ABSTRACT

My dissertation project, Mormons at the World's Fair: A Study of Religious and Cultural Agency and Transformation looks at a pivotal period of transition within the American religious and political national culture (1880-1907). Using Mormonism as an important focal point of national controversy and cultural change, this dissertation looks at the interconnections between Mormon transitions and the larger national transformations then under way in what historians call the "progressive" era. Prominent scholars have recognized the 1893 World's Fair as an important moment that helped initiate the "dawning" of religious pluralism in America. This national response to American religious diversity, however, is limited to a nineteenth-century historiographical framework, which made real religious pluralism in the next century more difficult.

Bringing together into one narrative the story of the anti-polygamy crusades of the 1880s, the ambivalent presence (and non presence) of Mormonism at the World's Fair of 1893, and the drawn-out US Senate Hearings and ultimate victory of Mormon apostle and Senator Reed Smoot in 1907, this dissertation offers new insights into the meaning and limitations of American religious liberty, the dynamics of minority agency, as well as a deeper understanding of America's developing national identity.
DEDICATION

My wife Mary has been very patient and supportive throughout this process. Many of the ideas that take shape within this dissertation began as part of our late night conversations. I also dedicate this work to my parents, Max and Marilynn Smith. I am most grateful for their encouragement and faith in both me and my education.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Foremost is Dr. Moses N. Moore, who early on saw the potential of this work and whose patience and criticisms have allowed it to become what it is now. In many ways, the existence of this dissertation is the product of his mentorship. Dr. Linell Cady, Dr. Tracy Fessenden, Dr. Tisa Wenger, Dr. Daniel Ramirez, Dr. Peter Iverson, Dr. Klaus Hansen and Dr. Peter de Marneffe, have helped further this project in both their helpful critique and in initiating questions that I here try to answer. Beyond just offering help in proofreading this text, Leslie Chilton also helped me understand the craft of writing, of which I am grateful. I also give my thanks to Lavina Fielding Anderson, whose friendship and criticism have been most helpful, particularly in the earlier stages of this work. There are friends, teachers, “blind” peer-reviewers, editors, colleagues, conference organizers and respondents that have also influenced this work who are too numerous to name individually, and of whom I worry if I tried, I would surely leave some out.

Two scholars that have had particular influence on my ways of critical inquiry and academic insight in the initial stages of this dissertation are the late Dr. Valeen T. Avery and Dr. Richard E. Wentz. The presence of both has been missed by many, but I hope that something of their influence will live on in this work.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem and Thesis

The story of Mormonism’s\(^1\) transformation from “un-American” to “quintessentially American” represents an important aspect of a larger historical narrative that provides crucial insight into modern Mormonism, American religious pluralism and the emergence of a secular America. Defined throughout much of the nineteenth-century as “un-American,” Mormons typified all the dangers which their evangelical counterparts held of false religion, namely despotism, irrationality, violence and sexual backwardness. Such imageries formed a crucial contrast to the self-proclaimed rational and peace-making state envisioned by Protestants, thus calling for the privatization and domestication (if not eradication) of distrusted religions. Secularists later applied these contrasts to a newly emergent secular state and extended this distrust to religion altogether. As Mormon leaders reigned in some of their more controversial practices, many attributed such changes as necessary to the logical outcomes of the external pressures of modernity and its irrefutable moral supremacy over religion. Within this traditional historiography, minority faiths were dismissed as lacking agency,

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\(^1\) The official name of the “Mormon Church” is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this dissertation I recognize the official name of the church, but largely refer to it in its abbreviated forms – “LDS Church,” or just “the church.” I also use the term “Mormon” and “LDS” to refer to its adherents. The term “Mormonism” is used to refer to the larger system that includes the culture, people, ideology, as well as the religious institution of “Mormons.” In some instances I use the phrase “Mormon Church,” not out of accuracy (as it is not a Church of Mormon), but to retain an important neologism that informs particular feelings and memories that color outsider perceptions of the church. My limited use of this term then has more to do with attempts to retain the mood of outsider perception than it does with how the church understood itself, as this dissertation is not just about them.
thus making irrelevant their role within the larger national narrative. Rethinking the story of Mormonism and its own use of agency offers an important entrance into the rethinking of the meaning of modernity and the role of religion within the traditional American narrative.

The story of Mormonism represents an ideological construction that continues to serve as a central feature in the mythologizing of the liberal nation state. Mormonism’s transformation thus helped solidify the myth of America’s religious pluralism and the state’s monopoly over what types of behaviors and religious practices that were deemed to be both rational and sane. Even evangelicals, in an ironic twist of fate, found themselves victims of this new dichotomy of irrational religion and the rational secular that they themselves helped establish in their long fight against religious diversity.

The intent of this thesis (focused on a study of the internal and external dynamics of Mormon history) is not to argue for the re-emergence of religious rule in the US, nor to dismantle “separation” as it has been defined by the courts in the mid to late twentieth century. Rather, this thesis seeks to encourage reexamination of our understanding of religious pluralism and religious liberty in North America and to question and reopen what has become assumed and closed.

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2 My use of the term “myth” follows Richard Wentz’s logic: “A myth is recounted, telling the story of who the American people are, why they came to America, and what they stand for. (Myths, we remember, are not falsehoods, untruths, or misconceptions. They are quite the opposite – they are the imaginative truths by means of which people construct their lives and order their thinking.)” Like the retelling of Washington and how he “could not tell a lie” regarding the Cherry tree – it was made up, it never happened. “But,” as Wentz realized, “it was true; I know that now. It was true because our people told it that way. It was true because our grandfather wanted us to be truthful.” Richard Wentz, The Culture of Religious Pluralism (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 53, 56.
by many historians and students of American religion – that religious liberty necessarily exists and that religious pluralism is necessarily liberal or a natural evolutionary outcome of modernity. It also raises questions about the state’s use of and justification of coercive “violence” against minority and “misbehaved” religion as either appropriate or necessary.

The traditional narrative that charts Mormon history as a “coming of age” story signifies that they were once “out of place,” and that the various states’ often violent (and extralegal) suppression of them was a direct and justifiable consequence of Mormon backwardness, intransigence, and violent tendencies, rather than a failure of republican governance and constitutional order in the US. In seeking to demonstrate that this “out of place” narrative of Mormon illegitimacy is not grounded in empirical fact, but is rather an outcome of a historical theological and ideological contestation for power, then this thesis furthers the argument that scholarship must not only rethink the role of Mormonism and its place and subsequent transformation within the national narrative, but must also hint at a larger question about the very meaning and history of religious liberty and pluralism.

At the end of the nineteenth century when the professionalization of history was just emerging, distinctions between the “secular” and “religious” were already in formation. American historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented a new paradigmatic framework for American historiography as he declared, at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago that the “frontier closed.” As both interpreted and demonstrated by Turner, history told the tale of secular progressivism as it
overcame the barbaric tendencies of the American “wild frontier.” Modernity represented, as signified by the fair, an unrivalled and unstoppable force that promised to transform the world into its own “progressive” image; Mormonism’s transformation being a perfect example. Progress thus spoke the correct language, wore the right clothes and understood the proper symbology of this new modern intellectual and cultural movement. Groups that abandoned their traditional languages, clothes, rituals and became “more like us,” were considered progressive and readily embraced into a new philosophy of religious pluralism.

In its attempts to find a more accurate place within the American historical narrative, Mormon history has often found itself disadvantaged by having been interpreted and presented as a foil of this larger national progressive narrative. In its interpretation of the taming of the unruly Western frontier (both ideologically and spatially), this national narrative helped establish a specific national character and unified “American” identity. However, through these overly-simplistic intellectual and social dichotomies that often premised and projected dualities of savagery and chivalry, barbarism and civilization, Americans forged a mythical identity within the guise of religious pluralism that was hostile toward nineteenth-century diversity. In so doing, Americans in general denied a more complicated and less comfortable reality—that barbarism was not limited to the frontier; that pluralism was not always plural, and that progress, as defined by Turner at century’s end, represented a violent and exclusionary mentality that may not have always been progressive or natural.
Therefore, the aim of this thesis is not to argue the moral supremacy of either the religious or the secular in the formations of American power, but rather to question these very dichotomies and their associated signifiers\(^3\) and assumptions toward American religious diversity. This rethinking opens up the possibility to see that progress and rationality are not monopolized by nor characteristic of the modern secular state. While giving credit to all the positive advancements American religious pluralism has brought forth in the US, it is important to remember that it is not without its own false dichotomies and overly-simplistic mythologies that are neither timeless nor universal, and thus falling short in our historiographical framing of a more diverse American religious experience.

American historiography has long encouraged overly-simplistic dichotomies that distinguish the “haves” from the “have-nots” in ways that uphold a particular approach to progress that now seems inevitable and intuitive. For Church historian Sidney Mead, history represented a “script” of religious and national progress. Scholar and a close friend of Mead, Richard Wentz explained this script as representing an “eternal and ubiquitous order, a contextual universe that explains that the chicken didn’t cross the road only to get to the other side,

\(^{3}\) Signification is essentially the “objectification through categories and concepts of those realities which appear as novel and ‘other’ to the cultures of conquest.” It is the barbarism that is implied when the term civilization is used by those self described as civilized. Charles Long explains that “signifying is worse than lying because it obscures and obfuscates a discourse without taking responsibility for so doing.” See Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (Aurora: The Davies Group, Publishers, 1995), 1, 4.
but because she had to – it was in “the Script.””

Throughout the nineteenth century, for most Church historians this “Script” was largely supportive of evangelical sovereignty and hegemony in advance of a providentially ordained progressivism over American society. History was thus a theological endeavor written to demonstrate God’s hand in the gradual unfolding of American history, and as things came to be, so were they meant to be. Premised within was what Catherine Albanese called consensus historiography, and Mormonism had to fit within the consensus of the proverbial “melting pot” ideal that minimized any narrative of religious pluralism. This long reigning model placed Anglo-Protestantism as the center of US religious history and meaning of progress, thus establishing a historical precedent for Protestant privilege within American social and political structures.⁵

America’s rich and complex religious diversity was thus significantly disadvantaged in such narratives, as they challenged this script and contradicted the ideal of a unified and progressive “Christian (read evangelical Protestant)” America. The marginalization and often invisibility (or eventual and inevitable disappearance) of minority faiths were therefore understood in positive and progressive ways (part of the “script”), and this Providential account of American religious history both drew upon theology and became and was used as a

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theological tool to legitimate and uphold both religious anticipations and the broader national identity and agenda.

This paradigm, and subsequent attempts to portray Mormonism as a progressively “American” faith, has been especially problematic for students of Mormon history. Under such an overly-simplistic framework, an accurate story of Mormonism cannot be told. As Mead’s mentor, William W. Sweet demonstrated, Mormonism within this structure represents a contradiction to an otherwise progressive narrative of American nationalism and was thus dismissed as neither sane nor healthy. Late nineteenth-century Church historian Daniel Dorchester’s color-coded map of the American religious landscape typifies this bias. According to his map, Mormon Utah is identified by a black square in the midst of a multi-colored tapestry of American Christianity (see Fig. 1). Like his predecessor Robert Baird, who decoded American religious history according to evangelical and non-evangelical traditions in his classical study Religion in America, Dorchester decoded the complexity of American religious history through the dichotomy of progressive and non-progressive currents. Notions of national identity and progress continued to be formulated through essentially religious and dogmatic definitions, and as Dorchester noted in his introduction, such historiography held “the hope that the best interests of Christianity may be

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6 “Many of these strange religious movements were the unhealthy offspring of the revivals of the thirties, forties and fifties.” In such a light, groups like Mormons, Adventists and the perfectionists were starkly contrasted with the “great Protestant churches” that “were adding tens of thousands of sane Christians to their membership,” and who were busy in productive enterprises in line with progressivism, such as “busily planting new churches in the ever advancing frontiers, founding colleges, expanding their missionary work to the Indians,” while their missionary endeavors “beyond the seas was receiving increasing attention.” William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America. 2nd Revised ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950), 273, 284.
subserved by it, and that it may prove helpful to the Christian ministry and to the public at large.” Mormons, along with Millerites, Campbellites, Shakers and Jews were categorized as “divergent” and “non-progressive” and were thus not worthy of serious reflection.

Mormon history had not been well served by such Providential and theologically rooted narratives of American progress. However, such theological narratives were little worse than the more secular rooted narratives encouraged by the Turnerian model, which likewise rejected Mormon agency and thus their role, relevance, and meaning in a progressive narrative of American religious history. In light of this historiographical hostility and consistent with its own theologically and Providentially rooted historiography, Mormon scholarship retained its parochialism, finding little purpose in connecting the Mormon story to that of the larger world. As such, this reinforced Mormonism’s own historiography as exceptionally American, posting a contrasting narrative of American religious history.

According to early Mormon historiography, the Mormon narrative was largely a chronicle of American misunderstandings and prejudice toward the Church. As the nineteenth century came to a close, such animosities began to give way and Mormons were given their rightful place within American religious pluralism. Thus, in Mormon historiography, the anti-polygamy crusades of the 1880s and the Reed Smoot Congressional hearings of 1904-1907 are well-traveled

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ground, though are rarely contextualized with the larger national narrative. However, an important event chronologically situated between these two events—the representation of Mormonism at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair—has been curiously ignored. It is at this fair, however, that Mormon agency as seen on the national stage is revealed and Mormonism is projected and represented on a wider national and international stage, and its place within a rapidly transforming national culture is raised. This fair reveals significant transitions within American society, but also in the LDS Church as it repositioned itself within this new environment. The fair thus marks a pivotal moment of transition for both Mormonism and its assessments of its place within the wider culture and its historiography. It is this transition and its implications for both Mormon and American religious historiography that this dissertation seeks to explore. In doing so it also opens up for analysis definitions of “Americanism” that played so prominently in the new formulations of American religious pluralism within both historiographies.

While examining Mormon participation (and non-participation) at the fair, this work seeks to link it with a number of other developments (internal and external to Mormonism) in order to illuminate major transformations within Mormonism and the wider culture during the Progressive Era (1880-1910s) that challenge the prevailing historiographical narrative. Briefly stated, Mormonism, externally challenged by religious, economic, political and cultural shifts of the

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latter nineteenth century, responded internally in ways that were deeply Mormon and characteristically American. These examples of agency illuminate significant shifts in Mormon self perceptions of its role in a progressive America together with shifts in its own historiography and its place in a wider and simultaneously transformed American religious historiography.

For all of its professions of progressivism and transformation, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America was characterized by its lack of religious, racial and ethnic tolerance. Even though these national shifts had often inspired surges of anti-Semitism, racism, Nativism, and xenophobia, Mormons ironically found (and forged) new opportunities for cultural and political inclusion. However, this transformation represented more than just the forced modernization (ie. “taming”) of Mormonism as often suggested. Though Mormon transformation was influenced by external forces, its presence at the World’s Fair enables us to point to the internal dynamics within Mormonism that inspired creative responses, both internal and external, that directly affected perceptions of its place within the national narrative.

The entire nation was undergoing equally dramatic shifts that affected traditional notions of religious diversity, pluralism, national identity, progress, as well as hierarchies of power in what was perceived as a more modern and secular America. Church historians and politicians had earlier heralded the distinctions between “true” and “false” religion in the marginalizing of religious competition, while on the cusp of the new century an emergent and more secular worldview and orientation attempted to define the nation in terms other than religion.
Consequently the myriad external (and internal) forces that Mormonism responded to were neither unified nor timeless and thus necessarily evoked different responses. As such, the object here is to illuminate the relations of power (both internal and external, both political and religious) at play, which helped to begin the transformation of Mormonism from an “anti-American,” to what has been described (with equal inaccuracy) as a “quintessentially American” religion.

Mormonism’s own use of this term represents an attempt to reposition itself within this national structure that had earlier excluded it. These structures, however, present hierarchies of power and ideological placement, rather than some neutral measurement of true Americanism that Mormonism could now align itself with. Distinctions of religion and progress by secular elites, as well as true and false religion by evangelicals, were more grounded in ideology and theology than empirical fact. As far as these distinctions determined prevailing structures of power, becoming “American” meant to become ideologically acceptable. For insiders who framed their world around such dichotomies, they appeared obvious and intuitive, even natural. For outsiders however, they represent little more than incoherence and prejudice. Nevertheless, such dichotomies were central and essential to how late nineteenth-century Americans organized their world and determined who fit in the new national narrative and who wielded power within that narrative.

The 1893 World’s Fair represents a decisive moment in America’s growing global influence and national identity in response to new scientific trends and technological and industrial innovation. This growing sense of influence and
power held significant implications for how Americans would understand themselves as a nation. It also offered a unique time in Mormon history and presented an important moment for Mormonism to develop a strategy in response to a variety of dichotomies that became increasingly apparent. The fair additionally helped to more broadly contextualize the objectives and reactions behind the anti-polygamy crusades and the anticipated political inclusion of Utah’s Mormon population as addressed by the Reed Smoot hearings just over a decade following the fair. In short, during this decisive moment of national transformation in the 1890s, Mormonism became an important point of reference for various competitors of national prominence in establishing both an identity of Americanism as well as the rules by which America’s diversity was allowed to fashion a legitimate part of that identity.

Representative of its expansive historiographical contribution to the history of religion in the United States, the intended audience of this thesis is four-fold. 1) American religious historians grappling with the puzzling presence of Mormonism and the placement of religious minorities in the larger national narrative; 2) Mormon historians seeking to make sense of their past within the same larger narrative, but who have largely ignored the broader American context; 3) Historians of the West (secular historians) who largely neglect the importance of religion within this narrative; 4) and students of American religious history seeking a new theoretical approach to questions of “Americanism” and religious pluralism and liberty.
Mormonism’s story has been traditionally assumed to be its own and Mormon scholarship has thus remained infamously parochial and aloof. When Mormon historians have attempted to place Mormonism within the national narrative, they have largely sanitized their narratives to fit the imagined “secular” world. Contemporary American historians have gained a well-deserved reputation of inclusiveness within the American record, but have, like Mormons, been curiously negligent in recognizing the power religion has had within their secular narratives. Church historians have sought to account for this neglect of the religious on the part of secular historians, but have found it difficult avoiding their own underlying prejudices that tends to privilege and over-celebrate their own particular expression of religious-rooted civilizationism. Typically, Anglo-Protestant expressions of this historiography are one of self triumph and celebration, in which minority religious traditions and Mormonism in particular is still projected in their narratives as an embarrassment and frustration.

All three historiographies (national/secular, church/religious, and Mormon) represent different approaches that have illuminated important aspects of the American past, as highlighted by the tools of their respective disciplines.

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9 Mormon historians have long been seen by academic historians as an example of parochial and apologetic history. In his epic narrative of the history of historiography, Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 12, quotes Laurence Veysey, “A sociologist writing the history of sociology remains, from the historian’s point of view, an amateur, no different in principle from an untrained Mormon writing the history of Mormonism. Particularistic intellectual commitments inhibit balanced clarity of vision . . . in the academic world as in any other.”

Informed by the broader theoretical and methodological perspective of contemporary Religious Studies, this dissertation seeks to build upon the strengths of all three traditions while recognizing their limitations and thus re-examine and better understand both Mormon and non-Mormon perceptions of the changing role and place of Mormonism within the broader narrative of American religious history.

American religious historiography has long projected the American West as a world of dichotomies. Its developments have been often framed as competing forces—between the poles of progress and digression, of barbarism and civilization, and religious fanaticism and secularism. Though such dichotomies may have been helpful in earlier analysis of power and ideology within a consensus historiography, contemporary scholarship demands an approach that looks beyond such dichotomous claims and their presumptions of moral, racial, and theological supremacy and instead accepts the more complicated dynamics involved when minority and majority religious and cultural groups encounter one another. Disenchanted with earlier consensus narratives that minimalize and ignore these encounters and conflicts, recent historiography has celebrated the shift in approach toward “popular” and “lived religion,” allowing dynamic and more complex explorations of religious experience as it occurs “on the ground.”

The obvious advantage of this approach is that it allows for a more complicated and diverse picture of American religion, allowing us to see its influence within

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11 Cartherine Albanese charts these historiographical developments in “American Religious History,” 28-35.
various levels of American society. It should not be assumed, however, that such
historiographical development has eradicated the tendency toward parochial bias
and the imposition of traditional dichotomous divisions (however now hidden)
that continue to disadvantage minority groups within the historical narrative.

The main objective of chapter 1 is to illuminate the political and religious
world of the nineteenth century, so as to make sense of its later transition. Over its
course was formed the unlikely alliance between evangelical Christianity and the
enlightenment philosophies of political republicanism. The latter principles were
initially at odds with American evangelical Christianity, but were redefined in
early nineteenth-century America by minister-historians in ironic and surprising
ways. These redefinitions were uniquely supportive of the effort by evangelical
Protestants to establish Christ’s kingdom in America and to privilege a strictly
Protestant worldview that marginalized its non-Protestant minority religious
populations. Nineteenth-century demands that such diversity assimilate to proper
Americanism, had less to do with Jeffersonian hopes for religious separation, then
it did with popular calls to restore a Puritan-style covenant that actually linked the
church and state in important ways.

Throughout the nineteenth century, dubbed the “Evangelical Era,” it was
within the biblical narratives pertaining to Abraham, Canaan, the Exodus and
Zion that Americans encountered one another and forged an enduring national
identity and agenda, rather than that of Enlightenment rationalism and its
professions of human equality and religious liberty. The major offense of an
emergent Mormonism during this era was not just that it was peculiarly religious
in a way that overtly united church and state, but that its particular synthesis of religion and politics (theology and ideology) directly challenged and contested the Protestant majority.

In their forging a synthesis of Enlightenment phraseology of “separation” into a national identity and agenda, evangelicals marginalized Catholics and Mormons in ways that would unintentionally further the increasingly formulated divide between the secular and religious in ways that would later include them. Appropriating the motif of an “American covenant,” as popularly identified with Puritan governor John Winthrop and his “City on a Hill” covenant, chapter 2 looks at the conflicts that arose within alternative interpretations of the American covenant. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw many expressions of “God’s voice” within America (as seen through Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Joseph Smith, Charles Finney, Ellen White, Helena Blavatsky, Wovoka, etc.), placing it on a level of deep familiarity for many Americans. Though there are significant differences among these many voices, this chapter seeks to recognize their similarities and the conflicts that such competing and alternative voices produced. Rooted within their respective “inspirations,” Americans acted out what they considered to be God’s will in ways that affected the relations of both state and church. Group agency and inspiration becomes an essential component of this thesis, as Mormon transformation at century’s end came not in opposition to popular understanding of religion and its national destiny during the Evangelical era, but rather in accordance with it. Religious rivalries seen here were not limited to church cathedrals or tents, but represented
an unstable element of conflict within a volatile nation where little was yet certain
and the “American covenant” was in need of continued and ongoing definition,
affirmation and defense. Despite protestations to the contrary, from within both
Mormon and American historiography, the dichotomy of secular and religious do
not easily work here, and thus needs to be complemented by a more holistic
approach of dynamic encounter that sees religion and politics as deeply
interconnected, not just for Mormons, but Protestants as well. When such terms as
the religious and secular are used, they generally have reference to some
particular perception and its correlated struggle for power, not some empirical and
easily defined reality.

As part of these structures of power, chapter 2 also demonstrates that
issues related to sexual practice, domesticity, gender roles, etc. intersect in
important ways and prove essential elements of American civilizationism and its
theological drive toward Christ’s kingdom. When Protestant bigamists, Mormon
polygamists, celibate Shakers and “free loving” Oneida Perfectionists challenged
this sexual orthopraxy of the Anglo-Protestant majority culture, many found such
ideas unsettling and consequently inspired various levels of mockery and
persecution. Mormon polygamy in particular represented more than mere
annoyance, but hit the heart of this millenarian related conviction that provoked a
response that was both violent and excessive. Many saw in Mormonism not just
another sectarian challenger or aberrant family structure, but instead a more
fundamental threat to the religious, political and cultural assumptions that
undergirded the evangelical agenda of making America a “Righteous Nation.”
Chapter 3 follows the subsequent fight against Mormonism into the federal courts and congressional benches, looking closely at the conflation of sexuality with national security and Christian civilizationism. These efforts by Protestants in the highest American courts oversaw the official defining of religion and the establishment of “Christian marriage” as the normative model essential for Christian civilizationism. This had direct implications on religious liberty and domestic relationships, not just for Mormons, but all Americans. Consequently, in keeping with this reactive agenda, Mormons were declared “barbaric” by the Republican Party national platform, and religious liberty consistent with an evangelically based exclusionary definition of religion was denied to Mormons as a point of female liberation and national security. This was not simply a reaction to polygamy and its attendant and perceived terrors, but rather an attempt to establish a theologically pure nation in connection with religious tradition and dogma. Mormonism’s continued growth and move to Utah in the face of mounting evangelical-political pressure present an important face to this national drive against religious diversity and its expectations of religious assimilation.

As demonstrated, American progress and the closing of the “Utah frontier” was not the national flow of evolutionary development and progress, but the outcome of deeply fought notions of religion and the establishment of Christ’s kingdom in America. A persistent and growing Mormonism, like Catholicism, threatened this religious and political agenda and met the wrath of an Evangelical majority and the semi-establishment of a Christian America that found American
religious diversity deeply troubling and threatening. Consequently, Mormonism, like Roman Catholicism was perceived as more than a religion but a regio-political system, and was thus deemed by the courts to be “not a religion.” Congressional legislation and the courts were thus tools of this national agenda aimed at establishing America as “wholly Christian” and dedicated to God’s glory. Therefore, the religio-political model of the nineteenth century was not Roger Williams’ “livelee [sic] experiment” of religious liberty in Rhode Island or Thomas Jefferson’s philosophy of disestablishment in Virginia, but instead John Winthrop’s Puritan exclusionary and theocratic covenant of Massachusetts Bay that affirmed American Exceptionalism and its Chosen People/Chosen Nation mythology.

The assault upon the Mormon Kingdom in Utah and the intrinsically related anti-polygamy crusades of the 1880s were saturated with theological assumptions of the civilized and the barbaric. This dichotomy was not abandoned in the new secularized world of the 1890s and 1900s, but instead was re-interpreted in the new language of science, progress, and the historiographical myth of objectivity. While it is true that some of the dichotomies of the earlier nineteenth century (such as Baird’s demarcation of the “evangelical” and “non-evangelical”) began to break down on the national level, chapter 4 illuminates the emergence of new dichotomies that retained these earlier theological prejudices. Among these are the continued uses of the terms barbarism and civilizationism, only retold in secular ways with new assumptions of secularization. This chapter looks closely at the emergent scientific, intellectual and religious and cultural
developments and their impact and explores their direct connections to the
World’s Fair. It was here (at the Fair) that Frederick J. Turner presented his famed
“frontier thesis.” It would also be at this fair that Americans responded to and
helped shape the increasingly popular comparative study of religion, which
helped establish an important new attitude of sympathy toward global religious
diversity. Though the contradiction was noted and protested and more inclusive
models were entertained, religious minorities found themselves again
disadvantaged within these new narratives of secular progress and their moral and
political assumptions of “well-behaved” religion. “Well-behaved” in this context,
of course, meant institutional expressions of religion consistent with the new
religio-political-cultural agenda of the state, that is, monogamist and apolitical.

In examining the Mormon experience at the World’s Fair of 1893, chapter
5 challenges the emergent “secular” and “religious” dichotomy, seeing them as
historically constructed categories that were employed and invented in the attempt
to wield or assert power during this period of significant national and cultural
transformation. However mythological, these new categories of the secular and
religious were real and powerfully induced and elicited Mormon agency in their
attempt to re-introduce themselves to the nation. In contrast to the reception
afforded them at the Parliament of Religions, Mormonism found itself
surprisingly welcomed as it “entered” the more secular realms of the wider
Exposition and avoided religious controversy. As it passed itself off as
secularized, it enjoyed unprecedented new levels of popular acceptance and even
celebration. For Mormons and their leaders, this secular engagement was not an
abandonment of religious sensibilities, but a demonstration of the fallacies of the secular mythology that assumed an actual separation of itself from the religious and secular. Nevertheless, it was within this new realm of the so-called secular that Protestants could celebrate Mormons, not as competitors, but as “well behaved” neighbors who’s “Mormonism,” though deemed different, was also reluctantly deemed acceptable, thus setting the precedence for America’s newly emergent virtue of religious pluralism.

Chapter 6, however, takes us deeper into the assumptions and preconceptions that accompanied these assumptions within the secular realm, where Mormon apostle Reed Smoot’s political power and the popular protests against it unveil its deeper theological undertones even as retained in all three branches of government. However, within the frameworks that separated the two imaginary realms, evangelicals found it exceedingly difficult to articulate just why a Mormon was so inappropriate as a national legislator in a way that resonated with the new secularized rules of inclusion and assumptions of separation. As a perhaps unintended consequence of an increasingly secularized nation, the Reed Smoot hearings represent and ushered in a new level of religious inclusion within American public life. But as argued throughout the four-year-long hearings, Mormon inclusion was dependent upon it becoming and continuing as a well-behaved religion. Religious liberty and inclusion had been defined as pertaining only to religions that “look like us” and “behave like us,” furthering the imaginary divide and furthering the newly emergent idea of religion as irrational and private and secularism as rational and public. It was thus the ironic relegating
of religion to a new status that provided new space for religion, so long as that religion played by the rules of the newly established secular order.

Though “religion” had been the only true source of political and cultural legitimacy during the 1880s, by 1907, religion had come to be defined in very different terms (that is, it was neither secular nor political). It was, in fact, in the process of being invented as the antithesis of the newly fabricated secular and its monopoly over power, progress, and sanity. These terms called for the privatization of religion (now including evangelical Christianity), which represented the completion of a truly revolutionary movement toward the secular within American political culture. The Smoot hearings reveal the uneasy transference of this power, as well as a hint of religions new role and non-role within the political culture and wider society.

This development also had significant implications for Mormons and Mormonism. Though they attempted to retain their earlier definitions of what they considered to be “true religion,” Mormons now colored it with more nuances that favored this new secular engagement and inclusion. For Protestants, this new dichotomy of the religious and the secular tore them in half, as some sought to embrace it, while other deemed such appropriation heretical and anti-Christian. There is an important parallel and contrast then between Mormons and evangelicals and their responses to the secularizing trends within American society, together with their willingness toward appropriation. Both evangelicals and Mormons that embraced these trends found new roles and positions within American society in this new era, but those who rejected such found themselves
pushed to the fringes. Such set the stage for a new image of Mormonism, as well as that of evangelical Christianity and its new modernist/conservative divide that would become increasingly apparent and irreparable in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Most historians of the Progressive Era have generally dismissed religion (and especially Mormonism) as a relevant component of these larger cultural shifts. On the other hand, American Church historians like Daniel Dorchester, Peter Mode and William Sweet have upheld religion (Mormonism not included) as the meaning and impetus of these shifts. The definition of modernity and progress, therefore, represents contested ground for both secular and Church historians as they attempt to define themselves within the national narrative of American progress. This dissertation thus posits itself in the middle of these two opposing historiographies, both of which have come to embrace these new dichotomies of the secular and religious. Each narrative traditionally justifies its marginalization of particular groups such as the Mormons by demonstrating their irrationality and inability to act against or within larger cultural forces, and thus assumed their irrelevance to the broader American narrative of human progress and civilization.

While the evangelical narrative marked this loss of agency to the unseen forces of false religion, later secular historians attributed it to the invisible forces of modernity and the frontier environment. Both historiographies defined themselves against the fallacies and fanaticisms of Mormonism, making Mormonism and its encounters with the broader nation a significant point of
controversy and thus a rich resource in illuminating contrasts of self-definition. However, taking seriously Mormon agency and questioning assumptions of irrationality offers a moment to rethink these categories and the dogmatic trust often given to earlier historical narratives. Thus Mormon transition and its use of agency in response to modernity does not hold mere parochial interest for the Mormon historian, but rather offers opportunity to examine Mormonism within its own critical period of national transition and transformation. And thus critically engage both Mormon historiography and the wider historiographies and thereby re-present it as an essential component of the broader American story.

In declaring the frontier closed, Frederick J. Turner solidified the progressive narrative that placed Mormonism and religion itself as at odds with the social evolutionism of the frontier environment and the development of the secular state. In seeing this frontier as an ideological construction of America’s elites for the sake of legitimating both intellectual and political power, we can reenter this frontier and recognize a much more expansive American identity that may not fit into the neatly crafted dichotomies of the past. Rather, in recognizing these dichotomies and the dynamics that forged them, this dissertation offers insight into and a rethinking of what historians and politicians have meant when they have spoken of American religious pluralism and religious liberty.

By reexamining Mormonism at the close of the nineteenth century and its experimentation in re-introducing itself to the nation, this work allows for an important case study in how communities internally respond to external forces, and how those external forces re-interpret themselves in light of these responses.
From the 1880s to 1907, this external environment took dramatic and even revolutionary shape, complicating any simplistic approach to American and Mormon historiography. In looking more closely at these complex and interconnected responses, we can learn much about minority identity and the motivations behind their responses; but just as importantly, we uncover the hidden moral history behind taken for granted terms, such as “American,” “separation,” “progress,” and “religious.” Turner’s frontier thesis turned historiographical attention away from theology to that of the environment; this dissertation follows current historiographical trends that look more closely at internal community response and their dynamic encounters with each other and their environment. In a real way, the story of Mormonism is not its own, but that of the nation at large. Beyond the limitations of parochial history (as characteristic of Mormon historiography), charting these shifts within the ideology and moral categories of “Americanism” (characteristic of American historiography) neglects to recognize these dynamic shifts and the agency that fueled them. This study of Mormon transition during the Gilded Age and into the Progressive Era thus appropriates these trends while at the same time challenging carryover tropes and moral assumptions of an earlier era.

**Literature Review**

Representation of Mormonism in sensational terms in American religious historiography is hardly new. Nineteenth-century assessments of Mormonism, as presented by historians and other popular authors such as Robert Baird, Philip
Schaff, Daniel Dorchester, and Josiah Strong characteristically emphasized Mormonism as inconsistent with American home and country and as “out of step” within a narrative that remained heavily Protestant. Influenced by an evangelical agenda, Mormons were characterized as delusional, violent and fanatical, despite Mormonism’s evident and puzzling success that seemed to reaffirm the legitimacy of its own religio-political counternarrative.

For pioneering American historians like Schaff, the growing presence of Mormonism represented a terrible embarrassment towards boasts of national progress and unity that American freedom was supposed to have brought forth. According to Schaff, whose historiographical plea was that America be not judged by this “irregular growth,” Mormonism represented “one of the unsolved riddles of the modern history of religion.”

Over a century later Sidney Ahlstrom, representative of mid-twentieth century historians of American religion, similarly expressed puzzlement in accounting for the presence and historiographical interpretation of Mormonism. According to Ahlstrom,

… the exact significance of this great story [of Mormonism] persistently escapes definition. It is certainly the culminating instance of early nineteenth-century sect formation, and at the same time that period’s most powerful example of communitarian aspiration. On the other hand, the transformation brought about by numerical growth, economic exploits renders almost useless the usual categories of explanation. One cannot even be sure if the object of our consideration is a sect, a mystery cult, a new religion, a church, a people, a nation, or an American subculture; indeed, at different times and places it is all of these.


13 Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New York: Image Books, 1975), 1:613. For further examples of these twentieth century historians and their approach
Like them, many of their colleagues similarly found it exceedingly difficult to place Mormonism within their traditional narratives of American religious history. Though a few tried (such as Ahlstrom) to account for it, most twentieth-century historians also felt content to ignore the Mormon phenomena.

However, with the advent of new minority historiography in the 1970s and 1980s, serious scholarly attention to Mormon history also increased. This new social historiography was part of the larger scholarly reaction against traditional elitist history that privileged authority, hierarchies, and white-male elites. New Mormon historiography emerged as part of the “new social” historiography whose focus upon cultural and “social” aspects of history was inclusive of racial and religious minorities, as well as women, and average Americans. Leonard Arrington, whose central thrust was towards telling the story of “every day” Mormons, as opposed to a continued male and elitist history demonstrates this new focus within Mormon historiography. Inspired by Howard Odum, founder of the Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and author of *Southern Regions of the United States*, which looked at the black man

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and woman, cotton and tobacco mill workers, etc., Arrington confessed that his approach “would be on people, particularly rural people.”

As social historians began to engage in more intimate portraits of history and historical actors (as opposed to the “greatest hits” of powerful men), individual agency among the marginalized began to be a topic of interest. It was seen that minority groups and minority religious groups often challenged mainstream claims of normalcy and national relevance. A brilliant example of this is Evelyn Higginbotham and her analysis of the women’s movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920. During this era, black women represented a double marginalized group within a culture of racial and gender debasement, but Higginbotham shows how the black church plugged these women into the public life. For these women, “secular” reform was a religious engagement. Traditional historiography had long ignored these women, but Higginbotham demonstrates their wider significance as they allied with black men for racial equality, and white women for gender equality. Thus, not only did black women have agency, they had national and historiographical relevance.

Among minority groups, responses to modernity and secularism were far from predictable, evoking instead a plurality of responses from a variety of religious communities and individuals. As will be noted in later chapters of this dissertation, the American mainstream had to accommodate to the challenges of

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16 See Ibid., 174.

modernity as did everyone else, and in the case of the evangelical hegemony, ultimately surrendered their place as guardians of national culture. Evangelical reaction to modernity was rather ambiguous, creating serious divisions within American Protestantism. With increased acknowledgment of America’s broad religious diversity, Mormonism came to represent just one of many traditions that responded to these growing cultural and religious challenges. Nonetheless, works which argued the gradual demise of religion (in light of the powerful forces of modernity) continue to be felt within American religious historiography and continues to inspire research aimed at deciphering the puzzle of Mormonism and its place within the broader American story.

Few historians have had more impact on the development of Mormon historiography than Jan Shipps. Her *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (1985) and a more recent article published in *Church History* entitled “From Peoplehood to LDS Church Membership” (2007) embody the implications of New Mormon scholarship and its adoption of secular academic and historiographical models. Like R. Laurence Moore and Klaus Hansen, Shipps narrates a remarkable story of Mormonism as it transforms from an eccentric religion towards a modern denominational church. Shipps’s influential thesis rests upon the premise of Mormon difference, and how their intrinsic sense of chosenness established particular boundaries that distinguished them from other Americans. In marking clear borders between their own sacred world and that of

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the “Gentile” nation, Shipps emphasized the Mormon inability to see beyond their own internal religio-mental processes. Mormons were unique then, in their sense of ethnic Peoplehood and the authenticity of their Scriptural based religious/political quest for realization of God’s kingdom in America. As she put it, Mormons built for themselves a kingdom patterned after and akin to David and Solomon, within the boundaries of the democratic republic of Jefferson.¹⁹ Thus in Shipps’ analysis nineteenth-century Mormonism was perceived and described as inconsistent with the progressive tenets of Jefferson’s emergent secular republic. Nonetheless, according to Shipps, it was as if sacred space was unique in Utah and that Jeffersonian secularism was the norm everywhere else in the nation. Such contrasts however focus on exaggerations of difference and minimize similarities, even as they diminish expressions of Mormon agency in the historical record. The historiographical/methodological consequence was to limit the historians’ gaze to data supportive of this historiographical bias and inaccuracy.

While Utah came to be perceived as sacred space, such geographical and ideological configurations were not unique within nineteenth-century America. Protestants, Mormons and secularists alike looked to the West as a mythical frontier that promised an improved and even utopian future. National consensus pointed west as the direction and definition of Manifest Destiny. Mormons were also not unique in their hopes of a literal fulfillment of Christ’s kingdom within the US. There were differences as Shipps suggests, but there were also significant

similarities in both the charting of “sacred space [or kingdom]” and the tendency to mark that space as beyond “ordinary time.” The secular historiography of the twentieth century dismissed both Mormons and evangelicals for their religious excesses, painting them both as fanatic and out of place in an American narrative of progress and secular rationalism. Nevertheless, within the New Mormon historiographical framework, Mormon history was seen to easily fit (albeit negatively) as a support to the larger historiographical narrative of modernity and secularism-as-progress.20

In his *Great Basin Kingdom*, “father of Mormon history” Leonard Arrington sought to connect the theocratic Mormon experience with one that was “truly American.” Interestingly, Arrington did not connect early Mormonism to icons of religious liberty such as Roger Williams, but instead, those that banished Williams to Rhode Island, New England’s Puritans. He points out that Mormon leaders, like their Evangelical counterparts, made these familial connections in hopes of declaring their integral “Americanness,” illuminating their

20 As other historians of religion have begun to do within the historiography of Pentecostalism and Catholicism, my engagement of Mormon history is to investigate this dynamic and offer a deeper interplay between these various definitions and appropriations of modernity. Far too often assessments of Roman Catholicism and the Pentecostal-Holiness movement were similarly dismissed as incompatible with democracy and progressive modernity. Moore for example employs the “deprivation” model to make sense of the growth and character of Pentecostalism, supporting Karl Marx’s argument (at least in this example), as he admits, that religions only efficacy is that as an opiate. R. Laurence Moore takes a similar negative approach in this popular, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1986), 127, 145. Similarly, historians have been content to contrast America’s popular sense of progress with Pope Leo XIII’s *Testem benevolentiae* in 1899, which warned against conflating Catholicism with “Americanism.” A few excellent examples of this new form of scholarship that more carefully assesses the relationship between Pentecostal and Catholic reactions towards modernity are Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) and John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004).
connectedness to a legacy that many Americans drew upon for national identity in the mid-nineteenth century. When it came to religious liberty, this was clearly not a Jeffersonian republic, and dissenters like Williams and statement like Jefferson were not considered mainstream heroes. Nineteenth-century historians ignored Williams and castigated Jefferson as an enemy and a godless infidel. However, by furthering the popular secularization myth that American Protestants separated matters of “church and state” in the nineteenth century. Arrington contrasts Mormonism’s attempt to “reverse the trend in the Western world which separated the church from the daily life of mankind.”21 Arrington, educated as a secular economic historian in the 1940s and 50s, was not looking for the presence of the “invisible” church within America that permeated nineteenth-century American religious sensibilities and public political policy, but rather how to fit Mormonism into the larger prevailing historiographical frameworks and secular mythologies then in existence. Arrington’s goal was to bring a larger sense of national respect and humanity to the Mormon story through the use of then-popular academic models rather than in challenging those models. Mormon Americanness and progress were thus defined by the peculiarities of the secularization myth and what was then popular in the academy. Thus the Mormon narrative fully and uncritically appropriated the secularism-as-progress narrative to explain Mormonism’s progressive “coming of age” story –a story that sought to downplay its “pre-evolved” peculiarities that the rest of the nation found so troubling.

Nationally, Arrington’s narrative and its contributions to American and Mormon scholarship were welcomed and celebrated. Nevertheless, because of the nature of this national narrative, it appeared that the emergent New Mormon historiography had little choice but to remain parochial, as the motivation behind it was entirely Mormon-centric with little if any concern for the larger national narrative. Metaphorically, Shipps spoke of this historiographical phenomenon as a “donut hole.” She notes that “many, if not most, historians of the West shape the western story like a doughnut, circling all around the Great Basin, taking into account and telling nearly every western story except the Mormon one.”

Consequently, “these holes get filled in,” she wrote, by “members of the church,” who often “write as if the significance of the world outside Utah is negligible.”

Notably, however, New Mormon historians who were inspired by Arrington, however, have been content in charting the Americanness of this donut hole, rather than connecting it to the larger story of American religious history.

Mormon historians and leaders have been quick to reference scholars and intellectuals who have credited Mormonism for its unique (and even hyper) Americanness. Most famous and oft-quoted of these is a supposed conversation that took place in 1892 between U.S. Ambassador to Germany Andrew D. White and the eminent Russian author Count Leo Tolstoy. In that conversation, as published in the Mormon periodical Improvement Era, Tolstoy is said to have

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rebuked White for his ignorance on the topic of Mormonism. “The Mormon people,” after all, he admonished, “teach the American religion.” “If Mormonism is able to endure, unmodified, until it reaches the third and fourth generation, it is destined to become the greatest power the world has ever known.”

This exchange may or may not have taken place, but what matters here is the enthusiasm by which Mormon historians, like Arrington, quote it. More recently, Yale professor Harold Bloom has similarly become well noted among LDS scholars in his creative argument that Mormonism represented one of two crucial branches “of the American religion.” However, few Mormons or Mormon scholars would embrace Bloom’s larger argument pertaining to American Gnosticism and exactly how Mormonism and its practice of polygamy fits into it, but such concerns have proven irrelevant within Mormon historiography.

Historians have sought to reconcile this identification of Mormonism with a hyper Americanness by contrasting it with an earlier tradition of Mormon un-Americanness as reflected in the works of R. Laurence Moore and Jan Shipps. Many historians, such as Peter Williams, simply chart Mormons as a paradoxical people – whose internal teachings had been anti-American, but whose later teachings and social practices took “a highly dramatic about-face in the course of the past century or so.”

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were thus directly understood by its contrast to earlier un-Americanness. While some scholars of Mormonism have made sense of Mormonism’s national identity with terms like “mysterious,” historian Klaus Hansen charts it as “nothing less than a modern miracle.”27 Cultural historian R. Laurence Moore understood the “superpatriotic language” in Mormon speeches and public documents to represent “highly schizophrenic” attitudes toward a nation Mormonism “no longer felt any common bonds” with.28 Clearly, Mormon identity in light of an American national identity has been and continues to be a complicated and baffling issue to both Mormon scholars and others. Much of this complication comes from this placement of Mormonism into a secular-as-progress narrative. In dealing with this paradox, some historians have been more creative in their analysis. Although agreeing with the popular consensus that nineteenth-century Mormonism was silly and wacky, Moore took the position that it was that silly wackiness that made early Mormonism undeniably central in the process of making America. As he brilliantly put it, “outsiderhood is a characteristic way of inventing one’s Americanness.” In light of a similar Methodist and Baptist rise to mainstream Americanism through the heightened and unbridled emotionalism of the great revivals in early and mid-nineteenth century, Moore’s point seems convincing. Mormons may have been a bunch of politically useless and pernicious dupes, but they, like other American religious dissenters, including Catholics, “did a great


deal to expose the shabbiness and the arrogance of the culture surrounding them and contributed a fair measure to whatever success the American system has had.”

Thus Mormonism’s strangeness and un-Americanness was, paradoxically, a quintessential way of being and becoming American. This, however, is not likely what traditional Mormon historians had or have in mind when they quote Tolstoy to the effect that their religion is “the American religion.”

Depending upon the assumptions of the historians’ larger moral narrative, early Mormonism represents either America’s worst expression of anti-Americanism (as argued by ethnohistorian Martha Knack), or the epitome of progressive American morality and nation building (as described by Western historian Patrick Limerick). By considering the subject by means of the Paiute culture within a context of white domination and cruelty, Knack’s ethnohistory describes Mormons as separationists and isolationists violently vying for unauthorized political power. For Knack, the scenario was clear, nineteenth-century Mormons were religious fanatics that interlocked clerical and political offices while the rest of America professedly basked in an era of increased separation of church and state—religion and politics. In light of the widespread embrace of the separation mythology and its attendant historiography, Mormons clearly did not resemble what we traditionally imagine as a progressive narrative.

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29 Moore, Religious Outsiders, xi, xii. Moore further demonstrates the struggle that scholars have in dealing with Mormonism, and it is from him that I borrow the term “mysterious” and “schizophrenic.” See Religious Outsiders, 25–26, 43–45.

of Americanism. A reinterpretation of Mormon Americanism consistent with such mythologies of modernity and progressivism would be miraculous indeed!

Revealing the shifting dynamic in American religious historiography, twentieth-century historians problematized this view of nineteenth-century Mormonism in light of reconsiderations of what was considered to be truly American. In his narrative of American Exceptionalism, historian Ernest Tuveson posits that Mormonism embodied “the most characteristically ‘American’ religious doctrine ever set forth.”

Similarly, historian of the West Patricia Limerick argued that “Mormonism was quintessentially American. Faith in progress, commitment to hard work, devotion to the family, careful attention to material prosperity—in all these qualities, Mormons could not have been more American.” But even such representations of Mormonism beg serious questions surrounding the presence of Mormonism and where it fits with the larger national narrative. Can Knack and Limerick both be right in their respective claims of Mormon “anti-Americanism” and “Americanism”? How do we reconcile the contradiction? The question must also be asked: Is Mormonism’s claim to Americanism and a wider American identity dependent upon these qualities or characteristics as outlined by Limerick? Are religious traditions that do not manifest them somehow less American? Depictions of Mormonism as being both the epitome and antithesis of what historians consider to be the definitive


expressions of Americaness, demonstrates the importance of re-opening the assumed closed frontier of Americanism and the historiography that establishes it as normative.

This American identity rests at the heart of how historiography is done. Heroism and villainy are directly connected to the flow and direction of such national idealism and self-understanding. Dogmatic theology had long been the undergirding standard by which these dynamics were understood. Although Frederick J. Turner removed the study of history from earlier biblical speculations and dogmatics, secular historiography, even as it went beyond Turner, retained significant problematics. In varied reinterpretations of Turner’s “frontier thesis,” twentieth-century American historians and scholars within related disciplines—sociology, political science, etc., relied on the “secularization thesis” deep into the 1980s to explain and offer a unique interpretation of America’s progressive fate and that of American religion. According to this thesis, secularism (aka. modernity) presented a progressive force that spread, while anti-modern forces, like religion, were destined to recede. As sociologist Peter Burger explained in his 1967 classic *The Sacred Canopy*, religion represented a “false consciousness” and as humanity progressed, such fallacies would be surrendered.33 It was a sort of academic prophecy that few secular academics questioned until it finally became too difficult to retain in light of the contrary cultural trends of the 1980s (ie.

Ronald Reagan, Billy Graham, the Religious Rights, new religious revival, etc.\textsuperscript{34} Nevertheless, the influence of this secularization thesis among an earlier generation of American historians and historians of religion is irrefutable. In this context, Mormon transformation was interpreted as one of assimilation to the powerful forces of a secular world, even at the expense of its core religious beliefs and practices. Typifying national historiography, historian Eric Mazur, in a study of assimilation and accommodation, charted Mormonism’s inexorable move into the modern and progressive era as a result of having “caved in” to the “awesome power of the federal government,” and of the inexorable acids of secularism and modernity, and thus was “forced to concede its foundation.”\textsuperscript{35} External pressures, be it governmental legislation, the anti-Mormon and anti-polygamy campaign of allied Protestant ministries and associations or even economic opportunism, were quickly credited for this “modern miracle” of Mormon transformation. However, Mormon internal responses and agency and the dynamics which induced these were largely, and often entirely, ignored. Consequently, however, the larger questions of what these outside forces really were have been obscured. Also obscured and largely ignored were the shifts already underway within Mormonism prior to this paradigmatic transformation. It has been easier instead to focus on Mormon aberrancy and difference and to attribute its transformations as the result of and altogether supportive of the secularization thesis.

\textsuperscript{34} For a fuller exploration of this argument regarding the secularization thesis, see Jose Casanova, \textit{Public Religions in the Modern World} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

When Thomas S. Kuhn argued in the late 1960s that this paradigm shift during the progressive era moved Mormons to now think like Americans, it was assumed that Mormons once did not think like other Americans. With this as the accepted historiographical framework, Mormon historians likewise approached their past with a tone of embarrassment, as Klaus Hansen has noted, conspicuously leaving out or minimizing the political kingdom of God (the socio-political-religious dimensions of their faith and identity) and diminishing the significance of polygamy within the Mormon religion and communities. As Hansen put it: “When polygamy made a quick and embarrassed appearance, it was for demographic reasons; once the population had become viable the practice quickly disappeared; and in any case, it was conveniently noted that only 2 or 3 percent adhered to the ‘principle,’ and then with great reluctance.” Although far from homogenous in methodological focus, the tendency to speak of Mormon transformation without taking seriously the Mormon internal response which gave credibility to its external responses has been normative. Mormon creative agency and initiative was thus lost to the historical narrative, as the broader dimensions of Mormon transformation and the internal motives and dynamics which spurred and nurtured the transformation were thus entirely attributed to external forces. As historian Eric Mazur bluntly contends, Mormon transformation was solely the work of the American government and exercise of its “awesome power” that “eventually brought [Mormonism] into line.” Though attributing this moment to


Mormonism’s conceding of “its foundation” (i.e. polygamy), Mazur implies that the doors were now swung open for an entirely different Mormonism to emerge—one that was both progressive and entirely American and thus Mormonism more readily fit within the prevailing historiography and historical narrative.

Ironically, the resulting and prevailing historiographical model and focus is still largely conceived within the frameworks of Mormon difference rather than that of similarity. This emphasis on how Mormonism is different than other Americans ignores the effects of the larger Progressive Era in which Mormonism made efforts largely and often on its own terms to redefine itself within and not in opposition to an emerging narrative of progress and Americanism. Consequently, it is not surprising that Mazur gave precedence to external rituals and practices and their sacrificial modification (thanks solely to the US government) as compelling Mormonism to transform its status from un-Americanness to Americanness. Completely left out of this discussion and analysis is the notion and possibility of internal agency –more specifically, the internal dynamics and transitions then underway within Mormonism itself that allowed for this important shift that enabled Mormonism to surrender its “foundation” in the first place. It also denies the connections of Americanism between challenging popular sexual, economic, and cultural norms, even at the point of the bayonet.

Writing in the 1980s, prominent historian Ferenc Szasz challenged the then popular secularization thesis by offering an important new assessment of the role of religion within American progress. In his survey, Szasz credits three

generations of Protestant missionaries for transforming Mormonism into what appeared to be another “conservative” Protestant denomination.  

Western historian Todd Kerstetter acknowledges the injustices done against Mormons in Utah during the nineteenth century, but dismisses it as an “exception” of religious liberty. The blame then was taken off the shoulders of an American structure of power, to Mormonism’s “bellicose and antisocial behaviors” that the “United States could not ignore.”  

