

UPDATE

LDS CHURCH, DOCTRINES RECEIVE WIDE MEDIA ATTENTION

WITH *THE BOOK OF MORMON* MUSICAL PLAYING ON Broadway, two Mormons running for president, and a polygamist leader serving a life sentence for sexually assaulting minors, Mormons are receiving a degree of media attention not seen since the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

While the Church redoubles its efforts to project a hip, diverse image through the “I’m a Mormon” campaign and other web and broadcasting initiatives, Mormon scholars and celebrities are making the rounds on radio and TV in an effort to explain to the general public the nuts and bolts of this peculiar faith.

“We’re jumping into the conversation because there is a big one going on about Mormons, and we want to be a part of it,” Stephen B. Allen, managing director of the Missionary Department, told the *Washington Post*. “When someone goes into Google, if the first 10 sites are people who hate us, we lose in terms of our message.”

The “I’m a Mormon” campaign includes ads which have been broadcast on TV and YouTube as well as taxi and

subway signs. In the ads, men and women of various races and backgrounds say something about their lives or professions and end with the punchline, “. . . and I’m a Mormon.” Mormon watcher Jan Shippo told the *Washington Post* that the Church spent \$1 million alone on a Times Square billboard located steps away from the theater where the *Book of Mormon* musical plays.

According to the *Post*, the LDS Church is using “search engine optimization” strategies to improve the visibility of LDS websites through Google and other search engines. “LDS impressed me with how they have leveraged inbound marketing to dramatically improve their outreach,” web consultant Justin Briggs wrote last December on *distilled.net*. “Their strategy is much more forward thinking than many organizations and companies.”

The cover of *Newsweek*’s June 13/20 issue featured a leaping missionary fashioned after *The Book of Mormon* musical ads but with Mitt Romney’s face superimposed. In the main article, novelist Walter Kirn, a former Mormon, gives an overview of the religion, touching on the doctrine of eternal progression and the history of polygamy. It also includes a reference to Glenn Beck and the John Birch Society.

Kirn describes the LDS Church as “an organization which resembles a sanctified multinational corporation—the General Electric of American religion, with global ambitions and an estimated net worth of \$30 billion.”

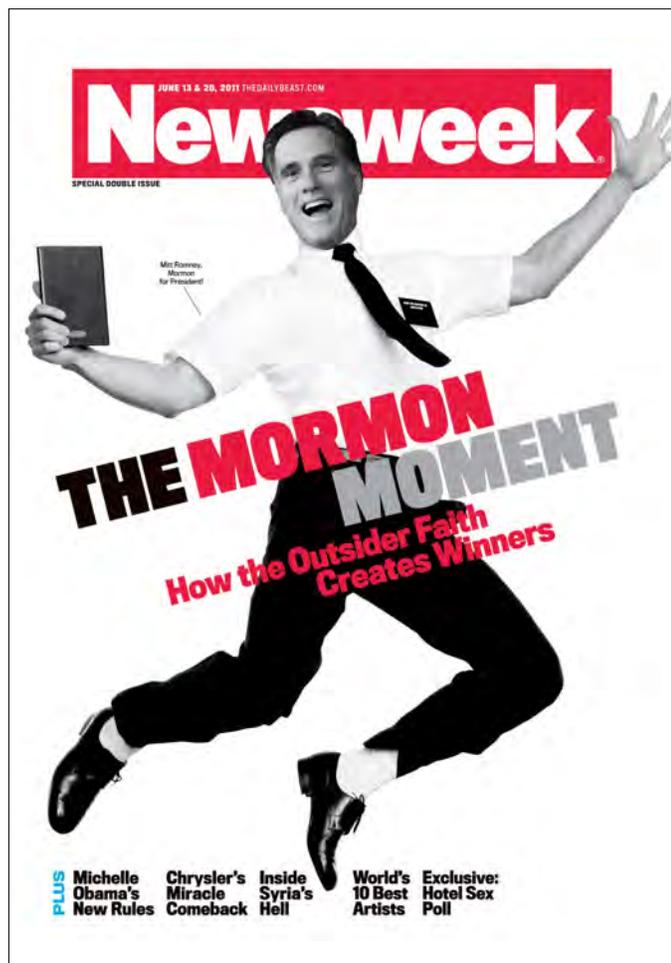
SCHOLARS SPEAK OUT

RICHARD BUSHMAN AND Joanna Brooks are two Mormon scholars who in recent interviews gave candid but sympathetic answers to questions about Mormonism. Historian Richard Bushman was asked to respond to CNN’s “In the Arena” blog after Tricia Erickson, an ex-Mormon, called temple ordinances “completely violent, mind controlling and alarming” and stated that “an indoctrinated Mormon should never be elected as President.”

