LDS temple endowment ceremony.

In the episode, Barbara Henrickson (played by Jeanne Tripplehorn), an LDS woman who has entered into a polygamous marriage, uses her sister's recommend to attend a temple session for what she knows may be her last time. With Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings" as background music, a segment of the episode depicts Barbara's solemn participation in the rituals of the prayer circle and going through the veil. After passing into the celestial room, Barbara confides tearfully to her mother that she has been summoned to appear at a "love court" (i.e., a disciplinary council).

Controversy broke out during the second week of March after *TV Guide* published a story about the then-upcoming episode. The accompanying photo depicts actress Jeanne Tripplehorn dressed in temple clothing and walking into the celestial room.

*Big Love* creator Mark V. Olsen tells *TV Guide* that the producers "researched it out the wazoo" and hired an ex-Mormon consultant to ensure the accuracy of the depicted temple rituals.

"We go into the endowment room and the celestial room, and we present what happens in those ceremonies," Olsen explains.

"But it's not for shock value," insists co-producer Will Scheffer. "It's really a very important part of the story."

The *Big Love* temple scene was posted on YouTube very shortly after the episode was broadcast, though because of copyright violation, it was removed soon afterward.

*The Battle for YouTube*

ON 9 MARCH 2009, the LDS Church issued a disapproving 870-word statement that places *Big Love* in a context of recent examples of "extreme misrepresentation [of Latter-day Saints] in the media." The list includes talk show host Lawrence O'Donnell's accusation that Mormons are racist; a parody of the Joseph Smith story shown on the Comedy Central series *South Park*; the feature film *September Dawn*'s portrayal of the Mountain Meadows Massacre; and accusations of hate following the LDS campaign in support of California's Proposition 8.

The LDS Church also responded to the *Big Love* episode by posting a video, "Why Mormons Build Temples," on both YouTube and LDS.org. The video includes footage of temple interiors accompanied by comments from President Thomas S. Monson, and Elders Boyd K. Packer and Jeffrey R.

Holland. It also includes short, positive sound bites from non-LDS scholar Frank Moore Cross and Lutheran theologian Krister Stendahl.

Savvy LDS YouTube users reposted the LDS clip with misleading titles such as "HBO Big Love—Inside the Mormon Temple—Rituals EXPOSED" and "HBO 'Big Love' and Mormon Temple Episode"—thus leading the curious away from the actual *Big Love* clip. Indeed, the top hit one will get by searching for the words "Big Love temple" on YouTube is a paid advertisement from the LDS Church titled, "The Truth about Mormonism." The ad leads viewers to the official LDS YouTube channel—and away from any *Big Love*-related clip. Other YouTube searches involving the words "Big Love" and "temple" likewise lead viewers to ads paid for by the Church.

The "Why Mormons Build Temples" video is part of a larger public relations campaign that the LDS Church has recently launched to highlight the less controversial aspects of temple worship. As part of this campaign, the Church has invited non-LDS scholars and evangelical leaders who are perceived as friendly to tour temples before dedications and attend other public temple-related events. For example, in early June, a number of non-LDS religious scholars will be given a tour of the soon-to-be dedicated Oquirrh Mountain Temple, treated to a lunch with members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and invited to speak at BYU's Sacred Space Symposium. The Church is underwriting the scholars' expenses, including plane tickets and hotel stays.

*"Religious Pornography"?*

RESPONDING TO THE Church's pre-episode statement that "members are offended when their most sacred practices are misrepresented or presented without context or understanding," non-LDS Vince Horiuchi, a TV critic for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, poses the question: Without having seen the episode, "how does anyone know [temple] practices will be



## TELLING TEMPLE SECRETS: A CHRONOLOGY

### 1800s

- 1842: John C. Bennett publishes *The History of the Later-day Saints: Or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*. The book includes a purported exposé of secret Masonic-like ceremonies.
- 1846: The *Warsaw Signal* publishes the first eyewitness account of the endowment.
- 1847: Increase and Maria Van Dusen publish *The Mormon Endowment: A Secret Drama, or Conspiracy, in the Nauvoo Temple, in 1846*.
- 1861: Jules Remy publishes a description of the endowment in *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City*.
- 1874: T.B.H. (Fanny) Stenhouse publishes "Tell It All:" *The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism*.
- 1875: Ann Eliza Webb Young describes temple ceremonies in her tell-all book, *Wife No. 19*.