Like Mazur, Kerstetter and Szasz used Mormonism as a foil to demonstrate and legitimate the power of these external forces, and to break the historiographical fallacy that “religion” was irrelevant to the larger narrative of American progress, particularly in the West. Both Mazur and Szasz illustrate the popular historiographical uni-dimensional analysis of Mormon transformation and its complete disregard for Mormon agency in this process of its own transformation. For Kerstetter, Mormon agency was belittled as religious fanaticism. Nevertheless, the question remains – How did Mormon’s understand this process and how did they legitimate both their resistance and accommodation to it? Relatedly, how did they understand their own unique identity relative to America (the USA) and Americanism in light of the post 1890 developments examined by this thesis. More specifically with Mormon transformation, are we looking at difference and change (as emphasized by national historians), or religious continuity and waning animosity (as emphasized by Mormon historians),


40 Todd M. Kerstetter, God’s Country, Uncle Sam’s Land: Faith and Conflict in the American West (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 10, 32.
or both? Do we see a wholesale appropriation of secularism and modernity and entire surrender of Mormon peculiarities, or rather unique approaches to secularism and modernity that remain consistent with Mormon understandings of their beliefs and agenda and notions of Americanness, however modified by both external and internal dynamics. In short, how has the myth of American progress and Americanism influenced the perceptions of Mormon transformation by American historians? How has this subsequently influenced not just the perceptions and presentations of the Mormon past, but more broadly understandings of and projections of the American past in relation to Mormons and by implication other minority religious groups? These questions are best taken up by looking more closely at the historical narrative itself and more specifically at key events that frame notions of Mormon transformation. Thus this dissertation looks at both familiar and lesser known episodes which reflect the intersection of American and Mormon history, but within the context of America’s transformation from evangelical to secular.

The Mormon presence at the World’s Fair remains one of those episodes largely glossed over in both traditional and current interpretations of the fair and its significance. Even John P. Burris’ insightful study of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, which challenges scholars to take note of both presence and non-presence at the fair (which this study takes seriously), fails to mention Mormonism’s related and widely noted and controversial presence and non-
presence at Chicago’s Parliament of Religion. As a corrective to this blind spot, Reid Neilson’s recent publication, *Exhibiting Mormonism*, looks directly at the Mormon presence at the World’s Fair in Chicago 1893. Typical of Mormon historiography, however, Neilson’s analysis is largely limited to the internal dynamics of the Mormon movement and does not connect it to the larger trends then taking shape both at the fair and internationally. Ironically much of the scholarship on the anti-polygamy crusades and the Reed Smoot hearings are also limited by their failure to examine and analyze the broader national dynamics that Mormonism exposes. As a general rule, Mormon historiography has thus emulated Shipps’ donut-hole historiography, remaining highly parochial in both content and interest.

Recent scholarship has begun to challenge the parochialism and related presuppositions of the Mormon-national narrative. Notable in this respect is Sarah Gordon’s *The Mormon Question* and Kathleen Flake’s *The Politics of American Religious Identity*. Gordon and Flake, both noted historians of the Mormon experience, have challenged traditional parochial descriptions of the Mormon past and thereby the place and placement of Mormonism in American religious and cultural history. Both effectively offer more nuanced and complex

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41 “Any analysis of the Parliament that does not take absence from the event as seriously as presence will fail to allow the Parliament to tell us all it can about the early development of a field of religion.” See John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions 1851-1893* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2001), 157.

interpretations of the Mormon narrative by appropriately integrating it within a reassessment of the larger national narrative. Flake for example demonstrates how the transformation of Mormonism (from a heretical sect to a quintessential American religion) during the Progressive era was not just a Mormon story, but an American story. Similarly, Gordon’s study of polygamy and Constitutional conflict offers important insight into the intersection of religion, sexuality, domestic freedom and law in nineteenth-century American culture. As she discovered, the religious and the secular were not so easily disentangled within the American story of constitutional conflict, not just in regard to theocratic Utah, but the nation itself. Consequently, battles against Mormon polygamy were nationally relevant, affecting how constitutional and religious liberty was understood for all Americans. Thus Gordon and Flake affirm that Mormonism cannot be limited to a footnote of the broader American narrative, but rather represents an important aspect of that narrative.

As the enterprise of writing national history has proliferated and diversified in recent decades, the challenges of its traditional tropes and assumptions have increased as well. Characteristic of this traditional historiography is the consensus narrative that has sought to illuminate a unified identity and cultural framework of national cohesion and progress. Scholar of African-American religious history, David W. Wills, reflects a particularly strong response against these traditional historiographical assumptions. Wills argues for the inclusion of blacks, not as a small part of the white evangelical story, but as an integral part of a larger American narrative that is yet to be written. To Wills,
blacks are not “outsiders” in the larger American story (as posited by Laurence Moore), nor are they constituent parts of the “fantasy” and “fairytale” of religious liberty and pluralism. Within this “multicultural nation,” blacks are, and have long been, “full Americans.” Wills effectively contradicts the popular historiographical assumption of religious and racial pluralism and tolerance which implies a single and progressive national culture which “black America could not so easily be fitted into.” His work suggests that religious liberty, Americanism, pluralism, and progress are thus largely situational assumptions that are dependent upon where one stands and the view visible from that positionality. This dissertation similarly defies this historiographical “fantasy,” thus challenging an exclusive and imaginary American narrative in which Mormonism likewise does not fit.

Like other minority historiographies, Mormon historiography has had to meet and respond to the new challenge of relocating itself within the traditional historiographical narrative. In examining the internal and external dynamics of the Mormon response to its larger national narrative, my thesis questions what has come to be understood as normative in the American religious narrative, particularly regarding minority groups and how they fit within the broader “American” narrative. Recent presidential campaigns, in particular, suggest that Catholics, women, blacks, and Mormons play a critical role within the makeup of today’s American political world, but there remain important questions as to how

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they fit. Almost exactly 100 years after Smoot’s victory speech in 1907 when he retained his Senate seat after an intensive four-year hearing, Mormon Mitt Romney announced his presidential bid in 2007, renewing old concerns. Romney’s successful campaign for nomination has brought forth significant internal reflection and unease for a political party largely influenced and long defined by evangelical Christian social conservativism. Though a few influential evangelical leaders supported Romney in his failed 2007 campaign, most continue to find it difficult to embrace Romney’s claims of being “one of us.” In late January 2012, just days before the South Carolina primary (a state whose GOP voters largely self-describe themselves as “Evangelical Christian”), national evangelical leaders held a special meeting to provide what appeared to be an official endorsement behind Catholic Rick Santorum (requiring at least a 2/3 vote). The 2011-2012 presidential primaries don’t just reveal a lack of unity among evangelical elites and its broader base, but real uncertainty within the GOP with how to respond to Romney’s Mormon faith. It is critical then to continue to rethink basic historical assumptions of American identity verses Mormon identity, and the privileging of the external, and to look more particularly at how ...

44 This uncertainty of how to respond to Romney’s Mormonism is not unique among evangelicals, but is also seen within the academic world. Blogger for the Chronicle of Higher Education, Michael Ruse argues the value of anti-Mormonism, as anyone stupid enough to believe in Mormonism should be held as suspect. “Voting for a Mormon,” a blog on The Chronicle of Higher Education website. “But is it acceptable not to vote for Romney because—or at least partially because—he is a Mormon? My inclination is to say, ‘Absolutely.’ The President is different from, say, a congressman, because the president is not just a politician, but the leader of the country—the symbol of the country like the Queen of England. I don’t want someone who denies evolution as my President; I don’t want someone who takes seriously the golden plates stuff as my President.” (November 30, 2011). Online: http://chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/voting-for-a-mormon/41744 (as viewed on February 3, 2012)
Mormonism itself understands and re-situates itself within and in response to this narrative of national identity.

Goals and Method of Study

This dissertation employs a methodological focus that is primarily historical and situated within the broader interdisciplinary framework of religious studies. It has also been influenced by questions raised within the disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Consequently, this study reflects and illuminates larger academic concerns’ regarding questions of group identity and cultural transformation that have largely been ignored as they relate to Mormonism and its study.

This project also attempts to illuminate how religious scholars think and write about minority groups, as well as the latter’s agency in response to perceived and real external stimuli and coercions. Religious and racial presumptions and challenges, together with broader cultural and environment influences, all play a part in these dynamics. Despite significant scholarly advances in the study and interpretation of American religious history and Mormon historiography, even the most cursory literature review suggest that the latter still remains largely parochial and the former largely exclusive. For this reason re-examination of the historiographical placement (or non placement) of Mormonism within the larger national narrative is particularly important. Of special historiographical and methodological significance in this regard is the recent work of Thomas Tweed in Crossing and Dwelling (2006). Appropriation of
his notion of travel and mobility, or the crossing of boundaries, allows for a more
dynamic and empathetic look at various perspectives of American and Mormon
history without unduly privileging or disadvantaging either perspective. His
emphasis on mobility is an acknowledgement that neither theory nor the theorized
are static, but constantly in motion. Theories do not reveal a map of truth, but
rather a journey into the unknown, obscuring as much as it reveals. The paths we
are forced to tread reveal insight into what is being studied, but is not a “God’s
Eye point of view,” revealing instead only that which we can see on our particular
path and our unique positionality on that path. More specifically Tweed’s model
represents a personal journey for me into my own positionality as an insider
Mormon and insider academic. It illuminates how both have influenced my
perceptions of both American and Mormon history in various ways. Although
“objectivity” has long been heralded by historians’ as an ideal, I have found it
more often a deceptive tool that veils the historians’ biases and methodological
and philosophical assumptions from both reader and the historian, often
interjecting and providing an aura of unwarranted and unquestioned “truth” to a
morally, culturally, and theologically-laden theoretical narrative.

In addition to appropriating the insights and perspectives of Thomas
Tweed’s “positionality” approach, this thesis creatively employs the insights of
anthropologist Talal Asad who admonishes scholars to look at human agency,

45 Thomas A. Tweed, Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion (Cambridge: Harvard

46 For a comprehensive narrative of the historiographical use of “objectivity,” see Peter Novick,
“real people doing real things.” This agency, Asad explains, does not take shape within a world of constants (such as the progressive nature of modernity), but rather a world of continual dislocation and change.\(^\text{47}\) The emphasis on historical objectivity (the explanation of things “as they really are”) within the recounting of Mormon history has not adequately addressed this question of agency and the broader implications of this world of transition and change.

The eclectic approach that this demands further challenges the historiographical presumptions of “objectivity” and over reliance on particular tropes (i.e., separation, unity, progress, freedom, etc.) often assumed as “truth” in the study of Mormon and American history. Instead, self-reflexivity on the models and assumptions of the historian remain important hermeneutical guides throughout this dissertation. It is also informed by Tomoko Masuzawa’s warnings that however objective scholars have attempted to be in the use of the traditional “historical method,” it has not necessarily inoculated the study of religion from theological dogmatism, or racial and cultural strands of prejudice.\(^\text{48}\) By emphasizing Mormonism’s miraculous transformation into the American mainstream, historians of Mormonism and its adherents have likewise not been inoculated from similar historiographical problematics. As one of my own mentors, Richard Wentz, was quick to remind me, “methodology implies metaphysics.” The aim of this project then is to reexamine this remarkable period


of change and transformation of both Mormonism and the nation in ways previously ignored and to analyze the implied metaphysics and signified prejudices embraced and employed by both.
Figure 1. Chart showing the ratio of Church accommodation to the total population over 10 years of age with the proportion of such church accommodation furnished by each of the largest four denominations within each state and by each of the largest eight denominations within the United States. Within this brightly colored tapestry of American diversity, note the stark contrast of Mormonism, as signified by a black mark. Compiled from the social statistics of the ninth census 1870. By Francis A. Walker. (Julius Bien, Lith., 1874) As Reprinted in Daniel Dorchester.
Chapter 2

THE "EMIGRANT AGE OF ISRAEL": ABRAHAM AND THE AMERICAN COVENANT

American religious diversity had always been profound, but few pioneering historians saw such dynamics as a virtue in nineteenth-century America. Robert Baird for example emphasized the glories of national and religious unity and contrasted it with the inferior and negative qualities of America’s racial, ethnic, and religious diversity. Success in dealing with this diversity was framed within the terms of conversion and eradication, rather than understanding and inclusion. As professor of religion Richard Wentz notes, diversity brings out “the impulse to conquer or convert the ‘other,’” rather than a desire to live with or accommodate to it. One reason for this is that diversity threatens the monopoly groups hold over “truth.”

New religious and historical scholarship has called for a pluralistic, or more complex approach to the challenge of America’s religious diversity, arguing for both its celebration and defense. Pluralism then, as defined in modern scholarship, is a culture or state of mind that is “instinctively defensive of diversity,” allowing for the questioning of these

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49 Wentz, *Culture of Religious Pluralism*, 4, 15. Diana L. Eck recognizes that the threat of pluralism is real to some, particularly as they fear the loss of a unified American banner under the banner of Christ, but as a proponent of the Pluralism Project, she states that “it is critical to hear and value the many new ways in which the variety of American peoples bring life and vibrancy to the whole of our society. Today we have the unparalleled opportunity to build, intentionally and actively, a culture of pluralism among the people of many cultures and faiths in America. We may not succeed. We may find ourselves fragmented and divided, with too much pluribus and not enough unum. But if we can succeed, this is the greatest form of lasting leadership we can offer the world.” A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 77.

“truth” monopolies and implying a decentered historiography that encourages the re-imagining of American difference in more creative and sympathetic ways. This sympathy calls for a more appropriate approach to American religious diversity, but also a better knowledge of “my own people at their best.” Struggles with diversity thus signify a larger endeavor that implies a more critically engaged understanding of the larger American narrative – or national self – and the need to recognize and decenter the various “truth” claims within that privileged narrative.

This chapter contextualizes Baird’s suspicions toward religious diversity in America by looking at the emergence of Mormonism within what he considered to be the American kingdom of God. When diversity breached the boundaries of this religio-political kingdom, popular alarm and animosity appeared justified, demanding popular as well as government response. In commenting on the “remarkable” ability of America’s “digestive power” in assimilating “all foreign elements, excepting only the African and the Chinese,” evangelical minister and American Church historian Philip Schaff argued in 1855 for a unified and specific American national identity, one that was limited solely to white Protestantism. “Over this confused diversity,” he stated, “there broods after all a higher unity,” though chaotic, within which can be discerned “the traces

51 “I cannot with integrity respond to other people unless I know my own people at their best. The development of the culture of pluralism requires this of us as we struggle with our diversity. There can hardly be respect, reverence, and refinement unless they arise from the depths of the traditions that have fashioned us. However, out of these depths will emerge an appreciative awareness of others who also have sounded the depths of their traditions. It is at this level that creative encounter occurs; it is here that we begin to learn from each other and from each other’s traditions.” Wentz, Religious Pluralism, 2, 119-120.
of a specifically American national character[.]” The US remained for many Americans the “world’s last great hope,” but such hope was dependent upon this unity. The popular consensus was that Christianity (as defined by Protestantism) would solve these anxieties presented by America’s growing diversity. Numerous volunteer efforts, such as Reform and Benevolent societies, were framed and undertaken to unify all Americans into a familiar understanding of God and the correlating national identity and agenda.

The relation of religion to the civil state in the US was understood to be unique within the annals of Christianity. Nineteenth-century Church historians like Schaff expected “something wholly new” to take shape in the United States that would prove the fulfillment of the European Reformation and the culmination of God’s literal reign on earth. For him and many of his contemporaries, St. John’s Revelation had spoken of literal historical happenings, past, present and future. Historian Ernest Tuveson explains, “So it follows that the prediction of a millennial state in the future must be more than an allegory of the spiritual order:


54 Schaff, *America*, 262-3. Robert Baird’s “most strenuous endeavour has been to promote the extension of the Messiah’s kingdom in the world,” through his text *Religion in America*, ix. Baird writes of the Puritans of New England, “Of the greater number of the early colonists it may be said, that they expatriated themselves from the old world, not merely to find liberty of conscience in the forests of the new, but that they might extend the kingdom of Christ, by founding States where the truth should not be impeded by the hindrances that opposed its progress elsewhere.” Baird notes this as an example common throughout the settlements of what would become the United States, godly settlers who lived “by faith, and their hope was not disappointed.” *Religion in America*, 179.
there is, God has promised, an actual historical kingdom of God to be expected, one inhabited by persons in this mortal flesh.”  

Hence the kingdom of God in America was perceived and celebrated as an expectation of Providential progression that Americans believed would herald a new millennium.  

Ironically, despite their persecution by their nineteenth-century evangelical neighbors, Mormons held a similar vision that likewise intersected with the functions of the state. Thus in 1852, Mormon apostle John Taylor could write that the “kingdom of God would be literally established on the earth; it will not be an aerial phantom, according to some visionaries, but a substantial reality. It will be established, as before said, on a literal earth, and will be composed of literal men, women, and children.” The success of Christianity and its Christ-centered ideals in the US had always been understood as an extension and aspect of an earlier European identity. Such millennial anticipations inspired a new level of importance for the American brand of Christianity for both Mormons and Protestants. America had become to be seen as the literal fulfillment of the Reformation, or as one historian put it, “the true English Reformation.”

In predominately Protestant and Calvinist America, the realization and fulfillment of the European Reformation was not perceived as in isolation of Christianity from the seductive influences of the wicked world, but rather to seize

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and transform it into their own likeness. The “New World” represented new opportunities for the accomplishment of old expectations. For early British colonists (Anglicans, Catholics and Puritans), America was not to be a land of religious liberty and racial equality, but instead one of discipline, and anxious Exceptionalism, and for Puritans, the agonized fulfillment of covenant promises and responsibilities. The kingdom, however, was to come through progressive and Providential means, as understood in a predestined Calvinist world. Even as indigenous populations fell by the tens of thousands to smallpox, it was a time of somber rejoicing in God’s promise and Providence. Thus could the first governor of Massachusetts Bay’s Colony, John Winthrop, write, “[The natives] are neere all dead of the small poxe, so as the Lord hathe cleared our title to what we possess.” And not withstanding continued efforts by Puritans to restrict other religious groups and deny them a place in God’s New Zion, diversity continued to erupt throughout the colonies.

Although religious, cultural, racial and ethnic diversity was an increasing reality throughout the colonial era, it was not embraced as part of an Anglicized “new world” vision, and was thus rendered opaque. Even rationalists like George

58 John Calvin’s own continuation of the Inquisition in Geneva (the burning to dearth of Servetus, a noted physician), and his Puritan descendents in New England demonstrated that in such matters, violence could be necessary in the preservation of a pure Christian society. See Justo L. Gonzalez, The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), 2:63. Such approaches were in stark contrast to their Anabaptist predecessor and their descendants who counseled withdrawal from the evils of the world.


60 Winthrop to Sir Nathaniel Rich, 22 May 1634, Winthrop Papers. III (Massachusetts Historical Society, 1943), 167.
Washington and Thomas Jefferson fundamentally perceived this “new world” as open and empty, a vast wilderness overflowing with promise and potential for white Europeans. None other than the more radical Deist Thomas Paine affirmed in 1776, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is at hand.”\(^6\) Thus John Locke furthered, “In the beginning, all the world was America.” Notably Paine and Locke were neither Puritan nor evangelical, but rationalists, thus demonstrating the widespread mythologizing of this “new world” that most translated into providential terms and viewed through a providential lens. “America” itself had become a powerful myth of origin and destiny, a “Land Promised to the Saints,” thus informing their response and that of their evangelical contemporaries.\(^6\) The collective memory of the colonialist voyage across the Atlantic had effectively represented and maintained the ideal of a “rebirth,” or even “baptism” into a new land of providential promise.

When the Puritans arrived in the Americas in the early seventeenth century, the European Reformation was over a century old. More recently in England, however, the British Reformation had just taken definition under Henry VIII and his heirs Edward VI and Elizabeth I. Their efforts to mediate church and state relations would inspire those concerned with a full realization of the


\(^6\) As quoted in Richard Wentz, *The Culture of Religious Pluralism*, 53.
Reformation in England to take efforts to “purify” the Church. Dubbed “Puritans,” they would eventually seek to fulfill abroad what they felt the all too often moderate and disappointing crown (particularly James I and his son and successor Charles I) was unwilling to do at home. The euphoric aura of the “New World” and all that it biblically seemed to represent set the Puritans apart from all they had once considered possible in the “Old World.” Many of its leaders exiled under Queen Mary Tudor due to her severe persecutions of Protestants (giving her the nickname “Bloody Mary”), returned during the reign of Protestant Queen Elizabeth I, steeped in Calvinist doctrine and millennial expectations. Moreover, the Reformation and Catholic responses had opened up simultaneous colonial and millennial interpretations of Scripture. As prominent pastor of the First Church in New Haven, Reverend Leonard Bacon put it, early colonists renounced the laws of England for those of Moses. “The Canaanite was in the land,” he explained. Because of this fact, colonists had to be ready and engaged so as to protect their children and servants against their inherent “barbarian vices” and their characteristic “heathenish and hideous superstitions.” Such groups were not just different, but represented a degradation whose intercourse promised individual and societal contamination. 63 As Baird made clear, these colonists “just exchanged what they considered a worse than Egyptian bondage, for a Canaan inhabited by the ‘heathen,’ whom they were soon to be compelled ‘to drive

63 Leonard Bacon, Thirteen Historical Discourses, on the Completion of Two Hundred Years, From the Beginning of the First Church in New Haven, with an Appendix (New York: Gould, Newman & Saxton, 1839), 31.
Thus, in very psychological and physical ways, millennial expectations were possible, not at the end of history, but within it, and American diversity was not seen as a challenge, but a direct threat against this religious expectation.

“The God of Israel is among us,” recognized Massachusetts Bay Governor Winthrop in 1630, “We shall be as a city upon a hill.” Aboard the Arbella, Winthrop’s sermon spoke of Christian duty and ethics as a “Covenant with Him for this worke.” “Love” represented the key element in how a true civil society was to be held and united together, but only God’s “elect” could reflect such a virtue, “and none can have it but the new creature.” Love and unity then was a monopoly of God’s chosen, suggesting a radical new philosophy of governance that rested upon religious piety, not blood. As a vital element of this strict notion of covenantal election and Exceptionalism, accompanied by such awesome responsibility, the Puritan settlers affirmed that they were commissioned to establish a “due forme of Government both civil and ecclesiasticall [sic].” Failure to live up to this providential and theocratic commission mandated divine wrath. As predicted by Winthrop, if they failed in their enterprise, then God “will surely break out in wrath against us; be revenged of such a [sinful] people and make us knowe the price of the breache of such a covenant.” Indeed, consistent with ancient biblical prophecy (specifically Deuteronomy 30), the Puritans saw themselves as called to choose between “life and good, Death and evill.” The New England Puritans were determined, notes historian Sidney Ahlstrom, “to make God’s revealed Law and the historical example of Israel an explicit basis for

64 Baird, Religion in America, 182.
ordering the affairs of men in this world[.]” Winthrop’s doctrine of “love” was not so liberal as to include religious diversity, for such in this context would not be seen as compassion toward one’s neighbor, but rather disrespect toward God and His law. The import of their election and divine mandate, instead demanded a social and religious uniformity that inspired, notes historian Edwin Gaustad, “intolerance, persecution, and exile,” as the necessary price of its preservation. Obedience, not tolerance; unity, rather than diversity became fundamental Puritan models of society and the rules by which God’s Providence was to be ensured and the covenant upheld.

Nineteenth-century evangelicals, heirs of the Puritans, later refashioned this Calvinist inspired Puritan motif of “chosen land/chosen people” into the fabrics of their new nation. It had become, reaffirmed Ezra Styles Ely, president of Yale University in 1791, “God’s American Israel,” a light on a hill, and a model for all mankind. The entwined theological and ideological heritage of Puritan beginnings in colonial America passed through the turmoil of revolution, inspiring new ideas of the relation of the “civil and ecclesiastical.” However, historian Sydney Ahlstrom notes that much remained unchanged. In fact, in many ways, the religio-political theocratic ideals of the Puritans became normative in the new nation, however much articulated within the new rationalist tropes of “liberty” and “separation.” “Many long-hidden implications became explicit

65 Ahlstrom, A Religious History, 1:120.


affirmations, while old informal working arrangements were enacted into law and custom. The pragmatic compromises and undefined aspirations of the past became guiding principles of the first new nation.”\textsuperscript{68} Winthrop’s “chosen land/chosen people” had become transposed by American Protestants into the central troupe of American Exceptionalism: “chosen nation/chosen people.”

Following the American Revolution, Americans were deeply divided on the question of religion and its relationship to the state, and it seemed that beyond anti-Catholicism there were few points of agreement. From the Revolution to the end of the eighteenth century, rationalist leadership and anti-cleric paranoia inspired a new mood that was lukewarm at best in its support of religion. As Baird would explain, “The first twenty-five years of the national existence of the States were fraught with evil to the cause of religion,” outlining the murder of ministers and the burning of churches.\textsuperscript{69} Revolutionaries, taking inspiration from the Enlightenment, were deeply suspicious of tyranny from all sides, be they civil (kings) or ecclesiastical (bishops).\textsuperscript{70} Even Quakers and Mennonites, both noted

\textsuperscript{68} Ahlstrom, \textit{A Religious History}, 1:464-465.

\textsuperscript{69} Baird, \textit{Religion in America}, 221-222. Jon Butler outlines this irreligion during the time of the Revolution, where British soldiers destroyed churches, Anglicans were persecuted and killed, Pennsylvania Quakers were harassed for their passivism, stone churches were dismantled and tombstones were used as oven floors, marking the bread with funereal inscriptions in the baked bread crusts. The pride of victory against England brought a level of vanity among Americans that made religion less relevant, and regular fasts were conducted from 1774 through 1783 by the Philadelphia synod to relieve the general climate of religious decline in the new nation. As it was, religion and its place within the new nation did not have a secure future in the US directly following the Revolution. See \textit{Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 207-209, 212.

\textsuperscript{70} The close association of the Anglican Church and the English crown and the widespread hostility and popular fears of an appointed episcopate in America led to its immediate disestablishment in the new nation and a new suspicion toward it as a particular style of religion. In fact, the fear that inspired the saying, “No Bishop, no King,” also inspired the popular
for their pacifism, took part in the military exercises of the Revolution, and according to Baird, “in great numbers renounce their former religious principles.” Though this new national anti-clerical temperament brought forth the constitutional structures and logic of liberty to the new nation, many began to fear that religion had been left in its wake. “Would to God,” Baird lamented, that men were as “zealous and unanimous in asserting their spiritual liberty, as they are in vindicating their political freedom.”

By the end of the war, nearly three-quarters of Anglican priests had fled the colonies, and the once prominent Church of England in America was gone. To deflect suspicion of disloyalty to the Revolution, the few Anglicans that remained in the US renamed themselves the Protestant Episcopal Church. Other opposition of the 1765 Stamp Act, which many, including John Adams, feared would allow Parliament to also “establish the Church of England with all its creeds, articles, tests, ceremonies, and tithes; and prohibit all other churches as conventicles and schism shops.” For a fuller discussion of this, see Hudson, *Religion in America*, 91.

71 Ibid., 223. In light of a petition from Virginia dated July 23, 1776, Baird’s assessment seems to be an exaggeration. This petition argues to the Convention of Virginia that the July 17, 1775 convention ordinance that exempted Quakers and Mennonites from serving in the militia is “extremely impolitic as well as unjust.” According to this petition, these exemptions “represent the Injustice of subjecting one part of the Community to the whole burden of Government, while others equally share the Benefits of it.” Edwin Gaustad, ed. *A Documentary History of Religion in America to 1877*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 204.

72 In context of this quote, Baird wrote: “The Lord is chastising the people, but they do not feel it…In the American army there are many clergymen, who serve both as chaplains and as officers. I myself know two, one of whom is a colonel, and the other a captain. The whole country is in perfect enthusiasm for liberty. The whole population, from New England to Georgia, is of one mind, and determined to risk life and all things in defense of liberty. The few who think differently are not permitted to utter their sentiments.” Baird, *Religion in America*, 223. The religious and civil tyranny of the English crown had inspired a curious alliance between the left wing (rationalists claiming freedom of religious belief and expression as a right) as well as right wing sects (evangelicals who would fight to retain an intimate relation between religion and state power), but the old enmities and struggles such groups held for each other were about to reemerge at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Mead, Sidney E. *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), 105-106.

Anglicans, followers of John Wesley’s “Methodist” interpretation of Anglicanism, regrouped themselves after many British loyalists fled, under the new American name Methodist Episcopal Church. However, Congregationalism (descendents of the Puritans) had no such ties and found significant new privilege within the newly organized states. As it came to be understood by many American Protestants in the early nineteenth century, Congregationalism was the American Church. Ezra Styles even argued that the establishment of Congregationalism in several New England states provided a sure guarantee against ecclesiastical despotism.

The US Constitution may have forbidden Congress from making any laws regarding the establishment of religion, but it said nothing concerning the right of individual states to do so. The 1780 Massachusetts Constitution, for example, established “suitable provision...for the institution of the public worship of God, and for the support and maintenance of public Protestant teachers of piety, religion, and morality.” As social critic Stephen Colwell would explain, “The States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, by their Constitutions, expressly recognized Protestant Christianity, whilst they expressly provide for the privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience.” Beyond this, the Massachusetts Constitution prescribes that all significant leadership in the state, such as Governor and Senator, shall subscribe a solemn profession, “that

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he believes the Christian religion, and has a firm persuasion of its truth.” The rhetoric of liberty was retained but did not apply, notes Colwell, to “infidels or unbelievers.” Consequently, true Americans were expected to “lay one hand upon the Bible…and the other upon the Constitution,” and in that order. In fact, according to the New York Supreme Court, “to revile the Holy Scriptures was an indictable offence.”\textsuperscript{77} Religious liberty and the disestablishment of religion had not ushered in religious equality or rationalist suspicion of religion, but instead reintroduced the old Puritan model of religious exclusion and religious privilege.

Despite the privileging of Christianity and specifically a Puritan-style Protestantism in this new nation, ministers were deeply outnumbered, but not without hope.\textsuperscript{78} In an ironic twist, the new development of religious disestablishment in Virginia, which called for the removal of religion from state support, though at first resisted, offered a surprising boost for religion and an answer to its lag following the Revolution. “Christianity enjoys advantages here never before accorded to it by accident or by power,” noted Colwell. “The Evangelical Christians of the United States can sway this power at their pleasure, for they have heretofore been and still are, largely in the majority.”\textsuperscript{79} The English Reformation had removed England from the jurisdiction of the Pope, but now in America, Protestants removed themselves from the King and his bishops as well.


\textsuperscript{78} According to Baird, in 1775, estimates show 1,400 ministers for a population of 3.5 million, granting 1 minister for every 2,500 Americans. See Baird, \textit{Religion in America}, 225.

\textsuperscript{79} Colwell, \textit{The Position of Christianity}, 68-69.
Disestablishment inspired the new principle of Volunteerism (the “voluntary” nature of Christian participation and competition), which essentially put “the people” in charge of upholding and extending the power and influence of religion, rather than the state. *Vox populi* is the *vox Dei* (“The voice of the people is the voice of God”) became the new American catchphrase. This principle did not separate religion from the state or guarantee its non-influence within the state (however much the intention of its authors Jefferson and Madison), but rather further entrenched Christianity, through a newly formed rule of the people, into the national fabric in powerful ways not seen under establishment.

As theological and ideological heirs of Calvin and Winthrop, many American Protestants felt the proper response to internal spiritual anxiety as well as external diversity was through politics. As Winthrop had earlier surmised, politics essentially established God’s kingdom on earth (as it had under King Saul and David) through legislation that enforced God’s sovereignty through a system of political and religious uniformity. Following the Revolution, few Americans doubted the providential, even millennial role the United States would play in the world. As Ahlstrom explained, “In many minds the American was conceived as a new Adam in a new Eden, and the American nation as mankind’s great second chance.”

Technically, the US Constitution forbid religion any direct role in the government of American society, “but nevertheless,” French observer Alexis de Tocqueville perceptively observed in 1835, “it [Christianity] must be regarded as

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80 Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 1:34.
the \textit{foremost of the political institutions} of that country.\textsuperscript{81} Protestantism in America was, as further observed by Tocqueville, \textquotedblleft an established and irresistible fact.\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{82} Christian historian Mark Noll explained that during the nineteenth century, evangelical Christianity became the largest subculture and wielder of influence within the United States, second only to the federal government itself. \textsuperscript{83} And according to Presbyterian minister and historian Robert Baird in 1844, the often noted failure to the Constitution to formally mention Christianity as the law of the land, was only because it already was. It \textquotedblleft is certainly a mistake,\textquotedblright continued Baird, to assume that \textquotedblleft the general government can do nothing whatever to promote religion.\textquotedblright The First Amendment was not to \textquotedblleft prostrate Christianity,\textquotedblright \textquotedblleft much less to advance Mahomedanism, or Judaism, or infidelity,\textquotedblright \textquotedblleft but to exclude all rivalry among Christian sects.\textsuperscript{84} The new logic, however mistaken, was that the evangelical hegemony made redundant an explicit statement of Christ\textquotesingle s sovereignty and those of His church within American governance.

Evangelical involvement in politics in the early and mid-nineteenth century represented a drive to uphold this earlier Puritan covenant and to ensure a sense of Christian unity and control in America. The disestablishment of religion (as pushed by rationalist leaders Jefferson and Madison) released particular churches from official support of several states, freeing all denominations for

\textsuperscript{81} As reprinted in Ahlstrom, \textit{A Religious History}, 1:468. Emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{82} Quoting Toqueville in Hutchinson, \textit{Religious Pluralism in America}, 59.

\textsuperscript{83} Noll, \textit{America\textquotesingle s God}, 197.

\textsuperscript{84} Baird, \textit{Religion in America}, 253, 261.
equal competition in American public life. But as Church historian Sidney Mead noted, “This of course was competition between Christian groups sharing a common Christian tradition and heritage. It was not competition between those of rival faiths, but competition between those holding divergent forms of the same faith.” Though thus disestablished, nineteenth-century America became a theocratic-style democratic republic where competing sects and volunteer associations, not bishops and popes, spoke for God.

As a move against the Anglican establishment in Virginia, Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers moved with Jefferson and Madison to effectively disestablish religion from Virginia. Though some feared such measures could unleash an irreligion that would threaten the American covenant, the anti-clergy sentiments at the end of the eighteenth century were too powerful to resist. Virginia was the oldest and most populous of America’s British colonies, and it was here that Anglicanism enjoyed its strongest public support. Disestablishment in Virginia, then, had dramatic national implications. “Virginia served,” explained historian of American religion Edwin Gaustad, “as the anvil for hammering out religious liberty’s guarantees, it also served as proving ground for turning principle into practice.”

Seeking to demonstrate the piety behind popular anti-clergy sentiment, Church historians placed the blame, not on the innate dangers or religious privilege, but on corrupt Anglican priests. Thus, because of their religious sentiments, leading Virginians became “disgusted with the irreligious

85 Mead, The Lively Experiment, 130.
86 Gaustad, A Documentary History, 197.
lives of many of the clergy,” known more for their time spent fox-hunting and other sports, than attending the needs of Christians in Virginia.  

Anglican battles between Baptists and Presbyterians continued well after the American Revolution, particularly as Anglican privilege in Virginia continued. Such realities, which Baptists argued “appears a Bitumen to Cement Church and State together; the foundation for Ecclesiastical Tyranny, and the first step towards an Inquisition,” furthered the need to refine the definition of religious disestablishment in Virginia and the role all denominations would have in the state.

Consequently, Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers joined Jefferson’s fight for disestablishment, but calling instead for a system of volunteerism that insisted, wrote Presbyterian minister Robert Baird, that “everyone be left to stand or fall according to his merit.” Presbyterianism (holding their first General Assembly in 1788), doctrinally identical with Congregationalists, whose growth in the colonies came from itinerant revivalists, and who by the eve of the Revolution were second only to Congregationalists in number, were more than ready to engage in a more open and competitive environment. Though Calvinism remained a significant force in America, the popularity of volunteerism and an accompanying revivalism during the first half of the nineteenth century (the Second Great Awakening) challenged the idea of predestination and the role

87 Baird, Religion in America, 228.

88 Gaustad, A Documentary History, 244.

89 Baird, Religion in America, 234-5.

90 Carroll, Historical Atlas, 38-43.
individuals held in society and the nature of one’s individual obligations to the American covenant. The first great revivals of the eighteenth century had sparked the popular imagination toward individual participation and a trend toward democratization, inspiring not just increased participation within churches, but an animosity toward unfair competition, as symbolized by the visible Anglican establishment and its newly aggressive arm in the colonies, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPGFP). Persecuted groups, such as Baptists and Quakers thus sought a new guarantee of local autonomy and individual freedom. Jefferson’s push toward disestablishment met such allies, but at the same time, such alliances were not always comfortable or enduring.

Suspicion of Jefferson, his unorthodox brand of Christianity and his overly-liberal principle of religious freedom, however, even among those that embraced volunteerism, remained strong. “Now,” remarked Baird, “none of Mr. Jefferson’s admirers will consider it slanderous to assert that he was a very bitter enemy to Christianity, and we may even assume that he wished to see not only the Episcopal Church separated from the state in Virginia, but the utter overthrow of everything in the shape of a church throughout the country.”91 The philosophical concept of religious liberty by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison represented one of the more controversial and radical proposals of the new republic and what Jefferson considered his most difficult fight. Earlier advocates of religious freedom were largely limited to outcasts and dissidents of the Puritan establishment like Roger Williams, Ann Hutchison and William Penn. Rhode

91 Baird, Religion in America, 230.
Island, where this “livelie experiment” first took form, was not referred to as a “shining city,” but instead the “sewer of New England.” Presbyterians knew they did not want an Anglican establishment, but they disagreed with Jefferson that Protestantism itself should be disprivileged by separation. Strict separationism, then, throughout much of the nineteenth century, remained a radical and new idea that drew the ire, not praise of many Protestants in America. Such measures, according to popular thought, would destroy religion, and lead the nation into unchecked vice and corruption. It is thus an anachronism and over-simplification to speak of nineteenth century religion as somehow different and separate from the political.

Jefferson’s attempt to establish religious liberty and separation, however, was considered by Jefferson as encouraging and saving “true” religion, not destroying it.92 Evangelicals were more skeptical, particularly in light of Jefferson’s connections with France and the philosophies of Enlightenment rationalism and its larger attacks against religion. European Enlightenment Rationalism, as seen by more radical Deists and critics of religion, namely David Hume, Voltaire, and after 1780, Thomas Paine, provides a context in which Protestants justifiably worried about the more moderate rationalist and Deist Thomas Jefferson.93 Either way, as Jefferson began a train of thought that would later transfer or separate a sense of the sacred to the more neutral political realm,

92 Hutchison, Religious Pluralism, 33.

93 As an example of the harsh criticism of religion coming from the Enlightenment, David Hume wrote, “But still it must be acknowledged, that, as terror is the primary principle of religion, it is the passion which always predominates in it, and admits but of short intervals of pleasure.” David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion 2nd ed. (London, MDCLXXIX [1779]), 258.
evangelicals fought to counter it. Among rationalists or Deists like Jefferson, the individual mind, rather than the Bible or educated elitist priests, or even uneducated and more eccentric preachers, informed one’s religious responses. As Church historian Winthrop Hudson noted, “There was nothing distinctively Christian about it [the Deist ‘creed’] – no mention of any special work of Christ, of man’s sinful nature and consequent need of redemption, or of any necessary dependence on biblical revelation.”

Though suspicious of the miraculous as well as the growing evangelical religious excitement and enthusiasms of the early revivals, revolutionaries like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson embraced rational and ethical (as they called it, “natural”) religion, considering it an essential ingredient in the creation of a civil society. Such became the rhetoric and spirit behind the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, where “Nature’s God,” not Jesus Christ, was cited as the inspiration behind the Revolution and the heart of one’s civil faith. The three foundational documents – the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution—as historian of American Christianity Mark Noll notes, are “hardly evangelical in any specific sense.”

For the writers of these documents, the Revolution and its aftermath was both an intellectual and religious event, not in denouncing religion, but calling for a return to it in its essential ethical principles, which did not necessarily include the virgin birth of Christ, His miracles, or His resurrection.

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94 Hudson, Religion in America, 92.

95 Noll, America’s God, 164.
The Founding Fathers came from an array of orthodox denominational backgrounds (Presbyterian, Anglican, Episcopalian, Congregationalist, Baptist, etc.), but their faith was a synthesis of traditional private piety (inclusive of prayer, church attendance, Bible reading, etc.) and moral philosophy rooted in human reason as embodied in the rationalism of the European Enlightenment. For some, like John Adams, George Washington, Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, this moral philosophy took precedence over private piety. Revolutionary optimism then was not rooted in the Bible, a personal God, or even Jesus Christ, as it was for evangelicals, but rather was found within human reason that demanded a broader “natural” and more vague, impersonal, and generic conception of God. As American historian of religion Jon Butler further explained, “their views of religion were far different from those of the Congregational, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian clergymen who backed the Revolution.”

In contradiction to later interpretations by Church historians, the definition of religious liberty as pushed by Jefferson was far from assured and was considered a dangerous and even radical experiment by many evangelical leaders. Jefferson’s interpretation differed radically from his Presbyterian and Congregationalist allies. In fact, it would be the issue of religion that would prove most personally and professionally divisive for Jefferson throughout his subsequent political career. In 1779, Jefferson first proposed the Virginia Act for

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Establishing Religious Freedom, which would not garner sufficient support for another seven years. Despite accusations of his godlessness, Jefferson’s argument was not without strong religious overtones. By invoking the name of “Almighty God,” Jefferson countered that religious privilege and compulsion even in a more generic non-denominational approach, was both “sinful and tyrannical.” Jefferson may have rejected a more supernatural approach to religion, as had Adams and Washington, but his focus on the secular and rational was deeply religious. Furthering this point, coercing the mind or body was “a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercion on either, as was in his Almighty power to do[.]” Without turning to scripture, Jefferson declared that religious liberty represented “the natural rights of mankind,” and to deny one this freedom represented “an infringement of natural right” that not even God would deny.  

Jefferson was not denying the existence and dangers of blasphemy, he was redefining it in ways that most evangelicals would find difficult to endorse, as it was them who Jefferson was suggesting were guilty of such.

Similarly, as Virginia’s representative in the First Congress, James Madison denounced Patrick Henry’s (1736-1799) attempt to establish “the Christian Religion” (as opposed to a particular denomination) as “the established Religion of this Commonwealth.” In his memorial against Henry in 1785, Madison followed Jefferson’s tone by declaring the establishment of religion to

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be an affront against “the Supreme Lawgiver of the Universe” and was “adverse to the diffusion of the light of Christianity.”

Jefferson and Madison’s enlightenment rationale was clear: Liberty was sacred; reason was the standard by which this sacred gift can be measured (as opposed to the Bible); God as the supreme watchmaker doesn’t coerce, but allows all things to happen; and liberty and happiness was a sign of God’s blessings. As Jefferson would have read from his personal Quran, there could be no compulsion in religion (Sura 2:256). Ethical rationalism weighed heavy on the philosophers of the early republic, but as seen here, self-evident rationalism (not the Bible or invocations of Jesus Christ) represented the standard for what Jefferson declared to be sinful and what Madison considered an affront to true religion. Though these principles would soon get lost in the rhetoric and rationalizations of the early nineteenth-century revivals and the rewriting of history by Church historians such as Baird, the rationalists Jefferson and Madison effectively transformed the relationship of political and religious empowerment through the constitutional establishment of religious freedom.

Inspired by the American Revolution and its focus on Enlightenment rationalism and anti-clerical institutionalism, French citizens demanded the same inalienable human rights Jefferson had declared in America. The French Revolution was hailed by many in America as a victory over the “Papist Anti-Christ,” although many Americans equally grew concerned with its upholding of Jacobism, or the rationalist “infidels,” and Jefferson was portrayed by American

evangelicals as being its “arch-Infidel.” To many, this French rationalism was just as bad as Roman Catholicism and had gained alarming national prominence, both at home and abroad. With the “French-infected infidel” Thomas Jefferson (who served as the first American minister to France) winning the presidency in 1801, evangelicals had cause for serious concern of its spread in America. Baird writes, “At the head of these [Deists] in the United States stood Mr. Jefferson, who was president from 1801-1809, and who in conversation, and by his writings, did more than any other man that ever lived, to propagate irreligion in the most influential part of the community.” As a significant contributor and even main author of America’s foundational documents, Jefferson’s embodiment of political virtue won him an air of political legitimacy despite his liberal support of religious freedom and unorthodox Christian beliefs. For the most part, however, evangelicals distrusted him and his drive for religious liberty and fought against the diversity such principles inspired. In fact, when he was president, rumors and paranoia circulated that Jefferson decreed the burning of Christian Scripture, causing some to hide their Bibles in wells.

Ministers feared the religious and political implications of Jefferson’s rationalistic philosophies, being both dangerous and anti-American in their

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99 Hutchison, Religious Pluralism, 33.

100 George Washington, though deistic in his approach to religion as well, was more difficult to dismiss. Baird notes in a footnote that a one Miss Francis Wright, a popular lecturer, was hissed for calling Washington an infidel as others like Baird had been calling Jefferson. Baird, Religion in America, 650-651.

response to America’s growing diversity. Though often associated with the beginnings of republicanism in America, Americans feared that French Jacobism (or Enlightenment rationalism) represented a plan “for exterminating Christianity.” Theologian Timothy Dwight raised the cry that such a course “presents no efficacious means of restraining Vice, or promoting Virtue; but on the contrary encourages Vice and discourages Virtue.”102 As historian Nathan Hatch explains, many Congregationalists and Presbyterians “associated democratic advance with the Antichrist of French revolutionary zeal.”103 The anxieties that emerged during this period concerning disestablishment and an accompanying secularization struck Protestant ministers with penetrating alarm, inspiring concerns about the identity and agenda of the new nation—notwithstanding the assurances of continued providence by Styles. An increased religious diversity also threatened evangelical hegemony as represented most alarmingly by the Roman Catholic growth that encouraged, notes Butler, “the infamous nativist campaigns” of antebellum America.104

An important response to this national crisis of America’s increasing religious diversity was in the appropriation of secularism itself as a religious principle and tool in the extension of God’s kingdom in America. Republicanism was no longer just a principle at odds with this early Puritan theocratic


104 Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, 284.
expectation, but the means by which it was to be actualized. Similar to the claim by Church historians like Baird and Schaff that America always was a Christian nation, disestablishment, as noted by Congregationalist Leonard Bacon, was now reinterpreted as supporting an evangelical agenda and narrative. As put by Bacon, “Revivalism was the spiritual counterpart of republicanism in politics. The élan vital of them both was democracy, freedom, faith, and optimism—the dominant characteristics, in short, of the great American frontier.”

Horace Bushnell declared, “It was Protestantism in religion that created republicanism in government.”

Even Jesus, it turned out, according to one Christian in Ohio in 1807, was in principle “the most genuine REPUBLICAN that ever existed.”

Mid-nineteenth century historians and popular Christian writers ignored the rationalist impulse of Washington and others to emphasize their public piety, thus repainting the founding of the nation as a strictly evangelical event and its foundational documents as particularly Christian. For Butler, this created a “myth of the American Christian past,” becoming “one of the most powerful myths to inform the history of both American religion and American society.” This myth was that “America had always been a Christian nation, from the settlement of Virginia and Massachusetts Bay to the writing of the Constitution.” Such mythologizing departed dramatically from the alarming reality encountered by Revolutionary clergymen, who, Butler notes, redoubled their institutional efforts

105 Mead, “Timothy Dwight,” in Wentz, 49.


107 As quoted in Hatch, Democratization of American Christianity, 186.
because of their fear that “America was not at all a Christian society.”

Jefferson’s “fair experiment” was thus refashioned once disestablishment had been completed nationally in the 1830s. Religious liberty thus guaranteed a broader “Christian” or “invisible” establishment, as supported not by the state, but the principle of volunteerism.

Simply put, the Constitution did not outline or hint toward this new interpretation of religious liberty and the American founding, but as many later understood it, it was implied. “Should any one, after all, regret that the constitution does not contain something more explicit on the subject [of America being a Christian nation], I cannot but say that I participate in that regret.” But still, argued Baird, “The authors of that constitution never dreamt that they were to be regarded as treating Christianity with contempt, because they did not formally mention it as the law of the land, which it was already; much less that it should be excluded from the government.” It was a mere oversight, offered Baird, and had “the excellent men who framed the constitution foreseen the inferences that have been drawn from the omission, they would have recognized in a proper formula the existence of God, and the truth and the importance of the Christian religion.”

As Schaff, Baird and others reconfigured it at mid-nineteenth century, the founding fathers intended what contemporary evangelicals needed to hear in their new conceptualization of the narrative of religious liberty (namely,

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establishing the supremacy of evangelical Christianity), it just never occurred to the fathers (who were largely not evangelical) to actually say as much.

ILLUSTRATION

Figure 2. “The First Prayer in Congress September 1774” by Jacob Duche. Painted in 1848, this image serves as visible example of the revised image of Washington and that of the piety of the founding of the new American nation. Such paintings directly connected the birth of the nation with the piety and religious enthusiasm of the mid-nineteenth century, rather than the rationalism of the late eighteenth.

As the second flame of revivalism burned brightly throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, evangelical religion exploded in a way that forced Christians to deal with this dangerous problematic of disestablishment. The retelling and mythologizing of American history by evangelical Church
historians/ministers represents but a single response to this emergent national challenge. Focusing on individualistic religious experience and the fear of God’s wrath, most revivalists dreaded the implications of Jefferson’s absolute doctrine of church/state separation and with the help of revivalists and popular historians, redefined separation in a way that privileged denominational Protestant evangelical Christianity in the American public sphere. According to such frameworks, this new evangelical definition of liberty would not contradict Jefferson’s “separation” motif, but would claim it as uniquely evangelical from the beginning.

Lyman Beecher, Timothy Dwight’s ministerial successor, articulated best the fears as well as the new hope many evangelical ministers felt during this period of national definition and individual participation in religious and political matters. In reflecting upon the recent disestablishment of religion in Connecticut (1818), Beecher despaired that “the injury done to the cause of Christ” was “irreparable.” In his mind, Jefferson’s principle of religious liberty had represented an affront to what he understood Christianity to be and the kingdom it was to bring forth. He confessed, “For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell.” But as he then explained, “the best thing that ever happened to the state of Connecticut” had happened—religion became officially disestablished. As belatedly realized by one of early nineteenth-century America’s more influential ministers, Christianity could unhesitatingly link arms with this new political and

110 Mead, “Timothy Dwight,” in Wentz, 50.
philosophical conception of disestablishment and separation. Rather than “ministers” having “lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe-buckles, and cocked hats, and gold-headed canes.” Beecher, like many of his ministerial colleagues, legitimated this republican twist to the “cause of Christ,” and reversing their original opposition became its most vigorous proponents. As such, those who did not start, but survived the Revolution, now moved to claim it as uniquely theirs.

Protestants and Catholics in Europe, nevertheless, charged that this new alignment of voluntary church and republican government, or reconfiguration of church/state relations, was heretical at best. John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) represented this continued concern as he argued at the time of the American Revolution, “It would hardly be possible for you to steer clear, between anarchy and tyranny... No governments under heaven are so despotic as the republican.” It was the “Savior’s government,” a “Bible government” that many American Revolutionaries fought for. This was not a system of popular equality, but in the words of Virginian James O’Kelly, a government of “Christian

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111 Noll, America’s God, 44, 75.


113 Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, 224.

equality, and the Christian name.” Republicanism was not intuitively Christian and for many, it was its antithesis. Still, American Protestants like Beecher came to see something Wesley and others had not. Republicanism, however heterodoxical and destructive, could be a new vehicle for fulfillment of “true religion,” and the enlivening spirit undergirding the building of God’s kingdom in America. Volunteerism (“the union of like-minded individuals”), for example, the idea that true religion was about voluntary individual involvement rather than state coercion, was now how God was to engage the world in preparation for the millennium. This new “invisible” approach was in contrast to the visible coercive power earlier wielded by the church. As twentieth-century theologian H. Richard Niebuhr would later explain, “The kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of love, and love is not only an emotion; it is a tendency to action, or action itself.” As Niebuhr furthered, it may be impossible to affect a perfectly pure organization, but Christians were to “not identify the visible with the invisible church, but it was determined that the visible should try to image the invisible.” Volunteerism represented the visible tool by which this invisible image could be imagined and made potent within American politics and public life as evangelicals fused theology and ideology, piety and practice in the evangelical reform movement and their quest to make America the foremost example of a Christian nation. Protestantism in America was thus not an institution (visible), but instead a

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115 Hatch, Democratization of American Christianity, 70.
movement of people (invisible)."\textsuperscript{116} Baird enthusiastically wrote in celebration of volunteerism, “Thus the principle seems to extend itself in every direction with an all-powerful influence. Adapting itself to every variety of circumstances, it acts wherever the gospel is to be preached, wherever vice is to be attacked, and wherever suffering humanity has to be relieved.” In short, religious freedom, through volunteerism, made individuals “co-workers for God,” in both countering and redefining the religio-political meaning of Americanism.\textsuperscript{117}

British colonialists had understood their crossing of the Atlantic as a form of collective baptism into their holy commonwealth; the great revival fires of the nineteenth-century, then, represented the Pentecostal descent of God’s Holy Spirit upon the nation and a renewal of the American covenant in new nationalistic terms. As Jefferson had viewed politics as a sacred endeavor devoid of dogmatic prejudice, evangelicals now re-engaged politics as a new dogma. Armed with the sword of volunteerism, American evangelicals of both lay and clergy status embraced the disestablishment of the nineteenth century and engaged the task of nation building with as much religious zeal as had their Puritan parents. They were, like their Puritan counterparts, pioneers of a new political and religious system that aimed to ensure and model the dawning and fulfillment of Christ’s millennial kingdom.


Whatever complacency and disruption there was to religion at the end of the eighteenth century as a consequence of the Revolution and disestablishment, this all changed following the camp meetings of the great revivals of the early to mid-nineteenth century. Earlier revival fires of the eighteenth century, though controversial and divisive, splitting denominations in half, also assured that the future belonged to the supporters of revivalism and the reviveralist party and its adaptation of Jonathan Edward’s Calvinistic “New England theology.”

However, with the advent of the new century’s waves of revivals and its new faith in the principle of volunteerism, American Calvinists were forced to shed their understanding of predestination and instead embrace a more participatory approach to salvation. In contrast to Edward’s eighteenth-century description of the revivals and accompany conversion as “the surprising work of God,” nineteenth-century reviveralist Charles G. Finney perceived and conducted revivals as an affect of human action, not God’s alone. Prior to this, only fringe theologians thought man assisted in his own salvation, and many prominent ministers like Lyman Beecher criticized Finney’s new methods to revival. Now however, the implicit Arminian theological shift such transformative interpretations of Christian theology and society validated by its revival success gradually became taken for granted and even Beecher came to accept Finney’s liberalized “New Measure” Calvinism. Here, due in part to the growing philosophy of individualism as furthered by the principle of volunteerism, church


gatherings found themselves under the unbridled enthusiasm of unlettered and sometimes obscene preachers of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ (whose qualifications and claim was “converted heart and gifted tongue”). America revivalists were not to sit back and wait for their salvation, but instead, as Finney expressed, were to become co-agents of it. Accompanying this was a nationalist impulse and emphasis toward salvation that was to be expressed in social reform. This new approach to reform reflected notions of and concern to reassert the Puritan Motif in the evangelical era, namely America as a “righteous Nation.” America was heralded by evangelicals as the foremost example of a righteous nation, giving a national cast to Winthrop’s “city upon a hill” that heavily conflated righteous nation with Protestant nation. Such perceptions and practices also proved fundamental in how revivalists rethought and redefined Jefferson’s separation motif and were able to reconcile themselves to it.