“Erickson does a good job of making Mormon temple rituals seem ominous and irrational,” Bushman responded. “The secrecy surrounding the temple inevitably arouses suspicion, but in my opinion, secrecy is important. I see Mormon temples as an effort to create a sacred space in a secular world—a quest followed by numerous religious peoples throughout history. They are a spatial equivalent of the Christian and Jewish Sabbath where a sacred time is demarcated from the rest of the week.”

Bushman did not shy away from difficult theological questions, including one about lyrics from *The Book of Mormon* musical, according to which, Mormons believe that “God lives on a planet called Kolob.”

“Pretty close, but not precisely accurate,” Bushman replied. “Mormon theology differs radically from conventional Christianity in locating God in time and space. He is not outside



creation as traditionally believed. He is part of the physical universe—a being like the God in Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel who could touch Adam’s finger with his own if he chose.”

Joanna Brooks, who chairs the Department of English and Comparative Literature at San Diego State University and blogs on Mormon issues, published a piece in the 5 August *Washington Post* dispelling some popular misconceptions about the LDS faith. On 24 August, she was a guest on NPR’s *Talk of the Nation*, where she gave candid responses to difficult questions about gender issues, homosexuality, race, and even the temple garments.

Asked whether Mormons believe that Jesus is God, Brooks responded: “There are theological technicalities and reasons, some of them having to do with the distinctive Mormon view of the shape of the Trinity, which lead some theologians and some Christians to reject us as part of the mainline orthodox Christian tradition. But we sure feel Christian to ourselves.”

“There is a lot of talk, especially in pop culture, some of it derisive, about Mormon undergarments,” Brooks observed. “And you’ll see them described as magic undergarments. It’s worth saying out loud that observant adult Mormons go to temples as adults and make promises to live lives of modesty and devotion and fidelity, and they wear undergarments under their street clothes to remind themselves of those promises. Are they magic? That’s not something I believe, and calling them so is a little derisive. It’s sort of like calling a kippah a magic beanie.”

DONNY AND MARIE ON CNN

IN A RELAXED, humor-filled atmosphere, Donny and Marie Osmond appeared on CNN’s *Joy Behar Show* on 29 August, answering questions about *The Book of Mormon* musical, polygamy, Mitt Romney, and temple garments.

“Do you think Mitt Romney could win being a Mormon?” Behar asked.

“Could Kennedy do it being a Catholic?” Marie responded.

Using Elder Carlos E. Asay’s language from a September 1999 *Ensign* article, Donny called the temple garments “an outward expression of an inward commitment.”

“The [temple] ceremony there, it goes back to the same ceremony in Solomon’s day—all those sacred temples back then, not everybody was allowed in there,” Donny said. “But the promises we make to God—you know, this magical underwear or whatever you want to call it—all it is, is an outward expression of an inward commitment.”

“But why underwear?” Behar pressed the Osmonds. “Why not the magic shirt, or the magic socks? Why not a ring? Why?”

“Way back in the days of Jerusalem . . . , the Old Testament days, they used to wear those things on their forehead to remind them or something on their hand or arm—it’s the same thing,” Donny replied. “It’s a reminder of the promises you make . . . those commitments and command-

ments that you say, ‘God, I promise to keep them.’”

“I just think that, you know, are we different?” Marie added. “Are we weird? No. We have more fun than anybody on the planet.”

POLL: AMERICANS DON’T TRUST MORMONS, MUSLIMS

A SURVEY CONDUCTED 10 YEARS AFTER THE 11 September terrorist attacks reveals that Mormons, along with Muslims and atheists, are among the least accepted minority groups. The “What It Means to Be American” poll by the Public Religion Research Institute concludes that only 67 percent of Americans have a favorable view of Mormons. Muslims fared worse, with only 58 percent favorable views, and atheists fared worst of all, with only 46 percent.

In a recent interview published by *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, author and scholar Shaun A. Casey argues that many Americans still perceive Mormonism as secretive.

“I think centrist and center-right Americans are susceptible to the fear factor about what they perceive to be closed, secret or secretive, or esoteric groups,” Casey tells Gregory A. Prince in the fall 2011 issue. “It’s almost the same way they distrusted the Catholic Church.”