### 1900s

- 1904: In connection with the Reed Smoot hearings, three photographs of a man in temple clothing are published on the front pages of the *Washington Times* and the *New York Herald*.
- 1911: Gisbert Bossard exhibits in New York City photographs he had secretly made of the Salt Lake Temple interior.
- Circa 1980: Ex-Mormons for Jesus publishes the temple exposé *What's Going On Here?*
- 1983: Edward Decker and Richard Bear release the film *The God-makers*, which includes a re-enactment of some portions of the endowment.
- 1990: *Time* publishes a three-paragraph article on 14 May describing recent changes in the endowment. Other national media cover the changes as well.
- 1990: Jerald and Sandra Tanner publish *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842–1990*.
- 1993: Deborah Laake publishes *Secret Ceremonies*.
- Mid-1990s: Entire audio recordings and transcripts of the temple endowment are posted on the Internet.

### 2000s

- 2007: The commercial film *September Dawn* is released, which includes a segment depicting the filmmakers' version of temple ceremonies as administered in the 19th century.
- 2009: *Big Love* airs an episode with scenes set inside an LDS temple.

Source: David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 203–27.

'misrepresented or presented without context and understanding?'"

"While I respect the scared nature of these practices, I also believe nothing . . . is above parody, satire, criticism, and open discussion," Horiuchi continues. "Just because one group deems a subject too sacrosanct to discuss doesn't mean it becomes off limits to everyone else for inspection and debate."

By contrast, *Deseret News* editor Joel Campbell condemns the show, asserting that only those who are spiritually prepared can understand temple ordinances.

"The spirit of God inside the temple helps people make and keep sacred covenants with God," Campbell writes. "What Olsen and Scheffer have created amounts to religious pornography. It takes something that is sacred and meant for personal reflection and commitment and throws it before the masses. Unfortunately, other religious groups have not been spared entertainment industry abuse."

The LDS Church statement reports, "Last week some Church members began e-mail chains calling for cancellations of subscriptions to AOL, which, like HBO, is owned by Time Warner. Certainly such a boycott by hundreds of thousands of computer-savvy Latter-day Saints could have an economic impact on the company. Individual Latter-day Saints have the right to take such actions if they choose." However, the statement continues that the LDS Church itself does not encourage a boycott.

LDS columnist Robert Kirby writes that he understands why there is so much interest in *Big Love's* depiction of temple rituals. "This is America in the Information Age," says Kirby in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "Telling people something is sacred/secret only makes them more curious."

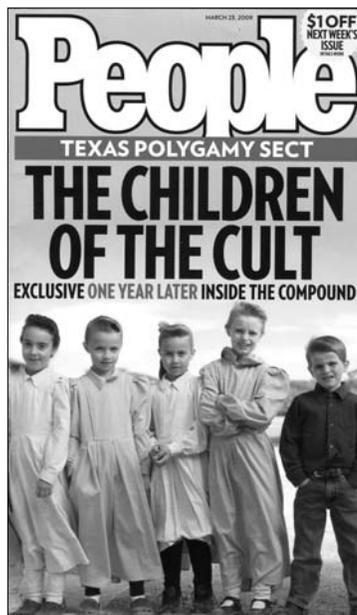
Kirby suggests that it is hypocritical for Mormons to complain when outsiders present their religion in anything less than "an utterly positive light," but not to complain when "the media routinely pry into" other faiths—including "American Indian rituals" or the secretive FLDS Church.

"What viewers of these programs might regard as quaint, silly, delusional or even potentially dangerous is considered by those groups to be utterly sacred," writes Kirby. "Afterward we feel enlightened and perhaps even a bit superior to such silly behavior. Meanwhile, they feel violated."