This appropriation and linkage of republicanism and religious liberty by evangelical elites can be contextualized as we look closer at the American revivals following the American Revolution. Ironically, these foundations may be found with early revivalist preachers, such as George Whitefield, a symbol of the official British establishment in the American colonies. However unintentional, the widespread ecstasy and democratizing currents that accompanied Whitefield’s revivals blurred traditional social and religious boundaries and established a limited environment of social egalitarianism and democratized individualism. By bringing colonial Americans into such close proximity with each other to share a common experience of the spirit, whites and blacks, men and women, rich and
poor were brought into direct communion with the divine and each other by the thousands. As the First Awakenings of the eighteenth century questioned the need for educated elites to mediate one’s personal experience, the Second Awakenings on the cusp of the formation of the new republic encouraged a more individualistic response. In this new setting of disestablishment and volunteerism, ministers were little different or more knowledgeable than the laity, with many traveling the countryside without “purse or script.” A “converted heart and gifted tongue” and pony, not one’s Oxford, Harvard, or Yale purse or credentials qualified one as a minister. The principle of volunteerism did not signify a total privatization and separation of religion as Jefferson had hoped, but it pushed religion into a voluntary and hence a more democratic and competitive role within the public realm.

Under this new principle of volunteerism, the evangelical majority reformulated the relationship of religion with the state. As Schaff explained it, American separation “is not an annihilation of one factor, but only an amicable separation of the two in their spheres of outward operation.” Still, Philip Schaff explained that such a separation was not ideal, as “the kingdom of Christ is to penetrate and transform like leaven, all the relations of individual and national life.” This evangelical reformation was thus more than a compromise but a re-conceptualization and reconfiguration of Jefferson’s ideal of separation and the new democratic spirit of evangelical Protestantism as embodied in Beecher. Ultimately this re-conceptualization and reconfiguration furthered this ideal of

120 Schaff, America, 90-91.
Christ’s kingdom in America and the furthering of the role of religion in the state, rather than the distance between the two. Though disestablished and separate, the majoritarian evangelicals were now claiming America a Christian democratic nation and that Jefferson’s “wall of separation” by no means meant to challenge government privilege of Protestant Christianity (however much he himself would remain a radical enemy of God), but instead, represented an unquestioned support of it. This remarkable reimagining of separation furthered by the principle and vehicle of volunteerism explains how Beecher went from extreme despair to unbounded jubilation at the disestablishment of religion in Connecticut in 1818. He had not changed his mind regarding the role of religion and the state, but rather saw the light in how best it could be accomplished.

The product of this unlikely union was that notions of the kingdom of God became imbedded with republican-style politics. As with the Puritans, politics had become conflated with a religious goal and religion infused and fused with a political goal, becoming the very pillars of an American cultural ethos. In ways contrary to Jefferson and Madison, the Bible represented a powerful motive for reform and an instrument of reform. “It is the religion of the Bible only that can render the population of any country honest, industrious, peaceable, quiet, contented, happy.” As Baird described, this was an impression not just made by minister-historians, but “the impression prevails among our statesmen that the Bible is emphatically the foundation of our hopes as a people.”121 Thus could Schaff explain, “God’s Church, God’s Book, and God’s Day are the three pillars

121 Baird, Religion in America, 372.
of American society.” “Without them,” however, we “must go the way of all flesh, and God will raise up some other nation or continent to carry on his designs.”¹²² The emergence and popularity of alternative sacred texts and expressions of religion other than the evangelical mainstream were thus to be dealt with as though the life of the nation itself depended upon it, for according to the new national covenant, it did. Diversity among the various evangelical denominations was one thing, but once this difference extended, as noted Church historian Winthrop Hudson, into uncontrolled madness, we enter the terrain of the “bizarre,” inclusive of the “Shakers, the Mormons, the Oneida community, the Millerites, the Spiritualists, and a host of smaller and more transient groups.”¹²³ Also conceived as a growing threat to the nation was the Roman Catholic Church, whose merging of theology and political ideology was pointed out by nativist movements with great alarm. The national response had not been passive. As Protestant historian Sidney Mead explains, “If and when it is judged the religious sects were inadequate or derelict,” the nation can defend itself by enforcing “necessary beliefs.”¹²⁴

For many Americans, America’s religious diversity stood as proof of the continual perils that threatened the nation. America’s newness brought a feeling of optimism among evangelicals, but at the same time, a somber reminder that


¹²³ Hudson, Religion in America, 181-182.

little was yet secured, demanding religious and civil obligation from each individual. Thus the providence of this new American system, which Schaff warns is “still in the storm-and-pressure-period,” makes “each Christian a priest and a king in the service of the universal High Priest and King of Kings.” The first years of the nation were thus formative, for it was here in “North America, moreover, the fate of the Reformation is to be decided” and the “city of a hill” was to shine for the entire world.125

Realization of this synthesis and its vision inspired a new zeal for evangelical reform in America that many anticipated would hasten Jesus Christ’s return. Mark Hopkins, president of Williams College hoped that the time was soon coming, due to “the transforming influence of Christianity,” when “wars, and intemperance, and licentiousness, and fraud, and slavery, and all oppression” was to end.126 According to later Church historians like Hudson, Lyman Beecher (upon his epiphany) became “the real architect” behind this American societal reform in both religion and politics. Beecher’s success was his systematizing and making compact the various volunteer societies, organizing them through the adoption of a secular business model, as he himself put it, into “a gigantic religious power.”127 With the significant growth of populations in the western frontier following the Revolution, Americans recognized that the days of informal efforts were over. By the early 1800s, a more systematic pattern was needed that

125 Schaff, America, 260-263.

126 As quoted in Hudson, Religion in America, 152.

127 Hudson, Religion in America, 152.
could dramatically expand the geography and efficacy of an evangelical Christianity. Based on the voluntary principle, missionary, Bible and tract societies sought to organize and educate America’s ever-expanding population. Other societies, now becoming organized on interdenominational and national levels, focused on moral and social reform in ways that had earlier been monopolized by the state. By the end of the nineteenth century, women refined these reform movements, uniting their leadership efforts against alcohol, prostitution, polygamy, child labor, worker exploitation, and on behalf of health and public education.¹²⁸ Church historians were quick to extol the virtues of this “benevolent empire,” and, as Kenneth Scott Latourette cheered, “Never had [Christianity] exerted so wide an influence upon the human race.” For Latourette and other evangelical writers of American history, the nineteenth century was, in light of evangelical political dominance, “the great century,” and Christian power in public life had never been wielded with more enthusiasm and efficacy than now.¹²⁹

Though it cannot be denied that these reform movements had a powerful impact on America’s sense of religiosity, the popular zeal for social and moral reform came directly at odds with various other American groups and societies. As several minority groups would argue, this “disinterested benevolence” was in many ways indiscernible from mob violence against America’s vast diversity.


Volunteer societies were popular mediums that anybody could organize in opposition to religious groups or cultural habits that evangelicals considered threatening. Social and moral reform crusades permeated American society, unifying a divided evangelicalism, leaving few unaffected. Masonry, Catholicism, Mormonism, Native-Americans, slavery, African-Americans, “worldly amusements,” prohibition, and Chinese immigrants were just a few targets of these crusades. Through these crusades, the rhetoric and militancy of a reformed Calvinism reached an apex, finding popular expression in new hymns such as Sabine Baring-Gould’s 1865 still popular “Onward Christian Soldiers” and Julia Ward Howe’s 1861 “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” In songs such as these, American Christians were given militant imagery for a decisive battle that was understood to be much more than a simple metaphor. Josiah Strong compared the battle for the Christianization of America with those of Julius Caesar: “In every decisive battle there is a moment of crisis on which the fortunes of the day turn. The commander who seizes and holds that ridge of destiny wins the victory.” “Our whole history,” he continued, “is a succession of crisis. Our national salvation demands in supreme exercise certain military virtues,” such as vigilance, tact, daring, force and persistence – “these are the martial virtues which must command success.” America was becoming, by means of evangelical voluntarism, cooperation, religious zeal of the great revivals, and the profession of republican principles, the foremost example of the “city on the hill” that would

bring in God’s literal kingdom, and thus transform a world of darkness into a world of light, understood as God’s American covenant of unity and millennial promises.

Though a new era, nineteenth-century evangelicals reified the seventeenth-century Puritan covenant of love and Reformation hope, retaining its prominence in popular and political discourse of “chosen nation/chosen people.” Their efforts gave credence to Chief Justice Brewer of the Supreme Court’s proclamation in the last decade of the nineteenth century, that America was indeed “a Christian nation.”

Though disestablishment had been a key concern of the American Revolution and a key fight for Jefferson and Madison, Christianity had become soon into the nineteenth century, familiar to the spirit of their Puritan fathers. Baird writes, Christianity “is to this day, though without establishments, and with equal liberty to men’s consciences, the religion of the laws and of the government.” Obscuring these religious developments with those of the Revolution, Baird goes on to explain, with references to the “religious character of the early colonists” that “our public institutions carry still the stamp of their origin: the memory of better times is come down to us in solid remains; the monuments of the fathers are yet standing; and, blessed be God, the national edifice continues visible to rest upon them.”

Officially, the United States did not have an establishment of religion, but according to Robert Baird, the government of the United States was “so far regulated by the Christian religion as

\[^{131}\text{Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States, 143 U.S. 457, 471; (1892).}\]

\[^{132}\text{Baird, Religion in America, 284-5.}\]
to partake of its spirit,” establishing a “Christian character” more effective in reforming American life than an established and visible church had ever been. It was not so much the national disestablishment that Baird celebrated, but rather the precedent of establishment that was laid out in many State constitutions. 133 As seen with colonial Anglicanism and the push for an American bishop, religious establishments required a visible head, be it of bishop, king or pope. Disestablishment had taken away this visibility and had unleashed an invisible force that was at heart in the European Reformation. Having “no visible head,” Baird quotes Montesquieu, “is more agreeable to the independency of climate than that which has one.” 134 The new “Christian character” of American religious liberty had provided means whereby an invisible head, as seen through the principle of volunteerism, could establish America as a Christian nation in both body and soul. This then, was the superiority and blessing of American Christianity, for as Beecher soon recognized, disestablishment had awoken this soul for the first time since the original Christian Pentecost. It was this “higher unity” Schaff had in mind that made sense of the seeming chaos of American religion. But this “higher unity” and “invisible” church had important consequences to the common understanding of religious liberty. As will be shown below, this ideal was perceived as being under continual threat by America’s growing religious, racial, and ethnic diversity, which many did not consider distinguishable. Consequently, Anglo Protestants organized themselves in defense


134 Ibid., 255.
of their crusade in realization of a righteous nation—a vision and defense that would prove troubling to religious, cultural and racial minorities that were not deemed as part of the Protestant majority.

**Barbarism, the Frontier, and Abraham the American**

A major dilemma throughout American history has been that of a religiously-fused national identity and how such constructions determined popular political and judicial responses to America’s diversity and its ideals of both enlightened and civil society. Schaff and other nineteenth-century Anglo Protestant writers distinguished themselves, religiously and racially, as uniquely chosen above all others to lead the new nation to its ultimate glory and fulfillment. It was thus appropriate that these evangelical ministers were also the nation’s first and primary historians. This section deals with this American identity and its establishment by a narrow group of white evangelical men, with its attempt to solve the problem of America’s diversity by claims that it was simply “un-American.”

Like religious diversity, racial and ethnic diversity was also apparent and widespread and contracted with the Anglocentric vision celebrated by Schaff and Baird. This diversity was not the “Phenix [sic] grave” that Schaff pointed to that would give new life to “all European nationalities” and “all European churches and sects, of Protestantism and Romanism.”  

135 For this Swiss-born immigrant, America represented “the theatre of the last decisive conflict between faith and

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infidelity, between Christ and Antichrist[.]”¹³⁶ Nineteenth-century historians understood the historical record itself to be “the record of a world-wide, time-filling, and veritable conflict between right and wrong, God and Satan,” having both racial and ethnic dimensions.¹³⁷ According to Schaff, Anglo-Saxons (in nineteenth-century scientific terms: “Aryans”) were peculiarly adept (thanks to their imagined superior racial and religious qualities) to pulling off this great achievement in world history. American Aryanism, argued Horace Bushnell, represented a new epoch of Christian civilization, and only “ready and pliant assimilation” to it could “save the inferior” races then in America. Aryans had unique social, religious, and physical qualities that by nature were transformative.¹³⁸ As Strong would add, this “powerful race” will result in a global “competition of races,” by which we can expect in the ‘survival of the

¹³⁶ Ibid., 272.


¹³⁸ Horace Bushnell, Christian Nurture (New York, 1861), 207, 205-206, 219. Regarding the use of the term “Aryan” in nineteenth century, Scholar of world religion, Tomoko Masuzawa, explained that although the term was initially used to refer to a cluster of languages, it soon had reference to an ethnic or racial group. It was a mark of identity in Europe and then America that defined “whiteness.” This whiteness excluded Jews, who were instead identified as “oriental.” This marking of Aryan came with the assumptions of the modern period, that social evolution marked the superior races/languages/religions from the inferior. This new scientific term fit well with more traditional religious designations, “For some, rather than generating a new system of difference and classification, this discovery presaged a new, scientific confirmation of an old monogonist idea sanctioned by the bible: the original unity of all humankind.” Also, Aryanism was a central idea of the new world order, “it is the Aryan nations who either originated or brought to fruition all of the universals that the modern world would recognize and value, namely, science, art, systems of government based on law and individual freedom, as well as those universal(istic) religions, or ‘world religions’ in the original, strict sense.” The Invention of World Religions, 152, 162
fittest.” Conversely, non-Protestants and non-whites, due to their assumed racial, cultural, and religious degradation were viewed as inferior and excluded as positive actors and agents within this nationalistic and explicitly racialistic and racist endeavor.

Minorities (such as the Jews, “red aborigines,” “black sons of Africa,” or the “yellow immigrants”) were presumed to have no agency within this narrative and were thus subjects to be acted upon as a natural consequence of the hegemony and “superiority of the whites.” According to Schaff: “The United States present, in the first place, a wonderful mixture of all nations under heaven. A tour through them is in some sense a tour through the world…” The New Englander, notes Schaff, “has a natural business genius, and can undertake anything….He early becomes independent, and even in youth learns to push through all possible difficulties. Hence the Jews hardly play any part in America; they find their masters in the Yankees.” Though enslavement of the African represents a “dreadful curse,” Christianization of “the black sons of Africa, rejoicing in the childlike cheerfulness of their nature, and even in freedom bowing instinctively before the superiority of the whites,” slavery has turned “into an incalculable blessing to the pagan savages of Africa.” With all the benevolence of the white man, “red aborigines of the country, who are constantly retreating further into the forests and prairies of the West, and, in spite of all attempts to Christianize and civilize them, are steadily approaching the tragical fate of self-extermination by

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139 Strong, Our Country, 214.

140 Schaff, America, 52, 52, 64
intestine wars, contagious diseases, and the poison of rum.” Speaking of Chinese immigrants, Schaff continued, “Lastly, the yellow immigrants from the Celestial Empire, attracted by the gold of California, and bringing with them their oblong eyes, their quiet disposition and mechanical culture, their industry, avarice, and filthy habits.” Thus, racial and religious diversity was categorized within these racist tropes and demeaning stereotypes and limited occupational characterizations. It was therefore “common sense” that liberty did not apply to all equally, and Jefferson’s “wall of separation” began to be understood in a very different light.

The trope of separation of church and state, as understood by nineteenth-century evangelicals, had reference not to the separation of religion from the public sphere, but more commonly the separation of false religion from the public sphere. It would be absurd, remarked Baird, to think that “irreligion and licentiousness are also guaranteed by the organic laws, or by any laws whatever.”

Enlivened by the principle of lay interdenominational volunteerism, evangelism demanded the Christianization (aka. Protestantization and Aryanization) of America’s culture and its diversity but the demand was too large for local churches and government to adequately respond to by themselves. As already noted with reform societies, groups established schools and missions with impressive zeal toward making the US a righteous Christian nation, and as best they could to transform religious, racial and ethnic minorities to more acceptable copies of the Anglo Protestant ideal. For example, the American Bible Society

\[141\] Baird, Religion in America, 273.
(1816) flooded western towns and cities with Bibles and the American Sunday School Union (1824) brought literacy and literature to thousands in the West. The success of such lay volunteer institutions however was minimized by the continued and massive influx of immigrants throughout the nineteenth century, further alarming the anxiety behind these volunteer groups. New missionary outreach organizations to enslaved Africans, Native Americans, Catholics, Asians, and Mormons, often in cooperation with government agencies, transformed the makeup of the American landscape and the frameworks in which this diversity would be allowed to respond.

Two generations later in 1885 social theologian Josiah Strong warned Americans that this vision of America’s divine destiny was under serious threat by immigration. Though much had happened to buttress the cause of Christ and Christianization efforts through alliance of church and reform organizations, its vision of a “righteous nation” and institutions were suffering from a “peaceful invasion by an army more than four times as vast as the estimated number of Goths and Vandals that swept over Southern Europe and overwhelmed Rome. During the past hundred years fifteen million foreigners have made their homes in the United States,” representing, posited Strong, a diversity that was just as dangerous to the US as the Germanic tribes were to Rome.  

A new generation of Church historians could find in the historiography of Baird an interpretive model of inclusion and exclusion. In one of the first significant efforts at religious interpretation of American history, Baird’s

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142 Strong, *Our Country*, 42.
pioneering *Religion in America* set the historiographical precedence of later generations of Church and religious historians in his schema and charting of “evangelical” and “non-evangelical” conceptions of American religion. Evangelicals were those “whose religion is the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible.” Non-evangelicals were “all those sects that either renounce, or fail faithfully to exhibit the fundamental and saving truths of the gospel.” As Baird revealed, America’s progress depended upon true “evangelical” religion. Structurally, non-evangelicals were all lumped together (inclusive of Catholics, Jews, Socialists, Mormons, Unitarians, etc.) and came near the end of his work. Baird was not saying all these unorthodox groups were the same in worth, but they as a whole mattered little to American progress and thus made an appearance in this narrative only after the story of America’s unity and greatness had already been told. Claiming that it was a “faithful exhibition” of the American religious landscape, Baird presented his work as more than an attempt to fulfill intellectual curiosity, but in service to its topic was also to “promote the extension of the Messiah’s kingdom in the world.”

The historical enterprise was thus employed, not just to make sense of (and thus dismiss) this increasing diversity, but more importantly to affirm and establish the frameworks of the expansion and maintenance of this evangelical kingdom in opposition to forces aligned against. Baird’s narrative was not a history, but instead an evangelical “manifesto,” noted Sidney Ahlstrom, “for a worldwide reformation of

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144 Ibid., ix.
Early American religious historiography, as seen through the eyes of Robert Baird, Philip Schaff, and Daniel Dorchester (and presented as a fusion of history and theology), as well as their successors William W. Sweet, Sidney Mead, and Winthrop Hudson, represented and advanced a religious enterprise with a nationalistic agenda. Such an agenda attempted to answer the question of America’s growing diversity and established a unified national identity that all “true” Americans could be understood and honored within. Jefferson’s mandate of a liberal religious liberty was thus appropriated by minister-historians like Baird and his successors in exclusive religious terms that affirmed and celebrated America’s “lively experiment,” even while refashioning it as a foil of the evangelical agenda. Religious, racial and ethnic minorities, however, as they looked to Jefferson’s promise of religious separation, remained bewildered as to their place within this historiography and national narrative.

The West as a new focus of later generations of Church historians created a fear anticipated by the earlier generation of minister-historians. As a major focus of American intellectual and religious thought, the idea of the western frontier helped formulated how Americans thought of American progress and manifest destiny. Westward advancement also demarcated progressives from digressives, patriots from rebels, and heroes from villains. America’s progressive march into the western frontier grounded these mythical frameworks into a visible patriotism. This historiographical focus also demonstrated what groups and individuals proved relevant to include in this national story, as well as what

145 Ahlstrom, Religious History, 8.
actions were considered hostile and aberrant in this narrative of Christian
cross. What was patriotic and American was thus often defined by a singularly
narrow class of American elites in the midst of an extremely diversified society.
Contrasting the development of “normative” white Christian civilization with an
untamed (un-Christianized) “savage” wilderness, this frontier environment lay in
the forefront of the American imagination and would, in the nineteenth century,
serve as an important inspiration behind depictions of national
“progress.” With all its promise, western expansionism brought forth significant
threats to what many volunteer societies were seeking to accomplish. In response
to these challenges, Americans worked within the frameworks of fear and
paranoia as much as they did with hope and charity.

Lyman Beecher, proud expounder of America’s millennial destiny and
president of Lane Theological Seminary in Ohio, early raised the cry of
immediate danger of America’s growing diversity in the West. For Beecher, as
outlined in his well-known 1834 publication *A Plea for the West*, the great influx
of ethnic and religious diversity had to be a conspiracy of foreign powers to
destroy America’s republican system. It made sense, that wherever God
established his kingdom, Satan would also be found trying to dismantle it.
Beecher’s biggest concern was with the supposed large influx of Catholic
immigrants to the West. His response is telling. “We are prepared cheerfully to
abide the consequences” of Catholics immigration, so long as they succumb to the
“various powers of assimilation.” In Beecher’s mind, Catholicism as a system
(due to its “visible” head) was innately evil and anti-American, and for such
immigrants to assimilate to the American system, they would have to deny the Catholic faith. The system corrupted the individual, rather than the other way around, and therefore the individual, not the system was welcomed. Beecher continually reminded his fellow Americans of God’s covenant with them and their great birthright, and how only immediate and dramatic action against America’s diversity could prevent Americans from selling this glorious birthright for a “morsel of meat.”

Beecher argued that such aggression against Catholicism and immigration should not be understood as bigotry or intolerance, but rather “the *right* of SELF-PRESERVATION, and the denial of it is TREASON or the INFATURATION OF FOLLY.” The destiny of the West was not to be taken any more lightly than one would take their own salvation, as the destiny of this nation was part of the responsibility of each individual. It was this sacralization of politics and social policy and the national identity and agenda that allowed American ministers to engage in it so directly and with such feelings of ownership. Separation, as Beecher had defined it, actually furthered this religious and political link. In the midst of this religious anticipation, the American West was central. In Beecher’s view, it was obvious “that the religious and political destiny of our nation is to be decided in the West.” Due to the huge influx of immigrants from throughout Europe, Beecher warned that a “nation is

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146 “Morsel of meat” had direct reference to the Biblical account of Isaac’s son Esau and his foolish selling of his birthright to his brother Jacob. Because of this foolish endeavor on the part of Esau, he became symbolic of surrendering your divine potentials in exchange for worldly desires.

being ‘born in a day.’” Immediate and collective action was demanded, “Let no man at the East quiet himself and dream of liberty, whatever may become of the West…. Her destiny is our destiny.”\textsuperscript{148} Beecher’s warning would have profound and ironic consequences for the Mormon westward trek. The more the LDS Church moved west in their flight from persecution, the more they entered and redefined this sacred land as their own, much to the annoyance of Beecher, Strong, and others.

When Beecher published his \textit{Plea for the West}, the American context was one of serious political, social, economic, and religious shift and uncertainty which made America’s growing religious, racial and ethnic diversity in the West alarming and threatening. The same year that Beecher threw up alarm over Catholic growth and immigration in the West, suspicions of Catholic sexual treachery and murder led to the mob burning of the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Also that year, Samuel F.B. Morse (1791-1872) wrote a series of anti-Catholic letters to the editor in the \textit{New York Observer}, collected in his \textit{Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States}. Published under the pseudonym of Maria Monk, \textit{Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal} further fueled anti-Catholic and xenophobic sentiments, and the widespread burnings of Irish-American homes and Catholic churches in the Philadelphia area in 1844.\textsuperscript{149} Indeed, throughout the antebellum years, fear of religious deviancy usually defined as fanaticism, with its attendant

\textsuperscript{148} Lyman Beecher, \textit{A Plea for the West} (Cincinnati, 1835), 11 ff.

sexual and social violence, represented an almost omnipresent influence within all levels of American society. From childhood to adulthood, most Americans were exposed to the dangers of religious difference. These reflected for example in increased anti-Catholic and anti-Mormon teachings in juvenile literature, school books, popular magazines, religious and secular newspapers, novels, poems, gift books, histories, travel accounts, and theological accounts, all which unanimously condemned, abhorred, and warned against the dangers of religious diversity.

Evangelical historians, however, were quick to downplay and even dismiss or redirect the blame and responsibility of resulting violence, charting the unjust attack on innocent nuns and children as having “been sadly misrepresented.” Baird was sensitive to the fact that many (particularly “Roman Catholics in Europe”) had reproached American Protestants’ lack of tolerance, pointing directly to the convent burning in Massachusetts as proof of widespread intolerance. Baird denied that such examples were evidence of America’s failed experiment of religious liberty, charting it as an uncharacteristic happenstance, not against Catholics, but perceived immorality of the institution. However, Baird noted that the atrocity was condemned “in the strongest terms by all respectable


151 Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 345. Terryl L. Givens demonstrates that by 1900, there were already 56 anti-Mormon dime novels, whose narrative may have been fictional, but as read by nineteenth-century Americans, were true nonetheless. See *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 34, 58, 124.
people.” Still, in Baird’s argument, the victims were indicted as instigators. If it were not for the “highly improper conduct on the part of some of the nuns” at the convent who “inflamed the minds of the populace,” this entire event would not likely have happened. Moreover, provided international perspective, he contended that “Romanists have little reason to complain” of religious persecution, as they are excessively intolerant toward Protestants “in almost all countries, whether in the old or new world, in which their religion is the dominant one.”

Regarding other events of violence towards religious, racial and ethnic minorities (who were often similarly dismissed or ignored or exposed as “dangerous”), as well as concerns over Protestant and majoritarianism at home, Church historians like Baird and Schaff remained silent.

Within the rough context of American development and expansion, injustice and violence against non-mainstream groups was downplayed if not altogether ignored, as if it was one of the necessary by products and components of American expansionism and efforts in defense of the notion of America as a righteous nation. A similar tactic was reflected in the treatment of enslaved Africans, free blacks, and Native Americans. Such tactics, however conscious, ensured the preservation of a contrived narrative of sacred land and chosen nation that was both uniform and free, and supportive of the evangelical kingdom ideal. In perceiving America as a chosen land as its people as God’s people, Americans looked to the West with great interest. The West was still, in the minds of

152 Baird, Religion in America, 614-615.
153 Ibid., 617.
nineteenth century Americas (not unlike those of earlier centuries), uncultivated and open. If new and great things were to happen, it would be here. It was thus a geographic and ideological space that offered great promise, as well as dire consequence.

Though Beecher’s *Plea for the West* drew attention to the growth of Catholicism in the West so as to incite Christian anxiety and inspire renewed voluntary efforts, he also recognized in 1847 that barbarism was indeed a much bigger threat then Catholicism alone. The West was more than geography, it was ideology and theology. It was more than economic opportunity, it was Manifest Destiny. The same year, 1847, Brigham Young declared a new home for the Mormon people in the heart of the West. Mormonism had provoked local passions in New York, Missouri, Ohio and Illinois, and now the western deserts of the United States also attracted evangelical concern. As evidenced by the Utah War of 1857-8 and the Congressional anti-polygamy crusades of the 1870s and 1880s, Mormonism was increasingly understood to be a major national problem that conflated religious and political fears and concerns with sacred geography. Throughout the last half of the nineteenth century, Mormon disempowerment, together with the discouragement of Chinese immigration and Native American confinement and eradication became the defining challenges of national policy for the development of the West.

As the “Barbarism of the West” increased in significance, biblical parallels from the Puritan legacy were easily called upon. In cultivating new land and encountering its unfamiliar inhabitants, Americans heavily drew upon Old
Testament imageries. The kingdom was to come, and despite a shared nostalgia toward the West, the role Americans held in bringing it forth was unclear. Eastern churches were increasingly aware that whoever ruled the West ruled the nation. Be it religious or cultural, gaining control of the West implied the control of the national narrative and its future cultural, economic, and political agenda.

This desire to control and exert influence over the West represented a significant challenge. Drunkenness, violence, superstition and ignorance were just a few of the assumed degrading influences and natural consequences of frontier life which had to be checked. Horace Bushnell, prominent pastor of the North Church in Hartford Connecticut, delivered in 1847 a widely published discourse titled “Barbarism the First Danger.” Perceiving the “new world” within a strict biblical lens, Bushnell argued that the US was in its “emigrant age of Israel,” or “time of the Judges.” The first half of the nineteenth-century had witnessed an immense expansion of the political boundaries of the U.S., inspiring a culture of frontier development, “a time therefore of decline towards barbarism.” Americans, and the nation at large, Bushnell predicted, will continue to be at risk on the frontiers until the kingdom is fully established and the frontier is finally closed. Until that time, American society must “bring back the times of the Judges,” a time when God lifted up strong individual men (not a centralized state) to physically beat down the surrounding dangers of barbarism by force. As a developmental phase preceding the reign of the one true king, these “American Judges,” endowed with individual strength and determination (through volunteerism), would win the wilderness for this future heavenly king. Ideals of
liberty were thus contextualized by a rough environment that required significant “hands on” cultivation and uprooting; grafting and burning.\textsuperscript{154} This approach was idealized by frontier grit determination and individualism, but was contextualized by Old Testament biblical imaginations.

Bushnell as theologian and preacher readily appropriated scripture as he contrasted godly Abraham’s “pure, virgin character of a great and primitive manhood,” with that of the wild and wicked Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Arab Bedouins. America’s diversity was discovered and defined in Scripture, conflating Abraham and Israel’s struggles with those in early America, thus establishing the promise of Canaan possession with the anticipation of Canaanite and Hittite exclusion and eventual eradication.\textsuperscript{155} The biblical past was re-created in the sacred territories of the American frontier. Thus, difference in race and religion were biblically proportioned differences, and challengers of the established order were enemies of Israel and of God. Indeed, if there was a “new Zion,” there was also a “new Canaan” and a new set of “Canaanites” that had to be properly responded to.

Mormonism out west became more than just a national problem, it was perceived as a direct threat to the very identity of what many deemed to be “American.” The evangelical and historical narrative and the earlier conflation of

\textsuperscript{154} For Bushnell, the West was a realm where the “villain and the saint coalesce, without difficulty, in one and the same character; and superstition, which delights in absurdities, hides the imposter from him who suffers it.” See Horace Bushnell, \textit{Barbarism the first Danger. A Discourse for Home Missions} (New York: William Osborn, 1847), 1.

\textsuperscript{155} William Hubbard, \textit{A General History of New England, From the Discovery to MDCLXXX}. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. 1848. Reprint (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 60.
religion and ideology in a national narrative of identity and agenda upheld religion as a viable power of the state, but Mormonism was upheld as its antithesis. Mormonism became an “other” identity that legitimated and assured this self identity over the West that implied, by way of contrast, a proper relation between the two as upheld by Bushnell and Beecher. In attacking Mormonism, scriptural parallels were readily made, identifying Mormons as worshipers of Dagon, idolaters, pagans, and heathens.\textsuperscript{156} The Scriptural model of nation building and defense against its internal and external enemies—the unrighteous, was regularly drawn upon from the pulpit, popular press and the nations politicians.

The existence of God’s enemies (the Philistines) verified the truth of His chosen (the New Israel). The wilderness was to be won over, for it was here, not in the great cities of Egypt, that Moses brought forth the new law and declared a new nation. Similarly, the western wilderness was crucial for Americans because it was here that new patterns and new structures could be laid down, and where God’s chosen could finish the realization of the Kingdom of God in America and the extension of God’s rule on earth. In short, the West and Mormon Utah in particular, came to be identified by some as a present day Canaan filled with the enemies of God’s chosen, and these enemies must first be conquered. The emergence and growth of Mormonism and its continual westward expansions and

\textsuperscript{156} When Buchanan sent troops to Utah in the late summer of 1857, the popular press described Mormons in Utah as “a set of intolerable idolaters who have erected the odious Dagon of their worship on a portion of American soil.” As a “Christian and civilized people,” wrote the \textit{New York Times}, Americans could not afford to tolerate such “absurdities, usurpations, indecencies and villainies of the worst form of Paganism.” \textit{New York Times}, April 21, 1857, “What Shall we Do with the Mormons?” pg. 4; \textit{New York Times}, “The War Department and the Utah Expedition.” December 10, 1857, Pg. 5
rapid development of the Mormon’s own version of the Kingdom of God in America, with its own appropriate theology and ideology and region-political justification and narrative, thus helped to make real Bushnell’s alarmism: The “Mormon city and temple rise as proof visible before me” and “all fantastic errors and absurdities will assuredly congregate there [in the west].” Already “thousands of disciples” gather to this “wretched and silly delusion”\(^{157}\) Taking lesson from Israel’s Judges (whose job it was to violently deliver Israel from the ungodly), Bushnell called for immediate action against “the wild hunters and robber clans of the western hemisphere—American Moabites, Arabs and Edomites!”

Fueled by rumors of polygamy, female slavery, and violence, clergy, historians, and theologians considered Mormonism to be a “second Islam,” and the swamps of Illinois and the deserts of Utah “another Arabia.” In predicting the “speedy annihilation” of Mormonism as it attempts to “found a kind of empire in the West,” Baird cautioned leaders of the “sect” that they “will soon find that America is not another Arabia, nor he [‘Joe Smith’] another Mahomet; his hope of founding a vast empire in the western hemisphere must soon vanish.”\(^{158}\) Philip Schaff similarly drew illusions to Islam as he pondered the irony of Mormonism and concluded that, “almost like a second edition of Mohammedanism, has this sect risen in the extreme West, to the astonishment of the world; and just at the time, too, when the old Mohammedanism in the East is decaying and lying as a

\(^{157}\) Bushnell, *Barbarism*, 27.

In making such connections with Islam (Christendom’s “inveterate foe”), Schaff felt that “Mormons and the Americans, or the proper people of the United States, do not fit together,” but by nature “have a deadly hatred of each other.” As the western frontier continued to become a locus and sanctuary to an influx of Roman Catholics, Chinese, Mormons, miners, ranchers, cow hands, and other lawless and untutored and irreligious immigrants and emigrants, America’s elites (politicians, evangelical clergy, volunteer societies, historians, theologians, etc.) called for action, comparable with the Hebrew Judge Samson and his slaying of the Philistines. What was needed to deal with the “Mormon question” and the questions posed by other troublesome peoples and traditions now contesting the West was the Scriptural prescription—the jawbone of an ass.

Fifty years later, anxiety for the West and its crucial role as thermostat and definer for the heartland of the nation had hardly subsided. By 1885, wide-selling author and General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, Josiah Strong noted that a “vast work remains to be done, both in the North and the South…but it is the West, not the South or the North, which holds the key to the nation’s future.”

Like Schaff and Baird, Strong also understood race to be a key factor in the West.

159 Schaff, America, 246.

160 Ibid., 243-246.

161 Almost unanimously, American authors and ministers called for a Christian re-awakening toward the Mormon West, in the form of federal troops, Christian missionaries, and religious educational facilities. “Thoughtful men see perils on our national horizon,” recognized Josiah Strong a generation later in 1885. “Our argument is concerned not with all of them, but *only with those which peculiarly threaten the West.*” Strong, Our Country, 9, 42, 194 (emphasis in original). Outlining the supremacy of the West and its Anglo-Saxon developers in regard to the “world’s last hope,” Strong unabashedly identified the perils of the West that then threatened this hope, — immigration, Romanism, and Mormonism.
He spoke matter-of-factly of the superior qualities of the Anglo-Saxon race (aka “Aryan”) in conquering the West, and from there, the rest of the world, but also the inabilities and liabilities of all other races. Clearly, God intended Anglo-Saxons to colonize (meaning Christianize/civilize) the West, as evidenced (by way of comparative contrast) in their brilliance of mind and solid work ethic. This “frontier race,” as Baird emphatically described them, were men that had been trained by the harsh realities of the wilderness. They were, due to their unconquerable spirit, “best fitted to penetrate and settle in the wilderness[.]”

Connecting these early settlers to the biblical narrative, Baird wrote, “When an emigrant from those States removes to the ‘Far West,’ he takes with him his waggons [sic], his cattle, his little ones, and a troop of slaves, so as to resemble Abraham when he moved from place to place in Canaan.” Non-Anglo Protestants had no positive place in this narrative of national and kingdom expansion. African slaves were good workers, but they were “too stupid and improvident to make good colonists.” Native populations were mere wretched creatures of superstition, whose downfall and extermination (self inflicted, and engaged well before colonialists landed on their wilderness shores) was attributed to their own barbarity and depravity as a race. The Irish (who cannot “let ardent spirits alone” and who were tainted by Catholicism) have but little experience or desire for frontier cultivation, not knowing “how to use the plough, or how to manage the horse and the ox.” Similarly religious and cultural habits handicapped the Welsh, German, Swiss, French, and Italians all have their good qualities, but as long as
they hold to the habits of their native lands, are altogether weak cultivators. Consequently, in a new world of wanderings and multi-ethnic, linguistic and religious background, apparently there could be but one Abraham, and that Abraham was the Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Kingdom building, as understood by these minister-historians, was synonymous with nation building. Thus the rhetoric of this kingdom-project remained a powerful motif or myth in the midst of an ever increasing racial and cultural diversity.

However grand and glorious the notion of conquest of the West had been, the price of that progress was always high. As when the Puritans looked upon the annihilation of entire Native Americans populations with joy, the myth of American progress allowed many nineteenth-century Americans to downplay and even justify and celebrate a similar price exacted in the nineteenth century against minority groups. Robert Baird reveals a significant sentiment among nineteenth-century evangelicals as he justified the evangelical treatment of non-evangelicals in the US.

While such is the prevailing respect and regard for each other among the members of our evangelical churches, they all unite in opposing, on the one hand, the errors of Rome, and, on the other, the heresy that denies the proper divinity and atonement of Christ, together with those other aberrations from the true gospel which that heresy involves. Now, it is this refusal to hold fellowship with errors of vital moment, —it is this earnest contending for saving truth—that leads tourists in the United States, . . . to charge us with uncharitableness.


The popular aversion toward “non-evangelicals” was neither uniform nor equally manifest, but as Baird remarked, intolerance toward heresy, errors, and all other forms of Christian aberrations, were but an “earnest contending for saving truth” and informed public and governmental policy (toward blacks, Native Americans, etc). Minority groups, such as Mormonism, took the brunt of this “contending for saving truth.” “It is for our statesmen to determine,” remarked the popular periodical, *The Ladies Repository*, “whether our Christian nation is to be charged with intolerance and arbitrary quarrelsome in suppressing a fanatical vice or evil corporation, such as Mormonism is.” The *Repository* then explained, that if the Constitution is open to protecting aberrant groups like the Mormons, then “it needs alteration again, to make plain what is obscure,” for surely, the founding fathers *never intended* such religious deviancy.164 Such sentiments set the precedence for late nineteenth century popular and political responses to American religious diversity that would be reflected at the World’s Fair and later with Mormonism at the Reed Smoot hearings, which this dissertation will discuss in later chapters. The Mormon attempt to be re-defined as “American” in both these events demonstrate a serious effort to re-position itself as within this Americana, and thus within what was originally intended when speaking of American religious diversity and the constitutional rights thus associated.

By the last quarter of the century, Strong echoed the earlier sentiments of Baird that Mormonism was a particularly disconcerting problem. “Mormonism”

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posed, he explained, an “abnormal” exception to the “gradual triumph in the whole country” of “the voluntary principle,” representing the worst form of this abuse towards our “religious freedom.”\textsuperscript{165} Diversity was thus an abuse of religious freedom, not something that was to be protected by it.\textsuperscript{166} Protestants also frequently pointed to Mormonism so as to demonstrate the consequences of sectarian division among their own. Foreign observers (some no doubt influenced by Baird’s assessment) furthered the insult by observing that only in a land of “humbugs” can such religions as Mormonism (“this shameful scandal based on lies, deception, and immorality”) emerge.\textsuperscript{167} Ironically even Catholics pointed to Mormonism as a way of criticizing the Reformation and America’s “city on a hill” arrogance and misplaced trust in religious liberty and volunteerism.\textsuperscript{168}

When the Mormon kingdom emerged within this setting, though it embodied many familiar American sentiments, it still found itself a target.

Animosities directed against Mormonism had to do with Mormonism’s

\textsuperscript{165} Schaff, “Progress of Christianity,” 221.

\textsuperscript{166} Division within the Christian religion had long been seen as a grave concern for American religionists. Although the principle of volunteerism (religious freedom) had become the “shining star” of American revivalism, it was also credited for bringing forth the evils of sectarianism, and faith in it was at times shaken. John Nevin of the German Reformed Church and a contemporary and esteemed colleague of Phillip Schaff, labeled sectarianism to be the very “Anti-Christ.” Nevin remarked, “The most dangerous foe with which we are called to contend, is not the Church of Rome but the sect plague in our own midst.” Quoted in Ahlstrom, Religious History, 572, 616.

\textsuperscript{167} Mark Noll, The Civil War as a Theological Crisis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 144-145.

\textsuperscript{168} Catholics were not looking at America as the “city on a hill,” but instead represented “a land of Cocinians—a land of infidelity.” In this perspective, the fate of Protestantism looked grim. “…Protestantism has declined, is declining, and is destined to decline; and probably before the end of a century from the day [November 10, 1860], there will remain of it throughout the civilized world but a spectacle of the wreck of what had been Protestantism.” As quoted in William M. Shea, The Lion and the Lamb: Evangelicals and Catholics in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 223.
divergence from traditional evangelical understandings of Christianity and Christian culture, and the evident success attendant on this divergence. But it was also rooted in the more direct challenge and even criticism of Christianity increasingly articulated by Mormon leaders in defense of their faith. Thus, divergent and shared visions of the Kingdom of God in America inspired both converts to and critics of Mormonism. Indeed, religious groups, such as Mormons, Catholics, and Protestants, however much they differed and struggled to get along with each other, were in many ways typical of the American experience and had much in common, even in the shared vision of the Kingdom of God in America.

Although Mormons have long been indicted for their differences with evangelicals throughout the nineteenth century, generally overlooked in the heights of emotions were their significant similarities and equally “American” claims. While Mormons differed significantly from their evangelical critics, their emergence represented an essential aspect of what many Americans understood to be a direct expression of the American experience and contested the notion that they represented an explicitly “un-American” expression of religion and culture.

**American Authority and the Mormon Kingdom**

A related overlooked question of historiographical significance was what did such negative representations and rhetorical and physical assaults mean to Mormons or potential Mormons? If one converted to Mormonism would that imply an absolute rejection by that convert of an American identity?
When Caroline B. Crosby, a devout school teacher and member of the Episcopal Church married Jonathan Crosby in 1834, his Mormon faith was “strange and new” to her. “Some of our friends,” she writes, “seemed to feel very sorry that I had fallen in with such a society of people. Some said they would rather bury me if I were their daughter. Others told strange stories of Jo Smith walking on water &C.” Though impressed by her husband’s new faith, Caroline “felt sorry that he should take so decided a stand against other sects of Christians,” but “at the same time my conscience told me that there must be a wrong somewhere in modern christianity, and possible he might be right in trying to expose that wrong.”

Following several public meetings with a former Methodist minister who now an Elder in the Mormon Church “by the name of King,” Caroline grew “convinced of the truth of his doctrine” and set out “to read the book of Mormon, and search the scriptures until I was thoroughly convinced that it was the work of the Lord.” As Mormonism was new and tended to be critical toward traditional Christianity and its sole reliance on the Bible, rumors and suspicions easily spread, and while America’s religious identity was still young and uncertain, these rumors elicited fears that were only beginning to find definition. Joseph Smith, a product of the anxieties and fears of burned over district revivalism had early defined Mormonism as a corrective of and direct challenge to evangelical Protestantism and its presumed cultural, religious, and political hegemony to

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presumptions that Evangelical Protestantism interpretation and expression of Christianity were uniquely the key to a righteous nation and Kingdom of God in America.

Mormonism did not attempt to reform the shattered pieces of what it perceived as a broken Christianity, but instead declared more basically a restoration of early biblical truth which claimed to transcend the accumulation of past theological and ecclesiastical misinterpretations and corruption. The excesses of sectarianism and division within American Christianity during the early years of Mormonism opened itself to outside criticism. As seen with Jonathan and Caroline Crosby, this distrust of mainstream religion, coupled with the idea that God was going to do something marvelous in America in the fulfilling of his kingdom, many flocked to the new faith. In offering a ready answer to America’s confusing religious diversity, this message proved enticing for individuals like Jonathan Crosby.

Even more threatening to critics such as Schaff was Mormonism’s challenge to already sacrosanct notions of American Providential destiny. Believing their criticism of American Christianity justified by Scripture and revelation, nineteenth-century Mormons presented themselves and their interpretation of religion as the true Christianity and Protestants as its defiled copy. For Mormons, additional proof of Protestant apostasy lay in their perceptions of Protestant aggressions toward them, as ministers were felt to be the inciters behind the mobbing, killings, and unjust legislations.
Many of these sentiments were influenced by earlier disillusionment of American Christianity. Early Mormon converts imposed their own initial struggles of religion to those of the entire Christian world. Mormonism, for these converts, was the logical fix for their, and thus the world’s problems. With misgivings toward American sectarianism, nineteen-year-old Parley P. Pratt of New York “resolved to bid farewell to the civilized world—where I had met with little else but disappointment, sorrow and unrewarded toil; and where sectarian divisions disgusted and ignorance perplexed me.” Within a few years, Pratt came across an itinerant Reformed Baptist (aka Campbellites) preacher named Sidney Ridgon. The Cambellites held similar reservations toward American Christianity as had Pratt and Jonathan Crosby. Leaving the Baptist denomination, the Cambellites (after Alexander Campbell) saw themselves as an attempt to restore the true form of Christianity that had been lost soon after the time of Jesus and the apostles. Impressed that he had found in the Campbellites the “ancient gospel in its true form,” even that “which I had discovered years before; but could find no one to minister in,” Pratt joined the Campbellites. Yet the question remained, “But who is Mr. Rigdon? Who is Mr. Campbell? Who commissioned them? Who baptized them for remission of sins? Who ordained them to stand up as Peter?” The anti-clericalism of the Reformation had dismantled the ancient claim of apostolic succession through a single Bishop in Rome or even England, but now every American had become his own pope, begging the biblical question over religious authority. “But still one great link was wanting to complete the chain of the ancient order of things; and that was, the authority to minister in holy things—
the apostleship, the power which should accompany the form. This thought occurred to me as soon as I heard Mr. Rigdon make proclamation of the gospel.” Thus Mormonism not only induced skepticism of traditional Christianity, but also conviction for converts like Pratt and finally Rigdon to fill that void.

Both Protestants and Mormons agreed that authority was important, but Mormons rejected the “invisible” church idea that had served the Reformation in America, and thus put new faith in visible ecclesiastical leaders. Protestants thus looked on Mormons as the reemergence of ecclesiastic tyranny that the Revolution had fought against, whereas Mormons criticized Protestants as having no proper authority in holy things. Joseph Smith claimed to restore the keys of Peter and at the same time implied that the Reformation had just thrown them aside.

Pratt’s religious biography exemplified the anxiety elicited by revivalism and the attraction of the Mormon corrective. After listening to the itinerant Campbellite preacher Sidney Rigdon, Pratt joined the Reformed Baptists, despite reservations regarding Rigdon’s authority to baptize. In search for this divine commission and with no theological training or ordination, Pratt set out to become a wandering preacher, “without purse or script.” It was within this state of scriptural anxiety that Pratt ran into his brother William, who he had not seen for 5 years, and who his family had given up for dead. It was a joyous reunion for the

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brothers, and William had been deeply impressed with Parley’s wife, his house and his prosperous wilderness farm. But Parley told William that he was giving up his farm for that of the life of an itinerant preacher, likely to never see his farm again. Surprised, William asked what he would do and how we would support himself. Parley responded, “Why, sir, I have bank bills enough, on the very best institutions in the world, to sustain myself and family while we live.” With William intrigued, Parley took him to his treasury, opened it, pulled out a large pocket book that was full of promissory notes with key passages of the New Testament written on them. Confused, William began to read, “Whoever shall forsake father or mother, brethren or sisters, houses or lands, wife or children, for my sake and the gospel’s, shall receive an hundred fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.” Parley Pratt then said, “Well, then, I am going to fulfill the conditions to the letter on my part. I feel called upon by the Holy Ghost to forsake my house and home for the gospel’s sake; and I will do it, placing both feet firm on these promises with nothing else to rely upon. If I sink, they are false. If I am sustained, they are true.” On his journey, Parley ran into an old Baptist deacon who told him of “a book, a STRANGE BOOK, a VERY STRANGE BOOK! In his possession, which had been just published.” This book was the Book of Mormon, and as Pratt read from this text, he was convinced that his quest for Scriptural truth, as commissioned to him as an individual apart from any official creed or denomination, had been fulfilled. Though content with the doctrine of the Reformed Baptists, Pratt enthusiastically embraced Mormonism for offering the Christian world what Protestantism had not, “a commissioned
priesthood, or apostleship to minister in the ordinances of God.” Pratt’s individual authority was thus replaced with a new form of authority, one that looked as much Catholic as Protestant. Sidney Ridgon soon followed Parley in his conversion to Mormonism, typifying an important mood within Mormonism that emphasized the hermeneutic of authority and divine commission when expounding the Bible and its new scriptural companion, the Book of Mormon.

The Mormon message was to be understood in context of American revivalism. As religion came to the doorsteps of many Americans, and as more American began to read the Bible for themselves, questions of biblical meaning and prophetic authority increased. As many Americans had become familiar and acceptant of the traveling minister, Mormon preachers took full advantage of these new anxieties. The same year Jonathan Crosby joined the Mormon Church (1833), twenty-six year old Wilford Woodruff from New York converted to Mormonism after attending a meeting put on by a “Mormon priest.” Like Pratt, Woodruff had been critical from a young age of denominational Christianity. As he explained in his journal, he had “no desire to join any of the sectarian Churches for I found by comparing the Churches with the records of divine truth that they were neither contending nor receieving [sic] the faith once delivered to the Saints.” Then, mimicking a sentiment offered by Roger Williams of Rhode Island over a century before, he opined, “the Church of Christ was in the wilderness

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171 Pratt, Autobiography, 20-22. (emphasis in original)

and that there had been a falling away from the pure and undefiled religion before God. And I was a looking for the Church to arise and again to be established upon the foundation of the ancient Apostles and Prophets Christ Jesus the Chief Corner Stone.” The message of a restoration of living prophets and additional scripture immediately appealed to Woodruff. “When he [the Mormon priest] had finished his discourse I truly felt that it was the first gospel sermon that I had ever herd [sic]. I thought it was what I had long been looking for.” Consequently, Woodruff “could not feel it my duty to leeve [sic] the house without bearing witness to the truth before the people.” Two days later, Woodruff joined the Church of Christ (aka Mormon Church).

As a new convert, Woodruff was asked by Parley P. Pratt, by now a prominent leader in the Church, to “settle my accounts arrange my affairs and prepare myself to join my Brethren to go to Missourie [sic],” the land designated by Joseph Smith as the “land of Zion.” Woodruff likened his journey to Missouri in 1834 as “similar to the ancient Israelites. Our horses, wagons and tents were in readiness and we were led by Joseph.” Comparisons to ancient Israel were common among Mormons travelers, as it had been for other Americans, similarly envisioning themselves as fulfilling the destiny of ancient biblical prophecy in light of America’s manifest destiny. Mormonism thus did not eradicate such sentiments among American converts, but forged itself within them. Connecting

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with a familiar American trope, Mormons saw themselves as “strangers in a strange land,” but whose destiny, like the majority of Protestants, was in the transformation of the world into God’s kingdom on earth, beginning with them in America.

The concerns and questions of Jonathan Crosby, Wilford Woodruff and Parley Pratt were not unique among Mormon converts within America, and the *Book of Mormon* did not provide the only answers to the heated religious debates that emerged during that era. Like Pratt, Methodist circuit rider Peter Cartwright (1785-1872) had no college training prior to his ministry and likewise went boldly preaching without “purse or script.” Part of Cartwright’s motivation was what he considered to be the degeneracy (or diversity) he found in American Christianity, particularly in New England where the descendants of Puritans now ate strange foods, were spiritually weak, and even prone to join corrupt forms of Christianity, such as Deism and Universalism. Cartwright’s approach to Christian diversity was one of uncompromising militancy, but one that was understood to be uniquely American.

With the advent of the Baptists, Methodists, Halyons, Campbellites and Mormons, America’s stunning diversity demonstrates the popular anticipation of America as the site of the realization and fulfillment of the Reformation. Nineteenth-century Americans, like their predecessors, expected something new to happen in this new realm, and so individually, they turned to the Bible as individuals to figure it out. By way of paradox, Americans, upset over growing sectarianism, increased their sectarian battles and formed new religious
movements so as to overcome it. Groups like the Campbellites and Mormons did not emerge because Americans lost interest in the Bible or understood it less, but instead, because they read it and found discrepancy between what they understood from their readings and what they saw.

Contested readings and interpretation of Scripture, millennial zeal and fervor, together with new anxieties over western expansion and religious liberty and authority fostered new religious answers and identities within an ever-changing American religious landscape. Paradoxically, it was through the expressions of these important issues that Americans began to identify themselves and be identified as wholly American, rather than the satellite version of something European. That “something new” was emergent was anticipated by all. American Christians no longer identified themselves as merely an expression and contention of the true “English Reformation,” but instead as the tools by and locale in which God’s kingdom was to be completed. This new synthesis of religious and national identity fostered, amidst the rugged individualism of frontier culture and the revivals and accompanying anxieties, as well as a growing Biblical literacy, pioneering Christian soldiers like Parley Pratt and Peter Cartwright. Both Cartwright and Pratt emphasized their lack of official theological training, both felt God’s providence and direction as they went forth without “purse or script,” both criticized what they considered uninspiring Christianity, and both were bold enough to counter the norms of the day to make their message heard. Mormonism’s success as a new faith lay not in its opposition to Americanism, but rather its ability to powerfully resonate with Americans.
Mormonism emerged within a context where, like with the Halcyons, God’s voice was commonly heard, visions were anticipated, heavenly appearances were warmly greeted, prophets spoke and communities responded.
Chapter 3

CONTESTED VISIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN AMERICA

“Christianity is no mere negation in this country; it commands, or should command, the moral and political power of the Christians who dwell in it, exercised in accordance with the spirit of our institutions and with a view to the highest interests of men, temporal and eternal... The American Christian is entrusted with powers never before enjoyed by Christian citizens; - the power of naming those who are to be the ‘ordained of God.’”