A 2003 poll by International Communications Research revealed that 53 percent of Americans view Muslims and Mormons as holding values and beliefs dissimilar to their own. In 2006, during Mitt Romney’s campaign for the White House, a *Los Angeles Times*/Bloomberg Poll reported that 37 percent of Americans would not vote a Mormon into the U.S. presidency.

LDS “REGRET” FOR MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE

AS THE SITE OF THE MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE became a national historic landmark on 11 September, Elder Marlin K. Jensen expressed regret for the 1857 massacre in which a Mormon militia killed 120 men, women, and children emigrating to California.

Falling short of issuing an apology, Jensen said that the human element of the massacre “compels me to say today just how sorry I am for what happened here so long ago.”

Church historian Richard Turley added that “no one alive today is responsible for this horrific crime, but we are responsible for how we respond to it.”

In September 2007, President Henry B. Eyring similarly expressed “regret” for the massacre in a statement which was prepared by Jensen and authorized by the First Presidency.

In July 2011, Warner Bros. purchased the film rights to Jon Krakauer’s 2003 bestseller *Under the Banner of Heaven*, which juxtaposes the 1857 massacre with the 1984 Lafferty murders. Ron Howard recently signed on to direct the film with a screenplay written by former Mormon and Academy Award-winner Dustin Lance Black.

People

Died. Best-selling Mormon author CHIEKO OKAZAKI, 84, of congestive heart failure. Born in Hawaii to Japanese laborers on a plantation, Okazaki moved to Utah in 1951, where, despite racial discrimination, she became a teacher and eventually a school principal. In 1961, she was the first non-Caucasian to join the Young Women's General Board, and in 1990, she became the first non-Caucasian to serve in the General Relief Society Presidency. A breast-cancer survivor, Okazaki addressed issues often ignored in official LDS discourse, such as sexual abuse and the difficult choices mothers working outside the home must make. As described by Vanderbilt professor Kathleen Flake, Okazaki was "fearlessly honest about herself and the problems that members of the Church faced."



Died. Elder MARION D. HANKS, 89, of conditions incident to old age. One of the longest-serving General Authorities, he served actively for 39 years until his 1992 release at age 70. An athlete and an inspiring speaker, Hanks studied law at the University of Utah and taught seminary and institute classes for the Church Educational System. From 1962–1964, he served as president of the British Mission, where future apostles JEFFREY R. HOLLAND and QUENTIN L. COOK then served as missionaries. In the early 1950s, he took African-American visitors into his home when no Salt Lake City hotels would receive them. BYU professor Warner Woodworth called Hanks a "sweet companion to those who suffered." "The world has Albert Schweitzer," wrote Woodworth. "The Church has Elder Hanks."



Monikered. President DIETER F. UCHTDORF, 70, second counselor in the First Presidency. He is known popularly as "The Silver Fox" and "Mr. Mac." According to *Salt Lake Tribune's* Peggy Fletcher Stack, Uchtdorf received the first nickname "for his amazing head of hair" and the second

after being seen "buying Apple computers for himself and family members."

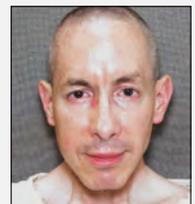
Charged. With failing to report teen sexual assault, LDS bishop GORDON LAMONT MOON, 43. According to Duchesne County detective DAN BRUSO, Moon, who is also vice president of the Duchesne County School Board, was told by a teenaged girl of his congregation that she had been sexually assaulted by a teenaged boy, and Moon advised her not to report the assault to the police.

Featured. Former Miss Wyoming and BYU student JOYCE MCKINNEY, 62, in ERROL MORRIS's new documentary *Tabloid*. In 1977, McKinney was accused of abducting and raping LDS missionary KIRK ANDERSON in Ewell, Surrey. The case, dubbed "the Manacled Mormon," created a media sensation in both the U.S. and U.K. McKinney, who claims she was trying to save Anderson from "the Mormon cult," was charged in 1984 with stalking Anderson at his workplace.



Out. As a gay man, BYU television producer KENDALL WILCOX, 41. Wilcox, who has produced documentaries, talk shows, and reality series for BYU, is now producing *Far Between* to document his journey as a gay Mormon.

Convicted. President of the Fundamental Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, WARREN JEFFS, 55, of sexually assaulting underage girls whom he took as spiritual wives. During the trial, Jeffs, who acted as his own lawyer, attempted unsuccessfully to prevent the playing of an audio tape in which he can be heard giving sexual instruction to twelve of his wives, including one who was allegedly 14 at the time of the marriage. The instruction, which Jeffs called "heavenly sessions," was allegedly related to ritualistic sexual encounters which Jeffs had with his wives in beds and in the baptismal font in the FLDS Texas temple.