Kirby concludes, "Maybe that's what bothers Mormons the most: That the rest of the world will peek inside the temple and see us exactly the way we see them."

## FLDS MARK ONE YEAR SINCE RAID, GIVE ACCESS TO OPRAH, PEOPLE

WITH A TRIP TO FORT CONCHO, A VISIT FROM Oprah Winfrey, and stories in newspapers and magazines across the country, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints marked the one-year anniversary of the massive April 2008 raid in which some 430 children were temporarily removed from the polygamist



sect's ranch near Eldorado, Texas. The children were returned two months later.

On 3 April, exactly one year after the raid, approximately one hundred FLDS members travelled to Fort Concho to thank the volunteers who helped them when their children had been taken there by Texas Child Protective Services. "We're here today because there's [sic] been many people here in the city that came to the aid of our people," said FLDS spokesperson Willie Jessop.

Propelled by the Texas government's raid on the Yearning for Zion Ranch (YFZ) last year, the polygamous group took their case to the media this year, giving unprecedented access to TV personality Oprah Winfrey and *People* magazine reporters.

### *Oprah Visits the Ranch*

ON 30 MARCH, Oprah Winfrey dedicated an entire episode to airing a taped visit to the YFZ Ranch. Winfrey quizzed FLDS spokesperson Willie Jessop on many of the issues that make the FLDS so controversial in the public eye. With long, and sometimes hedging, answers, Jessop denied that the beds found in the FLDS temple were used "for the perverted purposes that they allege." He also denied that FLDS members believe that marrying an African American is punishable by death on the spot.

Winfrey visited the compound's school, where she was given access to a 2nd grade class and asked the teacher whether it's true that the FLDS school teaches the students that humans never landed on the moon. "It's not taught that it never happened," the teacher replied, "but we do not teach them that it did."

Winfrey was given a rare opportunity to interview an adult FLDS man, identified as Richard, who gave her a peek into the life he leads with his three wives and nine children. Asked by Winfrey about how he divides his intimate time among the three women, Richard replied, "We live a clean and chaste life, and we just don't talk about that. It's a pure love of wanting someone else to be encouraged, blessed, increased in whatever way, rather than falling to the passions of the body. So as far as how we love, it's a Christ-like love."

Winfrey also interviewed Betty Jessop, who left the FLDS with her mother at age 14, but returned to the YFZ Ranch as soon as she turned 18. "I came back to my life, my family, my religion," she told Winfrey. "There is

nothing that I wanted more than that, and I did whatever it took to get back."

### *People Magazine Coverage*

AFTER RECEIVING EXTENSIVE access to the FLDS compound, in its 23 March issue *People* published an 8-page article on the one-year anniversary of the raid. Photos convey an idyllic image of the YFZ Ranch: A mother braiding her daughter's hair, a group of girls in school, and a group of boys and girls playing on a gravel hill. Adult men are conspicuously absent from all the pictures.

The article includes some mothers' complaints that during their time in foster care, the children were dressed in shorts and allowed to read Dr. Seuss—despite the FLDS teaching against showing arms and legs and reading fiction. "I know they did a lot of fun projects when they were in foster care," Nancy Barlow told *People*, "but I think it's going to take the children a lifetime to get over what happened. I feel like they will adjust, but it's forever in their minds. It's forever distrust. It was a shocking experience."

"If you want to know about somebody's religion and culture, come and learn about it," said FLDS member Bob Barlow. "But don't do a raid."



### DAILY UNIVERSE TYPO PROMPTS MASSIVE RECALL

A SINGLE TYPO ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE General Conference edition of the *Daily Universe* prompted BYU personnel to recall all 18,500 copies of the 6 April edition only hours after it hit newsstands. A spelling error in a photo caption on page one identifies members of the Quorum of the Twelve not as "apostles" but as "apostates."

The *Daily Universe* issued an apology to the Quorum of the Twelve and investigated the origin of the error, which turned out to be an unintentional mistake made while trying to correct a previous spelling error.