Stephen Colwell, *Position of Christianity in the United States*

“But in our contention for liberty—for we to-day are the defenders of the Constitution, and we shall have Constitutional principles to maintain and defend... and the words of Joseph, which were inspired by the Almighty, will be fulfilled to the very letter, namely, that the Elders of this Church will be the men who will uphold and maintain the Constitution of the United States, when others are seeking to trample it in the dust, and to destroy it.”

George Q. Cannon, *Journal of Discourses*

Antebellum America was a period of great social and religious transition and tumult, where not only Joseph Smith, but also Rappers, Oneida Perfectionists, Swedenborgians, Shakers, itinerant Methodist preachers and other groups like the Millerites made their mark and reacted against the dogmas of both a revivalism adapted Calvinistic absolutism and deistic secularism. Beyond the religious realm traditional understanding of the family and even the political economy were beginning to be strongly questioned and redefined during this period. Americans desperately sought stability and direction within this context.

For those who embraced Joseph Smith’s (at once competing and complementary) vision of Christ’s kingdom in America, they were not denying what it meant to be American, but instead, understood themselves to be part of its
ongoing realization and definition. The same is true for those embracing the 
message of other dissident religious leaders like those of the Disciples of Christ, 
Adventists, Baptists and Methodists. At the same time, it was also this new 
confidence in individual religious authority and freedom to choose one’s religion 
that emboldened Mormons to defy and criticize popular definitions of what it 
meant to be American and what the Kingdom of God in America meant. As 
Nathan Hatch explains, insurgent religious groups in the early republic did not set 
themselves as at odds with America, but instead held the “conviction that the 
meaning of America was integral to the beginning of their individual 
movement.”

Contradictions among these groups were common as this implied 
simultaneous withdrawal and engagement. Beyond this, these groups were willing 
to rethink the religious blueprint of this kingdom as well as who would be its 
primary architects. In so doing Mormons and their leaders put themselves directly 
at odds with the religious and cultural hegemony of the Protestant evangelical 
mainstream, but, as they saw it, directly in line with what God had intended for 
America.

Against the backdrop of theological and ideological claims of American 
Exceptionalism, Mormons understood themselves to be fulfilling Puritan 
expectations of the creation of a holy commonwealth. Mormons shared the notion 
that America was a sacred and chosen land and themselves a chosen people, even 
a new Israel. It was a vision and narrative that Mormons subsequently embraced

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175 Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 188.
as they linked America’s destiny with that of their Church. As Protestant Church historians declared a Divine role in the creation of the new republic and professed the piety of the drafters of the Constitution (with the exception of Jefferson), Mormon leaders linked and incorporated such patriotic moments and heroes to and within their own sacred narrative. Consequently Joseph Smith declared himself the “greatest advocate of the Constitution of the United States there is on earth,” and Wilford Woodruff was himself baptized in behalf of the nation’s founding fathers. Nevertheless, like other Protestants, Mormons were cautious about separating religious influence from civil society. Being on the defensive, Mormons were even more adamant in noting a special relationship between religion and politics and thus presented their institution as an important dynamic between them throughout much of the nineteenth century.

As a result religious influence of the Church within civil governance in Utah remained difficult to ideologically and theologically disentangle – all the more so since leaders of the LDS Church were also the politicians. Because of

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176 One example of this can be found in the naming of the Americas in the Book of Mormon as the inheritance of God’s chosen in order to build the Lord’s kingdom in the last days. See the Book of Mormon: Ether 13: 2-4. Thus, having great-grandparents who came over on the Mayflower, fathers who fought in the Revolutionary War, and siblings that took part in the war of 1812, brought more than a feeling of patriotism and civil pride, but served as religious distinction and patriotic legitimacy among Mormons.

177 Joseph Smith also said, as “God is true,” so also “the Constitution of the United States is true.” See Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 242n. In his diary August 21, 1877, Wilford Woodruff writes that he went to the temple and was baptized for 100 persons then dead, including the signers of the Declaration of Independence (excepting only John Hancock and William Floyd). Woodruff then baptized another (McAllister) in behalf of 21 names, including all the US presidents, excluding Buchanan, Van Buren and Grant. Staker, ed., Waiting for World’s End, 318-318

178 Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, 57.
their leadership skills and because Mormon leadership is lay leadership, Mormon leaders were often members of the territorial Legislature, eliciting critiques, such as that of non-Mormon Utah Governor West in 1888 that “the unity of the Church and state [in Utah] is perfect and indissoluble.”\textsuperscript{179} At the same time, Mormon leaders argued “in the most positive and emphatic language that at no time has there ever been any attempt or even desire on the part of the leading authorities referred to to have the Church in any manner encroach upon the rights of the State or to unite in any degree the functions of the one with those of the other.”\textsuperscript{180} The ideal for both Protestants and Mormons, however, was never seen as separation. Mormon apostle Orson Pratt explained, “The United States government is the best human government upon the earth” and “may be considered of God.” But, he reasoned, “a theocratical government, under an inspired Priesthood, would have been better still.”\textsuperscript{181} Philip Schaff similarly noted that a separation of powers was less than ideal, and should not be understood “as the perfect and final relation between the two. The kingdom of Christ is to penetrate and transform like leaven, all the relations of individual and national life.” The “obliteration of the church” from the state, continued Schaff, “must involve the annihilation of all freedom, and the ruin of the land.” There were those that sought such a separation of powers, but such were deemed by Schaff to be dangerous “radicals” and were

\textsuperscript{179} Gustive O. Larson \textit{The “Americanization” of Utah for Statehood} (San Marino: Publishers Press, 1971), 245.


\textsuperscript{181} Orson Pratt, \textit{The Seer}, Photo-reprint 1853-1854 (Eborn Book, 2000), 147.
negatively dubbed “political atheists.”182 Thus in the Mormon/Protestant divide over what church and state separation implied, their perplexing contradictions came from their similarities, not just their differences.

As Mormonism prided itself in its rejection of the creeds and philosophies of the Christian past, be they Orthodox, Roman Catholic or Protestant, it embraced instead an exaggerated form of divine inspiration not uncommon in antebellum America. Precedent and reaction was set as early as 1637 as John Winthrop tried and expelled Ann Hutchinson (1591-1643) for having “troubled the peace of the commonwealth and the churches here,” in part as a result of Hutchinson’s claim of “immediate revelation” – a claim that challenged the ecclesiastic authority in the Massachusetts holy commonwealth (and by implication their covenant with God). Although even Puritan divines often acknowledged their expectancy that there was more light to break forth from God’s Holy Word, Hutchinson’s individualistic claims were considered an offense “in the sight of God” and a breach not “fitting for your sex.” The offense was not that Hutchinson felt a personal and direct connection to God (“by the voice of his own spirit to my soul”), being a mandate within Puritan society, but that her declarations of this communication upset traditional gender and religious authority. It threatened a delicate balance between order and charisma that these early colonists sought to uphold. Hutchinson bypassed traditional male-oriented authorities and the monopoly they held over being able to discern this

182 Schaff, America, 40-41, 90, xi.
communication and their role within the commonwealth. But by the time of the great revivals of the early nineteenth century, the anti-clerical attitudes and individualism of the American environment (as seen with Pratt and Cartwright) had broken the spiritual monopoly typically reserved for establishment clerics. Ground work was laid in the eighteenth century among popular revivalists like George Whitefield, who stated, “We do not love the pope, because we love to be popes ourselves…” Whitefield notes that Christ enters the hearts of individuals and brings forth a new spiritual rebirth, independent of male priestly mediation. Such individualistic teachings found their full potential during the revivals of the nineteenth century.

One of the consequences of the early nineteenth-century revivals was that individuals became empowered to have direct and at times audible and optical experiences with the divine. As scholar of American religion Leigh Schmidt explained, nineteenth-century evangelical narratives evidenced that “mystical auditions and epiphanic dreams were Protestant commonplaces, part of a religious culture of divine intimacy cultivated through biblical immersion, prayer, meditation, and revival.” As the evangelical revivals revealed, personal and individual experiences were the inheritance of all whose hearts are attuned to God, regardless of class or social status, or even biblical literacy. Nancy Towle,

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prominent female itinerant evangelical from an elite revolutionary family from Hampton, New Hampshire, visited the “Mormonites” in Kirtland, Ohio. Here she met Joseph Smith, who had just “lay his hands upon their heads; (that they might be baptized of the Holy Ghost;)” The well-articulated female minister took offense and lashed out at Smith, “Are you not ashamed, of such pretensions? You, who are no more, than any ignorant, plough-boy of our land! Oh! Blush, at such abominations! And let shame, cover your face! He only replied, by saying, ‘The gift, has returned back again, as in former times, to illiterate fishermen.’”

This exchange exemplified the implications of revivals, where ancient creeds and established ministerial authorities lost authoritative prominence, as more and more Americans defined their faith and religious authority in first-hand self-legitimating expressions, whether supported by religious professionals and their ministers.

This popular sentiment for divine personal experience influenced Mormon evangelism and proved part of Mormonism’s success, as it challenged curious listeners to “ask of God,” not their ministers concerning the truth of their peculiar message. Mormons accepted the widespread evangelical notion that God spoke to his children, but Mormons claimed that this voice would also lead to a restoration of an ancient tradition of apostles and prophets, testified to in a new scripture, The Book of Mormon. Consequently, the offense of Mormonism was not that Joseph Smith saw Jesus Christ in a vision, or that Mormons appropriated secular

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186 Nancy Towle, Vicissitudes Illustrated, in the Experience of Nancy Towle, in Europe and America (Charleston: Printed by James L. Burges, 1832), 145-146.
authority, or that they declared the literal Kingdom of God, but that these visions, like that heralded by Ann Hutchinson, troubled the delicate balance between the peace of society and the authority of the traditional leaders of the various “mainstream” churches. Prior to visiting the Mormons, Nancy Towle was prepared to declare “that it was one of the most deep-concerted-plots of Hell, to deceive the hearts of the simple that had ever come, within the limits of my acquaintance.” Upon her leave, she met a family “started for the ‘Promised-Land [Missouri.]’” The family told her “to be careful, and not to oppose them,” to which she replied, “I shall think it duty, to speak and write against you, wherever I may go!”\textsuperscript{187}

The tendency has thus been to focus on difference, being an important aspect of self definition within historiographical understanding. Unacknowledged similarities between Mormons and Protestants, however, are striking, revealing important insights of the religious world both Mormons and Protestants took shape within.

Charles G. Finney, foremost of nineteenth-century Protestant revivalists, had strikingly similar experiences that a young Joseph Smith had when he “penetrated into the woods” to pray. On a “very pleasant day” in October in 1821 in Adams, New York, just one year after Joseph Smith saw Jesus Christ on another “beautiful, clear day” in a forest next to his home, just over one-hundred miles from Smith’s “Sacred Grove” in Palmyra, New York, Finney went alone into the woods to pray. Finney was struck by a New Testament verse that promised “if ye seek me” you will “find me,” which “seemed to drop into my

\textsuperscript{187} Towle, \textit{Vicissitudes Illustrated}, 146.
mind with a flood of light.” In a similar quest for truth, Smith was affected by a New Testament verse that promised those who “lack wisdom,” should “ask of God,” a promise which penetrated “into every feeling of my heart.” Armed with equal confidence and determination, both Joseph Smith and Charles Finney expected a direct answer to their vocal prayers, both having to do with the truthfulness of Christianity. In prayer, Smith felt seized by an unseen power that threatened his destruction, “binding my tongue so that I could not speak.” Though Finney’s “strange feeling” that he was “about to die” came the night before, he struggled intensely in the woods with fear and self-doubt, finding himself declaring, “I am dumb.” There were also several times when Finney jumped up in fear from perceived footsteps or the rustling of leaves. Although Smith understood these interruptions to be that of a real satanic presence, Finney saw it as evidence of his own pride and shame in being discovered praying to God. In both experiences, however, such obstructions were to be overcome prior to their encounter with the divine.188 (See Fig. 3)

Figure 3. Charles Finney in the Woods, from a wood engraving, as found in Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney 1792-1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 42.

Upon returning from the woods, Joseph’s mother recognized something different with her son’s temperament. Asking him what was the matter, Joseph replied, “Never mind, all is well – I am well enough off.”\(^{189}\) Though Finney did not see Christ in the forest as did Smith, he wrote, “I never can, in words, make any human being understand” what he had experienced that day and likewise kept his experience to himself. When Finney, after an entire day in the woods returned to the village where he lived and worked, he found that he had no appetite for dinner. At night when his room was dark, “it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light.” He then writes in his memoir of having seen Jesus Christ “face to face,” as

“I would see any other man.” Jesus Christ said nothing to him, but Finney translated this vision to be a call for him to give up practicing law and to become a minister for Christ.\textsuperscript{190} Though Finney became one of the most influential preachers of the nineteenth century, he did not necessarily upset the status quo, but instead infused what already was with new life. Many churches before Finney had prayed daily for revival, and Finney was the answer to those prayers.

At first the Protestant establishment did not embrace Finney’s adapted Calvinism or new measures that outlined human effort in the bringing forth of religious revival. Traditionalists like Lyman Beecher, however, eventually accepted Finney as the excesses of his revivalism were toned down. Finney’s linkage of revivalism and reform in the quest to make America a righteous nation soon transformed the American approach to revivalism and the effect such would have within American public life. Religion, thanks to Finney (as similar to Joseph Smith), took upon itself a new methodological “do it yourself” approach to religion, illuminating new potentials in its relations to the state. Though ordained by the local Saint Lawrence Presbytery, Finney refused formal ministerial training and found little interest in even reading the Westminster Confession.\textsuperscript{191} Like Smith, Finney moved away from the traditional idea of waiting on God’s spontaneous and unplanned providence in the fulfilling of His mysterious work, and instead instituted a program that could ensure its fruition. For Finney, this meant revival; for Smith, it meant a city.

\textsuperscript{190} Finney, \textit{Memoirs}, 15-23.

\textsuperscript{191} Hatch, \textit{The Democratization of American Christianity}, 196.
Though both were immensely popular within the American environment, the effects of and response to Smith’s vision were different to Finney in some ways. Joseph Smith did not become a revivalist as a consequence of his vision, but rather the founder of a new tradition (a new expression of Christianity and a practical and even tangible expression of the Kingdom of God in America). While Finney’s new measures brought life to struggling churches, Smith threatened to further weaken them in the building of his own. Robert Baird’s foremost criticism against Smith was not that he claimed God spoke to him or that his techniques were unconventional, or even that he claimed to see God, but that he sought, like “Mahomet,” “to found a kind of empire” in the western hemisphere. As Mormon projects included cities with a militia, shadow government, a city hotel, temple, Masonic lodge, city streets, ordered lots, schools, and orchards, many like Baird feared the tangible visibility of Mormon beliefs to be a direct threat to Protestant visions of the Kingdom of God in America. Finney may have set Presbyterian elites on edge with his untraditional methods, but Smith tapped into their deepest fears.

Although foreign observers as well as early religious historians and ministers unanimously agreed that something “wholly new” was happening in early nineteenth-century Christian America as a result of revivalism and its corollaries, including the principle of volunteerism, few accepted that Smith and Mormonism was this wholly new quality. Though Joseph Smith embraced the rationalities of Christian republicanism as did Lyman Beecher, Philip Schaff, and

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other evangelical ministers, his overt emphasis on more tangible expressions of the synthesis of theology and ideology manifest in communal cooperation, community development and hierarchical authority seemed contrary to the American ideal of individual freedom and the invisible church. For Towle, this was in direct contradiction to Scripture: “I do not justify the method, of applying the term ‘Church’ to a building of wood and stone, as it utterly confounds scripture language—which teaches us, that a church of God exclusively, is a body of believers.” Nevertheless, his message was powerful as well as provocative—God had established, through him, His kingdom in preparation for the imminent Second Coming of Christ. Although Smith’s later follower Sidney Rigdon (whom Towle had referenced as a “once, much beloved” Baptist preacher194) had preached “flowing millennial theories” that provoked among his Protestant congregants the idea that there was “something extraordinary in the near future,” his conversion to Mormonism translated these hopes into an active pragmatism. Smith was not asking his followers to imagine this “invisible” kingdom and await its spontaneous “visibility,” but as Rigdon and much of his congregation would find appealing, instead to begin laying its bricks and measuring its roads.195 Smith’s “new measures,” however, as they directly challenged traditional authorities (including the Bible), drew forth widespread concern and agitation among neighboring congregations and its clergy.

193 Towle, Vicissitudes, 221.
194 Ibid., 144.
Critics of Smith pointed to the danger imposed by the translation of the
*Book of Mormon* itself, the crowning achievement of Smith’s earlier vision. It was not necessarily the miracle behind the book that proved most troubling, but instead the challenge such a book proposed to local ministers and to the monopoly of the Bible in nineteenth-century American life. Joseph’s vision was not just promising revival, as had Finney, but instead a religious revolution in church structure and polity. Overhearing a conversation of “restless religionists,” Oliver Cowdery, an early Mormon leader and witness of the original *Book of Mormon* plates and translation process, reported expression of fears that, “It [The *Book of Mormon*] was destined to break down every thing before it, if not put a stop to,” and that it “was likely to injure the prospects of their ministers.” The concerned group spoke of ways to destroy the book before it was printed, as well as what to do if it succeeded, but the fear was largely pragmatic, not spiritual. When “Deacon Beckwith” and others attempted to get the manuscript from Lucy Mack Smith (Joseph’s mother), she “endeavoured to show them the similarity between these principles [as found in the *Book of Mormon*], and the simplicity of the Gospel taught by Jesus Christ in the New Testament.” “Notwithstanding all this,” explained Lucy Smith, “the different denominations are very much opposed to us. The Universalists are alarmed lest their religion should suffer loss, the Presbyterians tremble for their salaries, the Methodists also come, and they rage, for they worship a God without body or parts, and they know that our faith comes in contact with this principle.”

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concerns of her visitors. It was not relevant to them that the *Book of Mormon* was similar to the Bible, but the simple fact that the Bible was no longer sovereign and that it had inspired new and unconventional leadership. At heart then, was not mere theological difference, but claims of authority.

Mormonism and its canon did not fail to elicit strong words of condemnation by some of the most prolific and sought after names within America concerning religion. Baird expressed his annoyance of the presence of the *Book of Mormon*, considering it the “absurdist of all pretended revelations from heaven” and that Mormons were just “a body of ignorant dupes[.]”197 Schaff dismissed the discovery of the *Book of Mormon* as “pretended,” and that the book itself abounded in copied scriptural passages, “gross grammatical errors,” and a “very tedious romance about the ten tribes of Israel driven away to America and converted by Christ in person.”198 Towle likewise chided Mormon editor, William W. Phelps, that if “I had the Book, Sir, I would burn it!” For her, it was “strange, that so many men of skill; should be thus duped by them,” and how they came “to be the votaries of such ‘cunningly devised fables’ as these.”199

Mormonism’s focus on revelation and authority challenged the wisdom of the American disestablishment, and allowed it to directly challenge nineteenth-century evangelical notions of the kingdom of God in America. Moreover

Press, 1969 [1853]), 143-146.


198 Schaff, *America*, 244-245.

199 Towle, *Vicissitudes*, 143.
Mormonism’s significant growth in the West (Ohio and Illinois) provoked among Mormons a feeling of legitimacy in an Americanism that was increasingly being understood in exclusionary terms and as limited to the Bible. As such, Mormons sharply contested the popular definitions of American liberty and its narrow evangelical demands of absolute assimilation and submission. Most impressively, Mormons defined themselves, contrary to Protestant claims of them being anti-American, as the upholders of true patriotism and proponents of a more biblical national culture. Mormons felt they had special insight into the Bible, as the *Book of Mormon* serves as fuller expression of Christ, not just in the “Old world,” but now in the New. In ways not unlike Joseph Smith as he looked to Missouri (the “New Zion”), Brigham Young, his Utah successor, envisioned Utah in much the same way as Winthrop and company had viewed North America and their mission toward holiness, setting up a society that served as a refuge for a dying world, a place where Satan’s grasp on the individual was to be overcome and for God’s rule to become actualized. It was in this spirit that Young strongly admonished church members to “come home,” or gather in Utah to form this new and holy society, where even the bells on the horses read “Holiness to the Lord.”

As Brigham Young and other LDS leaders had understood it, America’s Constitutional government made such visions possible. Notably, he called upon members of the church to “sustain the government of the nation wherever you are and speak well of it, for this is right, and the government has a right to expect it of you, so long as that government sustains you in your civil and religious liberty, in those rights, which inherently belong to every person born on the earth[.]” This
was not surface patriotism, but represented a fundamental characteristic of Mormonism that understood God’s hand in the formation of the America government and the Mormon investment and positionality in its destiny. “The national institutions will never fail,” remarked Young, because the principles of civil and religious freedom were “ordained of God on this land for the establishment of the principles of truth on the earth; and our national organization originated in the heavens.” However, he was clear in noting that if the national government did fail, it would be because of “the wickedness of the people, and the designs of evil men in brief authority[.]”

Young’s comments also suggest that conflicts between Mormons and their evangelical neighbors were not a simple disagreement over Christian dogma or scriptural interpretation. They resided much deeper, within struggles over and around competing interpretations and understandings of national identity, the extensions and limits of religious liberty, and growing anxieties over Christ soon returning to earth and their collective readiness to receive him.

In contrast to evangelical notions of millennialism, the Mormon idea of Christ’s millennial kingdom rests upon the Mormon principle of continuing divine revelation through its leaders, which elicited images and memories from without of religious monarchy and theocracy. While it is tempting to ignore such subjective phenomena, it must be remembered that revelation was foundational in Mormon belief and action, as it was for other national figures like Charles Finney, George Whitefield, Anne Hutchinson, and Nancy Towle. By the standard of

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200 See Clark, Messages, 2: 63, 82, 98.
Mormon inspiration, it is clear that this idea of revelation emboldened Mormons from all socio-economic and educational backgrounds to radically challenge popular notions of what it meant to be American and what popular culture defined as proper behavior within that model. It was this inspiration that led to Hutchinson’s exile from Puritan society for not “keeping her conscience to herself;” this inspiration brought forth Finney’s untraditional “do it yourself” revivalism that upset more traditional revivalists, and also emboldened Nancy Towle to publicly preach and publish when many spoke of it as a “*shame for a woman to speak in the church.*”

Joseph Smith spoke of revelation as “pure intelligence flowing into you,” whereas Brigham Young often made mention of “the light” within him, allowing him to “foresee” the purposes of God. Wilford Woodruff, the fourth President of the Church said “…and everything I have done since I have been in this Church has been done upon that principle. The Spirit of God has told me what to do, and I have had to follow that.”

It should also be noted that incorporation of inspirational agency, likewise inspired several counter-movements within the Mormon Church, including those led by James Strange, Sidney Ridgon, Joseph Smith III and William S. Godbe, all of whom, under conviction of personal inspiration, led Mormonism in ways contrary to the visions of Brigham Young. For Mormons, without this inspiration, there could be no

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201 Towle, *Vicissitudes*, 8. (emphasis in original)

202 *Deseret News* [Weekly], 7 November 1896.

203 Its continued importance noted in 1891 as President Wilford Woodruff remarked at a Stake Conference in Logan on the dissolution of polygamy, “This Church has never been led a day except by revelation…It matters not who lives or who dies, or who is called to lead this Church, they have got to lead it by the inspiration of Almighty God.”Clark, *Messages*, 3:225.
kingdom. Apostle John Taylor wrote in 1852, “If, therefore, it is the kingdom of heaven [or the kingdom of God], it must receive its laws, organization, and government, from heaven.” Such endeavors “required more than human reason, and as we are left entirely to Revelation, either past, present, or to come, it is to this only that we can apply.” It was a doctrine that became a strong and lasting ethos within the LDS Church, not just among its leadership, but also within the general membership of the Church. As Brigham Young put it, “the Spirit of revelation” was not a monopoly of church leaders, but “must be in each and every individual.” On a popular and elite level, Mormons claimed the spirit of the revivals as their own, and looked to it as evidence of their unique authority and role in actualizing God’s kingdom in America.

According to Mormon apostle John Taylor, the only just, scriptural and “rational way for the Lord to accomplish this [His kingdom], is to form a communication with man, and to make him acquainted with his laws.” “It follows,” then, that “there must be revelations made from God; and if so, as a necessary consequence, there must be prophets to reveal them to.” Mormonism was structured on a divine model as more than a church, or even “body of believers,” which sought to bring in the reign of Christ. As perceived by its leaders and adherents, Mormonism was an approximation and continuation of the

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kingdom whose divine reign had already begun under Christ’s visible representatives – prophets and apostles. As already seen, the ideal of revelation was not a uniquely Mormon endeavor. In fact, the idea of divine inspiration represented and was understood as an essential component of the cultural surrounding of Mormonism. As Schmidt writes, “many of the most influential words in evangelical circles were not spoken between people and were not necessarily even heard aloud, but were listened to within, a hearkening.”\textsuperscript{207} As Mormon leaders ritualized it into a visible hierarchy of authority who wielded political power, American churches grew alarmed.

The most notable expression of this agency took place within mainstream Mormonism and involved the controversial legitimation and practice of plural marriage and the related notions of order and authority which it presumed. However, the internal and external response to the revelation of plural marriage generally turned not on the legitimacy and authority of revelation but on its challenges to traditional western notions of sexuality, marriage, and domesticity. These traditional notions surrounding the role and relationship of the family lay at the core of American religion and further clarify the ways in which Americans responded to each other, and specifically, to the Mormon message. Its examination also provides valuable insight into some of the internal dynamics of early Mormonism, and the ways in which polygamy was later criticized and defended.

\textsuperscript{207} Schmidt, \textit{Hearing Things}, 40.
For many Americans at the start of the nineteenth century, traditional monogamy perceived to have been outlined and mandated in Scripture, representing a basic tenet of righteous living and the proper realm of selfless devotion to God. But currents unleashed by evangelical revivals induced some of its offspring to a rethinking of sexuality, gender roles, marriage, procreation, and the role of women in society and the importance and meaning of community. Under founder John Noyes, Oneida Perfectionists attempted to break down gender distinctions between men and women, and the related notion then popular that men owned their wives and their sexual and procreative gifts. In fact, as Noyes would argue, women’s allegiance was not to her husband at all, but to God alone. In contrast to traditional individualized romance, sexual and emotional union was retranslated on a larger cooperative-community scale. Marriage was done away, save that of the entire community, where sexual intercourse was to be shared by all, not exclusive to just a few individuals. American sexual mores and the popular compartmentalizing of gender roles were similarly challenged by “Mother” Ann Lee of the Shakers who insisted that giving up sexual intercourse entirely was a pathway toward human redemption, as only then could men and

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208 According to Nancy Scott, “the founders learned to think of marriage and the form of government as mirroring each other.” Scott wrote that Enlightenment thinker Montesquieu “initiated what became a formulaic Enlightenment association of polygamy with despotism. The harem stood for tyrannical rule, political corruption, coercion, elevation of the passions over reason, selfishness, hypocrisy—all the evils that virtuous republicans and enlightened thinkers wanted to avoid. Monogamy, in contrast, stood for a government of consent, moderation, and political liberty.” Nancy Cott, Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 10, 22.

209 Lawrence Foster, Women, Family and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 95-95.
women overcome their flesh and fully concentrate on God. Lee noted the
disadvantaged role women had in society and celibacy freed them to become
equal participants in Shaker society. Redirecting their sexual tension upward to
God in a community setting, as directed by the Spirit, Shakers felt themselves
more capable of encountering the holiness of God and in refashioning a society
more acceptable to God.210

Mormons believed that polygamy, which they defined as “Celestial
Marriage,” also had religious warrant. Moreover, it was alleged to exist because it
was a revealed principle, not because it made sense biblically or because it
seemed natural or desirable to its early converts. Wilford Woodruff, for example,
complained in his diary on October 9, 1875 that it was exceedingly difficult to get
Mormon leaders to enter into plural marriage, either for fear of the law or their
wives.211 Upon attending a funeral after learning of the principle, Brigham Young
stated “I felt to envy the corpse its situation, and to regret that I was not in the
coffin.” John Taylor, co-apostle with Young stated that when he first heard the
principle, “it made my flesh crawl.” Historian Kathryn Daynes argues that it was
because of the sole conviction that Joseph Smith was inspired of God that early
members of the church “did not immediately and vociferously reject such
proposals so repugnant to their ingrained traditions.”212 Although many Mormons
(both male and female) were unsettled regarding the sexual, personal, and social

210 Foster, Women, Family, and Utopia, 39.

211 Staker, Waiting for World’s End, 311.

implications of polygamy as a revealed and divine principle, member were
encouraged to pray for a change of heart, as opposed to a change in principle. For
example, Phoebe Woodruff, plural wife of President Wilford Woodruff, presents
a common Mormon sentiment regarding polygamy: “When the principle of
polygamy was first taught I thought it the most wicked thing I ever heard of;
consequently I opposed it to the best of my ability, until I became sick and
wretched.” Though some in the church never moved beyond this sentiment and
thus left the church or avoided polygamy altogether, Woodruff had this change of
heart.

As soon, however, as I became convinced that it originated as a revelation
from God through Joseph, and knowing him to be a prophet, I wrestled
with my Heavenly Father in fervent prayer, to be guided aright at that all-
important moment of my life. The answer came. Peace was given to my
mind. I knew it was the will of God; and from that time to the present I
have sought to faithfully honor the patriarchal law. 213

Thus, because of the emphasis Mormon leaders and followers put on authority
and revelation, polygamy was accepted as a type of self denial that led men and
women closer to God. As Mormon polygamist, historian and Church leaders
Brigham H. Roberts explained, polygamy was

not a call to ease or pleasure, but to religious duty; it was not an invitation
to self-indulgence, but to self-conquest; its purpose was not earth-
happiness, but earth-life discipline, undertaken in the interest of special
advantages for succeeding generations of men. 214


At the height of the national anti-polygamy crusades, Mormon leaders called in late 1885 for “some allowance” of empathy toward the national opposition to the practice. “The idea of marrying more wives than one was as naturally abhorrent to the leading men and women of the Church at that day as it could be to any people. They shrank with dread from the bare thought of entering into such relationships.” With such reminders, church leaders spoke against the “rancorous or vengeful feeling” that many Mormons entertained toward those outside the church and in government offices of authority who departed “from their proper line of duty” in their overzealousness in their opposition to polygamy.215

Whether one personally embraced or rejected polygamy, “celestial marriage” had profound internal and external consequences for the Mormon community. It provided an attitude of selflessness as well as an economic and social independence that made it easier for Mormons to establish themselves as a larger cooperative in the Great Basin. Thus polygamy was not just a reformation of traditional sexuality and marriage, but it was also perceived as foundational to Mormon structures of economy, religion and society. It served as a continual reminder of God’s revelation to the church, and of the church’s need to align with this revelation. For Mormons, and their response to both internal and external critiques of polygamy, these were mere outward expressions of the workings of an internal spiritual truth. The name “Deseret,” which according to the Book of Mormon means “honey bee,” and which Young insisted Utah be called, was appropriate to this early cooperative vision. It was here that cooperation, not

215 Clark, Messages, 3:32.
individual brilliance or strength that the kingdom of God was to be built. Polygamy, divinely revealed, was among the foundational principles by which this Kingdom was to be achieved and individualism repressed, and God’s kingdom was to be actualized against all national legislation to the contrary.

As Mormon converts from England and Scandinavia and other parts of northern Europe immigrated to the Utah territory by the tens of thousands, the importance of this principle which fostered larger families and social cooperation cannot be underestimated. The theological implications of polygamy, even if only practiced by a few, became central to the success of the Mormon colonial project in the West. But beyond its practical advantages, it was integral to the Mormon notion of family and the definitions under which it would understand itself as a new and emergent religion. As historian Lawrence Foster wrote, “To an almost unparalleled extent, the Mormon religion really was about the family; earthly and heavenly family ideals were seen as identical.”

Mormon revelation argued that God’s kingdom, after all, was a family kingdom, and one’s hope of salvation, was in learning to call God, “Father.” As part of this “Order of the Priesthood,” the status and establishment of “family order” was of primary importance, both at home and nationally. Orson Pratt, Mormon apostle and theologian wrote in his Washington based periodical *The Seer*, “Family government is the first order of government established on the earth.” Socially and civilly this was important because, as he further explained,

God designs to make all the families of Heaven one with the families of the righteous upon the earth. In order to accomplish this, the most perfect order of family government must be adopted, . . . And when every family become one in all things, they will be prepared to unite themselves together under a more general form of government.217

Theologically, Mormons understood themselves as a larger spiritual family whose head was a divine heavenly couple. God consisted of Father, but was also associated with a Heavenly Mother, and Mormons referred to each other as “brother” and “sister.” Though later deemed unwise to teach publicly, early Mormon authorities speculated that not only had Jesus sanctioned polygamy, but that he himself had entered into a polygamous union.218 The entire purpose of life was to embrace the mission of this divine parentage and to create a corresponding family here on earth. In short, Mormon theology taught that humanity, as “children of God,” had the opportunity and even obligation to form themselves in similar family units in life with the expectation that such would continue into the next. The Mormon kingdom, then, was a family kingdom and polygamy then was about mirroring this larger and ideal divine order rather than mandating a principle that all must engage.

In the end, however, no matter how individuals in the Mormon community felt about the principle of plural marriage or economic and social cooperation,

217 Pratt, The Seer, 144.

218 As contextualized in defense of polygamy as a divine principle, some LDS leaders taught that Jesus himself was not only married, but to two women at once. At a Sunday School Conference on July 22, 1883, Apostle Joseph F. Smith spoke of the marriage celebration which Jesus attended in Galilee prior to his ministry. He argued that Jesus was the bridegroom and Mary and Martha were his brides. Woodruff, who closed the meeting, admonished those listening to remember the sermon which he endorsed, but counseled them not to teach such speculations themselves. Staker, Waiting for World’s End, 361.
they were understood to be revealed principles of the Mormon worldview and
directly correlated with how Mormons, both men and women, were to approach
God, their families, each other, and the world around them. In an epistle read at
the Semi-Annual Conference in 1886, the First Presidency\textsuperscript{219} stated, “The life of a
saint is not simply a personal perfecting, it is also a factor in the entire scheme of
earth’s redemption. No one can be saved alone, by himself or herself, unassisted
by or unassisting others.” God’s purposes for His children on earth were that they
were to “assume responsibilities, form ties, enter into covenants, beget children,
accumulate families,” so as to extend one’s eternal influence, in both depth and
width.\textsuperscript{220} Although it was possible to enter into God’s kingdom without practicing
polygamy, it was impossible to enter into this kingdom by ignoring the principle
of revelation and the cooperative principle that communicated the laws of that
kingdom as these were related to polygamy and the family.

On a practical level, however, polygamy on a wide scale was impossible
and posed an important theological and sociological inconsistency, solved only
through the spiritualizing of polygamy. As Wilford Woodruff explained, “A Man
may Embrace the Law of Celestial marriage in his heart & not take the Second
wife & be justified before the Lord.”\textsuperscript{221} Though the church had been clear that
Celestial Marriage was essential for one’s salvation, Young clarified that one
could “be polygamist \textit{at least in your faith},” even while remaining monogamous

\textsuperscript{219} Comprised of 3 men (sustained by members of the church to be “Prophets, seers, and
Revelators”) who stand foremost in authority in the Mormon hierarchy.

\textsuperscript{220} Clark, \textit{Messages}, 3: 87.

\textsuperscript{221} Staker, \textit{Waiting for World’s End}, 303.
In this sense, Mormons did not disagree with other Americans (especially American evangelicals) on the belief that God’s kingdom was one of revealed divine truth or law as defined within family and community, they simply disagreed on the practical application and realization of such laws.

Academic and theological discussions of Mormon polygamy invariably centered on the practice of sex and sexuality. Sexuality and gender roles were central to group agency and definitions of Americanism and what was characterized as divine order and were thereby a significant item of discussion. Thus even the increased female independence that came from the unique realities of polygamy in territorial Utah, due to husbands sent on missions, the difficulties of colonizing, or the need to supply for a much larger than usual family, Mormons were further categorized as un-American for challenging perceived gender roles and expectations. Philip Schaff, for example, referred to America as a “woman’s paradise” as “it is a fact . . . that in the United States woman is exempt from all hard labor (except perhaps among the immigrants, who keep their foreign customs, and in new settlements, say in Texas, or Wisconsin, or Oregon, where circumstances demand the strength of all hands).” Robert Baird made similar assessments of what was expected of the American woman: “Field work in all those States is performed by men alone; a woman [Anglo women] is never seen handling the plough, the hoe, the axe, the sickle, or the scythe, unless in the case of foreign emigrants [or female slaves] who have not yet adopted American

222 As reprinted in Daynes, More Wives than One, 75-76.

A discernable approximation of Victorian evangelical domesticity remained present within the structures and practices of Mormonism, but the independence of Mormon women and the peculiarity of polygamy furthered the idea that Mormon women were more akin to immigrants who had not yet overcome their foreign and un-American habits.

In response to evangelical denunciation, evangelical-led social reform crusades and the national opposition and harsh congressional legislation against polygamy, Mormons dug in to preserve what they considered both a Divine Principle and a Constitutional right. They accused American officials of waging an “open war against the Constitution and the dearest rights of American citizens.” For Mormons, the battle over polygamy and their conception of the American kingdom was synonymous with their battle over religious freedom that allowed them to practice their religion. Those who opposed polygamy through legislation, not Mormons, were the ones, Pratt and so many other LDS leaders declared, who were guilty of “treason” and “rebellion.” For Protestants, however, this breach of proper sexuality by Mormon polygamy struck at the heart of the American kingdom.

Polygamy more so than any other tenant of Mormonism, reminded both Mormons and its critics that it represented a peculiarity that emerged parallel to, yet distinct from the rest of nineteenth-century evangelical America. Both had emerged as responses to the theological and ideological reform currents unleashed

224 Baird, Religion in America, 36.

by the revivals of the Great Awakenings of the early nineteenth century.

However, Mormonism’s vigorous attempt to establish what Joseph Smith called a “theo-democracy,” put them in direct conflict with what other Americans felt to be appropriate religious expression and influence in American public and domestic life. Though less overt, the evangelical agenda (the establishment of the kingdom of God in America) was no less ambitious. Thus it wasn’t that Mormons were inappropriately mixing religion with politics, but were mixing the wrong kind of religion with the wrong kind of political agenda and ideology and thus having the tenacity to contest the hegemony of a religio-political system and world they were not supposed to be a part of. Accordingly, Mormon political philosophy and ideology was both a product of, and yet a counter cultural movement against the popular religio-political semi-establishment trends of the early republic. Protestants and Mormons defined their responses to church/state separation in juxtaposition to each other. And despite nineteenth-century Mormons, however un-American they were perceived to be by minister/historians, believed themselves to be uniquely and fundamentally American, and as such, rightful participants in American public life.

As the principle of republicanism brought forth new participants into the national public sphere, evangelicals moved to limit that participation in a way that simultaneously defined the implications of that inclusion. However inconsistent such exclusionary moves were to modern conceptions of liberal democracy and republicanism, evangelical definitions of religion and the state were driving

226 Journal History, April 15, 1844.
features of nineteenth-century political, cultural and religious life. When Americans spoke of “the voice of the people” as “the voice of God,” they had in mind a particular voice and a particular people. Sexuality and the structure of marriage had become a central marker in this identification and agency, and for their participation and apologetics toward polygamy, Mormons were not part of Justice Brewer’s “Christian nation” and thus their inclusion as a “people” was denied. Mormons were not considered to be “Christian,” thus they were naturally not considered to be part of the “body of Christ” which this nation was considered to be. Americans trusted in the revelation that they each considered to have come from God, and it was clear from those in power that such a voice could not condone polygamy. National legislation and Church historiography made it clear who God could and could not speak through and the implications such a voice could have within the American religious, political and domestic realm as well as within the American home. Those that insisted on inspiration and vision outside of these projected boundaries were deemed threats to this “redeemer nation” and were as such delegitimized from the public realm and deemed religious and political fanatics.

Indeed, as revealed during the slavery debates between the North and South in antebellum America, religion could not be separated from politics, nor could the kingdom be removed from divisive national questions of sexuality and slavery. As preachers North and South turned their pulpits into political platforms, the country was torn in half. As will be seen here as well, even Protestants of the same denominations had serious disagreement as to the Word of God and its
meaning for American political, religious, and economic expression. On a national level, the role of religion within American society was thus powerful and divisive. However clear the Bible read for one, there could be a radically divergent reading by another. The definition of Americanism and the kingdom and the role of the pulpit were similarly contested and the victors claimed a monopoly on its meaning and definition. It would be within this contestation that religious agency, the relationship of the state and the church, and the proper understanding of the Word of God would be expressed on deeply political levels.

**American Politics and the National Pulpit**

In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Bill caused national controversy over whether clergymen had the right to address what many perceived as primarily a political and economic issue from their church pulpits. This controversy was fueled by two New York newspapers, the *Journal of Commerce*, which said pulpits were to limit themselves to spiritual matters, and the *Independent*, which said otherwise. Senator Hale of New Hampshire called such usages of the pulpit as “preaching rebellion, both against the Constitution and Laws!” Calling out the “mob-exciting language” of the abolitionist *Independent*, Hale continued, “This bold and shameless doctrine [abolition] *The Independent* justifies, on the ground that ‘man cannot plant parchments as deep as God plants principles.’ Agreed. But one of the ‘principles’ of God’s law is, obedience to civil Governments. Another is, the obedience of servants [slaves, as is shown by the context] to their masters.” Ministers who preached politics from the pulpit, however, were widely praised
and their sermons were reprinted in various popular magazines and journals.\textsuperscript{227}

The initial protest was that churches were using their pulpits for the anti-slavery cause, with Reverend Henry Ward Beecher of Brooklyn, son of famed social reformer Lyman Beecher, being its foremost offender. Bringing political discourse into the pulpit was more than just reaching a wider audience, but represented an effort to make sacred a particular political question, in this instance, the question of slavery and its corollaries. The \textit{Journal} insisted that the pulpit symbolized the sacred realm of the Sabbath, where no work but God’s was to be accomplished or spoken of. Among evangelical social reformers, however, abolition was the very heart of the Christian message.

The issue of slavery, particularly as abolitionism grew in importance and intensity, proved particularly divisive for almost every major American denomination, and consequently, the nation itself. According to Moses Stuart, one of America’s foremost biblical scholars, the United States was “one nation – one so-called \textit{Christian} nation” and that “Christianity is a \textit{national} religion among us.” But as Stuart put his weight in opposition to the Fugitive Slave law, it became certain that this national religion was not so unified.\textsuperscript{228} In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church, just two generations old, split over a controversy raised in 1832 by the election of Bishop Andrew, a slaveholder. The opposition and equally strong support for Andrew’s appointment became more apparent at


\textsuperscript{228} Noll, \textit{Civil War as a Theological Crisis}, 58-59.
the 1836 General Conference, but it was at the next Conference in 1844 that the
Methodist Episcopal Church, South, made clear its intentions of separation.229

One year later, the Baptists also separated along pro-slavery and abolitionist lines. As it was among Methodists, the division was that of conservatives in the South and the social reform evangelicals in the North, and the central subject of controversy was that of slavery. In November 1844, the controversy arose when the Baptist State Convention of Alabama inquired after the Acting Board at Boston, whether it was appropriate to send out a certain slaveholding missionary. The response was that such concerns were not an issue, since “in thirty years in which the Board had existed, no slaveholder, to their knowledge, had applied to be appointed a missionary, and that such an event as a slaveholder’s taking slaves with him, could not, for reasons expressed, possible occur[.]”230 Nevertheless, the Board answered the hypothetical question negatively: “If, however, any one should offer himself as a missionary, having slaves, and insist on retaining them as his property, we could not appoint him. One thing is certain, we never can be a party to any arrangement which would imply approbation of slavery.”231 Though sectarian division was deplored on both sides, notes Gaustad, the pace of contention was such that “neither compromise nor conciliation” were able to absolve the issue.232 In 1845, delegates of the

229 Christian Advocate and Journal, June 26, 1844, p. 182.

230 The Christian Review, 1845, p. 40

231 The Christian Review, 1846, pp. 114-115

232 Gaustad, A Documentary History, 492.
Triennial Convention ruled against slavery and the role of slaveholders within the Baptist Church. Consequently, many from the South left the convention and formed a new denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) which upheld slavery as “biblically sanctioned.”

The question of slavery had also been at the center of the 1837 Presbyterian schism, giving rise to Old and New School Presbyterianism. The conflict was multifaceted, placing “Old School” traditionalists against “New School” social reformers. In focusing on white clergy, historians have doubted the importance of slavery in these schisms, but as a scholar of African-American religion, Moses Moore argues, a look at black Presbyterian clergy reveals the issue of slavery and abolitionism as having directly changed “the tone and tenor” of the debates between New and Old Schools, making compromise more difficult and schism more likely.233 Old School forces viewed this heightened tempo with alarm and tried to discredit the movement by conflating New School reformism with the “fanaticism” of the new antislavery movement, thus boosting their credentials as the “defenders of Orthodoxy.” For New School evangelist Charles Finney, religious experience did not end with the supernatural, but instead infiltrated “one’s daily walk.” To him and the New School movement, it was both hypocritical and sinful to uphold the institution of slavery. The new

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measures of Finney’s revivalism and social reformism were thus directly linked.\textsuperscript{234}

Two decades later in 1857, the same year the Baptist movement split in half, slavery was still a major concern for Presbyterianism, creating a schism within its New School Church. Assembled in October at the Central Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and coming on the heels of the Supreme Court Dred Scott ruling that declared blacks to be less human than whites, delegates took “great satisfaction and delight” in the secession of the pro-slavery southern churches from the New School General Assembly. Demonstrating their defiance in ways similar with the Southern Baptist Convention, southern Presbyterian synods provided their support for the Dred Scott decision as well as the biblical sanction for the institution of slavery.\textsuperscript{235}

In 1861 the Brooklyn Presbyterian Henry Van Dyke revealed a typical response against those using the Bible to counter slavery. “When the Abolitionist tells me that slaveholding is sin, in the simplicity of my faith in the Holy Scriptures, I point him to his sacred record, and tell him, in all candor, as my text does, that his teaching blasphemes the name of God and His doctrine.”\textsuperscript{236} Albert Barnes, Princeton Seminary graduate and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, typified the abolitionist sentiment. Barnes’ initial argument was


\textsuperscript{235} Moore, “Black Presbyterians,” 81-82.

\textsuperscript{236} Noll, \textit{The Civil War}, 19.
simple, that “Man was formed by his Maker for freedom, and that all men have a right to be free.” Viewing humanity as a type of higher biblical source of eternal truth than the literal word of the Bible, Barnes wrote, “No book which departs in its teachings from those great laws CAN POSSIBLE BE FROM God.”237 The hermeneutical differences were large and irreconcilable. Southern pastor, Frederick Ross of the Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama, articulated best the biblical slaveholding argument:

The relation of master and slave is sanctioned by the Bible; - that it is a relation belonging to the same category as those of husband and wife, parent and child, master and apprentice, master and hireling; - that the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, were ordained in Eden for man, as man, and modified after the fall, while the relation of slavery, as a system of labor, is only one form of the government ordained of God over fallen and degraded man[.]

The Bible then, according to Rev. Ross, was to teach the slaveholder “his right to be a master, and his duty to his slave.”238 The theological divide concerning slavery and the Bible within the Presbyterian Church was set, and many in the South, as they witnessed the increased abolitionist rhetoric from the northern pulpit, grew ever more alarmed. Such was the national divisive and contentious temperament within the various mainstream evangelical churches as the two New York newspapers, the Independent and the Journal of Commerce incited national debate in 1850.

This legacy of the pulpit helped to shape the antebellum pulpit into a powerful medium in which prominent Americans, white and black, could engage national issues. It was a role consistent with its Puritan heritage in which the pulpit was an essential element of New England politics. In light of the colonization controversy in which blacks were not given space to speak for themselves, the black pulpit had become an especially important forum for the black voice, becoming a key contributor to antislavery agitation. An important convert of Charles Finney, Theodore Dwight Weld, changed the tone as he powerfully linked revivalism with abolitionism, making him one of the most effective antebellum abolitionists.\footnote{Moore, “Black Presbyterians,” 64.} Earlier black Presbyterian leaders like Samuel Cornish and Theodore Wright likewise held an important voice to the agitation of slavery and abolition. These men criticized their own church affiliation, arguing that slavery in the South and racism in the North had corrupted “the Church of Jesus Christ” to “the very core.”\footnote{Moore, “Black Presbyterians,” 67-69.} Although many abolitionists called for adherents to “come out” of these corrupt institutions, black evangelical reformers found influence in remaining in their pulpits. “Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and far into the next,” explains Moore, “black Presbyterians continued to use such organizations as forums to challenge both themselves and their white brethren to be faithful to the doctrinal and evangelical heritage that they commonly shared and confessed.”\footnote{Ibid., 84.} The pulpit was thus an

\footnotetext[239]{Moore, “Black Presbyterians,” 64.}
\footnotetext[240]{Moore, “Black Presbyterians,” 67-69.}
\footnotetext[241]{Ibid., 84.}
important sphere of influence and agency for the evangelical social reform
movements, for both white and black ministers.

This use of the pulpit for public discussion and abolitionist dissemination
was what upset the pro-slave *Journal of Commerce*, as such speech conflated the
gospel of Christ with a controversial public policy, particularly one that
challenged the very patriotism and piety of the South. The role of the pulpit and
their preachers went much deeper than simple public discourse, but instead
represented a controversy over the role of religion in relation to the state. At stake
for both sides, was in the defining and conflation of American Christianity,
evangelical social reform, economic policy, and as such, the integrity and
possibility of the American kingdom of God. The slavery issue emerged in part
over the desire to make America the foremost example of a righteous nation via
revivalism, volunteerism, and the evangelical reform crusade, and whether the
nation could be such while upholding the institution of slavery.

On April 12, 1850, the *Journal of Commerce* raised a cry against the
Independent’s claim that “TEN THOUSAND PULPITS are every week pouring
light upon the public mind. Every religious paper (save a few whose subscribers
are in the valley of vision, a great army of dry bones), is standing for the right.” In
response the *Journal* voiced, “…We mean to say that this is an outrage upon the
Sabbath and upon the pulpit; an abuse of privilege; and affords to any
congregation just ground of complaint, and if persisted in, of repudiation.” In
short, many ministers in the North were using their pulpits to oppose current
fugitive slave laws, setting themselves in direct rebellion of both the American
law and the Bible, as argued by the *Journal*. In this same editorial, the Journal established its position: “Not that they bring into the pulpit *mere* party politics,” but as would become the rallying cry against these ministers, they instead preach and pray politics from the pulpit.242

In its detailed response to the *Journal of Commerce*, Rev. Beecher outlined in *The Independent* the popular position in the North that politics were not only an important subject for pulpit preaching, but that ministers held the “golden reed” with which congregants could measure their various duties, and “no duties are more widespread, and scarcely any more important, than political duties.” The alternative is for “men to go blindfold, through the ever present reforms which God works in each age[.]” Beecher explained,

> In this large sphere of action, vexed with as many currents, whirls and storms as ever mariner knew in equatorial seas, is a Christian man to proceed by men’s selfish maxims, or is he here, as everywhere, to ask: “Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?” If there be one place where a faithful Christian pulpit should be capable of exerting a strenuous influence, it should be here.243

As had been the case in Puritan New England, the religious authority of the pulpit was to influence political action and by such, take a role in the building of God’s kingdom in America. To cede the pulpit was to surrender this kingdom and to leave Americans blind as to their political duties. As argued in response to the *Journal’s* first attack, Dr. Bacon of New Haven wrote in the *Independent* on April 18 that the entire purpose of the pulpit was to fulfill the desires of the “assembled

242 Henry, *Politics and the Pulpit*, 5-6

243 Ibid., 17.
worshipers whose petitions it is their office to guide and to utter,” while following the “model prayer of Him who taught us to pray, the kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” In this instance, in light of the slavery question and in direct response to the Journal’s attack on abolitionist pulpits, the idea of the kingdom of God was the motive of political reform and the means by which the millennium was to be brought in. Who then were the true agents of political and social reform? Who could see clearly enough to lead others? For Mormons and abolitionists, the answer lay in the pulpit. In essence, the “doctrine of the kingdom of God upon earth” was to break down “all the forms of oppression” as “chaff of the summer threshing floors,” and who better than those in position of ecclesiastical respect to define these for the populace? Anti-slavery ecclesiastical leaders were not about to allow their voice to become irrelevant to important matters of the day, nor were traditionalist preachers willing to allow northern pulpits to preach against its own structures of master/slave relationship as read from the Bible.

The main argument used by the Journal was that such preachers were un-American for their defiance of American law and biblical truth. Abolitionist preachers agreed that they were defiant against the Constitution’s position on slavery and the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision, but they were adamant that Christians were duty bound to reject laws and rulings considered unjust. Patriotism and piety were intimately linked, and preaching rebellion over the

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244 Ibid., 10.

245 Ibid., 11.
pulpit could be an expression of one’s higher patriotism. Regarding the question over slavery and the role of the pulpit, William Hosmer adds, “The preaching of the pure word of God, is necessarily subversive of every form of human wickedness,” and according to the “higher law,”246 true “patriotism does the same.” He then continues, “It is quite as patriotic to break laws as to keep them, provided they are not what they should be. We may go even further, and affirm that patriotism absolutely demands resistance to bad laws.”247 As true patriots, ministers had an important role to fulfill in American politics, as they were “heralds of the kingdom of God” and proclaimers of the “Higher Law.”248 The question then remains, who is to define what laws “should be?” Regarding the Mormon question, the issue came down to, not whether laws can be defied, but rather to what figures of authority can we look to in deciding that defiance? As seen in this conflict over slavery, neither the Bible nor the Constitution was a sufficient guide. If the pulpit was the guide, then which pulpit? In a land of religious disestablishment and competitive diversity, who should the populace turn to in making such judgments against the state? According to the Journal, no pulpit should have such authority. The Independent, as would Mormon leaders, disagreed.