EVERYONE'S Responses to *The Book of Mormon*

in the end, the message is not against Mormonism but literalism: that whatever our different myths, metaphors, and rituals, the real purpose of religion is to give us a higher purpose and a sense of compassion in the universe.

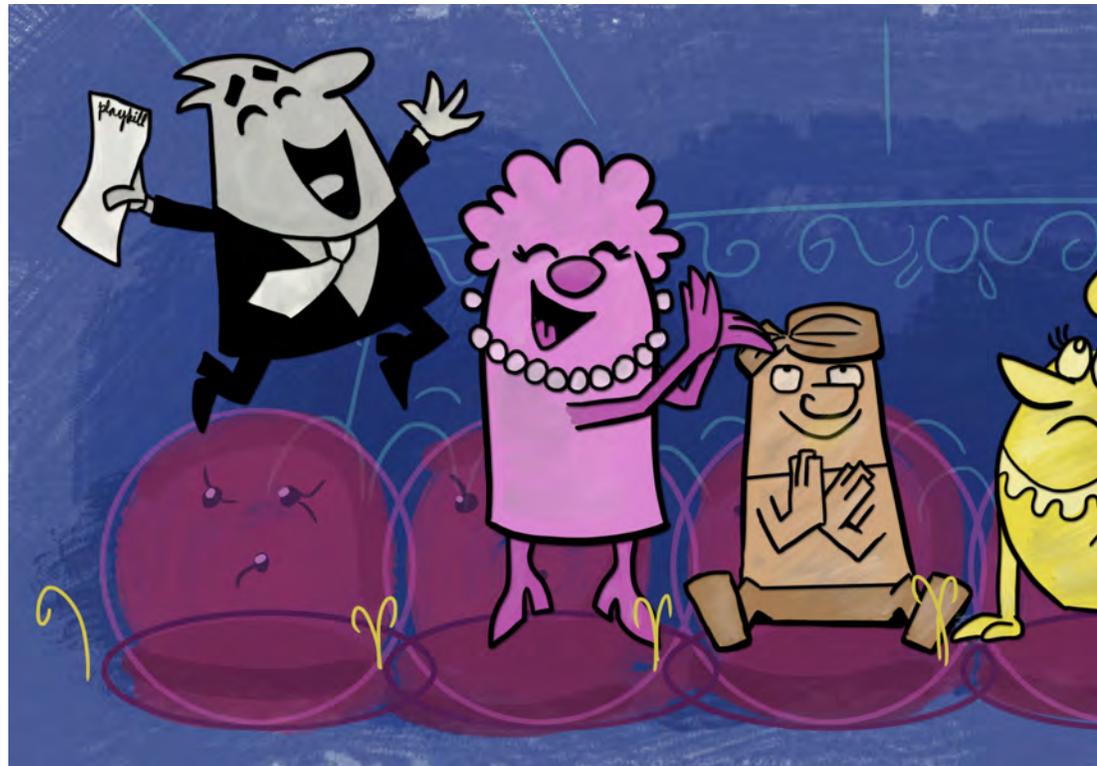
—Maur eeN do w d
New York Times

How audiences interpret [the show's most obscene] song and others like it . . . will determine whether the musical is received as an unapologetically rude yet unexpectedly sentimental hit, or a polarizing, provocative work of possible blasphemy.

—DAVE ITZKOFF, *NEW YORK TIMES*

The Book of Mormon may be the most obscene show ever brought to a Broadway stage But their musical also has an uplifting message: the Mormons save the African villagers and come to realize that the moral of the story is more important than whether it's true.

—JACo B Ber nSTeIn
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The day I spoke with co-creator Matt Stone, I coincidentally ran into a group of Mormon missionaries in the lobby of a mall. A dapper-looking elder gave me a message to pass along to Parker and Stone: "Tell them I said 'hi' and I think their show is funny." So freakin' nice.

—Chr ISTo Pher BeAM
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Conservative Mormons have ignored or denounced it. The Mormon Church itself . . . has signaled to members to turn the other cheek . . . Meanwhile, some more liberal Mormons (and some ex-Mormons) are making pilgrimages to New York to see it.