"It would have been worse if it were done intentionally, as

some have thought,” Rich Evans, editorial manager for the *Daily Universe*, told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. “But after talking to the people, we found it was an innocent mistake.” Evans added that one of the students involved was in tears over it.

As is the way of the world, some profit has been made from the embarrassing typo. An eBay user from Provo with the screen name “tvanderwerken” is selling a copy of the misprinted paper that BYU personnel failed to retrieve, with bidding starting at \$29.99. “Now a collector’s item!” the eBay ad proclaims.

## NEW APOSTLE CALLED

NEIL LINDEN ANDERSEN, 57, FILLS THE VACANCY IN the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles left by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, who passed away last December.

Born in Logan, Utah, and raised in Pocatello, Idaho, Andersen graduated from Brigham Young University and earned an MBA from Harvard University.

Called to the First Quorum of the Seventy in April 1993, he served in the area presidency in southern Brazil, and as-

sisted in supervising the work of the Church in Mexico, Central America, and Western Europe. As executive director of the Church Audiovisual Department, he managed construction of the broadcast facilities in the Conference Center.

Andersen speaks French, Portuguese, and Spanish in addition to his native English.

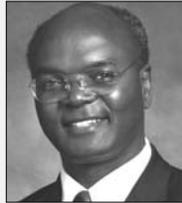
During a press conference held after the announcement was made, AP reporter Jennifer Dobner asked what Andersen sees as the greatest challenges to the Church. Andersen pointed to the Church’s rapid growth, especially “as the Church goes across nations we hardly know the name of at this time.”

“Given the fact that the Church is growing more rapidly outside the U.S., and primarily among minority groups, how would you respond to someone who thinks that the person in your position now perhaps should have come from that community?” Dobner asked.

“There are plenty of worthy people from all over the world,” Andersen replied, “and it’s only a question of who the Lord calls.”

### People

**Called.** To the First Quorum of the Seventy. JOSEPH W. SITATI, 56, the first black African general authority of the Church and the second general authority of black African descent. A native of Kenya, Sitati became the first district president of the Church in that country in 1989 and the first stake president in Kenya when the Nairobi Kenya Stake was organized in 2001. Sitati has also served as an area seventy, mission president, and director of the Church’s public affairs in Africa.



**Baptized.** Posthumously, STANLEY ANN DUNHAM (1942–1995), the mother of U.S. President Barack Obama. According to researcher Helen Radkey, Dunham was baptized on 4 June 2008 in the Provo Utah Temple and endowed in the same temple on 11 June. A story in the *Deseret News* quotes Church spokesperson Scott Trotter saying that the Church is investigating the matter. “It is counter to Church policy for a Church member to submit names for baptism for persons to whom they are not related.”

**Pulled.** From Deseret Book shelves, the vampire novels of LDS author STEPHENIE MEYER, 35. “Like any retailer, our purpose is to offer products that are embraced and expected by our customers,” said Deseret Book spokesperson Leigh Dethman. “When we find products that are met with mixed review, we typically move them to special order status.”

**Supportive.** Of her lesbian daughter, LDS actress, singer, and doll designer MARIE OSMOND, 49. In a recent interview, she confirmed rumors that her daughter Jessica is a lesbian. “When it comes to marriage, I think that civil rights need to be for all,” Osmond told Los Angeles radio station KOST 103.5. “God said to be married and be productive with your children and, you know, replenish the earth or whatever . . . We have a great relationship and I think she would tell you that.”



**Leading.** Opposition to same-sex marriage, science fiction writer and conservative columnist ORSON SCOTT CARD, 57. Card was appointed to the board of the National Organization for Marriage. The interfaith organization, which leads national campaigns against same-sex marriage, appointed Card when another Mormon, Utah Valley University President Matthew Holland, stepped down.

**Being investigated.** By U.S. authorities, federal judge JAY BYBEE, 55, in connection with a legal memorandum in which Bybee approved “enhanced interrogation techniques” which the Obama administration’s Department of Justice considers torture. A BYU graduate, Bybee is also the subject of a war crimes investigation opened by a Spanish court.