248 Ibid., 1.
Were the pulpit to stand aside and remain silent, noted Beecher in the *Independent*, it would render the Christian cause in America impotent. Beecher continued that it was a sin for “good men” to “not go near the temptation of politics,” but it was “more sinful still” to approach politics without “a sign of Christ’s robe upon them.”

Hosmer opined that it was the task of churches to define American morality for the state and that negligence on this point, while such morals were deeply contested, was equivalent to allowing Christ to be “betrayed in the house of his friends.” Churches then were deemed best suited for guiding a tumultuous land in political and moral public upheaval, despite what was said regarding the accepted role of church and state. As stated by Rev. Beecher, the man of God who jumps ship at the greatest moment of peril, leaving “the victim to be tossed on the chopping seas of expediency,” places himself under clear condemnation. Beecher continued to explain how important it was for Christian ministers to delineate “what principles should guide Christian men in political action, of whatever party, and without regard to measures.”

Regarding the relationship between religion and the state, William Hosmer recognized that such a discussion was unlikely to soon end. “The burden of determining anew, or at least of re-asserting what are the rights respectively of civil government and of Christianity, seems to be thrown upon this age.” Part of the difficulty, writes Hosmer, was that this question was not just one of

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251 Henry, *Politics and the Pulpit*, 17-18. (emphasis in original)
“jurisprudence, or of ethics, or of theology; but rather of all combined — of truth in general.” Such a crisis over the role of religion and slavery not only broke denominations in half, but it severed the nation into Civil War. This fight was not to be solved by prominent theologians from the pulpit, but instead, noted Mark Noll, by “force of arms.” It was left “to those consummate theologians, the Reverend Doctors Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman, to decide what in fact the bible actually meant,” and to Lincoln, the war’s preeminent theologian, to articulate the paradox. As the Civil War culminated in a northern victory and the emancipation of slavery, political impulses from the abolitionist pulpit and its model of the higher law, became an accepted national assumption. Southerners resented northern interference (particularly as coming from the northern pulpit) during the era of Reconstruction and remained defiant in honor of what they considered proper patriotism and religiosity.

Following the war and the abolishment of slavery with the Emancipation Proclamation, the question of reunion arose, particularly since their initial point of contention was that of slavery. Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in a pastoral letter, made their unwillingness toward reunion clear; as they

252 Hosmer, The Higher Law, 17.

253 Noll, Civil War, 8, 50. In his second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865, President Lincoln summed up his sentiments on the role of Providence in the Civil War. “Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered — that of neither has been answered fully.” J. G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Lamb Publishing Co., 1905), XI, 45-47.
argued that the real reasons for disunion were still alive. The letter charged that a majority of Northern Methodists had become “incurably radical,” preached “another gospel,” and were altogether immoral in their imposing of their brand of religion on the South. “Their pulpits are perverted to agitations and questions not healthful to personal piety, but promotive of political and ecclesiastical discord.”

The message that was given from before the war had not changed: “Preach Christ and Him crucified. Do not preach politics. You have no commission to preach politics.” The victory of war only emboldened the northern cause, serving as a beginning rather than conclusion. Led by popular Congregationalist minister, editor, and lecturer, Lyman Abbott (1835-1922), northern churchmen called for, even before war’s end, the necessity “not only to conquer the South, –we have also to convert it.”

Abbott contested that this necessary conversion could not be accomplished by the US government, as “Church and State are forever divorced in America” but instead the free churches of the North. Southern ministers could not be trusted with this task, for “we cannot trust those who have preached their congregations into rebellion to preach them back again.” Abbott’s understanding of the relation of the state and the churches was clear: “Thus to constitute a permanently free State, men must be taught not only their rights, but also their duties and their obligations. Submission must be inculcated, conscience must be educated,

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generous love must be inspired.” The sword was only one part of a two step process toward this conversion. Without the gospel as taught from the northern pulpit, there could be no republican form of government and therefore no self sovereignty and no effective reconstruction. “Thus the gospel is needed to prepare the way for true freedom. In truth, the principles of religion underlie republicanism.” An ideological reconstruction of the South was thus a process that was conceived of as being no less difficult and exacting than the demand of submission by bayonet had been during the war. If the South was to be worthy of self sovereignty, they could not be so without the implementation of “common schools and Christian churches,” as supplied by the North. 256 Southern ministers accurately interpreted these aims as arrogant and condescending, warning of systematic efforts to divide and devastate southern churches. Northern Methodist bishops and preachers had been intruding “themselves into several of our houses of worship, and in continuing to hold these places against the wishes and protests of the congregations and rightful owners,…They are not only using, to our deprivation and exclusion, churches and parsonages which we have builded, but have proceeded to set up a claim to them as their property; by what shadow of right, legal or moral, we are at a loss to conceive.” 257 The topic of Methodist reunion had been rendered impossible.

Though the controversy in Utah was not slavery but polygamy, the question of religion and its relation to the state remained. Like southern

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evangelical churches, Mormons charged opposition to their practice of polygamy as unconstitutional and an affront to religious liberty, or in the words of Mormon apostle Moses Thatcher in 1882, “treason” as “drafted by clergymen and carpet-bag officials[.]” To Utah Mormons, the northern response toward them appeared equally arrogant and unjust as it appeared to those in the South. Those in the East, after all, could not distinguish between the two relics of barbarism, and thus conflated polygamy with slavery, and thus responded in kind. In its national platform, the Republican Party placed polygamy and slavery as the opposite sides of the same coin of barbarism. Albert Barnes had explicitly linked the two as he argued in his tract, The Church and Slavery: that apologetics of either polygamy or slavery threatened the biblical faith of honorable Christians. Again, the issue was not what the Bible actually said, nor was it about the actual rights guaranteed under the Constitution, but “truth” as conceived from the northern pulpit. Such was the lone route to republican governance and the undergirding principle behind the rights of self sovereignty.

From their own pulpit, Mormon leaders addressed what they deemed wrongful government intrusion into the domestic affairs of Utah’s citizens. In an 1881 sermon before the general body of the church, George Q. Cannon of the LDS First Presidency responded to the “dogs of war” and “crusades” that were currently waged against them from the national pulpits and congress. In wondering why a country of “fifty millions of people” should be so unhinged

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259 Barnes, The Church and Slavery, 37.
regarding “a few thousands of people in Utah,” Cannon imbued it with higher and more supernatural meaning, which implied great things for Mormons and the nation. “We would never be the people God intends and designs us to be if we were to be let alone. The warfare must go on.” The battle was not against the US and the Mormons, but instead “God on one side and the Adversary on the other.” Though Satan has had power over this world for many millennia, the “Latter days” were different. “But this time it is another sort of a work. God has spoken concerning this work; this is the last work that the Prophets or the Apostles have called the dispensation of the fullness of times. There was to be a time when Satan should have to recede inch by inch, step by step. That time has come.” Cannon fully believed, despite their dwindling situation in Utah, that it was not they, but the government that would ultimately be “rent asunder by factions” and that only the “Latter-day Saints” would remain in organized strength, “and that it is their destiny as a people, to uphold constitutional government upon this land.” Although many in the East interpreted such statements as provocative and anti-American, Mormons felt it an authentic expression of patriotism. This was not a call to tear down and attack the government, but to preserve what they considered constitutional republicanism to be, despite its anticipated downfall. Then after speaking of liberty for all, including “The Great Agnostic” Robert Ingersoll, “Mohammed and all who believe in the Koran,” “Beecher and for those of his way of thinking; and even [Rev. De Witt] Talmage who has talked so badly about us,” Cannon claimed that “all people should have this liberty, that is, liberty of conscience, liberty of speech and liberty of the press, as long as it does not
degenerate into license, and interference with the rights of others.” Through defending polygamy as one of those rights, Mormons saw themselves defenders of religious liberty and republicanism, not because of their advantageous position in society (since they did not have this), but because of the position of their pulpit. “Now, my brethren and sisters, I forgot that it is Sunday; I do not know, however, but what this is as good Gospel as I can declare; it is the Gospel of humanity; it is the Gospel of truth.”

Mormons, like northern evangelicals, both declared from their pulpits a special connection to God’s will. Mormons agreed with popular sentiments that the pulpit rightly defined American polity. But they were Mormons and their pulpit was considered anathema to the mainstream evangelical churches. In short, the offense was not that Mormons allowed their pulpits to preach on the political issues of the day (as did their evangelical counterparts), but instead that they presumed and exercised such privilege as outsiders. Hence denied status within the mainstream American churches they were also denied status as acceptable expounders of this “truth” behind the meaning of American progress. The principle of volunteerism had allowed for religious competition in national public life, but the boundaries of such competition was limited to evangelical churches, particularly those in the North.

The Mormon pulpit offered a new interpretation of Americanism, presenting the LDS Church as bringing forth new agents of the kingdom of God in America. Mormon leaders trusted that they could demonstrate their patriotism

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260 JD, 23: 122-123.
by exposing what they considered the obvious and overt hypocrisy of the nation’s laws toward them and to others. Positioning himself as a rightful American and defender of “true republicanism,” Brigham Young pointed out in an Independence Day speech in 1854, that although the American Revolution was inspired of God, that there have been subsequent revolutions that have moved America away from those early ideals. Such “fathers” brought forth “a glorious prospect in the future, but one we cannot attain to until the present abuses in the Government are corrected.” Young then continued that there may be what some have called a “progressive revolution” since the Revolution, “but not in virtue, justice, upright, and truth.” In clarifying what he meant by this, Young continued, “It has become quite a custom, and by custom it has the force of law, for one party to mob another, to tear down and destroy Catholic churches, drive citizens from the ballot box, disallowing them the right of franchise, and persecute, plunder, drive from their possessions, and kill a great people.”

For Brigham Young and others in Utah, holding to the “fathers” of the initial Revolution was sharply contrasted with those then in power.

In their heavy criticism against the US government and its relation to the evangelical pulpit, Mormons saw themselves as the true patriots. Apostle Erastus Snow gave insight to this Mormon paradox at a general conference in 1883, “Whatever some may have thought of the mal-administration in our government . . . we must charge it [the blame] always where it belongs.” His explanation was that government officials, not the Constitution or the government itself, were to

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261 JD, 9-11, 15.
blame. In fact, he reminded members of the Church, “We regard the present form of government of this nation as embodying the greatest amount of virtue and principles best calculated to maintain and preserve the rights of man.”

Therefore, the defiant Mormon response and reaction against popular notions and processes of Americanization became a sacred and patriotic duty, and in defense of the spirit of the founding fathers. The destiny of the American kingdom and the success of the American experiment were conceived as intimately wrapped up in that of the LDS Church. If the Constitution and its guarantee of religious liberty were to be preserved and to reach its full fruition, it would be through their efforts, which included a defense of polygamy, not its surrender. For Mormons, this acerbic patriotism did not represent a form of schizophrenia as charged by historian R. Laurence Moore, but instead an understanding of Americanism that had developed in a different direction than that of their evangelical counterparts in the East.

The American press, reflecting public opinion decisively shaped by evangelicals, was uniformly hostile against the LDS Church and its members’ notions of Americanism and their future expectations of the American kingdom. Nonetheless, a tradition of “response literature” emerged early in Utah as a way to answer its more powerful critics. Historian Ronald Walker explained that this literature revealed the teachings and attitude of the new church, but more importantly demonstrated how the early church should present itself to the

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262 JD, 24: 66-67.
Despite its mixed success in gaining converts, such literature, due to its condemning tone and condescension, in the words of historian Reid Neilson, was a “public relations disaster.”\(^{264}\) Following the official announcement of polygamy in 1852 by Apostle Orson Pratt, Brigham Young and the First Presidency commissioned three apostles to make the Mormon pulpit national. Apostle Orson Pratt, Parley P. Pratt’s younger brother, began *The Seer* in Washington, D.C. (1853-1854); Erastus Snow issued the *Saint Louis Luminary* (November 1854-December 1855); and John Taylor went to New York City and published the *Mormon* (February 1855-September 1857).\(^{265}\) These three Mormon-run periodicals outlined Mormon doctrine, challenged American public and government officials, defied their status as “un-American,” upheld polygamy as a natural and biblical truth, and invited serious debate and investigation regarding the truths of Mormonism and its role to play in America. The evolution of this Mormon apologetic literature invariably contributed, perhaps unintentionally, to a tradition of critical internal dialogue with the outside world. However intentional, this literature posited Mormons as against and at odds with the rest of the nation, making reconciliation and understanding even more unlikely.

Orson Pratt’s *The Seer*, with its direct and critical arguments, was representative and illuminating of this effort. His language was both colorful and intentionally provocative; nevertheless, his positions illuminate most clearly the


\(^{264}\) Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism*, 46.

\(^{265}\) Ibid., 209.
paradox of Mormon defiance of and simultaneous loyalty to the American nation. Turning the press into a type of portable Mormon pulpit, Brigham Young and his counselors sent Pratt to both “preside over the Church throughout the United States,” and to write and publish periodicals, tracts, and books “illustrative of the principles and doctrines of the Church.” The purpose of *The Seer* was to advance “the work of the Lord among all nations,” but its primary intended audience was that of the nation’s capital, Washington D.C. Pratt was quick in this periodical to ridicule the assimilation efforts of Americanization and criticized its absence of true Christian morality in such attempts. Pratt directly charged the national pulpit to “show wherein it [polygamy] is immoral, or unscriptural, or criminal,” as it was constitutionally legal and biblically upheld, and globally, “four times more popular” than the “one wife system.” With purposeful irony, after contrasting the high morality with the sexual ills of a so-called Christian America, Pratt sarcastically pled for the nation to “come over and help us... set us in the good old paths of ancient Christianity.” Church colleague John Taylor similarly wrote in 1852 of the failure of historic Christianity, in its “eighteen hundred years” of prominence, to bring forth the “world’s redemption and regeneration.” Christianity has not served as this kingdom; rather, darkness has. In short, apostles Taylor and Pratt understood the kingdom to be that which deciphered God’s will for society, and thus transformed it into one that was both free and

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266 Pratt, *Seer*, 1.

267 Ibid., 12, 127.

268 Ibid., 77.
happy. As they looked to the nation, they allowed themselves to see only the disorganized and unhappy. “If we look at Christian nations as a whole, we see a picture that is truly lamentable; a miserable portrait of poor, degenerated, fallen humanity.” For Orson Pratt, Mormonism offered a direct contrast to traditional America, one both religiously and culturally superior. Therefore, for Pratt, Mormons were not only the true Christians, but also the true Americans, and the keys of the kingdom rested with them. Characteristic of nineteenth-century Mormon rhetoric and literature, Pratt’s periodical took the offensive and brought the debate back down into Mormon terms.

By use of logic and Scripture, Pratt put forth a strong challenge to his opponents. He pointed out that the national leaders had accused Mormonism of immorality, heresy, un-Americanism, and political treachery, but had never offered sufficient proof. “If the editors and ministers wish to put a stop to the rolling of the great wheels of ‘Mormonism,’ we advise them to try another plan.” “Send forth your master spirits,” he challenged, “your Calvins—your Luthers—your Wesleys; let the thunder of their eloquence be heard upon the mountain tops; let the vales of Utah be refreshed by their sublime effusions.” Pratt contested that the nation had no Constitutional rights and biblical support to oppose polygamy, and in doing so, exposed the country’s misuse of power and distortion of religion. “Must we, under the broad folds of the American

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270 Pratt, The Seer, 76.

271 Ibid., 77.
Constitution, be compelled to bow down to the narrow contracted notions of Apostate Christianity?” “Must we be slaves to custom and render homage to the soul-destroying, sickening influences of modern Christianity? No: American freedom was never instituted for such servile purposes.”

He accused Americans of enforcing from their pulpits religious “superstitions,” as had the theocracies of Europe. He posited this as a dire national contradiction, for “the government of this nation is not a theocracy; it is intended to give religious freedom to all.” Therefore, according to Pratt, Utah’s theocracy was not a threat towards American republicanism, but rather Washington’s was. Pratt thus ridiculed the American system, in a land of supposed religious freedom and liberty, of allowing itself to be ruled again by superstition and tyranny. “Why will not American citizens, then, rise up with one accord and repeal those illiberal oppressive laws, and let the liberties bequeathed to us by the choice blood of our illustrious ancestors be enjoyed to their fullest extent?”

After reiterating the injustices perpetrated against Mormons on account of their religion, Orson Pratt offered a critical response to America’s declaration of guaranteed liberty and freedom. “Boast not, O proud America, of the Liberality of thy institutions, when such illiberal laws as these curse thy soil!” In response to claims of the US being a Christian nation, he remarked with condemning emphasis, “A Christian nation!” “How is it, that you will not awake to a sense of

272 Ibid., 111.

273 Ibid., 112.

274 Ibid., 112.
the awful condition that you are in[?]’’ Then, taking a more prophetic tone, he wrote, ‘‘Oh, fear and tremble, ye hypocrites, ye whited sepulchers, lest God shall smite you, for thus provokingly telling him that you are a Christian nation!’’

Pratt’s call was not simply one of jeremiads and apologetics, but a prophetic call for a nation to both repent and join the ‘‘true’’ path of patriotism and to join the true kingdom of God as defined, defended, and being realized by the LDS Church. In likening the Mormon kingdom with the rock foretold by Daniel, a ‘‘city set upon a high hill, and lighted with the glory of God,’’ Pratt directly linked ‘‘the apostate nations of Christendom’’ with ‘‘great Babylon,’’ whose ultimate downfall was foretold in Scripture. Therefore, Mormonism was presented as not only the fulfillment of ancient Christianity, but also became the new ‘‘City set on a Hill,’’ as earlier and famously declared by the Massachusetts Bay governor John Winthrop. A vision of the kingdom which Pratt now argued was defended by a ‘‘true’’ reading of the Bible and the Constitution, and one which tapped into long held covenant themes and stories of national apostasy in his declaration of mainstream America as un-Christian, un-American, and staring in the face of God’s wrath.

The nineteenth century was one of deeply contested visions of the American kingdom of God and the definition of republicanism with that kingdom. The role and relation religion held with the state led to dramatic divisions within the religious and political world, solved only through Civil War, Reconstruction,

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275 Ibid., 260.

276 Ibid., 319.
and harsh anti-polygamy legislation. Assumptions of republicanism and one’s right of self governance were likewise challenged and narrowly defined, bringing forth competing notions of biblical and constitutional interpretation. Rebellion, barbarism, patriotism and truth were all terms that were thrown around with divergent meaning, creating bitter disputes within mainline denominations and sending the nation into secession and armed conflict. When the Civil War came to a close and abolitionism had been won and the northern pulpit had been rendered legitimate, the initial point of conflict remained, encouraging further conflict and making reunion difficult. A closer look at the anti-polygamy crusades reveals a similar divide, but Mormonism’s post polygamy response demonstrates an important look at what Mormons came to see as “American” and how their dramatic transformations were able to retain their earlier patriotism, while at the same time connecting to a new republic. The kingdom, as we have and will continue to see with the anti-polygamy crusades, represented more than an issue of political policy and the proper relation of religion to the state, but lay at the heart of what it meant to be “American.”
Chapter 4

"AN UNLOVED CHILD": ANTI-POLYGAMY AND THE DEFINITION OF AMERICANISM

This is, indeed, a ratification in heaven of what is enacted on earth, in such a sense as never entered the brain of mortal men before. This is as much as to say to the churches: Substitute humanity for God, or bear the consequences. The churches have but one answer to give: God, the one God, is both our country and our king.

Charles C. Starbuck, *The Sects of Christianity* (December 1888)

We do not ask for this freedom as a favor; we demand it as a right. We are as much entitled to the full rights of citizenship in these mountains as any other citizen who dwell under the flag of the Republic. Under any and all circumstances we are their peers.

LDS First Presidency, AN EPISTLE (March 1886)

In spite of Latter-day Saint efforts at correction, aggressive explanation, presentation of their case, and pleas for calm investigation, national fears of alleged Mormon murders, human sacrifices, blood atonements, secret conspiracies, temple oaths, female and child slavery, and priesthood despotism continued to fill the public mind. The thriving presence and apparent success of Mormonism due to its unprecedented missionary success and organizational strength, especially in Utah politics, only compounded popular fears of the immediate and eminent dangers of Mormonism. This further inspired a sense of urgency on the part of government officials and its citizens.

As was the case with nativist fears toward Catholicism, Mormonism was perceived as more than a religious denomination; they were viewed as a
competing political force. Therefore, Mormons were not simply different or weird, but rather, in the eyes of many Americans, they were a truly demonic force of incalculable consequence. If left unchecked, their power directly threatened the very foundations of American civil society. Their location in the West stoked fears of barbarism and its attendant dangers. Fearful that the nation’s future was dependent on the West, an earlier generation of evangelicals pled for the West to be civilized (which meant to be made Protestant). Utah political structures seemed to confirm the nation’s fears that Mormonism, like Catholicism, was incompatible with this evangelically linked democratic republicanism.

Despite constitutional guarantees to the contrary, religion shaped by evangelical hegemony framed the rules and definitions of how American civilization itself was understood. Hence political and judicial efforts to crush Mormonism held deep theological motivation. It was in response to these concerns that Mormonism was quickly perceived as being outside the freedoms and protections of the U.S. Constitution, and it would be for this perception that Congress and the Supreme Court moved to redefine both religion and the religious freedom. Thus, fears of Mormonism, Roman Catholicism and a radical pluralism from the evangelical hegemony form the logic behind unprecedented federal legislation that would attempt to define the parameters of religious freedom in America throughout the last half of the century. Through examination of the national anti-polygamy crusades of the 1880s, this chapter demonstrates the irony behind the use of state coercion and oppression in order to preserve what the courts later defined as the essential parameters of a “Christian civilization” that
was of decidedly Protestant orientation. In establishing what would become an exceedingly narrow definition of this civilization, the courts portrayed Mormonism to be its mirror opposite.

Throughout the expanding western frontier, there were strong national and local efforts to marginalize the Mormon influence. In favoring what had become a thirty-year disfranchisement of Mormons, Presbyterian and U.S. President Benjamin Harrison commented in 1890 that “such people should be checked.” Though the presence and success of Mormonism exposed the paradoxes and contradictions within the progressive and freedom narratives of historians Robert Baird, Philip Schaff, Josiah Strong, and Daniel Dorchester, these nineteenth-century minister-historians portrayed Mormonism in a way that upheld their hopes of a unified Christian America. Joined with their responses to this national crisis over religious and civil authority supposedly evoked by the threat of Mormonism and their practice of polygamy, popular depictions of Mormonism helped to illuminate the acceptable boundaries of America’s version of “Christian civilization” and culture.

By means of a metaphor from the Old Testament, Mormonism seemed to represent the scapegoat sent out into the wilderness so as to atone for new Israel’s collective sins. Mormonism represented a visible reminder of America’s failures and vulnerabilities. By labeling them as un-American and excluding them, the national narrative was preserved from the contradictions, nuances, and

complexities of American political, social, and religious realities. It was a narrative that was presented as predictable, stable, and progressive, and one in which the white Protestant influence appeared unchallenged, natural, and expected. However, the increasing success and growth of the Mormon “Empire” in Utah elicited continued alarm. Thus Mormonism in the last half of the nineteenth century increasingly became a scarlet-ribboned goat not only did not die, but flourished in the American territories of the West. Mormon success and intransigence in the West induced questions about what it would take for them to be acceptable and embraceable, something that would prove equally difficult for both sides. For Mormons to be accepted as viable Americans, assimilation to white Protestant religious and cultural norms seems to be a prerequisite. In the words of President Grover Cleveland to Utah’s Delegate John T. Caine amidst Mormon complaints of injustice, “I wish you out there could be like the rest of us.”

Consequently, the question of religious and cultural diversity, the toleration of that diversity, as well as the religious response to intolerance, be it in forms of assimilation, accommodation or resistance came to the fore and must be understood within the context of dynamic encounter, rather than through Church historian Sidney Meads’ historiographical model of an “unbroken continuum” of American progress. Throughout the nineteenth century, the parameters and definitions of a “Christian civilization” were under intense ideological and theological debate and cultural challenge. However, the dynamics of this

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278 Associated Press interview as quoted in Roberts, A Comprehensive History, 6:152.
civilization and the transformations it was undergoing post Civil War were neither obvious nor inevitable.

**Perceiving Outsiderness**

Mormons were not the only minority group in America which seriously challenged an imagined and constructed American insider identity that was based on Evangelical notions of civilization. Indeed, many late-nineteenth century parallels can be noted. Chinese and Irish immigrants, African Americans, and Native Americans, to name a few, also represented important challenges to the popular and normative notion of Christian civilization. Images pulled from the vastly popular comic weeklies of the 1880s, namely *Puck* and *The Wasp*, “Three Troublesome Children (Fig. 4)” and “Under False Colors (Fig. 5)” embody and depict the popular rejection and dehumanization of minority groups collectively deemed outside the accepted parameters of Christian civilization, and hence by implication and application justifiably denied full rights of U.S. identity and citizenship.

In “Three Troublesome Children,” Chinese and Indians are pictured alongside Mormons as impossibly difficult children in need of serious fatherly attention and discipline. With monkey-like characteristics, the Chinese child hangs from his mother’s (Columbia) hair, while the sexually unbridled Mormon child attempts to kiss her. Sitting on the floor, the Native American child amuses himself by chopping U.S. soldiers in half with his hatchet. To criticize the current “soft” national stance against unpopular minority groups, Uncle Sam is depicted
as the typical neglectful father. Preoccupied with news of politics and money, father Sam is oblivious to the chaos and barbarism going on behind him in his own home. The insinuation is that the American government needs to pay attention to fair Columbia, and whip its “troublesome children” into shape.²⁷⁹

ILLUSTRATION


²⁷⁹ Also profoundly significant in its absence was a depiction of African Americans.
The anti-Irish drawing by *Puck’s* founder Joseph Keppler, “Under False Colors,” presents another representation of this national struggle over acceptable parameters of Christian civilization and the limits of America’s “fair experiment” of religious freedom amid the resurgence of late nineteenth-century nativism and anti-Catholicism. Here an Irish-American, pathetically dressed in stereotypical Uncle Sam attire attempts to pass himself off as an authentic American, and thus deserving of US protection overseas. As he begs American Minister England James Russell Lowell for protection, the Irish-American is waved off with clear annoyance, “No, sir, you are not [an?] American citizen I am here to protect.” While discounting the perceived imposter, whose Irish identity is just too apparent, Lowell’s other hand holds a strong warning to all Irish immigrants that
hope for American privilege, “All such persons should be made to understand distinctly that they cannot be Irishmen and Americans at the same time.” This cartoon illuminates the troubles Irish-Americans suspect at home had in claiming American rights (and identity) overseas as reflected in Lowell’s continual refusal to defend or represent them.\footnote{John J. Appel, “From Shanties to Lace Curtains: The Irish Image in Puck, 1876-1910,” \textit{Comparative Studies in Society and History}, vol. 13, No. 4 (Oct., 1971.) 365-375, p. 369} Graphically conveyed was the message that Irish-Americans, as long as they retained any sense of their Irish heritage (inclusive of their Catholic faith), could not and would not be accepted as Americans at home or abroad. When the Apostolic delegate Satolli arrived in the United States, \textit{Puck’s} editor took the occasion to argue that “it is just a little more impossible than ever for a man to be a good Catholic and a good American.”\footnote{Quoted in Ibid., 370.} Though far from a minority numerically, Irish-Americans and other Catholics were quickly schooled in American notions of civilization and religion (religious tolerance) and their lack of both. For Protestants, the Roman Catholics Church was the epitome of what it meant to be “American,” inspiring patriotic expressions antagonistic of both Catholicism and its American leaders.

Mainstream Protestant Americans at the end of the nineteenth century were not questioning the meaning of civilization, but rather working to maintain it in accordance with their own unique and peculiar notions of Christian civilizationism. The US government, fueled and shaped by the evangelical hegemony, nearly stopped at nothing to impose and maintain a specifically
Protestant ideal of civilization, notes historian Erika Lee. Consequently, mainstream Americans mirroring their government and cultural agencies did not feel duty bound to understand, tolerate or protect excluded minority groups, but instead shared in a view of and willingness to treat them as troublesome children, or reject them as imposters.

Notions of an American civilization had direct linkages to what historians later called postmillenarianist thinking, which was a central ideal in American kingdom mythology. Postmillenarianism optimistically anticipated a progressive society that aimed to dispel national impurities like Catholicism and Mormonism. For Christ to return, postmillennial thinking demanded that society be made ready for him, implying serious social, religious, and political improvement. Consequently American evangelicals harnessed interpretations of God’s purposes in order to positively impact society through social reforms or crusades. Though optimistic about human influence, ability, and responsibility in directing American society toward God’s glory, the opposite was also true; humans could impact society negatively, and thus delay the realization of the American Kingdom of God. Thus, postmillenarian-rooted notions of American civilization also identified perils to be reckoned with and specific communities and groups, such as Mormons, Catholics, Native Americans, African Americans and others, all who became convenient and unfortunate targets and foils.

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Chinese immigrants had a particularly difficult time in the West since they not only looked different and ate different foods; they were also resistant to acculturation; that is, “becoming truly American.” One particular Nativist minister argued before Congress that the Chinese were managing a “perfect and increasingly efficient ‘imperium in imperio,’” promoting values deemed un-American and threatening. “Very few,” he argued, “of these ever change in character, to become Americanized.” And then to define more precisely what he perceived as the most crucial element that this Americanization process entailed, he explained: “Only about 500 in the last twenty-five years have renounced their native heathenism to profess Christianity.” If unrestrained, this testimonial continued that Chinese immigrants would overrun our lands with their adverse and un-American tastes, habits, and language. \(^{283}\) Difference was not only translated in negatively moral terms, but was also seen as an infectious disease that was not just an annoyance, but a national threat.

Racial and ethnic characteristics as well as religious and cultural traits also seemed to preclude acceptable Americanization. Philip Schaff recognized and mirrored the “ethnographic panorama” in America as he spoke of the Chinese: “the yellow immigrants from the Celestial Empire, attracted by the gold of California, and bringing with them their oblong eyes, their quiet disposition and mechanical culture, their industry, avarice, and filthy habits.”\(^{284}\) The news press


Grass Valley Tidings was more magnanimous though no less prejudiced as it confessed in 1874, “We have no feeling of ill will against the Chinese people among us; we would not abuse them nor willingly see them abused; but we cannot help a feeling that we want no more of them; that we want some method found out, if possible, by which those who are already among us may be removed.”\(^{285}\) It was claimed and asserted that children were not allowed to immigrate and the few women that came were kept as sex slaves in San Francisco, some of them in cages.

Notably, two-thirds of all lynching in California 1849-1902 were Asian (200 out of 302). Though representing a quarter of California’s total economy 1849-1870, Californians stopped at little to rid themselves of the Chinese populations. With massacres like that of Los Angeles on October 24, 1871 where a mob (including white women and children) shot, knifed and hung nineteen Chinese men and one woman and the roundups of at least 200 of the Chinese communities between 1850-1906, white Americans worked to make real their prediction that that Chinese immigrants could not assimilate, and become acceptably American.\(^{286}\) Responding to the Los Angeles massacre, which emerged as a response to a Chinese wedding (signifying Chinese cultural and religious permanence), California historian, Hubert Bancroft celebrated the massacre as an American “right of revolution,” or a democratic expression of the

\(^{285}\) Grass Valley Foothill Weekly Tidings, November 7, 1874. See also Jean Pfaelzer, Driven out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 252.

\(^{286}\) Pfaelzer, Driven Out, xxv, 31, 47-54.
majority’s “right…to suspend the action of the law…whenever they deemed it essential to the well being of society to do so,” rather than a “disrespect for the law.” Violence and cruelty then could be used as a way of furthering this Americanization and civilization project. In dismissing Chinese immigrants as un-American barbarians, Americans legitimated this violence rather than allowing it to illuminate their own barbarism run amok either among Chinese in California or blacks in the South. The false dichotomy of civilization/barbarism thus cast a spell over the American mind, recreating immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities as dangerous outsiders. The ultimate consequence was the disempowerment of the Chinese within American society and their inability to become “American.” As such, Americanism furthered reified its self identity as being “not-Chinese.”

In 1882, Congress moved to officially exclude and further humiliate the Chinese by passing the Chinese Exclusion Act (essentially barring Chinese immigration for 10 years), and its renewal in 1892 with the Geary Act (aka. “dog tag law”). The Supreme Court in 1893 upheld the 1892 Congressional Act in *Fong Yue Ting v. United States et al.*, in effect, notes historian Jean Pfaelzer, empowering Congress to declare who could and could not be considered a “person” (or American citizen) dependent upon their race. Consequently, Chinese could be arrested and deported “without trial of any sort,” and without protection against unfair and unusual punishment, as argued by Justice Horace Gray of the majority opinion. The arrested Chinese “has not, therefore, been deprived of life,

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287 As quoted in Ibid., 54.
liberty, or property, without due process of law,” as with the Chinese, Constitutional protections “have no application.” In effect, consistent with legislation and interpretations focused on restrictions of citizenship privileges of blacks, the Supreme Court upheld Congress’s power to brand America as an exclusively white nation at the expense of non-white minorities. These laws and rulings emboldened mob violence against the Chinese in California, but they also encouraged a backlash of violence against American merchants and missionaries in China, as seen in the 1900 Boxer Rebellion. This wholesale murder and constitutionally upheld racism against the Chinese does not represent an episodic or unfortunate blip in the narrative of national progress, but instead represented and reaffirmed prevailing notions of what Americans considered to be necessary within a progressive and unfolding Christian civilization.

Similar treatments of Native Americans are unsurprising, yet illuminate another aspect of America’s definition of and attempts to realize a Christian

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288 Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 302-304.

289 Ibid., 302-306.

290 For a discussion of this international reaction, see Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 305, 325.

291 Expanding on his scientific view of natural selection in light of American progress, Charles Darwin argued in a way that would be repeated by minister historians, that history too was marked by natural selection, and that human progress included the survival of the fittest. As he demonstrates, nineteenth-century science complimented both social and political thought. “There is apparently much truth in the belief that the wonderful progress of the United States, as well as the character of the people, are the results of natural selection; for the more energetic, restless, and courageous men from all parts of Europe have emigrated during the last ten or twelve generations to that great country, and have there succeeded best.” Darwin then quotes minister Zincke to further his point on this new American race, “All other series of events—as that which resulted in the culture of mind in Greece, and that which resulted in the Empire of Rome—only appear to have purpose and value when viewed in connection with, or rather as subsidiary to, the great stream of Anglo-Saxon emigration to the West.” Charles Darwin, The Descent of man (New York, 1888), 142.
civilization. Christian missions and schools (such as Yale and William and Mary) had long been established to convert Indians to the American ideal of progress and relegate them to a minor role as foils in the narrative of American civilizationism. Success had been minimal and popular resistance to such Americanization efforts continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century. Racial annihilation became the policy of choice. In furthering the agenda of Beecher and Barnes, et al, government and church agencies joined to clear the West and to guarantee that the nation would not be subverted by developments in the West.

By the time of the Gold Rush in California (1849), there was an estimated 150,000-300,000 Native Americans in California, which by 1860 had dwindled to 32,000 due to extermination, malnutrition, disease and the seizure of land. Newspapers called for “a war of extermination until the last red skin of these tribes has been killed,” while others stated, “It is a mercy to the red devils to exterminate them, and a saving of many white lives. Treaties are played out—there is only one kind of treaty that is effective—cold lead.” Church historian Philip Schaff however, attributed this decimation of native populations to “the tragical fate of self-extirmination by intestine wars, contagious diseases, and the poison of rum.” Americans did their best “to Christianize and civilize them,” but these “red aborigines of the country” proved incapable of such gifts. Similar to his pointing the finger at indictment of Catholics for their own troubles in

292 Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 19.

293 Schaff, America, 53.
America, Robert Baird described Native Americans as deserving of their pathetic situation long before whites ever arrived.294 

“Friendly” and “hostile” tribes met similar fates. In 1860, on an Island on Humbolt Bay, 150 Wyot women, children, and elders were slaughtered during a harvest ritual.295 On January 29, 1863 in southeastern Washington or Utah territory (present day Idaho), Colonel Patrick Conner attacked the resistant Shoshone Indians at Bear River, killing an estimated 300 men, women and children in what Scott Christenson labeled a “wholesale slaughter.”296 For the American military, this massacre represented a “signal victory,” establishing American authority in the northern Rockies and essentially terrorized native tribes into submission.297 For his “heroic conduct” at Bear River, Connor was promoted brigadier general.298 The December 29, 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee (South Dakota), where 270-300 Lakota Sioux were rounded up, disarmed and shot (2/3 being women and children) by American soldiers, Americans envisioned the closing of a savage frontier and the establishment of an American civilizationism. As part of the final conquest of the West, US soldiers who took part in the massacre were given the Medal of Honor and General Nelson A. Miles, whose


298 Ibid., 139.
campaign against the Sioux led to the massacre, was later promoted Commanding General of the U.S. Army. The legitimation of violence in support of the advance of Christian civilizationism and its presumptions of racial, ethnic, cultural and religious homogeneity or more correctively Anglo-Protestant hegemony was effective. Looking back, holy man and revolutionary leader Black Elk lamented after the massacre the end of Indian resistance, “the nations hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.” The first few years of California’s statehood saw military massacres, casual murders and retaliatory killings of Indian populations, but such was representative of the national treatment of Native American populations throughout the nineteenth century, and only calmed with the submission of native populations to what the American government declared “progressive.”

Additional anxiety and concerns related to perception and treatment of America’s black population following the Civil War included more than four million former slaves. Through a series of legislative and judicial prescriptions, the presence of African Americans represented an even more serious challenge to popular notions of “Christian civilization” within America and the horrible irony of its claims of American liberty and liberality. Threatened by Radical Reconstruction (1865-1877) laws that displaced white power in the South, historian John Franklin notes “a kind of guerrilla warfare,” even “holy crusade,”


300 Definitions of “progressive Indians” and “non-progressives” were thus established within this context, as Jeffrey Ostler points out, still remain even within “New Indian” historiography. See Ostler, The Plains Sioux, 7.
which emerged against blacks in the South and whites associated with Washington. Many secret terrorist societies such as the Constitutional Union Guards, ’76 Association, Knights of the KKK and the White Brothers were formed to preserve their sense of Christian civilizationism and the American covenant. Various levels of intimidation, violence, and even murder remained important methods for restoring southern honor and white rule. During the last sixteen years of the nineteenth century alone, there were 2,500 lynchings, most of them black.

Legislative and judicial rulings supportive of the Anglo-Protestant majority were crucial in returning white supremacy to a war torn South. In response to the imagined problem of “lazy blacks” following the emancipation of slavery, infamous Black Codes were initiated throughout the South. Targeting blacks, the Mississippi code forced “all other idle and disorderly persons” to involuntary labor, usually to former slave holders. By law, blacks were ordered to be courteous, dutiful, and diligent employees to their new white employers, looking in some ways to be a new form of slavery, as it kept poor and landless blacks in endless debt. In the United States v. Reese, 1875, the Supreme Court declared the 15th Amendment as not guaranteeing suffrage to anyone, while United States v. Cruikshank declared the Enforcement Act of 1870, which guaranteed suffrage, unconstitutional. Together, these Court decisions opened the

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302 Ibid., 312.

303 Cooper, The American South, 395.
way for the South to settle its own problems regarding voting standards.\textsuperscript{304}

Mississippi led the way as it wrote into its constitution a suffrage Amendment discouraging the black vote, including a poll tax, literacy tests, and a property ownership standard. Louisiana added the “Grandfather clause” into its constitution in 1898 which limited suffrage to those whose fathers or grandfathers could vote before January 1, 1867, essentially disenfranchised all blacks.\textsuperscript{305}

Tennessee outlawed racial intermarriage in 1870, and in 1875 initiated the first set of “Jim Crow” laws, setting up the first set of racial segregation laws. In banning the Civil Rights Act of 1875, the Supreme Court further extended the ban on blacks in public space. Furthering laws on segregation, the Supreme Court upheld segregation as constitutional in the landmark \textit{Plessy v. Ferguson} (1896), legitimating the “separate but equal” doctrine. Franklin explains, “The laws, the courts, the schools and almost every institution in the South favored whites,” essentially establishing white supremacy into law.\textsuperscript{306}

Following WWI, the KKK held a major role in defining and maintaining an evangelically influenced narrative of American civilizationism. For the Klan and other nativist vigilante groups, all races and religions that were not white or Protestant posed a threat. Hiram Wesley Evans, KKK Imperial Wizard and Emperor, outlined in the prestigious \textit{North American Review} an essential Americanism that had been initiated “ever since the days of Roanoke and

\textsuperscript{304} Franklin, \textit{From Slavery to Freedom}, 254.

\textsuperscript{305} Ibid., 260.

\textsuperscript{306} Ibid., 262-263.
Plymouth Rock.” In outlining his Puritan patriotism that held “America for Americans,” Evans conflated his Americanism with a “most sacred of trusts,” coming from both his fathers and God. In countering America’s diversity and the new national trends toward its embrace, the Klan held such trends to be absurd. “Race conflict” was unavoidable, he contended, as “the world has been so made that each race must fight for its life, must conquer, accept slavery or die.” Beyond race, Protestantism was an “essential part of Americanism.” From the beginning of its national ideology, American Exceptionalism came from its Anglo-Protestantism, therefore, in order to retain this patriotism, “she must remain Protestant.”307 Into this next century, the KKK continued to define and maintain an evangelically influenced narrative of American civilization, representing a new postwar nativism that retained an important nineteenth-century vision of God’s covenant and kingdom in America.

As a whole, minority groups, whether racial, ethnic, religious of cultural, found the pressures of Americanization difficult (and for some, impossible), not just in preserving their own ethnic or religious identities, but in finding participation within a nation that demanded these groups to “be like us.” Aided by George Washington’s promise that America provided “to bigotry no sanction,” Jewish immigrants had long looked to America as a “second Jerusalem” and gathering place for the “scattered people of Israel,” but soon found severe

307 North American Review, 223 (March, April, May, 1926), 52-55.
hostility to both the Jewish race and customs. Scientific thought at the end of the nineteenth century focused heavily on the impurity of Jewish blood as contrasted with that of the superior Anglo Saxon (aka. Aryan) race, making their presence seem contaminating. Through the efforts of pioneering Jewish leaders in the US like Isaac Leeser (1806-1868), American Jews embraced reform in ways that their Protestant neighbors could recognize. Leeser, for example, increasingly adopted Protestant frameworks for public worship, as testified by Leeser’s tomb which reads, “Reverend,” “minister” and “for forty years a preacher of the word of God,” rather than Hazan, or “reader” or “cantor.” In light of severe rhetoric against immigration and its consequent flood of non-Christians into the US, Leeser and other Jewish leaders approached postwar immigration and the social status of Jews in the US in ways that were considered to be both American and Jewish.


309 Josiah Strong, Our Country, 210-212.

310 Sarna, American Judaism, 77-88. Christmas has long been an uneasy American holiday for Jews, particularly as it began to be upheld on the state and territorial level in 1849 when New York and Virginia recognized it as a legal holiday, and forty-one years later when it became national. Christmas took an air of “Americanism” with its symbols of generosity, family, togetherness, peace, goodwill, and sharing. Many Jews adopted these ideals as part of their civil American identity, however much they rejected the Christ side of the holiday. This tension represents another aspect of the American assimilation or accommodation spectrum. See Jonathan D. Sarna, “Is Judaism Compatible with American Civil Religion? The Problem of Christmas and the ‘National Faith,’ ” in Rowland A. Sherrill, ed., Religion and the Life of the Nation: American Recoveries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 154-157.

311 Still, Jewish leaders embraced a policy of assimilation that drew off much of the suspicion of an anti-Semitic nation. For example, Jewish leader Isaac Leeser (1806-1868) avoided much of the hostility by advocating for Judaism nationally familiar Protestant ritualistic norms. Concerned of the affect American hostility in the public schools had on Jewish youth, Leeser advocated for independent Jewish education. In an attempt to preserve Jewishness, Leeser published the first Jewish translation of the Bible into English, breaking the Jewish reliance on the King James Bible
In the midst of this broader ethos of widespread discrimination of all those that were “not like us” and the driving pressure for minority groups to comply through assimilation, the popularity of anti-Mormonism is hardly surprising. Josiah Strong, terrified that the 1880s represented the height of foreign infiltration, pled for its limitations, which if “successfully met for the next few years, until it has passed its climax, it may be expected to add value to the amalgam which will constitute the new Anglo-Saxon race in the New World.”

The 1870s and 1880s represented a period of minority encounter that defined some of the more essential components of Americanism, as well as its legitimate and illegitimate players. The frontier was at its close, and it was essential in these decades to ensure its religious, racial, and geographic boundaries.

But final conquest and consolidation of the Americanization campaign in the West was hampered and defied by the reality of Mormons in Utah. Discrimination toward Mormons fit the context of hostility toward Chinese, African Americans, Native Americans, and even Catholics, demonstrating the boundaries of Americanism as well as the heavy price of not being sufficiently “like us.” As long as minority groups challenged the exclusivity of white Protestantism with Americanism, they remained threatening, and as such, the

that emphasized through captions a clear Protestant Christology. See Sarna, *American Judaism*, 210-211.

312 Strong notes that immigrants tend to be criminal cast offs more often than not, posing a severe threat as they mingle into the American population. They bring with them their moral and political ills and pour “into the formative West.” Such a fact was “by no means reassuring.” Either they will “foreignize us, or we are to Americanize it.” The war was on. Josiah Strong, *Our Country*, 42, 52-55, 57, 211.
American system put into play effective markers to preserve the purity of the public sphere against such impurities.

Being identified as American had powerful social, cultural/racial, and political implications, and it was thus jealously guarded. Part of the privilege of being seen as an American was that it brought with it seemingly automatic application of constitutional guaranties of certain rights and liberties. The problem, however, was that the constitutionally familiar phrase “We the People” was strongly coveted and fiercely protected, representing an exclusive, rather than an inclusive identity. To fall outside of this privileged status (or ethnic Peoplehood), groups and individuals fell at the mercy of those who saw these others as threatening, annoying, or simply unacceptably different. Legislation, specifically targeting race and religion barred the Chinese and other “non-whites” from identifying with this American peoplehood. The Supreme Court declared in the 1857 Dred Scott decision that African Americans were the rightful property of whites and were only partially (3/5) human, only furthered these boundaries that were subsequently reinforced by Reconstruction and post reconstruction policies and rulings in the South.

Similarly in 1860, the U.S. Surgeon General declared Mormons in Utah another race altogether, purportedly noting degenerate characteristics that marked them as non-white and therefore non-American.\(^\text{313}\) Science pointed to other non-

\(^{313}\) The Supreme Court decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in March 1857 ruled that people of African descent, together with their children as imported to the United States, were chattel and the rightful property of whites; The Exclusion Act of 1882 and Geary Act of 1892 clarified Congress’s intent that no state or federal court could naturalize a Chinese person. As Pfaelzer put it, “A Chinese American citizenry was not to be.” See Pfaelzer, *Driven Out*, 111, 292. The Surgeon
white races, such as Jews and Arabs, to demonstrate their innate and evolutionary inferiority, and as such, their inability to be truly Americans. With such evolutionary assumptions of the world (held by both secularists and religionists), the role of white-Protestant males and the exclusion of all others seemed obvious to white observers. Stigmatized as religiously, spiritually and physically un-American (and all that that implied), outsider groups, based on race, gender and religion, found themselves disqualified from rights and protections afforded other Americans.


Nineteenth-century science similarly marked women as inferior to men, and thus not capable of self rule and in need of male protection. In 1869, Thomas Laycock published an article in *Appleton’s Journal* that declared the fundamental “differences in the corporeal constitution of the sexes extend to the composition of the blood, the nutrition of the blood-vessels, and the constitution of the nervous system.” The conclusion? “Woman’s brain is smaller anteriorly than man’s, in this respect more nearly resembling the brain of youth.” He went on to suggest, “Experience shows that woman has less capability than man for dealing with the abstract in philosophy, science, and art, and this fact is in accordance with the less development of the frontal convolutions.” His argument is that, even if women are educated on the same level as are men, only the more “select examples of their sex,” “through greater effort and more exhaustion of the brain,” reach a stature of mind merely equal, never greater than men. Interestingly, he observed, “A few women have manifested the masculine faculties which lead to eminence in the physical sciences, but these have been quite as rare as bearded women.” Thomas Laycock, “Manhood and Womanhood.” *Appleton’s Journal: A Magazine of General Literature*. 1 (June 5, 1869): 311-312; It was believed, as stated by, that the woman “has a head almost too small for intellect but just big enough for love.” Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860.” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2. Part 1. Pp. 151-174 (Summer, 1966), 160. As Tomoko Masuzawa demonstrates, charges of Islam and Judaism were a racial accusation. Both religions were reduced to racial stereotypes. Muslim racial stereotypes were that of isolationism, violence and self-righteousness, as juxtaposed with universalistic Christianity that brought forth the natural gentleness of the Aryan race. Masuzawa, *Inventing World Religion*, 252-253;
Vanderbilt University re-popularized and revised the theory of polygenesis in his 1878 tract *Adamites and Preadamites*, which affirmed a separate creation for non-white races. Given special attention were blacks and the absurd idea that “the Negro is degenerated from the white man’s Adam,” to whom “every fact in nature shakes its head in denial.” After having “indicated the proofs of the Negro’s physical, intellectual and social *inferiority,*” the claim that blacks had a common ancestry with whites (stemming from Adam) necessitates “a wide-spread degeneracy, which is not only vast and appalling, but must be pronounced eminently improbable.” “Progression,” not digression as seen among blacks, “I say, is the law.” The Negro race, notes Winchell, is as fundamentally different from the white man as Negroes are from “African apes.” Science demanded white supremacy and the evolution of the Aryan race, but the existence of numerous blacks throughout the world complicated the issue. The “Negro” race, as it was understood, was not only inferior in intelligence, but was also lacking the “instrument of self-helpfulness and of all civilization.”315 Thus, it was the innate inferiority of blacks, as testified by the “facts of science” that explained and justified their place in America and the world, and as such, their lack of agency and independence, reifying notions of black inferiority as given in traditional interpretations of Scripture.

In the same way that Winchell conflated science (Darwinian evolution) and theology, many Americans brought together religion and politics. More often

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than not, given the ready and normative and thorough conflation of Anglo-Protestantism with Americanism, republicanism, national identity and agenda, the rhetoric of separation came from religionists as a religious and political tool to attack the perceived hierarchical and visible threats of Catholics, Mormons, and other groups that challenged their normative ideals. For example, in calling for this separation, the Reverend Henry W. Bellows spoke in 1871,

Will the American people—a Christian, Protestant nation—see any form of sacramental, hierarchical, theological priestcraft, getting possession of their politics and government, cheating them before their very eyes out of their rights and liberties, and not, sooner or later, treat it just as they treated slavery?—nay, override the Constitution to save the nation threatened with a government of priests?

Real America was Anglo-Protestant America and real Americans were Protestants. Non Protestants seeking political office were cheats and only the rights and liberties of “the American people” deserved protection. Without sensing or conceding hypocrisy, it remained the “duty of Protestants to warn the Catholic [and Mormon] hierarchy and the politicians that support them,” to “carefully cleanse their own skirts from every stain of political commerce[.]”

Wealthy layman Stephen Colwell argued in 1854 that the design of the Constitution was not to displace evangelical influence within American society, but to expressly recognize and uphold it.

They [the people] agree not to establish Christianity as a religion, but expressly provide that no law shall ever prohibit its free exercise. As any other religion inconsistent with Christianity may be prohibited, but the

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Christian religion is declared to be out of reach of Congressional interference.\textsuperscript{317} According to this political philosophy, religious freedom for Protestants meant that the state could not hinder its influence, yet at the same time, it guaranteed the suppression of non-Protestant religions. Thus, calls for separation of church and state, as were accusations of barbarism and engagements of violence, were essentially one sided.

This battle over Christian influence and Protestant hegemony was also waged most in the sphere of the public school system. So important was public education in the Americanizing process that the prominence of the school room was esteemed second only to the pulpit in the establishment of a Christian America. Upon who, then, asked Colwell, “devolves the responsibility of carrying it [public education] into execution?” Colwell then answered his own question, “We say it devolves upon the Christians of the United States.”\textsuperscript{318} It was the responsibility of Christians, not just to feed their own flocks, but all God’s children. Thus, the “duty of guiding, controlling, and enforcing this Christian instruction in our public schools, is one of the most important religious duties incumbent on the Christians of this country.”\textsuperscript{319}

Catholics, as would other non Protestants, however, found this Protestant “guiding” and dominance in this realm, problematic, and in their minds, also “un-

\textsuperscript{317} Colwell, \textit{The Position of Christianity}, 13-14, 54.

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid, 125.

American‖ and un- Constitutional. Archbishop John Hughes (1797-1864) complained in 1840 that although the public schools were not particularly sectarian, as Protestants took great pride within, they were decidedly anti-Catholic. Hughes argued that it was unjust and unfair to have to pay taxes “for the purpose of destroying our religion in the minds of our children.” School libraries were “stuffed with sectarian works against us,” so as to prejudice our children against us. Then, drawing upon the irony, Hughes wrote, “Is this state of things, fellow-citizens, and especially Americans, is this state of things worthy of you, worthy of our country, worthy of our just and glorious constitution?”320 As America grew in its size and diversity, more dissenting voices joined with Hughes. Rabbi Abram S. Isaacs posited that the “state has nothing to do with religion, its schools are not to instill religious teachings. Such work is for the churches and the synagogues. A godless school is not necessarily an ungodly school.” In short, noted Rabbi Isaacs, one’s religious education was “none of the school’s business, as long as the state has no established church.” Isaacs did not accept that schools were non-sectarian. Bible readings, prayers and hymn singings were all of a “sectarian character, suitable for a Protestant Sunday School,” but out of place in a public school “which is supported by hosts of tax-payers who are non-Christians.” There is only one remedy if America is to retain its constitutional guarantee of religious freedom: “to withdraw religion entirely from the

protestant privilege in the public schools thus taught minorities the importance of separation in ways that would seek to entirely remove it, rather than accommodate it.

this sentiment would spill out on march 7, 1859, when ten-year-old catholic thomas whall of the public eliot school in boston, refused when asked to quote the protestant-translated decalogue (ten commandments) in school. as attention to this incident grew, that next monday whall was asked again to recite the decalogue, to which he refused. the schools’ assistant principle mcclurin f. cooke stepped in and threatened to “whip him till he yields if it takes the whole forenoon.” cooke beat whall’s hands for half an hour until whall fainted.

following this incident, hundreds of catholic students were discharged from the eliot school for similar dissent, in what came to be called the “eliot school rebellion.” bishop john b. fitzpatrick of boston addressed the school committee on march 21, declaring that a forced reading of the decalogue “under the form and words in which protestants clothe it, is offensive to the conscience and belief of catholics.” then drawing attention to the unconstitutional breach of religion within state affairs (particularly in public schools), fitzpatrick argued that the chanting of the lord’s prayer “can only be regarded as an act of public worship. indeed, it is professedly intended as such in the regulations which govern our schools.”

when cooke was brought to court for excessive force, his

321 abram s. isaacs, “what shall the public schools teach?” forum, 6 (oct., 1888), 207-208.
322 mcgreevy, catholicism and american freedom, 7-8.
323 “the eliot school difficulty at boston ended,” the new york times, march 23, 1859.
attorney fought against and mocked Whall’s father. “Who is this priest,” he cried, “who comes here from a foreign land to instruct us in our laws?” The court sided with Cooke, arguing that forced biblical recitation in school was “no interference with religious liberty.”