—Laur ie Go o d sTeiN
New York Times

'S A CRITIC

Book of Mormon musical

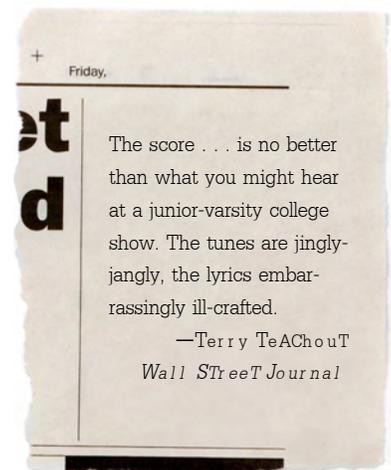
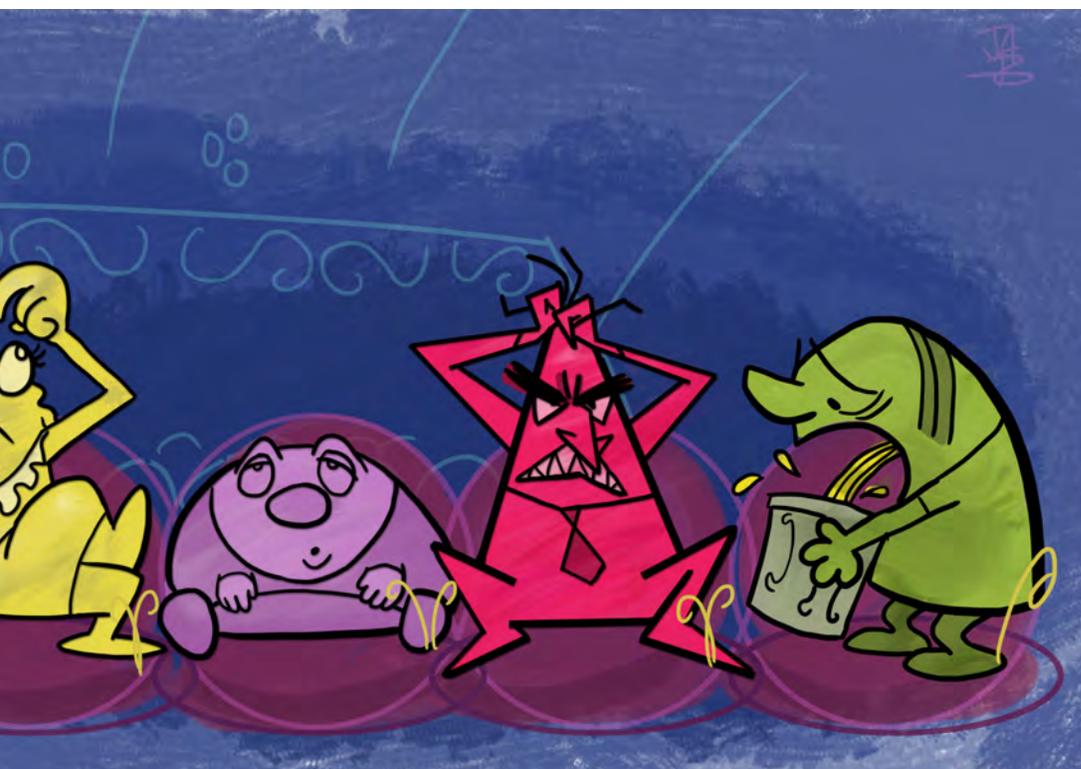
For all the show's refreshing novelty, it cops out almost completely at the finale, giving the entire cast of the credulous a free moral pass. The Book of Mormon sets out to attack religious fundamentalism, only finally to embrace Broadway's gospel of the bottom line.

—John 1 Ahr, *new Yorker*

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i can't recommend the show to anybody. it's just too much. i was frequently uncomfortable watching it. But that's a different thing than saying the show is hurtful or willfully antagonistic to the Church. it simply isn't.

—GLENN NELSON
Mormon Theatre Group, Co M



I'm not willing to spend \$200 for a ticket to be sold the idea that religion moves along oblivious to real-world problems in a kind of blissful naiveté.

—MICHAEL OTTERSON
HEAD OF LDS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The only problem with *The Book of Mormon* is that its theme is not quite true. The religions that grow, succor, and motivate people to perform heroic acts of service are usually theologically rigorous, arduous in practice, and definite in their convictions about what is True and False.

—DAVID BROOKS, *NEW YORK TIMES*

David Brooks says that "vague, uplifting, non-doctrinal religiosity doesn't actually last." If Brooks were to attend his local Mormon congregation for a few months or years, he'd see how wrong he actually is.

—JOANNA BROOKS, *RELIGION DISPATCHES*

i have no plans to see this new musical because i really don't see a need to provide money to someone who misreads and turns the sacred in my faith for their profit.

—LANE WILLIAMS, *Mormon Times*