American leaders had uniformly rejected such resistance expressed by Catholics as proof of Romanism’s “hostility to general education.” Civilization demanded the Christianization of all citizens, and the public school implicitly if not explicitly Protestant, lay at the heart of this call. As Stephen Colwell explained, it was the “intelligent Christian citizens” who were best equipped to “determine what is best for themselves, and best for their fellow-men.”

Reverend Edward Beecher, son of Lyman Beecher and Pastor of Park Street Church in Boston, reiterated the concerns of his father’s Plea for the West as he determined a half generation (two decades) later that Protestantism was, in essence, anti-Catholic. As such, Protestants continued to translate Catholic resistance to their overt religious influence in public education in deeply malevolent terms. Catholicism was, Beecher argued, a system of “immense conspiracy, designed to destroy the very roots of all intellectual, civil, and

324 McGreevy, Catholicism, 8.

325 “These public schools, however, as now constituted, have assuredly their great defects. Though commonly opened with singing and the reading of the Bible, yet they do not duly provide for the proper moral and religious education of the children, without which secular culture can do little good.” As it was, education without theology was dead. Schaff, America, 69-70.


religious liberty.” In a woodcut printed in his 1855 text, *The Papal Conspiracy Exposed*, Catholicism is represented as a demonic, even magical organization which “undermined free schools, and other American institutions” (See Fig. 6). Highlighting popular fears of papal conspiracy of global domination, Beecher, like his father and father’s generation, linked the little schoolhouse with that of America’s future.

The illustration which featured the papal figure and his henchmen appear in a puff of smoke, with what appears to be his foot on the Constitution, almost as if their presence was more satanic vision than reality. The American symbol of liberty, the bald eagle, holds in its talons not only the olive branch of peace, but the arrows of war (as seen on the one-dollar bill). Now, if ever, was a time when such arrows were needed. Could the nation just sit back and watch such a conspiracy and absolute defiance of the Constitution unfold? Should it offer a welcoming and friendly hand to such an eternal enemy? Beecher took it further: American Catholic leaders were not American. Notice that “I do not speak of them as American citizens, or as American bishops, but as bishops of Rome sojourning here,” mocked Beecher. “I do not regard them as in any sense American citizens in heart, whatever they may be in profession….They are part and parcel of a great conspiracy which now exists to subvert the most important and fundamental principles of the constitution of these United States and of every particular state in this Union.”

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328 Ibid., 399.
Catholics, dismissed as foreigners with dubious intent, were excluded from identification as fully American, becoming instead an annoyance that threatened the religious and cultural hegemony of Protestant Christianity within American public schools, and by implication the wider culture. The popular notion of separation of church and state in late nineteenth-century America was arguably a construct that was deeply rooted in the reality of Anglo-Protestant religio-political hegemony domination that was commonly presumed and largely unquestioned. Thus notions of separation did not threaten the political, religious, or cultural potency of Protestantism, so long as it was not unduly sectarian. Thus Protestant Christianity held a powerful and central role, as attested in 1882 by
Chief Justice George Shea who testified on religious influence within American political life, be it legislative, judicial, and executive.\textsuperscript{329} As early as 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville accurately judged Protestantism to be “foremost of the political institutions” of America.\textsuperscript{330}

Underlying this continued theocratic meta-narrative of American public life, America’s westward development was in large part viewed as a final chapter of a racialized quest to establish and maintain the supremacy of an Anglo-Protestant version of the American Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{331} Strong exemplified and voiced this basic American ideal, sparking an important controversy that has had lasting impact on the self-identity of minority groups. Strong’s position was that all races have their own specialization or gifts – Anglo Saxons (“the English, the British colonists, and the people of the US”) for example hold the talent of liberty and true religion. It was the Anglo Saxon racial “genius for self-government” that had both won liberty and preserved it. By nature, the Anglo-Saxon race was also the exponent “of a pure spiritual Christianity.” The civil and religious test, as proposed by Strong, was simple (and “without controversy”): the more Anglo-Saxon you were, the more likely you were to exhibit both liberty and spirituality.\textsuperscript{332}

\textsuperscript{329} Justice Shea wrote in 1882, “Our own government, and the laws by which it is administered, are in every part—legislative, judicial, and executive—Christian in nature, form, and purpose.” As quoted in Strong, \textit{Our Country}, 97.

\textsuperscript{330} As reprinted in Ahlstrom, \textit{A Religious History}, 468.

\textsuperscript{331} Lee, \textit{At America’s Gates}, 29.

\textsuperscript{332} Civil liberty and spiritual Christianity, argued Strong, were the two major forces which, “in the past, have contributed most to the elevation of the human race, and they must continue to be, in
While few white Protestants thought twice about Strong’s synthesis or religious and racial paradigms, some non-whites found it troubling. Theophilus G. Steward, minister of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church accused Strong of turning Christianity into a “Clan, first, last, and always!” leaving foundational principles of liberty and justice subordinate.\(^{333}\) Nevertheless, Strong saw this racialized role of Anglo-Protestantism as manifest and intuitive truth. “Is it not reasonable to believe that this race is destined to dispossess many weaker ones, assimilate others, and mould the remainder, until, in a very true and important sense, it has Anglo-Saxonized mankind?”\(^{334}\) As such, white Protestant Americans, as their ancestors two generations earlier were called upon to be, were cautioned to be on high alert against groups threatening the evangelical vision of the kingdom of God in America.\(^{335}\) Similar warnings and fears would further inspire the tone and immediacy of various national crusades and reform the future, the most efficient ministers to its progress. It follows, then, that the Anglo-Saxon, as the great representative of these two ideas, the depositary of these two greatest blessings, sustains peculiar relations to the world’s future, is divinely commissioned to be, in a peculiar sense, his brother’s keeper.” Strong then pointed out, that although the Anglo-Saxon race (which he now uses broadly to include all English-speaking peoples) comprises only “one-thirteenth part of mankind, now rules more than one-third of the earth’s surface, and more than one-fourth of its people.” Strong, Our Country, 200-202.

\(^{333}\) Steward continued, “The world is made for the Saxon, who is its lord, and all the other tribes are to clear it up for him. Surely this God is very good to the Saxon, although so very cruel to the Indian, Negro, Chinaman and the rest of mankind…. The Gospel of “Saxonism” (in opposition to “Christism”) had defined American Christianity, which held no place for “the darker races.” The sin then was in elevating this “Saxonism” above “Christism,” which “Saxonism must utterly and signally fail, in order that Christ may be all in all.” Theophilus Gould Steward, The End of the World: or, Clearing the Way for the Fullness of the Gentiles. With an Exposition of Psalm 68:31 by James A. Handy, D.D. (Philadelphia: AME Church Book Rooms, 1888), 72-75. End of the Word, 72-75, 135.


\(^{335}\) Strong, Our Country, 41-42.
movements that would emerge toward centuries end. Mormonism and its practice of polygamy would become a major focus of these reform movements.

**Mormon “Outsiderness”**

Mormonism with its own complex notions of the Kingdom of God in America and its own unique agency in its establishment and maintenance and extension and the proper relationship between church and state, countered demands to assimilate by confronting the government through lawsuits, sermons, and print. Reflected was an ambiguity within Mormonism between upholding the “powers that be” and remaining true to their own unique American destiny. Although Mormons upheld as an article of faith their obligation to be subject to these powers, an official statement by early church authorities also outlined the rights of citizens to protest and seek redress for “all wrongs and grievances.” The letter stated that Latter-day Saints were theologically bound to the state, but also demanded limitations of its authority, particularly on matters infringing upon individuals “free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.” Believing governments to be “instituted of God,” Mormons felt a certain level of accountability in how they reacted to the state, especially regarding the upholding of perceived freedoms. This sense of stewardship, however, placed Mormonism directly at odds with a government that denied such unconventional expressions of social equality and religious liberty.\(^{336}\) Although Mormon protests were perceived as proof of their anti-Amerianness by most

\(^{336}\) See Articles of Faith, 12; Mormon Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 134.
nineteenth-century Americans, it is clear that Mormons saw themselves acting within their rights and status as true Americans.

Mormon resistance was not an un-American enterprise, any more than Thomas Whall and the Eliot School Rebellion, but rather served as an attempt to prove their standing and status as true Americans against what they considered a breach of their constitutional rights. But like Catholic and Jewish resistance to Protestant Bible reading and prayers in public schools, this was not, of course, a perception shared by Protestant America, who were operating with very different definitions of separation of church and state, religious freedom, and attendant religious, political, and cultural presuppositions that still privileged an Anglo-Protestant majority.

More commonly accepted by the Protestant mainstream was the view that Mormonism was, as put forth in Harper's Magazine, “so absolutely un-American in all its requirements that it would die.” How then could they become “real” Americans? In an address: “To the Patriotic Citizens of America,” written in 1882 in the Hand-Book of Mormonism, an influential anti-Mormon work, several denominational ministers boldly asserted: “But they are so controlled by the Mormon leaders that until this power is broken by some means, there is no hope that Utah will ever be in harmony with the rest of the Union.”

This address described the Mormon population as being largely adult foreigners, “generally ignorant and unlearned” in what it meant to be “intelligent

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citizens in a free government.” It then continued more positively, “it is also true, as we believe, that under proper training they would in time become liberty-loving, patriotic citizens, as they are now industrious and economical.” The LDS Church then and not Mormons was the real problem. Its perverse theology, secretive ritualistic practices and its aspirations for political power were deemed inseparable and synonymous. The Mormon people could become successfully Americanized, but first the Mormon Church had to be “at once effectively and permanently broken.” Thus, to be Americanized, Mormons had to become de-Mormonized—liberated from the church and its hierarchy. To this end the 1862 Anti-Bigamy Act disenfranchised the Mormon Church with the aim of minimizing Mormon enterprise, and thus the influence of the Church.

Assault on the Mormon Church also included efforts to undermine its economic practices and success. During the late 1870s and 1880s, the LDS Church held significant involvement in various economic enterprises, such as railroads, street railroads, a gas company and telegraph lines. Mormon cooperative enterprises also boomed, including iron works, banks, textile and cotton factories and woolen mills. Such progress often came at the expense of non-Mormon businesses, provoking jealousies and bitter rivalry. In light of

338 Roberts, Comprehensive History, 6:141.

339 The object of this bill, though attacking polygamy, was economic. As Senator Bayard of Delaware (its chief sponsor) said, it was to ensure that “theocratic institutions inconsistent with our form of government” were denied wealth and property. This bill disenfranchised the Church, limiting the amount of real estate which it could hold ($50,000). Leonard Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 257-258.

340 Ibid., 279-293, 313-320.
postwar tendencies toward private enterprise and uncontrolled laissez-fair capitalism, many ridiculed the continuation of Mormonism’s communitarian engagements, however popular such had been in antebellum America.\(^{341}\) As Mormonism progressed, national anxieties associated with westward expansion and development, together with these new economic animosities heightened the national focus on Utah. However successful Mormon economic policies and projects were, they appeared insular, backward and resistant to American progress. Popular calls emerged for the government to end Mormon influence once and for all. National efforts continued throughout the 1870s to impede these co-ops from both the national and local levels, but it was in the 1880s that a new level of prosecution emerged that forced Mormon leaders to rethink their economic policies.\(^{342}\)

\(^{341}\) Ibid., 322.

\(^{342}\) In a pamphlet sent out in 1875 to the general membership of the church by Mormon authorities, it was noted, “One of the great evils with which our own nation is menaced at the present time is the wonderful growth of wealth in the hands of a comparatively few individuals.” This pamphlet continues that the very freedom our fathers fought for are challenged by this trend. Cooperative enterprises were formed to combat this very danger, at least in part. Clark, Messages, 2:268. This policy would soon change, however much the underlying sentiment would not. In 1882, president John Taylor wrote an epistle to the various leadership branches of the church, “A feeling had been manifested by some of our brethren to branch out into mercantile business on their own account, and his (the speaker’s) idea, as to that, was, if people would be governed by correct principles, laying aside covetousness and eschewing chicanery and fraud, dealing honestly and conscientiously with others as they would like others to deal with them, that there would be no objection on our part for our own brethren to do these things; that it was certainly much better for them to embark in such enterprises than our enemies.” Taylor then continued, “Our cooperative institutions generally had done very well in subserving the interests of the people; and if other institutions should be introduced in the various stakes by wise, honorable, just and honest men, who had at heart the spirit of co-operation, and who practiced the principle and carried it out, there would be no objection to their calling upon the people to sustain the same principle in anything that they might introduce by way of financial enterprises among themselves.” In short, though cooperation was ideal, it was ok to engage in market capitalism so long as one retained a cooperative heart. Clark, Messages, 2:334-339.
In 1882, after the Supreme Court pointed out weaknesses in the 1862 anti-bigamy law, Congress passed the Edmunds Act that reinforced this earlier law and added new measures intended to eliminate the Mormon Church as an economic and political power in Utah.\textsuperscript{343} The new wave of anti-Mormon hostility that inspired this law was evident in the words of President Grant’s appointee, Chief Justice James B. McKean, who set it as his patriotic and sacred mission to destroy Brigham Young’s “polygamic theocracy”:

\begin{quote}
The mission which God had called upon me to perform in Utah, is as much above the duties of other courts and judges as the heavens are above the earth, and whenever or wherever I may find the Local or Federal laws obstructing or interfering therewith, by God’s blessing I shall trample them under my feet.\textsuperscript{344}
\end{quote}

Mormon ally in Congress, Judge Black, wrote to the Mormon outlet the \textit{Deseret News}, warning them of the renewed hostilities then facing Utah. He explained that Congress felt its current fines against the LDS Church and imprisonments against Mormon leaders as “altogether too merciful.” Consequently they “super-added the penalty,” effectively removing all rights Mormons claimed as American citizens.\textsuperscript{345} While serving as Utah’s delegate in Congress, George Q. Cannon of the First presidency wrote to Eliza T. Cannon in 1882, “Our enemies are anxious to destroy us. All hell seems to be boiling over.”\textsuperscript{346} With Congress and the US president demanding an end to Mormonism, Mormon leaders knew they were

\textsuperscript{343} Arrington, \textit{Great Basin Kingdom}, 358.

\textsuperscript{344} As quoted Arrington, \textit{Great Basin Kingdom}, 358.

\textsuperscript{345} As quoted in Roberts, \textit{Comprehensive History}, 6: 60.

\textsuperscript{346} As quoted in Davis Bitton, \textit{George Q. Cannon: A Biography} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 253.
staring in the face of utter economic and political ruin if they would not, at least symbolically, “become like them.” Mormon defiance, however, continued throughout 1889 as Mormon leaders felt that divine judgment against the nation was assured and their deliverance was nigh at hand. Thus President Wilford Woodruff records this revelation in his Journal on November 24, 1889: “Let my servants call upon the Lord in mighty prayer, retain the Holy Ghost as your constant companion, and act as you are moved upon by that spirit, and all will be well with you. The wicked are fast ripening in iniquity, and they will be cut off by the judgments of God. Great events await you and this generation, and are nigh at your doors... I the Lord will deliver my Saints from the domination of the wicked in mine own due time and way.” On New Year’s Eve, Woodruff wrote in anticipation, “Thus Ends the year 1889….1890 will be an important year with the Latter Day Saints & American Nation.” As Woodruff wrote following the Supreme Court ruling in 1890 that escheated Church property, both real and personal, the nation had at last turned “the Last [key] that will seal [its] Condemnation…”

Although Mormon leaders assured themselves and their followers that God’s judgment against America was certain and near, this did not excuse them from legitimate protest against what they considered to be unfair and unjust American policy. Fantasies of divine judgment against the nation were not out of place


348 As would become an important trope within Mormonism, one could expect God’s intervention only after they had done all they could do. See *Book of Mormon: 2 Nephi* 25:23. “For we labor
of disdain for the Constitution or hatred for the nation, but because, as Mormons understood it, Protestants themselves disdained the Constitution. Like Bishop Fitzpatrick of Boston, Cannon accused Congress, in light of the Edmunds Act (1882), of legislating from the “pulpit of our nation, the orthodox pulpit,” enforcing both religious and cultural “orthodoxy” in the United States. Cannon’s accusations were not without merit.

These laws, however severe, were considered necessary in combating an even more severe terror – polygamy. For Americans, polygamy belonged to the savages, or in the words of one scientist, “rather to the gregarious mammals.”

Fearing the worst from the “Asiatic” effects of polygamy on the inhabitants of Utah, Senator John R. Tucker of Virginia warned that legislation against polygamy “should be radical,” and though needing to harmonize with the constitutional principles of the government, “will require a change in the Constitution of the United States.”

By 1885, the national excitement and resolve over Utah reached its crescendo. Consequently, Utah’s territorial marshals and judges were empowered and free to enact anti-Mormon legislation with as much strength as they felt necessary. Animosities between Mormon leaders and territorial officials had run deep for decades. Factors were that territorial posts were often used as payment
diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”

349 Laycock, “Manhood and Womanhood, 312.

for political debts, thus enticing men having ulterior motives than the people of Utah.\footnote{Norman F. Furniss, \textit{The Mormon Conflict 1850-1859} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 13.}

As a result of the virtual “blank check” given to territorial officials by Congress as a result of the Edmunds law, and significant boost in manpower, what Mormon historians call “the Raid” against the Mormon people had begun.\footnote{Arrington, \textit{Great Basin Kingdom}, 359.} Polygamy became the focus, but the war was against the Mormon people and their most cherished institutions, rather than that of upholding the Constitution or morality. Windows were “peeped” in, homes were broken into, men and women were pulled from their beds and arrested, women were forced to describe sexual relationships with their alleged husband, children were accosted by city officials to reveal the relationships of their parents. Polygamous men or even those under suspicion of polygamy were forced into hiding for fear of unfair and expected conviction.\footnote{Firmage, \textit{Zion in the Courts}, 172, 173.} Seeing these laws and tactics as unconstitutional, Mormons in Utah felt duty-bound as Americans to resist. Moreover, Mormon leaders couched their anger and opposition within apocalyptic rhetoric declaring national condemnation and calamity, only heightening national alarm.

Apostle Franklin D. Richards said in general conference in 1882, “While this is upon the nation and until they wash their hands of it [deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith], we can but look upon them with sorrow and apprehension and dread for thus acquiescing in breaking and overriding the fundamental laws of the
land.”

In contemplating this sorrow and dread, President George Q. Cannon followed Richards by adding, “The day would come when republican institutions would be in danger in this nation and upon this continent, when, in fact, the republic would be so rent asunder by factions that there would be no stable government outside the Latter-day Saints.” Resentment toward the injustices done against them in Missouri and Illinois, which both killed their beloved patriarch and sent them into exile, it was clear that these current pressures gave them new life, instilling deep levels of Mormon resistance.

At the height of this struggle, practicing polygamists found it necessary to either break off all familial ties (an act severely condemned as cowardice by Church authorities), go into hiding, or leave on a mission. President Cannon was among those who went into hiding. In May of 1885, as these raids became ever more severe, Cannon appointed a committee to construct a document known as the “Declaration of Grievances and Protest.” This document was sent and read to members of the Church throughout the Mormon territories. Chiefly, this document complained that the Edmunds law had been enacted unjustly, and those willing to “fall in line” with the laws, including Mormon President John Taylor and other prominent Mormons who agreed to surrender polygamy, continued to be “harassed and prosecuted.” President Grover Cleveland, upon receiving a

354 JD 23:112.

355 JD 23:122-123.

356 Explained Mormon President John Taylor, “When this infamous Edmunds law was passed, I saw that there were features in that which were contrary to law, violative of the Constitution, and contrary to justice and the rights and the freedom of men. But I said to myself I will let the law
copy of this document outlining Mormon grievances, promised to see to it that the law be administered impartially, but then remarked, “I wish you out there could be like the rest of us.” Mormon leaders bitterly rebutted such sentiments and all that was implied. In an epistle read in the April General Conference in absentia, the First Presidency fired, “We are inconsiderately asked to rend our family relations and throw away our ideas of human freedom, political equality and the rights of man, and ‘to become like them.’” The epistle then challenged, “Be like them for what?” The Presidency then proceeded to answer its own question,

It means that *E pluribus unum* is a fiction; it means that we tamper with and violate the grand palladium of human liberty, the Constitution of the United States and substitute expediency, anarchy, fanaticism, intolerance and religious bigotry for those glorious fundamental principles of liberty, equality, brotherhood, human freedom and the rights of man.

The Church was emphatic: “We cannot do it….We cannot and will not lay aside our fealty to the nation at the bidding of political demagogues, religious fanatics or intolerant despots.”

Though declared guilty of being rebellious and unduly mixing church and state, Mormons were quick to return the accusations. The definition of true Americanness lay in the balance, and Mormons fully anticipated victory, if it so be by divine intervention. Mormons declared that they would win this quintessential American battle, not because they were stronger, but because they

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357 Associated Press interview as quoted in Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 6: 152.

were right. As George Q. Cannon reminded the Saints in general conference, “We are on the winning side, because we have right, we have justice and we have truth on our side.” Moreover, Mormons dug deeper as they evoked prophesy. Mormons understood themselves as becoming, as a result of the Edmunds law and other legislation, an actual fulfillment of a prophecy given by Joseph Smith. “The time would come,” Cannon quoted Smith, “when the Latter-day Saints would be the only people that would maintain constitutional principles upon this land.” Thus, as the nation moved forth to crush Mormonism, under the pretense of preserving Christian civilization as perceived and defined by a Protestant majority, the Church felt it their patriotic and religious responsibility to defy and survive these trials, and thus fulfill prophecy. They were, as they perceived it, the last true patriots and defenders of true Americanness and a constitutional and republican form of government. Indeed, as they saw it, the success of the great American experiment of religious liberty and the American kingdom of God rested upon their shoulders. In a spinoff of Philip Schaff’s earlier anticipation, Mormons saw themselves as the “world’s last hope.”

359 JD (June 25, 1882), 24:49; for similar recitations of this prophecy, see also JD 23: 122-123; 24: 49; 25:350; 26:142, 156, 226.

360 These sentiments gave new strength to sentiments that have been growing for decades. Wilford Woodruff’s dream, as recorded in his journal from 1873 proves insightful: “I dreamed last night the 4 [September] That the United States Flag passed from North to South in the sky all tattered & torn. Then the Constitution of the United States followed it but was all tied up with ropes to keep it from falling to peace.[sic] Then followed an [immense] Eagle with his talons fast in the hair of the Head of President Grant Carrying him off. When this passed I awoke.” This dream made use of some of the most iconic American images available. The flag, symbolic of this countries unity and original vision, was in shreds. The Constitution, which contains the inspired genius of this government, was held together only by ropes. Then, the American eagle, large and powerful and symbolic of America’s integrity, was in the act of removing by “the hair of the Head,” a corrupt and oppressive government. It would be significant for Woodruff several years later when Ulysses S. Grant ran an unsuccessful bid for a third presidential term in 1880. Woodruff reflected that if
On July 4, 1885, George Q. Cannon, now in hiding, proposed half-masting several American flags throughout Salt Lake City. Such half-mastings was “a symbol of our sorrow for liberties departed.”\(^{361}\) “The Mormon people have no reason for engaging in expressions of joy under the existing circumstances,” noted the Deseret News. Making the flag an “insignia of mourning” was thus an intentional protest against celebrating America’s greatness in light of the federal government’s response to Mormonism.

The American standard was placed at half mast because the fundamental principles upon which this great Government was built were being assassinated by some of those who should be most interested in their preservation. It was a symptom of loyalty to constitutional principles, and because we were sorry at their being dragged in the mire of tyranny.\(^{362}\)

Laden with deep symbolisms, this protest on Independence Day had implications not lost on the American public and national and local officials. “Symbols like the flag,” explains theorist of religion Catherine Bell, “effectively merge many ideas and emotions under one image. This type of totalization generates a loose but encompassing set of ideas and emotions that readily evoke a collective sense of ‘we’—as in ‘our’ flag.”\(^{363}\) Conflating the symbolism of the American flag with their grievances as fellow Americans, Mormons placed themselves directly within

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Grant had become the next president, “he would be the last Presidet [sic] and the Nation would go down on his hands.” It was common for Woodruff and other LDS leaders to present such grim pictures of contemporary nineteenth-century America, especially as pressure against them mounted. Staker, Waiting for World’s End, 306, 304.

\(^{361}\) As quoted in Bitton, George Q. Cannon, 272.

\(^{362}\) “The Mormon Insult to the Flag,” Brooklyn Eagle, July 7, 1885, 2.

this collective understanding of “our” flag. Independence Day represented a type of “American Passover,” where America’s fight for liberty was annually re-enacted and ritually celebrated. This national ritual took Americans as a collective back to a sacred time and place that stood at the center of its national mythology, exhibiting the epitome of what America stood for. When this ideal faltered, those affected were quick to point out the inconsistency. However, Mormon interpretations and connections drew significant backlash, demonstrating a significant dissonance between what Mormons and other Americans imagined this symbol to signify and who were allowed to be legitimate participants. As the LDS Independence Day protest turned Americans into the oppressive Egyptians and the Mormons the oppressed Hebrews, Americans felt justified in the quick and heavy response. Americans found this protest and its symbolic implications intolerable.

Both local and national newspapers threatened violence over what they perceived as a provocative act of defiance and called for Uncle Sam, as the periodical *Sam the Scaramouch* put it, “to rise upon [his] dignity with a club” (See Figure 7). This illustration powerfully demonstrates the distance the American public sought to place between them, Mormonism, and the Mormon people and their vision and symbols of Americanism. Here, Uncle Sam speaks of the American flag in a possessive tone, alluding that Mormons had no rights in half masting it. In short—who were “they” to lower “my” flag? The initial shock and recoil illustrated by Sam’s backward step hints at the severity of the offense,

and the necessity of force in dealing with it. Fittingly, a military General is pictured awaiting Sam’s instructions. This same paper compared the incident in its “provocation” to the firing on Fort Sumter at the commencement of the Civil War. Mormons had avoided a show of blood in the Utah War (1857-8), thanks to an early winter and the diplomacy of one Colonel Thomas Kane, but now in 1885, violence looked imminent.

The Mormon Elders have not as yet been called to account for half-masting the American flag on the Fourth of July. There is as much provocation in this as there was on firing on Fort Sumter. The Mormon Elders should be moved out of the country, house, foot, dragoons, wives, twins and triplets. 365

Memories of Northern victory in the Civil War gave many American’s a new set of militant references readily evoked to make sense of the continued presence of Mormonism. Outraged, the Salt Lake Tribune threatened violence if the Mormons repeated the half-masting on their annual twenty-fourth of July Pioneer Day celebration: “And this is the loyalty of the Mormon people!…Let us hear no more of Mormon love for the Stars and Stripes.” 366

The hysteria spread like wildfire. And as the situation continued to intensify, President Cleveland ordered the military “to keep all posts . . . in full strength,” so as to be “prepared for any emergency that might rise in Utah in the near future.” 367 Cleveland’s response to send troops arose largely from appeals of non-Mormons in Utah, to come to Salt Lake City and prevent the “insult offered

365 As found in Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton. The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834-1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations (Utah: University of Utah Press, 1983), 374.

366 As quoted in Larson, The “Americanization” of Utah, 140.

367 Ibid., 141.
to the flag” from repetition on Pioneer Day later that month. On July 10th, the *Salt Lake Tribune* wrote,

There is talk on the streets to the effect that on the 24th—Pioneer’s Day—the Mormons intend to drape the flag in mourning and float it at half-mast. That would be a good day for the presence in this city of two or three thousand old soldiers, federal and confederate. It would probably result in a speedy and effectual settlement of the whole Mormon business, for with such men here in force the nation’s flag would not be insulted with impunity.368

In response to this local turned national shock and indignation, the *Texas Siftings* reported: “The Gentiles have been exasperated to a point where they may be led into violence at almost any time.”369 Civil War veterans in Utah were reported to be ready, “armed, uniformed and equipped.”370 The presence of veterans elicited powerful Civil War memories and its victory over the barbarism of the South, helping to conflate this half mast episode with a much larger national agenda against barbarism in the West.

At the height of this crisis, however, it seemed as if the Mormon evocation of the “power of faith,” proved effective.371 In what Mormon historians Gary Bunker and Davis Bitton call a “curious coincidence,” the entire nation would hang their American flags at half-mast on July 24th.372 Former U.S. president,


370 As printed in Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 6:162.

371 Mormon weapons are not of guns, but as explained by Mormon apostle Franklin D. Richards, “Our warfare is entirely in another direction, it has to be carried on and accomplished by the power of faith.” JD (Franklin D. Richards, Jan. 18, 1885), 26:101.

Ulysses S. Grant died on the 23rd from a lingering illness. His death resulted in an executive order to honor this now departed national hero, which was a half-masting the flag on what turned out to be Utah’s Pioneer Day. Civil war in Utah may have been averted by Grant’s death, but anti-Mormon sentiments proved relentless. The immediate threat of bloodshed had passed, yet the general hostilities remained. Rumors of violence and threats of military action continued on and off throughout the remainder of the year.

The Independence Day controversy and flag crisis serves to illuminate a much broader tradition of protest and self identity. Interruptions of its celebrations in order to draw attention to significant ironies and contradictions of such celebrations of liberty provided occasion for exposing popular injustice against minorities throughout America. In a speech titled, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” Frederick Douglass spoke on Independence Day in 1852. “This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony.” Douglass called the joyful Independence Day celebration both blasphemous and treasonous. In 1876 on Independence Day, the National Woman Suffrage

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373 Larson, The “Americanization” of Utah, 142.

374 “Would to God, both for your sakes and ours,” noted Douglass, that the “great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us[,]” He continued, “Fellow citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are today rendered more intolerable by the jubilant shouts that reach them.” Can this “scorching irony” be ignored? It is “not light that is needed, but fire….the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be denounced.” In concluding his remarks, Douglass professed that to the slave, the Fourth of July “reveals…more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to
Association gave a declaration in Philadelphia likewise provided lament rather than joyous celebration. The Association declared, “While the nation is buoyant with patriotism, and all hearts are attuned to praise, it is with sorrow we come to strike the one discordant note, on this one-hundredth anniversary of our country’s birth.” However great the strides this nation had made in the last century since its birth, “women still suffer the degradation of disfranchisement.”

By pointing to which he is the constant victim. To him your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy – a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation of the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of these United States at this very hour.” Frederick Douglass, from “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” in Erik Bruun and Jay Crosby, eds. Living History America: The History of the United States in Documents, Essays, Letters, Songs and Poems (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, Publishers, 1999), 432-435. For whites, even those who opposed slavery, such as Philip Schaff, slavery had been an “incalculable blessing to the pagan savages of Africa,” but for Douglass and those he represented, such intellectual and theological rationalizations were shameful and further defiled the nation and its flag. Referring to the “American Colonization Society and its offspring, the negro republic of Liberia, on the west coast of Africa,” Schaff noted that this colony was undergoing significant and unexpected progress, that “the groundwork of a general Christian civilization for the wild negro tribes around, in a land whose climate the Caucasian race cannot bear, any more than the negroes amongst the whites can, to all appearance, sustain an equal social importance and dignity with them. Schaff saw the colonization project as evidence of God’s “wonderful wisdom, which can bring good even out of evil. By Christian and civilized negroes he is kindling in the heart of that terra incognita the light of the everlasting Gospel, …” See Schaff, America, 51-52.

After acknowledging due “pride at our great achievements as a people; our free speech, free press, free schools, free church, and the rapid progress we have made in material wealth, trade, commerce and the inventive arts[,]” it had to be acknowledged that women were excluded. “Yet we cannot forget, even in this glad hour, that while all men of every race, and clime, and condition, have been invested with the full rights of citizenship under our hospitable flag, all women still suffer the degradation of disfranchisement.” This protest was against the fact that gender had been made a crime, “an exercise of power clearly forbidden” in the “United States Constitution.” It was an insult that women, unlike men of whatever race or vice, could not be tried by their peers. Universities and Law schools similarly excluded female entrance, while Asian and African immigrants “are welcomed there.” Though America was to have no aristocracy, there was “an aristocracy of sex” that “imposes upon the women of this nation a more absolute and cruel despotism than monarchy.” With cries similar to Orson Pratt several decades earlier, America’s cries of freedom were more despotic than the tyranny of England. “The aristocracies of the old world are based upon birth, wealth, refinement, education, nobility, brave deeds of chivalry; in this nation, on sex alone, exalting brute force above moral power, vice above virtue, ignorance above education, and the son above the mother who bore him.” It was now argued, however, that these privileges were not gifts to be bestowed by men, but were rights in which men had no power to
the terrible irony of the lack of female and black inclusion under the liberty symbolized by the holiday and flag, these protests pointed to the greatness of the American ideal, but also symbolized that such ideals were not yet fully realized by all in America. Mormons, Frederick Douglass and the National Woman Suffrage Association may have recognized their relegation to the margins of society, but each saw such positionality as an affront to true Americanism. To them, inclusion was a right and the denial of such was hypocrisy and oppression of the worst sort.

The First Presidency, consisting then of John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, with Joseph F. Smith on Church business in Hawaii, defended the halft-masting, while not providing official Church sanction:

A condition of affairs exists in this Territory which, when understood, every lover of human rights must condemn; and in behalf of ourselves, in behalf of our wives and children, in behalf of the Constitution of the United States, and in behalf of the principles of human rights and liberty in this land and throughout the world, we enter our solemn protest against such iniquitous acts as are being perpetrated here.

Flag protest in defense of the American Kingdom of God, illuminated the broader agenda related to its extension. Mormons believed they had a global mission to accomplish, and that mission was directly connected to their understanding of themselves as Americans, and their divine mission in helping to bring forth God’s

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deny without throwing the country into peril. “It was the boast of the founders of the republic, that the rights for which they contended were the rights of human nature. If these rights are ignored in the case of one-half the people, the nation is surely preparing for its downfall.” In concluding their national protest, the Association argued, “We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States, be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever.” See “National Woman Suffrage Association, ‘Declaration of rights for Women,’” in Bruun and Crosby, eds. Living History America, 435-440.
kingdom in this “chosen land.” Mormon’s appeared defiant. Mormon
Exceptionalism and by extension American Exceptionalism was affirmed.

Let us contend for our rights, inch by inch, and not yield a particle to the
demands of those who are assailing us…Were we to do less than this, we
would fail in performing the mission assigned to us, and be recreant to the
high trust which God has reposed in us.  

In waging this battle, the Mormon leadership still asked to be “distinctly
understood” that the Church was not to be against the “Republic as a nation,” but
rather in opposition to those “sitting in high places and administering the laws,”
who were “guilty of outrageous acts of oppression towards their fellow-
citizens.” Many Americans, predictably, could not accept this explanation or
accusation. It was as if the Mormons were calling Americans to be like them in
their reading of the Constitution and Americanism. Mormonism’s western-based
challenge to Protestantism’s claim to Christian civilization was downright
infuriating. In referring to the degradations of Mormonism, prolific author and
pastor of several Congregational and Presbyterian churches in New England,
Leonard W. Bacon wrote in the Princeton Review in 1882, “The disgusting
defenders of Mormonism will do well to count the cost before attempting any
such attack upon the Christian civilization of New England.” Advocates and

376 John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, “TO THE PRESIDENTS OF STAKES and their
Counselors, the Bishops and their Counselors, and the Latter-day Saints generally,” in Clark,
Messages, 3:16.

377 Taylor, et al, “AN ADDRESS to the Latter-day Saints in the Rocky Mountain Region and
Throughout the World,” in Clark, Messages, 3:20.
defenders of New England’s Christian civilization were in little mood to be challenged by the “brazen advocates of the base systems of Mormonism.”

George Cannon’s sentiments in response to Bacon et al, were typical of the response of other Mormon leaders, “There are those who would have no sentiment of pity for us [even] if they knew we were innocent of the charges made against us.” Like the earlier controversy, Mormons were called to rethink, reconceptualize, and reaffirm their position in response to the nation. Internal dynamics of Mormonism altered in response to this assault while Mormon apologetics sharpened it. Interestingly, in their claims of loyal Americanness and constitutional allegiance, Mormons found meaning in being rendered national outsiders, and in important ways, they embraced it. Mormons felt they had the religious and national responsibility to stand up for their constitutional rights, but they also held onto, stronger than ever, an identity of a chosen and marked people called upon to defend and realize a chosen and marked nation. In this way Mormons retained for themselves the popular notions of America’s glorious destiny, yet still remained religiously peculiar and separate from American “Babylonian” society. Repeatedly, Mormon leaders taught that polygamy, economic independence and social cooperation saved them from prostitution, poverty, and all other ills of American society.

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380 Taylor and Cannon wrote, “Where in this broad land is the virtue of women so amply guarded or so jealously protected as here? No cry of hungry, naked or outraged humanity has ever ascended to heaven from our borders against the men whom the courts are now so busy in sending
them, Mormons pointed to the nation’s immoralities as proof-positive of their own righteousness. For Mormon converts, Mormonism’s polygamous unions and economic cooperation was not proof of their hostility toward Americanism, but was instead in line with the new possibilities America seemed to promise. Thus Mormonism defended and presented itself as uniquely American – they were not a “new world” mutation of an old world faith, but instead grew out of and were defined within this American environment. For many European and American converts disaffected by their old religions, Mormonism proved surprisingly enticing, not because it was so un-American, but precisely because it appeared to be so uniquely American.381

According to Mormon scripture, “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass.”382 Thus Mormons expected this period of opposition to bring in a more perfect version of American promise and identity. This was “an important epoch” for the Church, noted President Cannon. Indeed, as the First Presidency wrote in an epistle to the general membership on April 8, 1887, the Church was “passing
to prison and treating as criminals. There was a time in these mountains when adultery, fornication, whoredom and illegitimacy were almost unknown.” George Q. Cannon and John Taylor, “AN EPISTLE from the First Presidency: To the Officers and Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” in Clark, Messages, 3:38.

381 Until the Edmunds-Tucker Act ended it in 1887, the Mormon emigration fund (P.E.F.) brought over 100,000 converts to Utah, mostly from England and Northern Europe. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 382. Laurence Moore’s Religious Outsiders takes a similar approach, but does so under the historiographical lens of Mormon “outsiderness.” Consequently, Moore writes that early converts to Mormonism were a little bit “different” from their society. These early converts, he argued, “for a variety of personal reasons,” simply did not “fit in” with their native surroundings; Mormonism simply “gave its [outsider] converts an [outsider] identity that worked.” Moore, Religious Outsiders, 32-33, 41.

382 Book of Mormon: 2 Nephi 2:11,23.
through a period of transition, or evolution, as some might be pleased to term it.”

As Cannon continued, “Events are taking place now that are worthy of our remembrance and we are being put in a position to be tested thoroughly.”

Therefore, Mormons leaders declared this short period of pain and persecution a time of God ordained opportunity to prove their patriotism, to learn justice and mercy, to purge the Church, to expose the wickedness of their persecutors, to express their loyalty amidst corruption, to practice tolerance amidst intolerance, to learn to deal with pain, to unite, to reconcile sinners, to stir up complacent members to a remembrance of their religious duties, to prove them saints, to demonstrate that polygamy was not inspired by lust, and in short, to bring about “righteousness.”

Important internal dynamics were thus in shift during this period. Though revelation had always been given full credit in dealing with these internal changes, the external environment was also acknowledged in this inspirational creativity. This mood of dynamic transition within the internal workings of the church made possible the idea that significant shift was possible.

Though Mormons expected that God would change the nation in its response to

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383 JD 26:144.

384 JD, 23:210, 242, 264, 267; 25:70; 26: 104; Clark, Messages, 3:29, 37, 75, 69, 110, 17, 34, 143, 49. The optimism Mormon hailed to its general membership amidst this period of severe governmental oppression is best stated in this First Presidency epistle read in General Conference April 8, 1887 at Provo. “Such periods appear to be necessary in the progress and perfecting of all created things, as much so in the history of peoples and communities as of individuals. These periods of transition have most generally their pains, perplexities and sufferings. The present is not exception to the rule. But out of apparent evil, Providence will bring abundant good, and the lesson which the signs of the times should teach us is one of patience, endurance, and calm reliance on the Lord. The result will be that we shall be stronger, wiser, purer, happier, for the experience gained, and the work of the Lord, delivered by His Omnipotence from all the snares set for its retardation, or plans laid for its destruction, will yet triumph gloriously over all its foes, and the infinite atonement of the Redeemer will accomplish its perfect work. The final victory of the Saints is certain; after the trial comes the reward.” Clark, Messages, 3: 127, 143.
Mormonism, avenues were being laid that would soon allow for Mormonism itself to change in ways that made it more acceptable to the nation. Still, Mormon leaders continually noted the higher purpose of such national and religious tensions, for “by crushing us,” the Mormon cliché went, “they’re helping us.”

Cited was the Christian verse, one can only rise with Christ once they have learned to crucify themselves in the flesh. Mormons had long employed persecution as a crucifix for national reformation but it was also occasion for their own internal reformation and transition.

Though accused of attempting to establish a theocratic kingdom in the West, Mormons emphatically defended Utah as unique in its ability to separate church and state, even as they admitted to their critics that such severance of religion from their public lives was not practical. The “fair experiment” of religious freedom had only partially been defined by 1880, as seen in its contestation over meaning by LDS leaders. However, the popular Protestant notion of religions relationship to the state was clear. In the New Englander and Yale Review (1888), Charles C. Starbuck explained “that the American state expresses more perfectly the highest conception of the gospel than the American church, and must therefore rather fashion it then be fashioned by it.” For many

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385 Ibid., 3:49.

386 As it says in Galatians 5:24 “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Similar verses include: “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live” (Romans 8:13). “Put to death what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

387 JD 26:39.
American Protestants, higher conceptions of Christianity were expressed politically. “The churches, then,” continued Starbuck, “must adopt country as their highest symbol of God, or they become disloyal to the nation.” In this context, Mormonism’s unwillingness to entirely sever religion from politics, though Protestants refused to acknowledge it, had more in common than not with their Protestant neighbors. The significant difference then, lay in the imbalance of power between Mormons and their Protestant neighbors, and their divergent conceptions of religion and religious freedom – not the feigned issue of separation of church and state. Mutually justifying themselves, Mormons and mainstream Protestants continually accused each other of practicing theocratic elements of polity, and in many ways, both were right.

**ILLUSTRATION**

Fig. 7. “Uncle Sam in Mormondom: ‘If those fellows will half-mast my colors it behooves me to rise upon my dignity with a club.’” Cartoon. Cover from *Sam the Scaramouch*, 18 July 1885, by Porter. As reproduced in Bunker 1983, 49.

**Religious Liberty and the Supreme Court**

In protesting against early anti-Mormon legislation (Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act of 1862), President Cannon propositioned in 1874 his close friend and member of the Church Seventy, George Reynolds, to provide a “test case.” Accordingly, Reynolds argued before the Utah court the unconstitutionality of the 1862 anti-bigamy law because it represented an infringement upon the First Amendment. Judge Alexander White rebuffed the plea by explaining that there
“must be some limits to this high constitutional privilege.”\(^{389}\) Such limits, however, had not yet been defined, and Reynolds appealed to the Utah Territorial Supreme Court, then to the United States Supreme Court in October 1876. It was not until November of 1878, however, that the case came before the unsympathetic and even antagonistic US Supreme Court. Reynolds, as a representative and proponent of the Mormon system of marriage, entered the courtroom already convicted.

While rejecting Reynolds’s request to instruct the jury, the Court began by reminding the jury of their duties as Americans. Mormonism was defined as a delusion, with terrible consequences upon its innocent victims. In contextualizing the case, the Court encouraged the jury to think upon the “pure-minded women” and “innocent children—the innocent in a sense even beyond the degree of the innocence of childhood itself,” which Mormonism directly threatened.

Although Mormons understood this case as an opportunity to test the constitutionality of the anti-bigamy (inclusive of anti-polygamy) laws, the Court used it as an occasion more broadly to suppress a perceived threat against another American icon—marriage and domesticity as defined and conceived according to American Protestantism. The Court warned the jury that if they “fail to do their duty,” then the “victims” of Mormonism would “multiply and spread themselves over the land.”\(^{390}\) And as the founding fathers “never intended” the concept of liberty and freedom to destroy the innocent women and children of the republic,

\(^{389}\) Bitton, *George Q. Cannon*, 218. (Emphasis mine)

\(^{390}\) *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145 (1879), 150.
the Supreme Court explicitly justified its rejection of what Mormons understood as a quest and protest for religious liberty.

In establishing the limits of “constitutional privilege,” the Supreme Court resumed to define what the founding fathers meant by “freedom of religion.” Quoting Thomas Jefferson, the Court declared, “that it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order.” As the Court explained to the jurors, this was indeed a time when “peace and good order” were jeopardized. Such accusations however, were more assumed than proven. In short, anti-Mormon legislations that were clearly in contradiction to the Constitution in a legal or legislative sense were afforded the stature of legality and necessity in order to break a more immediate and threatening system (polygamy) that “fetters the people in stationary despotism.” Illustrative of the religious and legal conflict was Justice William Strong’s “acquiescence” in the Reynolds opinion. Justice Strong, an active Presbyterian and president of the American Tract Society and of the American Sunday-School Union, was also president of the movement for a Christian amendment to the Constitution in the 1870s, which sought to

391 Ibid., 163. Philip Hamburger notes in his Separation of Church and State, that Justice William Strong’s “acquiescence in the Reynolds opinion is particularly suggestive of the narrow professional focus of lawyers and judges.” Justice Strong, an active Presbyterian and president of the American Tract Society and of the American Sunday-School Union, was also president of the movement for a Christian amendment to the Constitution in the 1870s, which sought to further unite the relationship between Christianity and state. Although Hamburger does not suggest that Strong sought a union of church and state, it is clear that Strong’s lack of opposition for Waite’s use of “wall of separation” did not significantly contradict his larger agenda of a Christian union. 260n 13.

392 Reynolds, 164, 166.
further unite the relationship between Christianity and the state. Although the Court upheld the anti-polygamy legislation of 1862 as constitutional, Mormons declared the case unfair, prejudiced, and unconstitutional, thereby refusing to see it as either legitimate or binding.

The Mormon response included accusing government officials and chief justices such as Strong of corruption and religious bigotry. However, Mormon leaders were careful to reemphasize their loyalty to the Constitution itself. “Whatever some may have thought of the mal-administration in our government and of the efforts of individuals and sometimes of large factions, to abridge the rights of the people,” spoke Mormon apostle Erastus Snow, “we must charge it always where it belongs—to the bigotry, the ignorance, the selfishness, ambition and blind zeal of ignorant and corrupt politicians, their aiders and abettors.” Snow then recalled that the “fathers who framed our Constitution were not such dunces” as he accused the chief justices of the Supreme Court of being in Reynolds. The case served, however, as a strong reminder of the refusal to include Mormonism and its adherents under the umbrella.

Mormons accused the Court of hijacking the constitution for its own selfish purposes, and thus refused to accept its ruling as not only unconstitutional but also un-American. Mainstream Americans, on the other hand, were appalled at their constitutional defiance which reinforced what they had long presumed Mormonism to be—namely a dangerous, anti-American, and oppressive

393 JD 23:67
394 JD 23:73.
institution—a threat to both church and state. Consequently, Mormons continued to struggle to have their religion and practices rightly understood and accepted.

In response to the influx of Mormons in Idaho during the 1880s, the territory of Idaho enacted a law that went even further than *Reynolds* enforcement of religious orthopraxis. Idaho essentially made it illegal to believe, or to have once believed, in Mormonism. The Idaho law said that no man can vote or run for public office, without first taking an oath which denied any affiliation with or belief in the Mormon Church. In attempting to evade this law, some Idahoans renounced their membership in the Mormon Church. Election officials, however, disregarded such claims as conspiracy and continued to bar even former Mormons from voting. Challenging this legislation as blatantly unconstitutional, the former Mormon Samuel D. Davis went before the US Supreme Court in 1889 to argue the case that became known as *Davis v. Beason*.

In this ruling, Justice Stephen Field upheld the Idaho “test oath,” explaining that such a law “is not open to any valid legal objection to which our attention has been called.” The decision rested upon simple assumptions, to be Mormon, was to be against the law—and not against any law, but the very moral laws upon which the United States government was founded. The only concern therefore of the Supreme Court held was whether Idaho had the authority to enact such a law, and it found in the affirmative.

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396 *Davis v. Beason* 133 U.S. 333. [1890], 8.
In effect, Mormonism had been denied the status of religion and the protections due religion by the highest court of the land. In justifying such an overt breach of the constitution and its protections of religious freedom, Justice Field wrote, “To call their advocacy a tenet of religion,” he contended, “is to offend the common sense of mankind.” Like the Reynolds case, the church’s practice and condoning of polygamy understood to be a crime “by the laws of all civilized and Christian countries…” undermined all claims to legality and constitutional protection. Polygamy it was claimed “tend to destroy the purity of the marriage relation, to disturb the peace of families, to degrade woman and to debase man.” In fact, he continued, “Few crimes are more pernicious to the best interests of society and receive more general or more deserved punishment. To extend exemption from punishment for such crimes would be to shock the moral judgment of the community.” By 1890, Americans were not seeking to understand Mormon polygamy any more than they were willing to accept whatever religious or scriptural justifications it claimed or virtues it professed. The barbarity of Mormon polygamy and by ready extension Mormonism itself had become assumed and fixed on a national level.

*Davis* revealed practical limitations of interpretation and application of constitutional guarantees of religious freedom as rooted in an oppressive political system that compelled parties to conform to the normative religious beliefs and practices of the State. To the Supreme Court, the support of the Idaho “test oath” had not imposed a violation of this historical precedence, but rather upheld it as a

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397 Ibid., 5.
benevolent attempt to protect “the peace, good order and morals of society.”

Then, in a move that overtly threatened the disestablishment clause of religion, the Court presumed to establish a normative definition of religion, in order to demonstrate Mormonism’s breach of it.398 “The term ‘religion,’” wrote Justice Field, “has reference to one’s views of his relations to his Creator, and to the obligations they impose of reverence for his being and character, and of obedience to his will.” He continued, “It was never intended or supposed that the amendment could be invoked as a protection against legislation for the punishment of acts inimical to the peace, good order and morals of society.” In other words, legitimate religion was one of “reverence” towards a monotheistic God, and “obedience to his will.” Hence the strangeness of Mormon belief was one thing, but the disruption of “peace, good order and morals” by its practice of polygamy could hardly be seen as reverent obedience to God. Therefore, as Mormon belief extended into the domestic, social, political, and economic sphere, it was perceived and defined as threatening the normative “common law” equally rooted in these various spheres. Hence the Court moved quickly to privatize, or more correctly, delegitimize Mormonism as a religion altogether. Likewise, as Mormonism endangered national civility, as the Court argued, it could not be held as “true religion,” and as such had no constitutional guarantee of toleration or protection. “And on this point,” Justice Field explained, “there can be no serious

398 In her important analysis of courts defining religion, Winnifred F. Sullivan demonstrates that the very act of the state defining religion excludes the possibility of religion to define itself, and thus, to religious freedom. In defining religion (as confined to the worldview of the judge), Sullivan demonstrates how other worldviews are thereby disadvantaged from the start. The Impossibility of Religious Freedom (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 29, 136-7, 151, 159.
discussion or difference of opinion.” Protestantism was thus upheld as the paradigm of true religion, and all other versions, even if acceptable, were to be relegated to the less noticeable spaces of the private realm.

George Q. Cannon, seen by many as the “political head” of the Mormon Church, protested against the government presumption of authority to challenge one’s religion, let alone advance a normative definition of religion. Men had the right, challenged Cannon, of worshiping God according to their conscience, “despite the Supreme Court decisions, despite the action of Congress, despite the expressions of pulpit and press.” Moreover Cannon insisted that the Constitution was above the dictates of any court or group of men, and that as moral agents, all men are responsible to God, and him alone regarding the legitimacy of these religious practices. Following this, Cannon remarked against these attempts to define and thus limit religion, “I would just as soon be dictated to by the Pope of Rome, by Mr. Ingersoll⁴⁰⁰ or by a ‘Mormon’ Bishop, as to be dictated to by popular preachers, as to what I must accept as religion.”

As perceived by Mormon leaders, what was taking place was not simply a battle over Mormon religious liberty. As Cannon explained, “we are fighting the battles of religious liberty for the entire people; it might be said, for the entire

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³⁹⁹ Davis v. Beason [1890], 5-6.

⁴⁰⁰ Robert G. Ingersoll was a well-known secularist-agnostic who ran for president in 1880. His push for the privatization of religion included even Protestant Christianity. His platform was: “TOTAL SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE, to be guaranteed by amendment of the United States Constitution: including the equitable taxation of church property, secularization of the public schools, abrogation of Sabbatarian laws, abolition of chaplaincies, prohibition of public appropriations for religious purposes and all other measures necessary to the same general end.” See Hamburger, Separation, 327.
Additionally at stake was the popular idea that the American experiment of religious liberty as embodied in the notion of the Kingdom of God in America would revolutionize the world. Cannon placed Mormonism and Mormon resistance to religious tyranny directly in the middle of the process. These heightened anticipations were put to the test during these court proceedings, only to be ruled, time and again, in the disfavor of the LDS Church. The question of existence within the face of such absolute and overwhelming opposition inspired Mormon leaders to rethink these ideals and the role they were to play within the nation.

In October of 1889, the Mormon Church again appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court in a case framed as The Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints v. United States. This case proved a final attempt by the Church to protest the un-constitutionality of the current anti-Mormon laws. Like Reynolds, this case had its share of charged religious rhetoric and anti-Mormon hostility and it too, came to focus on the unwillingness and inability of the Court to understand Mormonism and its practice of polygamy as a legitimate religious tenet of its faith. As argued by former senator Joseph E. McDonald, if Congress upheld the Mormon religion and the practice of polygamy, then they were declaring

that the teachings, doctrines, tenets and practices of the church, sect, association or organization now known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints are not opposed to public policy and good morals, and are not contrary to the laws of the United States.\footnote{Late Corporation v. United States, 136 U.S. I (1890), 41}

\footnote{JD, 24:42-43.}
Mormon polygamy had already been described by the Supreme Court as an offense against “all enlightened mankind,” and contrary to all good morals and public policy. Consequently, the Supreme Court refused to question the validity of this popular belief, for to challenge it would destabilize prevailing definitions of the family and its attendant sexuality, essential to the notion of Christian civilization itself. Americans correctly expected the Court to uphold popular Protestant morality, and Mormonism presented a perfect opportunity to fulfill this expectation and to define it more clearly. Though apparently more uncomfortable in the realm of morality enforcement than its predecessors, the Supreme Court could not ignore popular sentiment. Uninterested in challenging traditional assumptions of Christian civilization, the Court instead defined its role to be that of “encourage” traditional “religion, morality and knowledge, as being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind.” With Christian civilization as defined by the Anglo Protestant majority serving as the nation’s ideological foundation, the Court once again ruled against Mormonism, deeming it a “blot on our civilization,” “a return to barbarism,” and “a contumacious organization” and, thus beyond the bounds of Constitutional protection.

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403 Ibid., 2,18.
404 Ibid., 65.
405 Ibid., 49, 63-64.
As in *Reynolds*, popular assumptions of Mormonism rooted in presumptions of ignorance, immorality, and irreligiosity framed the Court’s decision regarding the power of Congress to intervene in the First Amendment rights of religious groups. Emboldened by judicial rulings, Congress set out to destroy the Church by confiscating Church property, including its temples, tithing offices and other worship and industrial facilities. Latter-day Saints found by 1890 that they had few friends, for all the higher and lower courts, houses of congress, executives authorities, as well as what seemed the entire national populace, united in a common cause to destroy the “immorality” and “immense power” of Mormonism. Thus purported attacks on polygamy had served as a convenient tool to “legally” attack Mormonism and in effect further encode “our Anglo-Saxon system of laws” that encouraged “Religion, morality and knowledge” as shaped by an Anglo Protestant majority.\(^406\) Consequently, Mormonism was perceived and treated as not just inconsistent with prevailing notions and standards of American civilizationism, but as the Supreme Court now made clear in 1889, the Constitution itself.\(^407\) These successive rulings proved a

\(^{406}\) Ibid., 63, 65.

\(^{407}\) However, a related point of contention that Mormons had with the Supreme Court and the rest of mainstream America was when and to what degree polygamy was rendered unconstitutional. The Church was emphatic that *Reynolds* had only upheld the Morrill Act of 1862, leaving some technical wiggle room when it came to the constitutionality of polygamy, legitimating the continued Mormon opposition to it while simultaneously calling for obedience to the laws of the land. It was not until the Supreme Court decision of 1890 in *LDS v. U.S.* that the Mormon Church was forced to acquiesce and finally accepted the constitutionality of anti-Mormon legislations. For a detailed argument between Mormon President Joseph F. Smith and Attorney Tayler on this question, see 59th Congress, 1st Session. Proceedings before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the matter of The Protests Against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, A Senator From the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat. Vol. 1. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906. pp. 101-105. Consequently, as Mormons understood themselves to be law observant citizens, as argued in the Woodruff Manifesto of 1890 (which essentially ended new
fatal blow to the Mormon practice of polygamy and the institution itself. With these practices deemed unconstitutional and barbaric, and by extension the Mormons themselves, Mormons could no longer appeal to the courts or the Constitution for its protection as a religious tenet.

Whatever the accusations of barbarism and defiance, and despite continual provocative rhetoric from LDS leaders, Mormons desired to be fairly seen and properly treated and understood, not only as Mormons but as representative constituents of the best of what it meant to be American. Their repeated protests, often led by Cannon, in effect the Church’s political arm, aimed to expose what all Mormons saw as unjust and unconstitutional action by way of the US government. Not only had this action violated religious beliefs of Mormons, but Mormons deemed it as an undermining of the nation’s own most cherished and professed notions of liberty and freedom. Nevertheless, national temperament, as defined within the parameters of Protestant morality and civilization, greeted Mormon efforts with increased disdain and hostility. Bitter and traumatic as these encounters were, they would nevertheless prove fundamental in defining the parameters of this “fair experiment” of religious freedom in light of American jurisprudence and popular definitions of Americanism and the Kingdom of God in America.

contracts of plural marriage), other Americans pointed to nearly three decades of defiance toward all branches of government, be it judicial, congressional, or executive.
Angie Newman and Congress

Another incident proves important in understanding popular American sentiments regarding the “Mormon problem” and how various Americans felt such should be responded to. Further illuminating the clash between nineteenth-century Mormons and Protestants over who and what is American, Christian, and ultimately “religious,” Angie F. Newman of Nebraska, secretary for the Bureau for Mormons petitioned Congress on June 5, 1886 on behalf of the Industrial Christian Home Association of Utah Territory. The Bureau for Mormons was an auxiliary of the Women’s Home Missionary Society, formed at the suggestion of Utah’s supervising Methodist Bishop Wiley in 1881, to provide assistance to the innocent victims of polygamy, namely Mormon women and children. In seeking financial assistance and in pursuit of what was in effect a more compassionate but no less obvious attempt to destroy Mormonism, Newman sought to break Mormon influence through providing escape for the “great numbers of persons now entangled and fettered in the structure of Mormon society” now in Utah. Congress, she was convinced, would generously support her in this religiously-inspired agenda.


410 This incident illuminates the deep underlying assumptions and prejudices behind the Americanization project that moved to bring into conformity groups deemed inconsistent with prevailing notions of Christian civilization with Mormonism being its archetype. Religious agendas worked hand in hand with the powers of the state.
The conception and agenda of a Christian School in Utah was considered by those seeking an end to Mormonism, though leery of harsh congressional legislation, to be a perfect approach—while the federal government was “[justly] breaking up” Mormon homes and society, Newman’s Christian School would “provide support for the innocent victims.”\(^{411}\) As she put it, her motives were both benevolent and patriotic:

I am here because in my veins flows the blood of the Pilgrim Fathers; because the author of my being gave his life for the flag which shelters me, and in those crimson folds I read and answer to the prayer of every manacled suppliant who bows at the Nation’s feet—especially if that suppliant be a helpless woman or child.

Newman argued that Mormon practice in Utah presented such a case of trammeled innocence, and stood, “in its entirety” as an “anomaly for which the history of the races furnishes no parallel.” This Mormon system, she argued, based upon the “subjugation of women,” was hostile, defiant, and theocratic, but more importantly, it sought to take over the entire world.\(^{412}\) Congress took Newman’s claims seriously and uncritically, demonstrated by its shared perception and feeling of immediacy in the advancement and establishment of proper religion in the American West.

To establish her case, Newman evoked images of Mormon anti-Americanness, theological perverseness, social, physical, and mental degradations, and the cries of the innocent pleading to be rescued. Mormon atrocities, such as kidnappings, forced marriages, suicides, and priesthood

\(^{411}\) Ibid., 4

\(^{412}\) Ibid., 10.
treachery and conspiracy were all examples cited by Newman to justify and garner support for her “benevolent” agenda. In heightening the alarm, Newman argued that among the “homes of the lower classes” of Mormons, the allowance of polygamy in Utah had encouraged “the demon of lust” and “hath taken to himself seven other spirits more wicked than the first, and there is held in continual session the high carnival of hell.” Newman’s rhetoric echoes a familiarity with Scripture common in nineteenth-century America, to both herself and her listeners in Congress. Such allusions reflected an invisible, yet powerful and assumed bond between American Protestants. Conflating Scriptural metaphors like “seven other spirits” to the imagined situation in Utah, Mormons were biblically recognized enemies, not just of American sentiments, but of God. Her poetic and highly emotional rhetoric demonstrated another popular nineteenth-century rhetorical medium taken from earlier revivals that inspired a response of immediate action, not calm reflection and investigation. Despite generations of warnings and all the efforts Congress and volunteer societies had invested in the West, the “high carnival of hell” remained unchecked, particularly in Utah. Within this rhetoric as contrasted with the kingdom of Christ, Utah represented an almost tangible and even physical and observable hell on earth. Such notions powerfully reinforced by testimony from the rescued such as that of Mrs. L, presumably the wife of a former Mormon polygamist, who proclaimed: “Four years I lived in polygamy—four years I lived in hell.”

413 Ibid., 15.
The Industrial Home was presented as an absolute and necessary imperative to liberate Mormon women from this hell: necessary because, as Newman describes it, Mormon women did not have the freedom of dissent that other Americans enjoyed in their various Protestant churches. Allegedly, "The lower order of priesthood" visits the families twice a week, and whenever a sign of disobedience is recognized, it is telegraphed directly to Salt Lake. If women disobeyed their secret oaths to the priesthood, the penalty was to have her "throat cut from ear to ear." Thus Mormon treachery was not limited to just their polygamous practices, but in their unity and organizational strength. All conspiring to destroy the very values that America seemed to represent – freedom of religion, freedom of mobility and freedom of individuality. Newman’s testimony insisted that this was not just hyperbole, but that in actuality many women defiant of the priesthood (though devoid of evidence) have been thus sacrificed. Thus Newman presented the Mormon priesthood as a type of ruthless and amazingly organized secret police state, one that harassed its victims, and impoverished them through mandatory tithes, physically and mentally terrorizing them, making it almost impossible for them to seek escape.

"Therefore, to escape Mormonism, once entered in, is as impossible as to escape Hades, once having passed the gates, except some outward provision has been made for such escape." By providing this escape, Newman presented herself

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414 Ibid., 21.
415 Ibid., 22.
416 Ibid., 17.
and the Christian association she represented as both a savior and deliverer. The purpose of the school was thus nothing less than to provide escape from a veritable hell on earth and beyond and reification of the standards of American civilizationism, and thus clearly worthy of funding by the federal government.

Newman clearly viewed her mission as at once patriotic and religious, as seen in her placement of an “immense national flag” above the Salt Lake Seminary. She told those present, “Let it wave in wind or storm, by daylight or darkness, so that every weary eye which looks upon it shall be assured that the women of the nation are thinking of them, and that in those crimson folds there is refuge for all women.” If only the “national heart,” lamented Newman, could have “knowledge of the wrongs which are perpetrated under the shadow of the flag,” one that causes, explains Newman, one’s little child to look into his mothers face and say, “Mamma, I wonder if there is any God.” Obvious to Newman was the need of undermining the institution of Mormonism and especially to Americanize its captives and provide hope for its innocent and naïve foreign converts.

Those who are there largely are children of parents who have come from foreign countries with little idea of American life, as they are taken immediately to Utah. The only impression of American life they have ever received is that which they find in the Territory and among their own people; consequently, their children are not trained to domestic life or to any industrial pursuits such as are common to Americans.

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417 Ibid., 19.
418 Ibid., 30.
419 Ibid., 31.
Newman’s appeal to Congress conceptualized what in effect was an Americanization project directed at Mormons in Utah. As best articulated by Pastor R.G. Moniece of the Presbyterian Church,

Now that Congress has taken thoroughly in hand the great work of Americanizing this splendid Territory by rescuing it from the clutches of the Mormon priesthood, how could they better appropriate a hundred thousand dollars than to a humane and industrial institution of this kind.420

The operative question at this juncture was not whether Mormonism should fall or whether it was entitled to religious liberty, but how it should fall, by “bayonet rule,” or more benevolently through “philosophy” and “logic.” Mormonism, as such, was not just to be conquered, but converted.

Although Newman’s success in converting the “Mormons” to a proper Americanism was based on accusations against Mormon life and religion in Utah that were clearly exaggerated and often fictitious, the underlining assumptions of Christian civilization made the accusations appear plausible. Earlier in the century, an American public upheld similar jargon that had embraced as factual the blatantly anti-Catholic “true confessions” of Maria Monk, a self-confessed escapee from a nunnery in Montreal. This expose, published in 1836, became a national bestseller, selling over 300,000 copies before the Civil War.421 Monk’s

420 Ibid., 4.

421 For a fuller discussion on this, see Jenny Franchot, Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 154. Claiming to have been held captive through physical and psychological terror, Maria Monk exposed the horrors of the Catholic convent. Babies from raped nuns were strangled at birth, just after being baptized, and then buried in secret rooms. Disobedient or even questioning women were severely punished and some were executed. In asking how nuns could allow such atrocities to continue, Maria Monk explained that she had been taught by the Catholic institution not to think on her own and was kept from investigating the Scriptures herself. In short, the institution demanded ignorance for its “crimes of a deep die” to run unchecked. Maria Monk, like Mormon converts,
narrative of captivity and escape had fed into nativist sentiment and help set Americans on edge against Catholics, leading to widespread animosity and violence. But Monk’s narrative, like that of Newman’s witnesses, was largely fiction. Prominent and otherwise intelligent Americans believed the reports of Monk and Newman, not because they were true or verified (in fact it was the opposite), or even likely, but because they needed them to be true. They were in keeping with a pattern of demonization of its minority populations to such an extent that the ridiculous and fantastic was anticipated and even expected.

However horrible, such fancies not only brought reassurance to the direction of the American republic and its “Christian civilization,” but more importantly kept groups like Catholics and Mormons at arms length from national inclusion and public participation. Reports from Monk and Utah were not considered to be isolated facts, but were representative of the consequence of false religions. Mormons and Catholics were simply “like this” because of their faith and the institution they belonged to. Ultimately, reassuring Protestants by contrast of the validity of their faith and its “Christian instruction,” were by nature a “Christian civilization.”

The subsequent efforts of Newman and Congress testify to these overly-assumed and heavily relied upon dichotomies. Consistent with earlier legal rulings, Mormonism was projected as at heart un-American because it appeared

\[\text{Maria Monk, } \textit{Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk} (\text{New York: Howe & Bates, 1836}), \text{ ii, 58-59, 124-125.}\]
inconstant with prevailing notions of Christian civilization and religion. Thus, to become civilized and American, the institution of Mormonism had to surrender itself to the larger forces of civilization as defined and enforced through popular Protestant notions of Christianity. “Mormonism had to go down before the civilization of Christianity just as the pale-faced Indian has had to go down before the civilization of the white man in the United States.” Similar parallels could also be made regarding the treatment of blacks and Native Americans in Indian Territory as America consolidated and closed its Western boundaries at the end of the nineteenth century. Thus the Mormon question was just one of a number that had to be resolved with the impending closure of the western frontier. The existence of a competing Mormon empire in Utah made it especially critical.

However, Mormonism was never without its defenders. Emmeline B. Wells, a prominent female leader and suffragist in the LDS Church, sent a letter to the Committee of the Senate on Education and Labor in contrast with the report of Newman. Here, Wells and three other Mormon women protested “on behalf of the Mormon Women of Utah.” This was, as the letter read, a “most emphatically protest against any such pretext being used for obtaining a share of the public funds.” The letter explained that women in Utah are free to come or go, to marry or divorce, and that “no Mormon woman, old or young, is compelled to marry at all; still less to enter into polygamy.” This claim went even further: “Mormon girls have homes as happy, as pure, and as desirable as any of their Eastern sisters, and are far more independent.” These Mormon representatives denounced the

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422 Blair, In the Senate of the United States: 1886, 43.
claims of Newman, especially regarding temple oaths, ecclesiastical punishments
and female financial dependence. They “most positively” asserted, in response to
the expected success of the school,

that there is not a Mormon wife, whether plural or otherwise, who would
accept charity at the hands of those who have procured, and are still
demanding the passage, of laws whose enforcement has brought sorrow
and desolation into their once happy homes.\textsuperscript{423}

These Mormon women had thus challenged the testimony of Angie Newman,
pointing out not merely that her prejudices against them were unfair and
inaccurate, but that their place as women in Mormon society, if not equal,
excelled that known by Newman and other American women.

In rejecting Newman’s self-proclaimed authority to speak on behalf of the
“helpless woman or child” of Utah, the defense offered by Mormon women like
Wells surprised many in both their boldness and intelligent counter arguments.

Ongoing Congressional attacks and popular animosities enlivened and united the
female Mormon voice in support of their faith and community. Phoebe Woodruff,
plural wife of Mormon president Wilford Woodruff, expresses this popular
sentiment in Utah, “Shall we as wives and mothers sit still and see our husbands,
and sons,” while following the “highest behest of heaven, suffer for their religion
without exerting ourselves to the extent of our power for their deliverance? No!
verily, no!”\textsuperscript{424} Mormon women understood that this fight was not against Mormon

\textsuperscript{423} Wells, Emmeline B., et al. To the Committee of the Senate on Education and Labor: Letter by
Washington, D.C. 1886, 44.

\textsuperscript{424} Such can be found in the “Minutes of Woman’s Mass Indignation Meeting,” Jan. 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1870, as
printed in Roberts, Comprehensive History, 5:233.
men alone, but all who believed in the new faith, whether polygamist or not. Most Americans, however, did not see these protests as proof of female agency in Utah, but instead, the ultimate “disgrace” of true womanhood, and natural byproduct of the Mormon institution. Their efforts were thus interpreted as proof of their duplicity. These protests were not acts of Mormon female agency, but instead evidence of a diabolical alliance with an oppressive institution. The Mormon female voice was thus seen as that of a slave forced to the defense of her master. By dismissing this voice, such protests furthered deepening national animosities. Notably, Mormon women were defined as both un-American and non-woman, while Newman’s benevolence was celebrated as the norm of true womanhood and patriotism.

Angie Newman’s subsequent response to Emmeline Wells typified both the attacks against Mormon polygamy, and the perceived illegitimacy of the Mormon people as American citizens and the discounting of the voice and agency of Mormon women. Newman dismissed Wells’ argument and protest as defiance and rebellion and female subjugation and claimed that her testimony did not stand alone. Newman buttressed her testimony with that of federally appointed officers in Utah, namely Chief Justice Zane, U.S. Attorney Dickson, U.S. Marshal Ireland, together with the highest ecclesiastical authorities of the Territory, the respectable businessmen of Salt Lake City, the Christian women of the Industrial Home association, and especially exposé novels, such as Fanny Stenhouse’s Tell it
All.\textsuperscript{425} All illuminated the fact that the heart of the perceived Mormon rebellion against the nation was its bold affront to the pillars of Christian civilizationism: “These women, by their treasonable political attitude, and their avowed hostility to Christian marriage, have cut the chords which bind them to the world’s heart.”\textsuperscript{426}

Though Congress fully supported Newman’s school, its subsequent failure reveals the dissonance between Mormons and those purportedly seeking their liberation. As Mormons had learned by 1890, definitions of religion and employment of religious freedom were limited to prevailing Protestant definitions and terms. Expressions of American religious agency were likewise limited to these particular and exceedingly narrow boundaries. Nevertheless, Mormons strongly resisted efforts at assimilation, and declared themselves, by Constitutional right and Providence, legitimate heirs of a larger and more diverse national culture. They did not seek to escape, but instead to challenge and shape it according to their own notions of civilization and the American kingdom of God. To them, diversity did not need to be “added” or homogenized to the larger American experience, but simply acknowledged and protected. Although misunderstood and persecuted throughout the nineteenth century, Mormons provided an important arena for Americans like Newman to fashion and define their own sense of patriotism and providential American destiny.

\textsuperscript{425} Newman, \textit{Letter to Henry W. Blair}, 45. Not only this, but other anti-Mormon novels and exposés were used as legitimate testimonies in support of Newman’s many charges against the Mormon Church, specifically the \textit{Hand Book of Mormonism}, and \textit{Madame La Tour}.

\textsuperscript{426} Ibid., 45-46.
Congress’ ready provision of support of tax dollars for this simultaneous agenda demonstrated the power of religious sensibilities in driving domestic policy and the deep expectations of orthodoxy such policies sought to enforce. Congress approached Newman’s designs with great hope and optimism, granting her the requested one-hundred thousand dollars for the School. After granting another twelve thousand a few years later to aid the struggling school, Congress finally abandoned its support after it had proven less effective than anticipated. In fact, the school had represented a dismal failure in its aim to provide sanctuary for victimized Mormon women, as few Mormon women themselves saw a need for escape or sanctuary. According to early Mormon historian B. H. Roberts, the Women’s Industrial Home served as a “ghastly failure” and “jest in Salt Lake City and Utah.” Its demise and conversion in 1893 into federal offices, was a potent representation of what was hoped to be an end to an old era. Ironically and perhaps symbolic of a new era regarding Mormon and American relations and understandings, the Christian Industrial Home was auctioned off on September 7, 1899 for $22,500 and converted into a local family hotel.\textsuperscript{427}

Though Congress had embraced Newman’s attempt to convert Mormons through “compassion,” most national leaders focused on conquest of the Mormon institution. More severe laws were routinely justified and even demanded throughout the 1880s. For example, under the Edmunds Act (1882), children of polygamous marriages were denied the rights of familial inheritance and even legitimacy as sons or daughters, rendering them illegitimate, stigmatized, and

\textsuperscript{427} Roberts, \textit{Comprehensive History}, 6:184-186, see also Larson, \textit{Americanization}, 227-228.
potentially impoverished. Though admittedly harsh, this legislation was acceptable because it “helped destroy the polygamous marital system that produced them.” These laws, though severe, were deemed necessary. “They have been said to be rough provisions,” explained Senator George F. Edmunds of Vermont, whose name the Edmunds and Edmunds-Tucker Acts bear, “they were intended to be rough. Desperate cases need desperate remedies.”

Following similar logic, extinguishing the “immense” political power of the Mormon people was an additional way of “helping them,” for it would destroy the ecclesiastical institution that oppressed them. Senator Dayard of Delaware, a supporter of the Edmunds Bill explained that even though its provisions were “an unrepUBLICan theory of proceeding in regard to elections,” they were necessary in breaking an even worse unrepUBLICan theocracy in Utah. Ironically, Senator Tucker, who later joined his name to an even more severe legislation known by the name of Edmunds-Tucker (1887), saw this as an issue over fair representation, regarding the “monopoly of power” held by Mormons in Utah. It was rooted in his conviction that Mormon leadership oppressed its members and dictated elections. Thus an oath, which judged citizens on grounds of religious belief, though unconstitutional, was necessary to “protect the local minority and the whole of the people of the United States.” Therefore, the unrepUBLICan and

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428 Firmage, Zion in the Courts, 239.

429 Ibid., 165.

430 Ibid., 165.

431 Tucker, 10.
unconstitutional methods Congress employed to attack Mormonism were, ironically, seen as a way of preserving liberty, democracy, and the well being of the republic. Mormons then, recognizing this as “legalized mobocracy,” found they had no right to protest against it—for such “privileges” were granted only to “Americanized” Americans, not Mormons.

Long-standing popular and historiographical assumptions about nineteenth-century Mormonism are those of national rebellion, religious aberrancy, theocratic despotism, sexual perversity and abuse, isolationism, and defiance. Americans additionally perceived Mormonism as proof exemplar of the barbaric tendencies and influences long feared of the Western frontier and the dangers it posed to the entire nation. In the eyes of Mormons, however, these assessments have always been unfair caricatures of their faith and purposes. Consequently as argued by Mormon apostle Moses Thatcher in 1882, Mormonism had always been treated like “an unloved child,” and whoever knew a father to be just to an unloved child?432

Given the emotional contexts surrounding the question of Mormonism and its perceived threat towards U.S. sovereignty and progress in the West, it is not surprising that the inclusion of Mormonism into the national narrative would prove problematic and uneasy. By including Mormonism, even negatively into the national narrative, challenged the privileged place of Anglo-Protestantism and its traditions in earlier narratives of progress and liberty and force further inquiry.

From the perspective of Mormons as well as members of other minority groups (Catholic, Jewish, female and African American, Asian, Native American), selective interpretation and application of the American experiment of freedom had failed them. Exposure of this failure was central to the Mormon response.

However, in order to understand Mormon defiance, it is also necessary to understand Mormon patriotism. The conflict between Mormonism and ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial defenders of America’s version of Christian civilizationism and competing notions of the Kingdom of God in America would foster a dialect that would alter both adversaries. Notably the extended battle would not only foster important internal and external changes within Mormonism that were limited to Mormon practice and policy, but also inspire new and more accommodating responses from the LDS Church that were perhaps not possible during the high emotions and bitter animosities on both sides during the decade of the 1880s.

Throughout the nineteenth century, American historiography looked to Mormonism as an international embarrassment and potential provocation of God’s wrath. The resulting policy encouraging both heated rhetoric and occasionally actions was often geared toward annihilation and extermination of Mormonism and its adherents. In language that would have been familiar to Puritan adherents of covenant theology and its corollaries, Colonel Patrick Connor arguing for the “annihilation of this whole people [of Mormonism],” posited:

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If the present rebellion [Civil War] is a punishment for any national sin, I believe it is for permitting this unholy, blasphemous, and unnatural institution [Mormonism] to exist almost in the heart of the nation, ignoring its horrid crimes and allowing it to extend its ramifications into every grade of society in defiance of laws human and divine.

He added, “The sooner we are rid of the evil, and the nation of the stigma, the better it will be for us.”\textsuperscript{433} Within American religious historiography and national policy, Mormon usefulness was limited to its ability to unite a divided America and “redeem” it by its sacrifice. “One of the great sins of Protestantism is,” wrote Stephen Colwell, “the refusal to co-operate—to be, even for the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom, a unit; even for the common defense against a common enemy.”\textsuperscript{434} Rallying cries against Mormon Utah that united an irritated nation in the cause of a perceived righteous anger was not unique in the world of unloved children (Chinese, Native Americans, blacks, Catholics, etc). Popular nineteenth-century historiography upheld a vision of America, as defined through notions of Christian civilizationism that demanded that America’s diversity be understood in both threatening and demonic terms.

Historians of the nineteenth century cast Christian civilization as a beacon of safety, even the “world’s last hope” that promised a new kingdom of God that would wipe away all the tears of a troubled humanity. Such hopes, however, required progress, and groups that stood in the way of that progress were demonized. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Mormonism, situated and seemingly impregnable in its Utah stronghold in the West, would be cast as its

\textsuperscript{433} As quoted in E.B. Long, The Saints and the Union, 149.

\textsuperscript{434} Colwell, The Position of Christianity in the United States, 171.
worst and most dangerous offender. The words of evangelical minister and pioneering American religious historian Philip Schaff retain an almost timeless relevance within American religious historiography: “But the voluntary principle [religious freedom] has gradually triumphed in the whole country, except in the abnormal territory of the Mormons.”

“I must only beg,” Schaff spoke in another setting, “in the name of my adopted fatherland, that you will not judge America in any way by this irregular growth.” So irregular and repulsive had been the Mormon religion, and so glorious the national destiny that according to Schaff, “Americans cannot be particularly blamed for wishing to be rid of such a pest.”

Traditional historiographical narratives that reduce Mormons, together with other forms of religious difference, to either victims of history or national conspirators, neglect to see this as a patriotic gesture of Mormonism. They can be perceived as real agents and co-builders of what we now consider America. Concepts like religious liberty were neither certain nor fully trusted, and Americans on the heels of a war that had threatened all were at best anxious and cautious in their realized disentanglement. Mormonism further demonstrated its

435 Philip Schaff, “Progress of Christianity,” 221. American religious historiography continues to reflect this bias. Following this privileged narrative of the Protestant mainstream, Ferenc Szasz notes that the Mormons created a “distinctly hostile environment” against the nation and their “Gentile” neighbors, making Utah so different and foreign from the rest of the nation that missionaries felt “as if they had been serving in Asia or Africa.” It was to the credit of “three generations of Protestant missionaries,” Szasz writes, that we have to thank for helping “the Saints . . . appear more and more like another ‘conservative’ denomination.” Szasz, The Protestant Clergy, 154, 174. For similar assessments of Mormonism within developments of American religious pluralism, see also Hutchison, Religious Pluralism in America and Kerstetter, God’s Country, Uncle Sam’s Land.

436 Philip Schaff, America, 249-250.
perils and limitations and legislations and crusades quickly formed to contain and marginalize it. This response by both historians and the US government reveals this liberty as not already made, but rather in the process of being made.\textsuperscript{437} As the Supreme Court demonstrated in \textit{Reynolds}, the exercise of religious freedom was a principle extended only to those that did not challenge or annoy the dominant religious establishment in nineteenth-century America. With significant historiographical implications, the American experiment of religious freedom in nineteenth-century America was a privilege extended only to those who were sufficiently “like us,” rather than an assumed right granted to all equally and fairly.

In her celebrated analysis of the “Mormon Question,” Sarah Gordon broke new analytical ground through effectively demonstrating how these several contestants translated the resulting constitutional, as well as religious and cultural struggle, into a language of faith. As she explains of her experience as a grad student, torn between studies in law and theology, neither realm were wholly exclusive of the other.\textsuperscript{438} In looking at the “Mormon Question” of the 1870s and 1880s, the link between the forces of religion and law were apparent and

\textsuperscript{437} Inspired by theorist and philosopher William James, cultural historian Ann Taves admonishes an approach to the study of American religious experience that focuses “our attention from the study of religion \textit{per se} to the \textit{processes} by which religious and nonreligious phenomena are made and unmade.” As such, we “lose a sense of religion (or not-religion) as a substantive thing.” In a similar way, this dissertation has sought to overcome the dichotomy of the secular and religious, and instead look at how such terms are made and un-made, in order to similarly lose a sense of religion and the secular as necessarily distinct and substantive things. See Ann Taves, \textit{Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 360-361.

\textsuperscript{438} Gordon, \textit{The Mormon Question}, xiii, 5-7.
profound, allowing for a united affront by ministers, Christian social reformers, the Judiciary and Congress. Indeed, Americans on various fronts unified together in the encouragement of Christian civilizationism (typified by white Protestantism) over that of barbarism and superstition (typified by Mormonism). Part of Gordon’s analytical strength is in her suggesting a way to rethink the American experiment of religious liberty, not according to a simplistic (perhaps “pretended”) paradigm of progress, unity and fairness, but instead one of disarray, confusion, and deep and desperate contestation where religion was not so easily disentangled from matters of governance. Adverse theories pertaining to the meaning of democracy, theocratic republicanism, the limits and transformations of federalism, and the setting aside of constitutional principles for the purposes of national progress were also illuminated. In short, Gordon presents a messier, more controversial, contradictory, and at times shocking picture of the American national culture that is supported by this thesis. As this dissertation furthers, however, national culture is not one, but many; made up not just of its majority population, but its various minorities as well. Gordon did not exhaust the issue; she merely took note of one of its more significant illusions of church/state separation and the notion of unity and progress.

439 Ibid., 54, 140, 144, 218.
Chapter 5

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGION AND THE CLOSING OF THE "FRONTIER LINE" 1890

“The Lord has told me by revelation that there are many members of the Church throughout Zion who are sorely tried in their hearts because of that manifesto….I want the Latter-day Saints to stop murmuring and complaining at the providence of God.”

President Wilford Woodruff at Cache Stake Conference, 1891

“To be at peace with the Government and in harmony with their fellow citizens who were not of their faith and to share in the confidence of the government and people, our people have voluntarily put aside something which all their lives they have believed to be a sacred principle.”

Amnesty Petition to President Harrison, December 19, 1891

With the nation in the midst of dramatic shift and having entered a new world of social, spiritual, intellectual and economic disarray, many looked for their “balm of Gilead,” or source of healing and security. This chapter examines this discomfort and the challenges presented to the wider religious culture by the "ordeal of faith" at the end of the nineteenth century by the emergence of the scientific study of religion and the correlating secularized historiography of the "frontier thesis." This frontier thesis replaced old theological models of historical truth, serving as a new overly-simplified model that established as progressive the

440 Clark, Messages, 3:225-226, 228.
441 Ibid., 3: 231.
outcome of the last few decades of bitter struggle between a newly industrialized nation and its various minority and religious populations.

Within the academic arena, a new generation of historians became more secular in their orientation. In its twist of the old theological narrative, this new “frontier” thesis notably dropped the religious rhetoric, but retained the fundamental model of progress of its theological counterpart. Rather than offering critical reflection on the past century, this new academic model of the frontier retained and solidified the traditional narrative regarding the disadvantaged placement of America’s religious diversity. Though minority groups found themselves disadvantaged by such a narrative, it offered new opportunities to some non-Protestant groups. No longer defined and dismissed through disparaging theological terms, Mormons for example found in this new secular narrative the opportunity to present themselves, not as hopeless heretics, but as reformed citizens now willing to fall into line with the nation’s progressive codes of proper behavior.

Together with this new secularized historiographical model, the academic study of religion emerged that required a new level of empathy toward non-traditional faiths. Among the key factors was the new “sympathy for religion” that the World’s Fair had furthered within popular and intellectual America. Mormon’s were uniquely positioned to be advantaged by this dual shift of the historiographical frontier thesis and the new academic “sympathy of religion.” With the polygamy question at least officially behind them and progress now defined in secular terms, Mormons took advantage of their changing national
environment and engaged this progressive era with a sense of divine mandate and began efforts to successfully redefine themselves. Frontier Mormonism had long been discounted as a barbaric faith, but the new romanticism of the West and the progressivism it offered, promised new possibilities to a church whose internal dynamics were newly open to change and new revelations.

At the opening of the World’s Fair in 1893, the spirit of change had already dramatically affected both Mormonism and the nation. That year, Angie Newman’s Christian Industrial School, symbolic of the popular opposition toward the Mormon Church, lost its congressional financial support. In the early 1890s, national political parties (Democrat and Republican) replaced Utah’s more polemical Liberal (anti-Mormon) and People’s (pro-Mormon) Parties. With the March 9, 1892 Republican victory in the Democrat stronghold of Logan, Utah (home of both apostle and politician Moses Thatcher and Utah’s delegate to Congress, John T. Caine), the New York Times wrote that the outcome “effectually disposes of the question of Mormon Church influence in the political field.” A Salt Lake Tribune editorial wrote: “We congratulate Logan on having a genuine American election, and we say, ‘Good for Logan!’” In October 1892, the Fourth District Court declared the Idaho test-oath law unconstitutional, introducing 25,000 Mormon votes into Idaho politics. “It seems that the

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442 For a discussion of this political shift in Utah see Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, 37-50; Lyman, Political Deliverance, 153-181.; Roberts, A Comprehensive History, 6:297-301.


444 “A Victory for Mormons: Judge Stockslager says They May Vote in Idaho,” New York Times, October 9, 1892. Pg. 16.
Republicans of Idaho,” reported the New York Times, “are undergoing a change of heart in respect to the Mormon inhabitants of their State, which we are pleased to see and only wish it extended to the entire Republican Party.” The avowed Presbyterian and US President Benjamin Harrison offered a limited and reluctant amnesty on January 4, 1893 to those who had followed the November 1890 anti-polygamy manifesto and obeyed the law respecting unlawful cohabitation.

Harrison’s amnesty was in response to an 1891 petition by leaders of the LDS Church on behalf of all those “under disabilities because of the operation of the Edmunds-Tucker law” of 1887. An even more liberal amnesty that paved the way for statehood was given by President Grover Cleveland the next year. As Brigham H. Roberts suggests, Harrison’s amnesty demonstrated little if any shift in attitude toward the LDS Church, whereas Cleveland’s amnesty, coming after the World’s Fair, demonstrated a softened stance in the highest levels of the nation toward Utah and its dominant faith.

Some indices of change were more symbolic. Nationally heralded as “the most remarkable building in the country,” the completion of the Salt Lake Temple was the most visible expression of Mormon architectural sophistication.

445 A recent platform of the Republican convention went as follows: “We congratulate the Mormon Church on the recent declaration abandoning polygamy and divorce of Church and State in all political concerns, and, accepting this declaration as sincere, we pledge the party that, with the continuance of the evidences of this sincerity, we will at the next ensuing session of the Legislature restore to its members the free political privileges of citizenship secured to all others.” As reported in “The Mormons in Idaho,” New York Times, September 5, 1892. P. 5.

446 Roberts, Comprehensive History, 6:288-289; “These culminated in the passage of the Edmunds (1882) and Edmunds-Tucker (1887) acts, which disfranchised all polygamists, took control of Utah’s Mormon-dominated public school system, abolished the territorial militia, disfranchised Utah women, provided for imprisonment of those practicing plural marriage, and confiscated virtually all the church’s property.” Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, 4.
Estimated to have cost around twelve million dollars to complete, the April 6, 1893 dedication of the Salt Lake Temple (whose construction began under Brigham Young almost half a century earlier) provided a strong continuity with the Mormon past as well as a new determination to present the Mormon faith and people in more public ways. Ironically, it was in response to international recognition of their performance at this dedication that the Mormon Tabernacle Choir received, and inspired perceptive church leaders to support their venture to Chicago just a few months later. Beyond the outward publicity attendant on the choir and the temple, the dedication service revealed a significant shift within Mormon theology that would make possible and legitimate this more public portrayal of the church. The Atlanta Constitution observed that Mormons flocked from far and near, “with bed and babies in arms,” so as not to miss some great revelation or other divine manifestation and holy blessing. “The ancient Hebrew looked not to the sky with more expectancy from the base of fiery Sinai than did the Mormon peasantry at their temple gates today.” Just two days prior at the semi-annual general conference, as reported by the Los Angeles Times, Mormon apostle Lorenzo Snow felt the need to caution against overzealous expectations at the Thursday conference and dedication, such as the hope of Christ’s Second Advent. It may take ten, twelve, or even twenty years, Snow explained, before the

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447 Historian Reid Neilson notes that it was the highly positive response in both eastern and European newspapers that helped convince church leaders of the value of sending the choir to the fair. See Reid Neilson, Exhibiting Mormonism, 116.

448 “The Great Temple of the Mormons was Formally Dedicated Yesterday,” The Atlanta Constitution, April 7, 1893. Pg. 1.
Saints would be prepared for such an event.\textsuperscript{449} It was a subtle but profound theological and millennial shift as Mormon leaders, though still holding to an imminent return of Christ, began to encourage expectations of a less imminent return, and thus began to ponder more long-term realities.

These new developments and transformations did not come without serious concern and were contested. National leaders like Missouri Senator George G. Vest (1830-1904) declared in late 1893 that “the death blow to Mormonism has already been struck. It can never flourish in this country again.” The reason polygamy had ended was not because Mormonism ended it, argued Vest, but because “the religious sentiment of the Latter Day Saints is not strong with them,” likely having reference to the general membership of the church.\textsuperscript{450} Though Vest’s theory of Mormon declension does not adequately explain Mormon transformation, his thesis that Mormons were losing and compromising vital aspects of their faith was a real concern among Mormon leaders. In 1893, the LDS Church was in serious debt as a result of punishments for polygamy which were financially draining; also draining were its responses to the anti-polygamy crusades; finally, there was the misfortune of the 1893 national financial panic. These developments threatened a sense of deep crisis regarding church independence and solidarity.\textsuperscript{451}

\textsuperscript{449} “Saint and Sinner: Mormons and Gentiles Journey to Salt Lake City,” \textit{The Los Angeles Times}, April 5, 1893, pg. 2.


\textsuperscript{451} For thorough details in the final situations of the church following the Edmund-Tucker law 1887, see Arrington, \textit{Great Basin Kingdom}, 360-379. Arrington concludes his chapter thus: “The
Political transformations were also alarming. Dividing members along political party lines had been necessary in alleviating an earlier crisis brought on by the national concern of Mormon political unity (inspiring national legislation to break it up), but such divisions brought a new and potentially more destructive internal crisis within the Mormon Church, threatening church unity and God’s displeasure. Elections like the one in Logan in 1892 were deeply contested and bitterly fought, leaving more than a few with bitter words and feelings for their fellow Mormons. In preparation for the Salt Lake Temple dedication, the Mormon First Presidency sent out a circular letter to officers and members of the church on March 18, 1893. “During the past eighteen months,” the letter announced, “there has been a division of the Latter-day Saints upon national party lines.” Feelings had been intense, inspiring “conduct” on the part of members toward one another that “have been very painful to us and have grieved our spirits.” Calling offense toward each other an offense toward God, the letter called for reconciliation. Before Saints could consider themselves worthy to attend the dedication, they were to “divest ourselves of every harsh and unkind feeling against each other; that not only our bickering shall cease, but that the cause of them shall be removed, and every sentiment that prompted and has maintained them shall be dispelled.” Thus, the temple was projected as a visible reminder of community renewal and religious solidarity amidst significant political and religious change.

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Raid had finally culminated in the long-sought goal of statehood, but had produced capitulation in many areas of Mormon uniqueness, not the least of which was the decline in the economic power and influence of the church. The temporal Kingdom, for all practical purposes, was dead – slain by the dragon of Edmunds-Tucker.”
that threatened the unity and economic viability of the church and its abilities to effectively present itself anew within a nation and era in the midst of visible transformation. It was of “supreme importance” that the Presidency letter admonished each member to be “at peace with all his or her brethren and sisters, and at peace with God.” Frustrated that the apparent unworthy were still given recommends by their Bishops, the Presidency created another letter following the dedication on May 9, 1893; this threatened disfellowshipping or excommunication to those who attended the dedication not having achieved political reconciliation and who would not now repent.\footnote{Clark, Messages, 3:241-244.} Thus at a time when political parties in Utah were in serious flux, Mormon leaders were seeking to remind their membership of Mormonism’s higher principles.

In Utah, as well as nationally, old institutions were encountering new social, intellectual, and cultural realities, requiring important individual and institutional changes which impacted how individuals understood themselves and their respective religions. Thus popular reformulations of Mormonism recast the eccentric faith in a more “American light” and reflexively offered and embraced new explanations of this light. These new explanations, however, did not bring forth a rethinking of the earlier assumptions of Mormon un-Americanism and belligerence. For many, the transformation had come about from the powerful and inexorable forces of American progress, not Mormon agency.

Numerous factors were at play, including important shifts in the natural sciences. Beyond just Mormonism, these shifts (particularly those in the natural
sciences) had dramatic importance for how minority groups presented or represented themselves to the larger national public. With the prospects of a friendlier world, for example, Mormons were willing to allow these earlier criticisms to go unchallenged, in the hopes they would just be mutually forgotten. With the official manifesto against the practice of polygamy and the dedication of the Salt Lake temple and the prominence of its internationally celebrated choir, Mormonism had become a more visible and less feared religion. How Mormons now explained (and did not explain) themselves in this changing context represents an important focal point of national and Mormon transformation. As will be shown in the succeeding chapters, this redefinition came to be discussed and understood within national (as well as international) and naturalistic (as seen in music, mining, and agriculture) terms, rather than just regional (Utah) or religious (LDS).

The 1890s represented a height of radical demographic, intellectual, and cultural changes taking place nationally and internationally. The World’s Fair of 1893 in Chicago was envisioned as a display and celebration of progressivism at the end of the century. It was anticipated to be one of the most visible and important events of the nineteenth-century, with the progressive role of religion not to be neglected. In fact, many proclaimed that its religious congress(es) culminating in the Parliament of Religion was the Fair’s greatest achievement and source of religious and national pride.

This chapter examines Mormon participation at the Congress and illuminates the intellectual, religious, cultural and historiographical dynamics that
set the tone for Mormon and national transition that undergirded Mormonism’s entrance and acceptance into the American mainstream. Historiographical transitions, notably the professionalization of history as a scientific field of study was just one crucial aspect of these cultural and intellectual shifts at the end of the nineteenth century which affected how the nation looked at religion, inclusive of Mormonism. The scientific “comparative study” of religion represents an equally important and related academic endeavor that similarly upheld a larger national and international narrative. It outlined and encouraged a new “sympathy for religion” that would dramatically alter national attitudes toward non-traditional religions, including Mormonism. Notably, its emergence and perspectives highlighted the fact that throughout the nineteenth century, purported academic national narratives that spoke of Mormonism were less interested in understanding Mormonism as a religion and more in understanding it as an “object” of the frontier.

Closing the “Frontier Line” and the Secularization of History

By 1890, numerous developments would portend Turner’s thesis about the closing of the frontier. For several decades Americans had seen remarkable urban and industrial growth and increased social complexity by way of economics, urbanization, and improved technology. Despite significant attempts to make sense of these chaotic and turbulent decades, the closing of the Western frontier promised to bring a sense of meaning and progressive assurance to a decade fraught by doubt and uncertainty. In the first three years of the 1890s, labor riots
inspired widespread chaos and violence while a national economic collapse brought misery, malnutrition, and disease to millions. During these unsettling years the US acquired nearly twelve million acres of land from Native tribes for white settlement while Congress passed harsh anti-immigration legislation that furthered a culture of violence and prejudice against the Chinese in California and the West. Simultaneously, the South ended civil rights legislation through a series of Jim Crow laws that perpetuated unbridled violence against blacks in the South, West, and Midwest (1892 alone saw a record number of 161 lynchings of blacks). Though these events added to the chaos and instability for millions, they were in response to deeper shifts already underway that threatened a century of white Protestant rule. Historians were among those politicians and preachers called upon to make sense of and find meaning within these new realities.

Though having reference to actual geographic space, the notion of frontier and frontier closure coincided with white expansionism and its crusade to subject its minority populations to its definitions of white Americanism and acceptance of their unequal place and status within the still rambunctious republic. An often unacknowledged aspect of the closing of the frontier had to do with Anglo-Protestant expansionism and Manifest Destiny through the intimidation or eradication of minority populations.

453 John Mack Faragher, et al, Out of Many: A History of the American People, combined 2nd edition (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1997), 627-634. Such atrocities against America’s black populations were sometimes announced in local newspapers for public spectacle while railroads offered special excursion rates to make attendance at these gatherings easier. To heighten the excitement, the bodies of the murdered were often both burned and mutilated for entertainment but also to terrorize black populations into submission to white supremacy. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. ed., The Almanac of American History (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2004), 371-377. Faragher, et al, Out of Many, 634-635.
During the same era there was the setting aside of thirteen million acres of land as protected national forest; Thomas Edison’s patenting the radio and motion picture devices, Charles and Frank Duryea’s perfecting of the American-made automobile, and Whitcomb Judson patenting of the “zipper.” Within an increasingly urban and industrialized American society, where traditional white Anglo Protestant churches remained largely unmoved by the attendant suffering around them, a new “social” interpretation of Christianity emerged that demanded obligation toward the nation’s poor and downtrodden. Together with the technological and industrial growth of the late nineteenth century, attempts by the nation to control the closing frontier brought forth new perceptions of and responsibilities toward it’s economically and socially disenfranchised, thus interweaving a reconfigured frontier with that of social obligation. The Columbian Exhibition of 1893 was an example of this complex interweaving, as it graphically juxtaposed the fruits of modern human progress with carefully selected past examples of human depravity and ignorance. Effectively and graphically legitimated were the fruits, powers and tactics of the “progressive.”

Less progressive in hindsight were other aspects of the fair. As historian John Burris explains, the World’s Fair contributed to the popular apologetics of Anglo-colonialism, making clear its justification and legitimation through the embrace of prevalent academic, intellectual, cultural, religious and racial theories.

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regarding the social evolutionary hierarchy of race, religion, and culture. As the World’s Fair would show, “progress” implied that some were ordained to lead, while others were designed to submit and follow.

The resultant notion of history and its actors re-emerged with the notion of the frontier and its impending closure. It would have significant implications not just on how Americans perceived and dealt with racial and ethnic minorities, but also how they perceived and dealt with religious minorities such as the Mormons. The frontier had long been the real and imagined locus of conflict between the nation and its minority populations and faiths, and its imagined closure anticipated both cessation and legitimatization of that long running struggle. The year of 1890 saw many pivotal events among minorities, among them Black Elk declaring the “sacred tree” (symbolizing the Ghost Dance and Native resistance to US expansionism) to be dead following the massacre of Wounded Knee; Louisiana passing segregation laws which were to be adjudicated in Plessy v. Ferguson six years later; and the Mormon Church raising its own white flag of assimilation and surrender in its anti-polygamy manifesto. National attacks against Mormonism were not isolated campaigns of the US government during this time of radical national redefinition against its minority populations. These heavy measures against America’s religious, racial, and cultural diversity further

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defined the status and place of racial and religious minorities in a nation in the midst of transition that had long defined itself as white and Protestant.

For Turner, it was the encountering of the savage wilderness and its populations that characterized the true spirit of Americanism. The savages of the wilderness were comprehensible by understanding the powers of the wilderness, for its powers mastered the colonist and made him barbaric, rather than some innate and eternal characteristic. Though some seemed hopelessly lost to their own barbarism, there were those who, “little by little” could transform the wilderness into a “new product that is American.” It was through the encounter of the savage and civilized that the American was made. National attempts to civilize the West and its unruly inhabitants, however lawful, were thus a very American response to America’s vast diversity in its multiple frontiers. The deeper into the frontier these encounters against barbarism went, the “more and more American” these encounters heralding civilization were becoming.\(^\text{457}\) These developments were not Providence, but instead represented the invisible and undeniable rules of nature. The closing of the frontier in 1890 implied an increased and closer association with and knowledge of once isolated communities and their inhabitants be they native or Mormon. At the same time Americans were anticipating the end of Mormon barbarism, Americans began to have more contact with them. The more the nation observed Mormons from close up (thanks to the rail and the telegraph), the less strange they appeared to be, and

the more the Church appeared to be reasonable in its willingness to abandon rituals and practices deemed odd or offensive by other Americans.

The World’s Fair would additionally attune Mormon leaders to these developments. As an official 1896 “political manifesto” from the Church testified, “An era of peace and good-will seemed to be dawning upon the people, and it was deemed good to shun everything that could have the least tendency to prevent the consummation of this happy prospect.” Despite these new developments and softened perceptions, popular prejudice against Mormonism and widespread fears of its political relevance in Utah remained close to the surface. Nevertheless, the re-introduction of Mormonism and Utah to the nation in Chicago at the Columbian Fair of 1893 illustrates an important moment in American history that helped redefine both Mormonism and Utah. In the minds of many, Mormon involvement at the fair was a crucial step in bringing an embattled nineteenth-century religion out of the savage frontier and into the civilized mainstream of a more expansive and socially liberal twentieth-century America. Though the intellectual institutions within America were in the process of becoming secularized and their attitudes toward religion were turning negative, another intellectual and academic approach emerged that sought a deeper level of cosmic truth that in turn inspired a new and sympathetic approach to nontraditional religion. Mormons re-engaged the nation within these new secularist terms. In so doing, this engagement helped the nation to re-imagine Mormons and their peculiar faith in new and dynamic ways.

458 Clark, Messages, 3:275.
Both the national narrative and American religious historiography was additionally profoundly impacted by the “closing of the frontier” thesis. The frontier myth had long elicited major anxieties Americans during the nineteenth century over barbarism and its challenges to national identity and Christian civilizationism. Mimicking popular sentiment and their ministerial counterparts such as Protestant Church historians from Baird to Schaff, America’s elites spoke romantically and theologically of the frontier as an open wilderness awaiting initial cultivation through an Anglo-Christian civilization.

But now in the 1890s, the American social context “made urgent” a new notion of the frontier as it suggested the need to explain human difference and development in more scientific ways. The World’s Fair would both illuminate and symbolize the convergence and impact of many of the new currents. John Burris in his study entitled Exhibiting Religion suggests how the fair and its approach to global diversity encompassed and illuminated the scientific theories of social evolutionism and its expressed hierarchy of race and religion. Human difference thus became an object of scientific study and display at the fair and a central feature of its various auxiliaries. It would be within this context that the frontier thesis was presented and helped further a particular scientific classification of human progress and development.

In what Burris would label “the most significant paper delivered throughout the Congress Auxiliary of the World Columbian Exposition,” American historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared that the “frontier has

459 Burris, Exhibiting Religion, 146-147
gone.” Notably his thesis and paper was presented on July 12, 1893 at the annual meeting of the American History Association, appropriately held in conjunction with the World’s Fair. Citing an 1890 Census report that recognized the end of the “frontier line,” Turner explained that “the first period of American history” had ended. Consequently, a new era had dawned, bringing new questions concerning the placement and definition of both mainstream and marginal groups within America.

Turner’s thesis upheld social evolutionism and argued the inevitable development of the frontier from barbarity to civilization, and did so without theological reference. Turner’s charm was in his simplicity and his ability to articulate the consensus of the scientific community while still being able to resonate with the general public. Thus, rather than challenging popular racial, religious, and cultural biases, Turner provided them with a new scientific and academic vocabulary. Progress was not formulated through Providence, but rather the forces of the frontier and its inevitable move toward closure. Thus, the environment, not God, proved to be the central and motivational factor of mankind’s move toward civilization and the location of agency in responding to historical shift. In short, Turner argued that human development was governed by the environment, not the internal and invisible workings of the human mind and heart or an inevitable working out of Divine Providence. Whatever internal and

461 Burris, Exhibiting Religion, 146-147.
external dynamics were in play, they were in response to this external environment, and thus deemed unimportant to the historical narrative of progress.

The appeal of this thesis as a historiographical and now scientific model rested in its ability to respond to and make sense of the past two decades of social and political transformation, inclusive of the Indian Wars, anti-polygamy crusades, Jim Crow and Chinese exclusionary laws, as well as the relative control white Americans now wielded over their once unruly environment. In the 1890s, American expansionism was also at a height, giving new meaning to the American mind regarding the expanding American-Anglo frontier. Together with this, Turner’s theoretical model emerged within a broader international scientific inquiry into human progress through several mediums, including scientific history. By 1890, the natural sciences and their evolutionary assumptions defined this inquiry on its own terms, promising an eventual supremacy both racially and socially. While eschewing theological language and premises, Turner provided new dogma and new enthusiasm to the old idea and direction of “American civilizationism,” with no lessening of its national and international implications.

To be sure, Turner’s “frontier thesis” was an invention, but as prominent scholar of religion Martin Marty explains, it was a “useful and appealing one and one which provided a framework for a host of American historians.” Once this law or principle of interpretation “had been formulated,” notes Marty, “it closed the eyes of most historians to any facts which did not conform to it.”

notion of “frontier” was just as much psychological and ideological as it was environmental or theological, the closing of it represented important mental changes for the American mind. Its closing further problematized the discussion of American difference, making it difficult to question earlier theological assumptions of religious heathenism that were now recast as objectively and culturally savage. Focusing on the observable environment and its affects, this narrative provided a new empirical and scientific grounding that helped legitimate as scientific the intersection of culture and history. Deeply influenced by Germany’s new “scientific model” of history, American historiography entered into what historian Henry Bowden aptly referred to as a “true renaissance of historiography.” Prior to this intellectual renaissance beginning in the 1870s, clergymen like Baird and Schaff had filled the ranks of America’s US historians. Their theological approach to history demonstrated for many the clear dangers and aberrancies of the uncultivated frontier and the need to Christianize (or close) it. Now however, under the increased influence of the natural sciences and its idealized model of “objectivity,” religious dogma was dropped almost overnight for an equally dogmatic yet more secular historical narrative purportedly based on empirical “scientific truth.”

Church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette referred to the nineteenth century as the “Great Century” of Christianity, providing a marked contrast to its...
surrender to a more secularized approach at century’s end. Having held a “quasi-establishment” over American public life, evangelical influence harnessed American society and successfully recreated it in its own image. Only following the devastation of the Civil War had this influence begun to be challenged. In what Francis Weisenburger referred as an “ordeal of faith,” postbellum America witnessed “an assault on traditional Christian bastions which was unequalled in its force, seriousness, and diversity during any other century in the Church’s history.” As twentieth-century Church historian Sydney Ahlstrom explains, this multifaceted challenge to Christian hegemony came as a response to changes within the secular realm of urbanization, industrialization, secularism, new scientific, technological and intellectual currents that oversaw the emergence of new social and intellectual problems and an increased anti-clericalism. As such, scientific and technological progress offered attractive alternatives to Christianity, and in impressive ways, was beginning to define itself as apart from it. Europe served as the prologue to these intellectual, academic, religious trends that were now challenging American academic, intellectual and religious life. In some sense the World’s Fair represented an attempt to celebrate, define and exert some control over many of these currents and their corollaries.

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466 Ahlstrom, The American Protestant Encounter, 1.
German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), became the first honorary member of the American History Association which was organized in 1884 for the explicit purpose of furthering this new “scientific history.” He stood as an inspiration for an emergent generation of American historians and historiography committed to the principles of scientific objectivity. Among these historians was Fredrick J. Turner. The German seminar itself was celebrated and appropriated in the United States as an effective methodology that encouraged independent research and critical use of documentary evidence. Although Ranke himself saw history as God’s handiwork within the context of German philosophical realism, his seeming secular methodology, inclusive of the seminar, became the new “scientific” standard for American historians in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Ranke’s catchphrase, “as it really was,” exemplified this new American objective scientific historiography. Herbert B. Adams exemplified this trend in 1894 when he spoke of their academic German champion as a “truly scientific historian,” because his principle “was to tell things exactly as they occurred.” In contrast to earlier historians, Ranke, he noted, did not attempt to “preach a sermon, or point to a moral, or adorn a tale, but simply to tell the truth as he understood it.” As University of Chicago historian Peter Novick explains, US historians “enthusiastically adopted Ranke’s critical use of

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467 Bowden, *Church History*, 14.

sources and his seminar method,” but had misunderstood the *Wissenschaft* or spiritual underpinnings of Ranke’s own historiography.\footnote{Bowden, *Church History*, 10-11; Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 27-31.}

This distortion and misunderstanding of Ranke was all part of the intellectual transformation then underway within American universities and with it the new disenchantment with earlier theological narratives and presuppositions. As the locus of American history shifted from seminary to university, American historians enthusiastically moved to demonstrate the craft of history as a legitimate scientific endeavor comparable to the natural sciences, then central to the university system.

Through German intellectual influence, American historiography posited itself as a new natural science, comparable to biology and chemistry, as reflected in its dissecting historical documents with the same intensity as a biologist would a cat.\footnote{Bowden, *Church History*, 24-25.} In short, US historians appropriated Ranke and his methodology as they attempted to legitimize their new craft as comparable and compatible with other empirical natural sciences and in so doing to distance themselves from an earlier tradition of historiography now viewed as non-scientific, even amateurish and ultimately flawed.\footnote{In illuminating the shift from “metaphysical history” to “scientific history,” historian Henry T. Buckle argued near the turn of the century that “metaphysics will never be raised to a science by the ordinary method of observing individual minds; but that its study can only be successfully prosecuted by the deductive application of laws which must be discovered historically, that is to say, which must be evolved by an examination of the whole of those vast phenomena which the long course of human affairs presents to our view.” In achieving an unbiased narrative, Buckle argued that every “believer in the possibility of a science of history” had to abandon imaginations of Providence and instead form opinion “according to the evidence actually before him.” Henry Thomas Buckle, *Introduction to the History of Civilization in England*, revised ed., 3 vols. (New}
In consequence of the increasing challenges aimed at traditional forms of knowledge in the 1870s and 80s, it is not surprising that traditional views of the Bible and “sacred history” were questioned.472 As corrective, historians dogmatically embraced the myth of objectivity (seeing things “as they really are”), making normative and central a determined progressive narrative. Providential explanations of history did not cease to exist, but historians offering such found themselves increasingly marginalized in a new academic environment progressively hostile toward traditional expressions of religion and its influences on societal progress. Philip Schaff had been the foremost proponent of seeing Christ’s footsteps within history, but as noted by historian Henry Bowden, “Schaff’s death in 1893 and the dissolution of the ASCH in 1896 marked the end of an era.”473 While Schaff continued to argue that true history (that which animates and controls it) rested in the envisioning of God’s Holy Spirit, new “scientific historians” referred to religion in general as “blind superstition.”474 As universities (citadels of modern science) further embraced secular empirical science, Church historians fell from grace as serious academic historians. It was a transition deeply disconcerting to Church historians, and many turned to popular

York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1904), I:10. Novick writes that this new scientific approach brought forth a new level of force and confidence to the newly fashioned scientific study of history: “Science had offered prewar historians not just a method-well or ill understood-but above all a vision of a comprehensible world; a model of certitude, of unambiguous truth; knowledge that was definite, and independent of the values or intentions of the investigator.” That Noble Dream, 134-135.

472 Ahlstrom, The American Protestant Encounter, 1.

473 Bowden, Church History, 226.

scientific models to legitimate and revive the craft. George Harr for example, President of Newton Theological institute and the American Society of Church History, spoke in his presidential address in 1919: “Our study of Church History has suffered greatly from the fact that too little regard has commonly been paid to the forces that are simply human, rather than technically religious—the economic, social, and political influences.” Harr’s charge was intended to encourage a new generation of Church historians to meet the new methodological demands of the secular academic world, so as to win back academic respect and relevance. Moreover, as Harr understood it, Church (Protestant) History was not in contradiction with secular-scientific explanations of the world, but supportive of them.475

Demonstrating the secular/religious divide was less stark than how it first appeared, important Church historians followed Harr’s lead and began to adopt the standards of scientific objectivity and empirical restraint. Notably, these Church historians challenged the subjective conclusions (however triumphant) of Baird and others as unsubstantiated speculated guesses at deciphering God’s invisible hands within history. Church historian Ephraim Emerton of Harvard Divinity School (from 1882-1918) best demonstrates this trend among Church historians toward empirical science. Emerton believed that Christian history could be examined through a methodology “as purely scientific as those of the

contemporary sciences,” and with equal precision. Characteristically iconoclastic toward earlier Church historiography, Emerton urged a new generation of Church historians to return to the original historical sources of documents rather than the assumptions of the unverified and over-assuming orthodox tradition. Trusting instead in the “absoluteness of the law of evidence,” Emerton proposed to his Christian and scientific critics that science liberated and made valid religious history in the same way it had any other history, articulating for many a viable link between science and Church History. For Emerton, this new approach was not about denying God in history, but rather cultivating a humility regarding that reality. Despite these efforts by Harr, Emerton and others, scientific historians (from the secular biased American History Association) continued to dismiss Church historiography (and by extension the ASCH), while many Church historians remained hesitant to embrace too readily a historiography and methodology that dismissed the deeper theological message of history. In light of these dramatic intellectual and academic shifts, Church historians found themselves awkwardly and uncomfortable situated between empirical science and a sacred narrative of God’s Providence.

Secular scholars at the closing of the nineteenth century were not just dismissive of the element of religion and the miraculous within history, but increasingly spoke of it with disdain and ridicule. As progressive historians


477 Bowden, Church History, 97-100.
looked to the past to make sense of America’s current greatness, religion as blind superstition no longer fit. The result was a dramatic secular revolution in historical inquiry, which further sidelined Church historians and their efforts. Dubbed “methodological atheism” by religious scholar David Hufford, this new historiography replaced the theistic model as it offered its own measure of historical and religious truth.

Hufford speaks of this growing secular-scientific approach towards religion as the beginning of the “tradition of disbelief” within the secularized university, assuming *a priori* that “beliefs under study are objectively incorrect.” Prominent scholars from the new fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy joined hands with these new “scientific historians” in this empirical attack on religion and its impact on interpretations of national progress and identity. Religion was not only deemed irrelevant to the progressive narrative, but in essence antithetical to it. One particularly striking example of this secular hostility was the popularization of works like Ludwig Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* (1854 – translated into English). Here, using the tools of anthropology, Feuerbach argued that the principle doctrines of Christianity (or religion in general) reveal man, not God. Atheism is the secret to all religion, and giving God credit for the beauties of life is both blasphemous and irrational.479


For the secular university, religion was at best an evolutionary “social construction” and unfortunate “neurosis” whose demise would come with the growth of scientific reason, and at worst the most terrible sickness of “invincible horror,” from which only atheism can deliver. Religion was thus dismissed as devoid of any real relevance in the historical record, as it was, after all, delusion rather than agency. However, there were the empirical-scientific defenders of the worth of religion, such as Rudolf Otto and most famously within the US context, William James. Even so, their ideas were framed as part of the modern discourse rather than representative of the earlier discourse and scholarship.

As the nation entered into this period of cataclysmic shift at the close of the century, the increased hostility of science toward religion also represented an important response to national redefinition and affirmation of its agenda and identity. This divide between science and religion however, represents an imagined and reactionary response to the impact of empirical science, defining itself in opposition to a new and scientifically imposed definition of religion.

Within the judicial realms an earlier evangelical Supreme Court had already defined religion as limited to the otherworldly worship of God in its attempt to marginalize Mormonism. Consequently, this and other secular trends aimed at displacing religion altogether from the political and empirical spheres

provided ready model and inspiration. By the time the anti-polygamy crusades ended in 1890, the nation had become embroiled in a contestation over proper definitions of religion and Americanism. The academic struggle over a proper model of history and historiography and the proper place of religion within that model suggests an increasing divide between religion and history. These intellectual and academic developments while having significant impact on the perception and role of majority traditions would have even more profound impact on minority and non-traditional faiths and how the national narrative described, incorporated or ignored them.

Historians recognize the power of their craft, for not only do they help shape the larger collective memory of the past and its cherished victories, they also decide how the events of those victories are to be presented and prioritized. Historians do not just recount the past, but stand as guardians of a particular collective identity and sacred memory, telling us what is worthy of remembrance as well as what is worthy of forgetting – all disagreement to the contrary, minimized or effectively eliminated by claims to “objectivity.” As Mormonism remained stigmatized in the national mind, acceptance demanded a rewriting of their controversial past by both Mormon and non-Mormon historians. Notably, for national historians, the Mormon past was usually remembered and presented in ways that upheld notions of the secular’s monopoly of reasonableness and sanity (See Figure 8). Yet, the retelling of history has always brought forth an increased measure of anxiety related to minority groups. Mormonism’s challenges to Americanism were often presented as most dubious, as in the illustration by Larry
Gonick that depicts Mormonism as subjugating women through polygamy and employing the Mountain Meadows incident as indicative of Mormon’s “detesting” of Americans. Indeed, the harshness of the anti-polygamy crusades and their narrow cultural and legal definitions of religion, together with a jealously defended nationalism and religiosity, were simply products of these larger American anxieties and struggles that were later exploited by a new secular elite rising to prominence toward the end of the nineteenth century thus furthering popular negative depictions of Utah. Consequently, Mormons may have found a new national acceptance and empathy in the twentieth century, but they had not necessarily found sympathetic understanding of their nineteenth-century past.
“Comparative Religion” and the Parliament

The place of “comparative religion” as a scientific field of study had become internationally secure by the last decade of the nineteenth century. Department chairs in prominent universities had been established in the last several decades of the nineteenth century in the Netherlands, Amsterdam, France, Denmark, Germany and Sweden, producing eminent scholars such as Emile Durkheim (France), Max Weber (Germany), and Nathan Soderblom (Sweden).
Sydney Ahlstrom explains how academic journals, encyclopedias, professional congresses and conferences all emerged to address the question of scientific religious studies with increasing regularity. American institutes of higher learning followed in turn and established its first professional chair in 1873 at Boston University and Princeton Theological Seminary employed important pioneers such as James C. Moffat (1811-1900), a prolific scholar of Greek languages and literature. Significant American professors of comparative religion received training abroad, establishing important intellectual and pedagogical parallels between American universities and European comparative studies of religion. Such parallels had dramatic effects on American scholarship regarding its mood and approach to the natural sciences and attitudes concerning religion. As a testimony of the potency of this trend, ideas began to formulate among fair organizers as early as 1889 of a Parliament of Religion at the 1893 World’s Fair. In a similar vein Frank F. Ellinwood of New York University organized the American Society of Comparative Religion in 1890.481

The Columbian World’s Fair of Chicago in 1893 was one of the most publicized events of the nineteenth century. Its intentions were to represent the beginning of a new age, one of progress, intellectual sophistication, cultural awareness and technological advancement. The World’s Fair, which ran from May to October 1893, had three components: the “White City,” the “Midway Plaisance,” and the massive “Congress Auxiliary.” The White City celebrated the glories of “secular” government, commerce, and manufacture; the Midway

481 Ahlstrom, The American Protestant Encounter with World Religions, 10-12, 25.
exploited cultural as well as racial differences\textsuperscript{482}; and the Congress Auxiliary (which included two hundred and twenty-four General Divisions within twenty Departments) was devoted to even more diverse interests, ranging from the fine arts to the latest developments in surgery.

Despite the seemingly secular emphasis of its major architects, one of the congresses, the “Parliament of Religions” (housing forty-six General Divisions\textsuperscript{483}) received more media attention and applause and generated more controversy than any of the other congresses.\textsuperscript{484} The president of Dartmouth College, S. C. Bartlett, linked the Parliament of Religions with the main Columbia Exposition, marking them both as religiously significant: “This movement [Parliament of Religions] in connection with the Columbian Exposition, may, perhaps, become the most important and noteworthy aspect of the most noteworthy gathering of our

\textsuperscript{482} For many, the Midway provided necessary psychological comfort, as it restored feelings of superiority amidst challenged worldviews. “The lessons of the Midway were valuable, aside from the amusement they afforded. One could learn a great deal about the strange peoples who inhabit other portions of the globe. But for the Midway, many men, and women, too, would have gone from the Exposition to an insane asylum. It furnished rest and recreation to the mind, which it would have been impossible to obtain in any other way. Many weary mortals entered the portal of the Midway after having tramped for hours among the bewildering scenes of the Exposition proper until they were so confused that they could not realize what they were doing, and suddenly remembered that they were on the earth and a the World’s Fair. Whereas, if they had gone directly home, their rest would have been broken, their minds confused, resulting in many mental wrecks. It was the change of scene and the amusement which the Midway afforded that was absolutely necessary to restore rational thought and regulate the machinery of the mind so that it would resume its normal condition.” E. A. McDaniel, \textit{Utah at the World’s Columbian Exposition} (Salt Lake City: Press of the Salt Lake Lithographing Co., 1894), 164.

\textsuperscript{483} Charles C. Bonney, \textit{World’s Congress Addresses} (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1900), iii.

Chairman Barrows, a liberal Congregational clergyman, and his associates also saw the opening of the parliament as the mark of a new epoch in the religious history of mankind. “Within a hundred years,” boasted the Chairman, “pilgrims from many lands would flock to the scenes of the World’s First Parliament of Religions, in the unhistoric City of Chicago, almost as they have for centuries flocked to Westminster Abbey, St. Peter’s Church, and the Holy Shrines of Jerusalem.” Popular Congregationalist minister Josiah Strong echoed the sentiment of what this moment represented for the nation and its destiny: he suggested that the nineteenth century, however great it had been, was merely a forerunner, a type of John the Baptist, for the next great century as previewed by the World’s Fair, which Strong served as secretary of the Evangelical Alliance.

Echoing such sentiments, Charles Carroll Bonney, general President of the World’s Congresses and originator of the religious congress, explained that the purpose of the parliament was to bring together into “brotherly sympathies any who are groping, however blindly, after God.” Such an aim was not just to celebrate global diversity, but more importantly to “unite all religion against all

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irreligion.” Celebration of the one was the realization of the other. Bonney, a Chicago lawyer and Swedenborgian, presided over the seventeen-day-long event that attracted an estimated seven hundred thousand visitors.

Notable was its ecumenical and interfaith motto taken from the biblical prophet Malachi—“Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?” Divided into four parts, the “presentations” section of the parliament alone focused upon the “distinctive faith and achievements” of the “great Historic Religions of the world.” It was within this great hall that the heart of the parliament was felt – those without were considered mere appendages and whose relevance was marginal. As put by historian Richard Seager, “if one was not among the speakers or the 3,000 observers in the Hall of Columbus in the Chicago Art Institute. . . . one was not at the World’s Parliament of Religions.”

Columbus Hall, housed in the newly constructed Memorial Art Palace (now the Art Institute of Chicago) in downtown Chicago, was the location that these presentations were to be given “to the world,” representing the real crescendo of the entire Congress Auxiliary. The significance of this drama was that the congress (as presided over by representatives of Christianity of predominately

489 Burris notes that for Swedenborg, Bonney’s source of inspiration, “irreligion” meant “lack of religion.” As he explained, “To be religious meant ‘to acknowledge God, and to refrain from evil because it is contrary to God.’ These two acts ‘make religion to be religion.’” To be able to “acknowledge God,” however, was a possibility open only to certain cultural groups, leaving others altogether incapable of such and thus unable to “refrain from evil.” Such groups would have been necessarily sidelined, as was Mormonism. See Burris, Exhibiting Religion, 147-148.


liberal and Protestant hue) served as the capstone or benediction to the fair’s display of human progress. Hon. H. N. Higinbotham, president of the World’s Columbian Exposition, regarded the parliament as “the proudest work of our exposition.”

By conflating 1492 with 1620, Bonney made the Parliament of Religions opening day for presentation of liberal Congregationalism, thus establishing its prominence as well as its theological and intellectual trajectory. Being descended from Puritanism, Congregationalism and its legacy was enshrined by Bonney at the fair, thus making the Puritans the originators of religious liberty and proper governmental order in the US. Following the opening prayer, Bonney extended his welcome to these modern-day Puritans by saying:

Wherever throughout the great republic the children of the pilgrim and the puritan have gone, flowers of the highest culture have sprung up in their footsteps. Wherever they have made their homes, cultivated farms or builted [sic] towns the highest domestic virtues have been conspicuous: piety, peace and good order have flourished, and education, both for the people and in its higher forms, has been a dominant power.

Plymouth Rock thus stood as “a monument of civil and religious liberty more glorious than the granite shaft which on Bunker Hill greets the sun at his coming.”

Bonney christened Columbus Hall with powerful iconic “American” symbology, thereby marking as religiously and nationally significant the distinctions between those invited and those uninvited and underrepresented. The other three divisions of the religious congress were less significant and limited to

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492 As quoted on the front of Barrows 2 volume history and speech compilation of the parliament, The World’s Parliament of Religions.

more parochial and denominational concerns, such as missions, religious associations, literature, Sunday Rest, and ethics.  

The Parliament of Religions at the Chicago World’s Fair proved a decisive landmark for the study of religion in America and affirmed the contribution of the American parliament to the broader international study of religion. Beyond this, the Parliament of Religions clarified a growing and ever-serious rift within American Protestantism and the newly defined scientific community. Increasingly threatened and offended by the godless approach of this scientific community, it was not surprising that more conservative-minded evangelicals were moving in another direction than that of the liberal parliament. As science increasingly defined itself in opposition to religion, conservatives defensively redefined Christianity in opposition to the scientific and intellectual revolution then underway.

Mainstream conservative evangelical churches looked down on anything foreign, particularly if it emerged from the realm of the natural sciences. Consequently rejected by evangelicals were the scientific implications on biblical scholarship and the notion that non-Western religions could be studied as on par with Christianity. Evangelical revivalist Dwight L. Moody stood as a powerful contrast to the religious liberalism espoused at the parliament and materialism of the fair as he orchestrated popular alternative meetings outside the World’s...
Challenges posed to traditional religion by modernity came from other areas and disciplines as well, including sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, philosophy and the scientific study of religion.

The religious congress’ appropriation of the insights and intellectual developments associated with international responses to modernity and science challenged traditional American views of religion. Of particular importance was the study of “comparative religions” and its implications for the uniqueness and authority of Christianity and the Bible. As initially formulated by British linguists like Monier Monier-Williams and Max Muller, comparative religion provided a legitimation for a new view of and approach to non-Western and non-Christian religions. Ahlstrom notes that the Parliament of 1893 became a “kind of landmark or watershed” in the “epoch-marking role” of the study of comparative religion “in American social and cultural history.”

Thus on the day preceding the opening of the Parliament of Religions, Rev. S. J. McPherson spoke at Chicago’s Second Presbyterian Church, celebrating the parliament as affording “the best

495 Inspired by Josiah Strong’s warnings against the multiple perils of modernity, conservative evangelist Dwight L. Moody held his own six-month crusade in parallel with the World’s Fair in the city in which he was a resident, drawing in hundreds of thousands of fair goers. For Moody and those who attended these alternative meetings, Moody’s “crusade” criticized the materialism of the fair, positing his services as “a daily standing protest against the mammon worship of the busy mart, and an appeal to the unsatisfied cravings of the soul that cannot live by bread alone.”

This growing distrust of modernity, modern popular culture and its fixations on the external (if not increasing hostility and polemicism) furthered the religious divide between conservative and more culturally accommodating liberal Protestants, later culminating in what scholars would term the “The Fundamentalist Controversy,” which grew in parallel with these new social, intellectual and scientific developments. Ahlstrom, The American Protestant Encounter with World Religions. 16-17, 25-28. Impressively, even some of the writers of the conservative “fundamentals” of the 1900s and 1910s saw Darwinism as an important link in understanding God’s creative forces in the world. For a discussion on this see Edward J. Larson, Summer of the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 19-25.

single opportunity in the history of man for the study of comparative religion.”

Not only would this provide the most interesting exhibit at the World’s Exposition, but it would reveal, in one room, “the grandest successes and the most pathetic failures in the highest plane of human endeavor.” As the parliament was “Christ Exclusive,” it had “nothing to fear from the light. If our faith has not the inherent power to conquer the world, we can’t save it, for the power that made it great was not that of man.” McPherson delighted that papers were to be read “from the representatives of all the existing historical faiths, feticism and Mormonism being perhaps the only two excluded.”

Still, many at the fair resisted these comparative trends and rather took the non-sympathetic stance of Rev. William C. Wilkinson. In his parliament speech near the close of the parliament, September 26, Wilkinson countered a more tolerant approach to world religions by reminding parliament-goers that Christ’s attitude toward “every religion other than his own, that is, other than Christianity,” was one “of frank and uncompromising hostility.” Consequently, Christianity’s attitude “towards religions other than itself is an attitude of universal, absolute, eternal, unappeasable hostility.” However, expression of Christian exclusivism and sectarianism, the fair (not to mention Christianity) was much bigger than Wilkinson, and such negative and intolerant sentiments toward other religions of the world were mixed with more sympathetic and tolerant

497 “Study of Comparative Religions,” The Chicago Daily Tribune, September 14, 1893. 1.

498 Barrows, The World’s Parliament of Religions, 2:1243-1249. For more by way of evangelical presentation on this more “seamy side” (ie, negative and unfair) of non-Christianity, as Barrows called it, see speeches by Dr. Pentecost, Joseph Cook, Mr. Mozoomdar, Mr. Nagarkar, Dr. Post, Mr. Candlin, Mr. Gordon, Mr. McFarland, Dr. Clark, and Dr. Dennis.
attitudes, not just for adherents of other faiths, but toward the various faiths themselves. For example, following Wilkinson’s speech, abolitionist and social activist Julia Ward Howe referenced “our much honored friend [Prof. Wilkinson]” directly, stating that Christianity was not characterized by intolerance and exclusion, but rather of “an infinite and endless and joyous inclusion.” It was human “aspiration,” Howe explained, that marked “true religion,” which this Parliament of Religions upheld and celebrated. Respecting and including these aspirations symbolized a new type of voyage, one of “unknown infinite of thought, into the deep questions of the soul between men and God—oh what a voyage is that! O, what a sea to sail!” Then, hinting at the new atmosphere of liberalism and toleration at the fair, Howe continued, “After many wanderings, we shall have come to the one great harbor where all the fleets can ride, where all the banners can be displayed.” Such celebratory statements of Columbus and discovery were common at the fair, representing a literary genuflection to the ecumenism intended by the congress. By connecting the parliament to her religious longing, Howe effectively connected the metaphorical significance of this celebration of Columbus’s voyage to the broader religious expectations of many Americans (especially those of more progressive or liberal theological orientation) at the close of the nineteenth century.

At the same time, Wilkinson demonstrated a powerful strain within American Christendom that saw the parliament and its use of comparative studies as an opportunity to check these more liberal forces and affirm the “absoluteness”

of Christianity and its unrivaled leadership within a dramatically altered world. In contrast, the comparative study of religion was neither innocent nor unified in its approach and conclusion, demonstrating instead a variety of agendas and methodologies. Many participants and organizers of the parliament borrowed this academic strategy of comparative religions to further their own religious or secular goals, however apologetic, critical or sympathetic they were.

Leading Christian apologetic, Philip Schaff called for a larger Christian unity, within which denominationalism would be embraced (celebrating its varied and unique glories) as divine and sectarianism (with its proud divisions) was denounced for its evil influence toward Christian unity. In comparing the worth of other denominations, Schaff generously allocated a place in the American kingdom for various Christian groups, including many once accounted as heretic. This more liberal list included the Anabaptists, Waldenses, Socinians, Unitarians, as well as many others whose doctrines and methods had been considered both strange and abnormal by more “orthodox” Christians. Even the traditionally demonized “Romanists [Roman Catholics]” and ridiculed Salvation Army found place in this kingdom. “There is room for all these and many other churches and societies in the Kingdom of God, whose height and depth and length and breadth, variety and beauty, surpass human comprehension.” These visible distinctions could be overlooked, as Schaff’s vision entertained the realization of a larger invisible kingdom. This invisibility that transcended sectarian division was key for Christian progress and unity, which called for a mutual act of remembrance (those things that unify - emotion) and forgetting (those things that divide -
theology). Such self-reflexivity typified this new spirit generated by the parliament and its call for a broader human fraternity regarding religion. Schaff embraced this spirit (at least partially) as an important development (even revelation) in the kingdom. In fact, the “theory of historical development” as long practiced by Church historians (of whom Schaff was foremost) not only corresponds to the new scientific “theory of natural evolution,” but preceded it and was “endorsed by Christ himself.”\textsuperscript{500} But this Christian ecumenicity, liberality and endorsement of science was limited, as reflected, for example, in Schaff’s silence on Mormonism and the fair’s marginalization of the LDS, Native Americans, and black churches, as well as its largely negative response to Islam and the fair’s sidelining of women.

Thus the comparative perspective and approach, as appropriated by the parliament, brought with it the inescapable baggage of the nineteenth century: religious, sexual, racial, and cultural condescension and prejudice. Moreover, in significant ways, despite new liberalities, these new methods of scientific inquiry and comparison actually supported and gave new articulation to traditional bias and earlier prejudice. \textit{Puck}, a British weekly known for its cutting-edge literature, social commentary, and humor, featured on its October 1893 cover a caricature of the “privileged” Anglo-Saxon race visiting the fair (Figure 9). Here we see two white women with erect posture and elaborate coiffures, dressed in fancy Victorian garb, regard with disgust three scantily dressed and ill-formed African

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{500} Barrows, \textit{The World’s Parliament}, 2:1198, 1201. Indeed, as Ahlstrom notes, Church historians and biblical critics were “the real groundbreakers and methodological pioneers of the history of religions.” Ahlstrom, \textit{The American Protestant Encounter with World Religions}, 8.
\end{quotation}
women. In its caption, Anabel remarks, “Just look at those African women! I should think they’d hate to go out with such scanty clothing.” Madge replies, “Well, you know, people with their complexions don’t tan easily.”

Following a larger theme of the fair and its treatment of difference, the juxtaposed women sharpen the contrast between civilization and savagery in what people believed, how they dressed, and how difference demanded a form of moral and cultural judgment. The fat and skinny (classic depictions of otherness) appearances of the African women sharpen when contrasted with the perfect proportions of the two Victorian women.

The role of women, notes one scholar of the fair, was ambiguous. On the one hand, they were middle and upper-class women at the fair, with their own distinguished buildings. As for the “other,” they found themselves sitting in booths as objects of display (as in the “World’s Congress of Beauties”) on the midway alongside exploited ethnic villagers. But this caricature cannot be reduced to a serious analysis of women at the fair, as its artist, Joseph Keppler, was neither a woman, nor did he seek to speak for them. Whatever his intention in depicting these Victorian and African women at the fair, Keppler’s drawing translated the unfamiliar of racial difference into the absurd, which he made visible through contrasting and caricaturing black-African women with their Anglo counterparts. Perhaps this caricature was meant to poke fun at the vanity of


American women at the fair, but the real lesson was in the translation of
difference and the potency of the comparative mode.

An important counter narrative to this translation of racial difference can
be seen in the fight for both female and black participation at the fair. Fannie B.
Williams achieved important recognition in her fight for female inclusion and
race equality at the Parliament, being only one of two blacks (along with Bishop
B. W. Arnett of the AME Church), and the only black female, to present. In her
Parliament speech entitled “What Can Religion Further Do to Advance the
Condition of the American Negro?” Williams pled for religious leaders to preach
“less church” and to teach “more of religion.” “It is a monstrous thing that nearly
one-half of the so-called Evangelical churches of this country, those situated in
the South, repudiate fellowship to every Christian man and woman who happens
to be of African descent.” The “Golden Rule” of love had been replaced by the
“Iron Rule” of race division and hatred. 503 In her own faith journey from Baptist
to Unitarian, Williams appropriated the modernist impulse of the times, regretting
the slowness by which black women and men embraced “the growing rationalism
in the Christian creeds” in the advancement of race and gender in America. 504

Though being clear in her criticism of black churches and its traditionalist
ministers, Williams spoke that while there were


504 Fannie Williams, “The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women of the United States since
the Emancipation Proclamation,” in Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their
Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings, ed., Bert J. Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin (Pennsylvania
State University Press, 1976), 272. See also Fannie Williams, “A Northern Negro’s
highly capable colored ministers of the country, I feel no hesitancy in saying that the advancement of our condition is more hindered by a large part of the ministry entrusted with the leadership than by any other single cause. No class of American citizens has had so little religion and so much vitiating nonsense preached to them as the colored people of this country.

Furthering the lines of Christian liberalism and inclusivity, Williams argued before the parliament, “It should be the province of religion to unite, and not to separate, men and women according to the superficial differences of race lines.” Indeed, coinciding with the newly emerged sentiments of the liberal parliament and its emphasis on science, Williams called upon Christians to preach “less theology and more of human brotherhood, less declamation and more common sense and love for the truth.” As she saw it, a more rationalistic and inclusive approach to religion and faith had the ability to correct the deepest and most fundamental flaws of American society, particularly as related to black women and men.

In the larger fair and even within the congress of religion, despite its claims of liberality, Africans and even African-Americans were virtually excluded. As Burris explains, their exclusion can be understood in that they “fell entirely outside the scope of white ideological projections about progress and a rose-colored future.” Speaking on “Colored Jubilee Day” on August 25 at Festival Hall about racial injustice, in what would be his last significant public speech, Frederick Douglass met white hecklers directly: “There is no negro problem…The only problem is whether American people have loyalty enough,

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and patriotism enough to live up to their own constitution." In important ways, the fair was meant to bring together global difference, but this bringing together of cultural and ethnic difference was not necessarily an attempt at understanding and cross-cultural sympathy. In some ways, as figure 10 shows, it was to solidify an American sense of global leadership and superiority and a particular form of Christian unity that hoped to shame away difference by way of comparison.

Figure 9. “A Privileged Race,” Cartoon. Cover from *World’s Fair Puck*, October 23, 1893, by Keppler and Schwarzmann.
Figure 10. “On With the Dance!: The American Women Leads the World,” Cartoon. Cover from *World's Fair Puck*, by Joseph Keppler. Such art demonstrates the American-centric view of the World's Fair. Others were invited and even allowed to participate, but as this shows, the dance was not that of unity through equality, but unity through US supremacy and global leadership. Such was a typical sentiment that defined the emergence of American religious pluralism.

Such exclusionary caricatures were part of the nineteenth-century social and intellectual environment, and it would have been unusual had they not proven prominent at the fair or the larger scientific studies of world religion. During the 1890s when the idea of social evolution was at its height, comparative models that depicted Chinese, Native Americans, Inuits, Gypsies, and Africans as less evolved and backward met with little if any criticism, and served instead to fuel the call...
for a renewed missionary agenda at home and overseas. The World’s Fair, inclusive of the parliament, took this new scientific idea of social and even religions evolution for granted.\footnote{For more on social evolutionism at the fair, see Burris, “Social Evolutionism and International Expositions: A Cultural History,” in Exhibiting Religion, Chapter 3.} Parliament speeches such as “Some Characteristics of Buddhism as it Exists in Japan Which Indicated that it is not a Final Religion,” by Reverent M. L. Gorgon, of the Doshisha School in Kyoto, Japan were common.\footnote{Barrows, The World’s Parliament, 2:1293.} Non-Western religions were often depicted as less evolved and inferior and destined to ultimately move aside for that which was fully evolved – Christianity. In his speech titled, “America’s Duty to China,” Dr. W. A. P. Martin, president of the Imperial Tungwen College in Peking, China stood as a spokesman for Chinese religion, inclusive of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. According to him, Chinese Taoism was “sadly degenerate,” being little more than “a compound of necromancy and exorcism.” Confucianism “was woefully wanting in vitality,” and marked by “sadducean indifference,” despite its high ethics. Chinese Buddhism has done much to “prepare the soil for the dissemination of a higher faith,” but it was now dead and its force has been spent. Buddhism’s priesthood represented little more than “ignorance and corruption” and there appears “no possibility of revival.” Native systems in China, with their “absurdities of geomancy and the abominations of animal worship,” were before the congress to represent an anachronism in an era of “steamboats and telegraphs.” Martin adds that it was thus “preeminently the duty of Americans to
seek to impart” their Christian spiritual power through missionary engagements to
the people of China. In light of “cruel legislation [Geary Act 1892]” in America
that Martin compared to the Russian legislation [pogroms] against the Jews, it is
less than surprising that China expressed little enthusiasm for the Chicago
exhibition. With such implied assumptions of American and Christian superiority
and condescension, it is unsurprising that China’s Premier, Li Hung Chong, was
adamant “that china would have no exhibition at Chicago.” Upon hearing the
rejection, Minister Denby expressed his “regret at this irrational conclusion, and
used some arguments to make him recede from it—but without avail.”

Organizers of the fair understood themselves as the leaders of world brotherhood,
and found protest to such leadership difficult to understand – even irrational.
While the Chinese non-presence at the fair was dismissed as irrational
stubbornness, Martin’s speech and Denby’s response hint at the overt prejudice
and arrogance within the ecumenical structures of the fair as well as those of
American society and the newly developed tools of “comparative religion.”

European and American academics signified this difference through new
pejorative academic terms (ie. “primitive,” “basic,” “savage”) that replaced earlier

509 Barrows, The World’s Parliament of Religions, 2:1138-1140. (emphasis in original)

510 It was actually through this religious arrogance and national condescension that furthered the
Western colonial project and its subjugation of cultural and natural resources for the upholding
and expansion of western powers. For further discussion of the links between colonialism and the
study of religion, see Masuzawa, Inventing World Religion; Asad, Geneologies of Religion;
Richard King, Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and ‘The Mystic East’ (New
York: Routledge, 1999); David Chidester, Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative
Religion in Southern Africa (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Bruce Lincoln,
Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
1999); Randall Styers, Making Magic: Religion, Magic, & Science in the Modern World (New
derogatory missionary terms (ie, “pagan,” “heathen,” “idolater,” “infidel,” etc.) which were supportive of an imagined social hierarchy of racial development and human progress. According to Oxford linguist Max Muller (1823-1900), one of the founders of the comparative science of religion, this hierarchy would culminate into the glories of Christianity, upholding the conviction among many that Christianity was God’s last and best revelation to mankind. By observing others in their religious decay or primitive state, Christianity could be contrasted so as to reveal its true greatness and true essence. Comparison could also aid missionaries in finding common ground, and thus revive any spark of truth that can be, in Muller’s assuring words, “dedicated afresh to the true God.”511 Using the “scientific study” of religion, Oxford and other university’s dedicated themselves in such ways to the cause of Christian evangelism and European expansionism. British Indologists like Muller and Monier-Williams upheld the colonial establishment by directly connecting the importance of God’s Holy Spirit to the possibility of India’s ability to grasp civilization. Until such a conversion happened to the primitives of India, Christian colonial rule was necessary. Sir Monier-Williams writes, “Superstition, immorality, untruthfulness, pride, selfishness, avarice, all of these and other faults and vices, of course, abound,” but no more than any other society or in “other countries unpenetrated by the spirit of

511 Though Muller was careful to distinguish himself from the agendas of Christian scholars, the religious implications of this evolutionary scale offered hope to the Christian cause. As he would explain, Christianity has progressed towards “the fullness of times.” Muller thus assures that the comparative study of religion offers the “greatest assistance” to the missionary program of Christianity. Carl Olson, Theory and Method in the Study of Religion (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2003), 70-73.
true Christianity…” Though rhetorically familiar to other nineteenth-century Christians, Muller’s definition of God’s revealed “good news” was somewhat unorthodox, and was not likely shared by many of his more conservative fellow Anglicans. As Muller explains in his written address to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago of 1893, his hope was that of a “complete revival of religion, more particularly of the Christian religion.” This faith, however, was in the universal “logos” as understood by Greek philosophers prior to Christ’s birth. Muller’s advocacy of “Natural Religion” (the idea that all religions are natural and thus universally held a spark of divine truth) represented a more liberal interpretation of Christianity and even non-Western religions that became an important thread in the parliament itself. Muller’s paper (read in his absence by Dr. Barrows on Easter Sunday, April 2) argued for a revival of a “pure” and “primitive” ante-Nicene Christianity, which was but a synthesis “of the best thoughts of the past.” Modern Christianity had become corrupt and lost in its own institutional structure, and the comparative study of religion and its nostalgia for a pure past provided a means of retrieving its primitive glory. A study of various religions from around the world, as envisioned from the parliament in 1893,

512 Though Christian missions in India were at first hesitant to adopt Monier-Williams call for a more liberal (“hinduized”) version of Christian preaching, by the beginning of the twentieth, they had begun to adopt his advice. Raj Bahadur Sharma, History of Christian Missions in North India 1813-1913: A Case Study of Meerut Division and Dehra Dun District (South Asian Books, 1988), 170; See also Terence Thomas, The British: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986 (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1988), 85-88. In North America missionaries and officials spoke of Mormonism and other minority groups in identical ways. Nineteenth-century Supreme Court cases that marked Mormons, Native Americans and the Chinese as without religion (and for blacks, humanity) demanded, as did colonial officials in India, a form of governance and colonialism that could enforce true religion and civilization and thereby close the unruly and barbaric Western and Southern frontier.
promised a rediscovery of that primitive and pure “ante-Nicean” faith through the scientific model of comparison.\footnote{513}

Impressively, Muller’s faith in a higher unity and evolution of Christianity, which bypassed not just Catholicism, but Protestantism as well, was not altogether unique and tapped into a more advanced liberal interpretation of the Christian faith, anticipating the later Fundamentalist and Modernist divide of the 1910s. Arguing for a similar “higher unity,” Philip Schaff similarly anticipated an eventual breaking down of “corresponding errors and defects, in the ideal church of the future,…forming not a new church, but the final perfect product of that of the present and the past.”\footnote{514} Holding to an earlier American ideal, Schaff and Muller felt that “something new” was about to break forth, and the parliament and its comparative approach was a significant step in its realization. European colonial endeavors had thus become relevant to the workings of the Spirit and the furtherance of Christ’s workings in America. Germany had been first in the leap of ideas though Martin Luther and the Reformation, but America was destined to be the final scene of application and culmination. For Schaff, the American environment was hardly that of a neutral space, but instead represented “the theatre of the last decisive conflict between faith and infidelity.” Here, in

\footnote{513} “It gives us at the same time a truer conception of the history of the whole world, showing that there was a purpose in the ancient religions and philosophies of the world, and that Christianity was really from the beginning a synthesis of the best thoughts of the past, as they had been slowly elaborated by the two principal representatives of the human race, the Aryan and the Semitic,” Max Muller, “Greek Philosophy and the Christian Religion,” in J. W. Hanson, ed., The World’s Congress of Religions... (Chicago: International Publishing Co., 1893), 217-219.

\footnote{514} Schaff, History of the Apostolic Church: With a General Introduction to Church History. Translated by Edward D. Yeomans (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1853), 678; Bowden, Church History, 62.
America, opposing national faiths (such as Irish Catholics, German Lutherans, English Calvinists, etc.) would have their “greatest collision between” themselves due to their various ecclesiastic and theological peculiarities; but it would also be here and through these rough encounters that their “final reconciliation” would be had in what Schaff imagined to be a truly glorified and universal Christian faith.  

The new perspectives that came from the scientific model of comparative religions had proven supportive of increasing world knowledge, but had not come without limitations. David Chidester, a scholar of colonial conflict and religion explains, “The discipline of comparative religion emerged...not only out of the Enlightenment heritage but also out of a violent history of colonial conquest and domination.” Jonathan Z. Smith, a theoretical scholar of religion, explained that the comparative study of religion was “by no means an innocent endeavor.” As universities and other intellectuals engaged these new scientific models that helped categorize and chart global difference and understanding, they did not necessarily find their prejudices of difference reversed, but instead, now had “objective” and “scientific” tools (such as social evolution) to better articulate them. Also, as seen through Schaff and Muller’s faith in Christ’s coming kingdom, the future was not that of religious diversity, but a renewed and liberal unity that culminated in God’s glory and reign. Turner, though his focus was not

515 Schaff, America, 272.

516 Chidester, Savage System, xiii.

517 As quoted in David Chidester, Savage Systems, xiii.
religious as were Schaff’s and Muller’s, also framed his world within social evolutionism, imagining with his religious contemporaries a more perfect future devoid of barbarism.

Parliament organizers tapped into these intellectual and spiritual developments as a model for both liberal tolerance and Christian evangelism. Barrows wrote in 1892 that “the science of comparative religions…has shown the necessity of religions to man, and the supreme necessity of the highest of them all,” which he understood to be Christianity. Like Martin’s comparative analysis of Chinese religion that called for further evangelism in China, the comparative model promised to breathe new life into old agendas and stimulate new Christian action in foreign lands. Christianity was not “only the complement of all other religions, filling out what is imperfect in them, and correcting what is erroneous, but is also a direct, miraculous revelation” that will provide Christians with powerful new opportunities “to proclaim it as never before.” Though given in the “spirit of the most generous human brotherhood,” invitations from the parliament’s General Committee (made up almost exclusively of Christians) were seen as an “invitation of Christianity, addressed to all the great historic faiths, to come and give an account of themselves.” With eyes fixed to that kingdom which was “yet to cover the earth,” “the Committee believed that the best representation possible by the ethnic religions would tend to the exaltation of Christianity.”

The liberalism and ecumenism of the parliament were in many ways limited to the narrow frameworks of Christian evangelism, apologetics, and the coming

518 Barrows, Parliament of Religions, 452-456.
kingdom; such limitations were no longer comfortably accepted in the increasingly secularized universities.

As it came to be understood by many, the “history and science of religions” or “comparative religions” emerged as an important element of a larger assault on traditional faith, and was thus resisted.\textsuperscript{519} Presbyterians were deeply affected and divided both at home and abroad by new liberal interpretations of Scripture as inspired by science and the scientific study of religion. Edward W. Blyden, originally ordained an Old School Presbyterian minister and worked as a missionary and educator, came to embrace comparative religion and the sentiments of Muller and Charles Briggs (the Davenport Professor of Hebrew and Cognate Languages at Union Theological Seminary) enroute to demitting his ordination and becoming a self proclaimed “Minister of Truth.”\textsuperscript{520} In his missiological endeavors in West Africa, Blyden’s direct encounters with indigenous African religions and Islam led to discoveries and sympathies that “ultimately reconfigure Blyden’s mature theological, missiological, ideological, and ecclesiastic orientation.” As one of the first “indigenous comparativists,” Blyden contributed to the new discipline of religious studies as he critically appropriated the tools of an emergent discipline to the study of African religions

\textsuperscript{519} Sydney E. Ahlstrom, \textit{The American Protestant Encounter with World Religions}, 2.

and African culture.\textsuperscript{521} Like many of his fellow liberals, Blyden followed Brigg’s anticipation for a higher revelation of God that would radically alter American institutional religion beyond Presbyterianism and even Protestant Christianity.\textsuperscript{522} Quoting “the view of leading Presbyterian divines” in a letter from Monrovia on November 29, 1888, Blyden confessed that though “Presbyterianism is in advance of all other Christian denominations in the realization of the ideal of Christianity, it is not a finality.” Blyden continued:

It [Presbyterianism] is the stepping stone to something higher and grander yet to come, when the spirit of God shall be poured out in richer measure and in more abounding gifts and graces upon the Christian world, in order to a revival of religion [sic], which will transcend the Protestant Reformation by its omnipotent energy and world-wide sweep.\textsuperscript{523}

Blyden had been an admirer of controversial Presbyterian biblical scholar Charles Briggs, a “champion of liberty and unfettered scholarship against stubborn traditionalism.”\textsuperscript{524}

In an inaugural address delivered at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, January 20, 1891, in response to his induction as Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology, Briggs provoked controversy as he invoked science as an appropriate standard of biblical interpretation. As a pioneering American

\textsuperscript{521} Moses N. Moore, Jr., unpublished manuscript on Edward Blyden in my possession. Regarding the importance of “indigenous comparativists” in the study of African religion, see David Chidester, \textit{Savage Systems}, xvi.


\textsuperscript{524} See Charles Briggs, \textit{American Presbyterianism: Its Origin and Early History together with an Appendix of Letters and Documents} (New York, 1885).
advocate of “Higher Criticism,” Briggs joined in raising questions and conclusions deemed threatening to conservative academic and ministerial colleagues: “that Moses did not write the Pentateuch” and that “Isaiah did not write half of the book that bears his name,” declarations that were refuted by the General Assembly of the American Presbyterian Church as “contrary to direct statements of Scripture.” Further, Briggs challenged the exclusionary nature of Protestantism itself. The Bible may not have taught a universal salvation, “but it does teach the salvation of the world,” which “cannot be accomplished by the selection of a limited number of individuals from the mass.” The Protestant “good news” is not one that grasps “only a few,” but instead it stretches its loving fingers so as to comprehend as many as possible—a definite number, but multitudes that no one can number. The salvation of the world can only mean the world as a whole, compared with which the unredeemed will be so few and insignificant,…

These statements were equally heretical and ruled to be “contrary to direct statements of Scripture.” Although many scientific academics like Muller and Briggs found within science and its academic corollaries the answers to deeply religious questions, science represented an iconoclasm that could be deeply troubling.

As illuminated by Brigg’s trial for heresy before the Presbytery of New York and his suspension by the General Assembly, demission of his Presbyterian ordination and subsequent ordination as an Episcopal minister, the appropriation

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of the new science of religion did not come without significant controversy. But Blyden saw within the scientific study of religion an important response against unfair characterization of African indigenous religion, African Islam, and especially, the black race in America. With a mind for the inclusive and scientific ideals of Barrows’ Parliament two years prior, Blyden called for African-Americans to “take a prominent part” in the liberal movement of “comparative studies.”

Although Blyden served as the iconoclast as he advocated this new scientific comparative study of religion, he did not see himself as leaving the Bible behind. “The Bible is a vast treasury of spiritual knowledge, not to be exhausted by one race only,” thus calling forth for “a new translation” that adapted the needs of the Negro.” Blyden called for blacks to become the new Bible scholars and scientific experts of religion, so that these new Biblical and academic studies can “astonish and instruct Europeans” and “help the white man to see God and understand him.” One major distinction between Muller, Blyden and his liberal Protestant contemporaries was that he upheld empirical science and the comparative study of religion (not the Bible) as his inspiration. It


527 Barrows was a leading liberal and Haskell Lecturer of Comparative Religions at the University of Chicago. Blyden’s comments made in a letter to Booker T. Washington were originally published in the New York Age on January 21, 1895.

would be through this comparative study that new realizations would burst forth. However iconoclastic toward biblical authority and traditional interpretations men like Muller and Blyden appeared, they understood themselves as scientists whose quest for truth was not devoid of religious significance and empirical and even biblical backing. Perhaps without recognizing how much his own Anglican heritage influenced his science, Muller encouraged a new scientific discipline to study religion within a Christian-inspired paradigm. In other words, whatever this new higher truth presented for Blyden and Muller and their empirical-based study, it was to be framed within already familiar religious terms and structures.

This biblical foundation to the “study of religion,” liberalized and decentered, led to important misunderstandings of how westerners would understand global religion. Overly-fixated on textual sources to examine Asian religions, or “their Bible” (a literary bias taken from Christianity), Muller represented the tendency of early western scholars to look for “their founders” (another Christian assumption of religion) and the need to translate “their scriptures” into English. As Masuzawa explains, when scholars like Muller looked to the East to understand Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism, they were not discovering them, but were inventing them within a Protestant paradigm. Their drive to uncover a “primitive,” “pure” or “original” form of Buddhism that could stand next to Christianity as a “world religion” advocated a religion that only they understood. Why true “otherworldly” Buddhism was only found at Oxford and not “worldly” Asia, was easily explained by saying that Buddhists in Asia were not “real” Buddhists, but instead corrupted ones. Muller’s own
translation of the Hindu Rig Veda into English, for example, did not represent a relic from dark heathenism, but the first true revelation (or Bible) from God, which Hindus had by and large forgotten.\(^{529}\) As Turner and other “scientific historians” reformulated their craft (from theology to empirical science), Muller allowed scientists of religion to seriously discuss the question of religion in all its global varieties, however radically speculative they remained.\(^{530}\)

Although organizers of the parliament appropriated scientific methods to the study of religion for often explicitly religious ends, the comparative study of religion as seen in the universities and intellectual associations had begun to be distanced from the explicit apologetics of the dominant Christian churches. But as seen at the religious congress, this scientific approach could respond to the concerns and agenda of both Christian supremacy and evangelism. Barrows was adamant in his review and summary of the parliament that no Christian speaker compromised by way of participation their fundamental belief “in the supremacy and universality of the Gospel,” and that “there was no suggestion on the part of

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\(^{529}\) Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 128-143.

\(^{530}\) Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2\(^{nd}\) ed. (La Salle: Open Court, 1986), 38, 40. What Muller meant by a “disease of language” was that Primitives gave gender specific identification markers to objects like the moon, stars or sun. As such, they began in their ignorance to believe the gender characteristics that the language implied. The sun thus became a man, the moon a woman, etc. Thus, gods were born through a “disease of language.” In responding to this form of speculative theory in the quest for the origin and essence of religion, as popularized by scholars such as James Frazer, E. B. Tylor, Sigmund Freud, and Max Muller, social anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard lambasts these scientific theoretical frameworks as not actually scientific, but rather “just so” stories. In his Sir D. Owen Evans Lectures delivered at the University College of Wales in 1962, Evans-Pritchard argued, “To my mind, it is extraordinary that anyone could have thought it worthwhile to speculate about what might have been the origin of some custom or belief, when there is absolutely no means of discovering, in the absence of historical evidence, what was its origin.” E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 101.
Christian speakers that Christianity was to be thought of as on the same level with other religions.”

All religions at the parliament were thus understood by parliament organizers as within the frameworks of “heavenward yearnings” of “Christly origin,” and though discovered in Asia, Africa, etc., were but a reflection (however dim) of the “original Light” which first “shone amid the hamlets of Galilee and in the streets of Jerusalem.” Christianity was thus the paradigm that other world religions were to be understood and contrasted with; not as equals, but dimmed and lesser copies of the original. Nevertheless, despite Barrows careful assurance to his Christian friends and critics of the religious importance of this congress, there were others who took these new scientific currents his ultimately faith-promoting intentions.

Such developments which reflect the ambiguity and multiple agendas of the parliament further demonstrates a breakdown in the easy dichotomies of “science” and “religion,” and instead suggest that religion did not necessarily pose itself as the antithesis of science, nor the other way around. Indeed, there was much by way of overlap and interweaving. Historian William Cavanaugh further explains, “There was a time when religion, as modern people use the term, was not, and then it was invented.” In connection to the secular, Cavanaugh continued, “In the pre-modern West, there simply was no conception that Christianity was a species of the genus religion, a universal, interior human impulse, reducible to propositions or beliefs, essentially distinct from secular pursuits such as politics


532 Barrows, Parliament of Religions, 454.
and economics.”533 One of the characteristics of the modern era, explains Richard Wentz, was to connect (and limit) “this world” with empirical meaning, thus removing it from spiritual expoundings. “In other words, the modern understanding of ‘secular’ is satisfied with a world of observable data – the thingification of existence. ‘Secular,’ therefore, came to stand for the world unto itself (whatever that may mean).” As he further elaborated, “There is no ‘conflict’ [between the religious and the secular] in a traditional society because there is no ‘science,’ no ‘religion.’”534

Inspired by this empirical approach to the world, theological liberalism and the emergent discipline of comparative religion and its corollaries (the new anthropological, ethnographic, sociological studies, etc), the world parliament provided a picture of a deeply diverse and internationally complex conception of religion – particularly Christianity. The fair represented an important beginning in its increased willingness to look beyond itself and incorporate non-Western and non-Christian religious and philosophical tenets, but demonstrated a response to these changing perceptions and the West’s new attempts to understand itself within a dramatically altered world. While some called for a specifically Christian framework in understanding world religion at the fair, others promoted instead a specifically ethical, empirical, and rational response, rather than that of “Christly...


534 “If science refers to the pursuit and content of knowledge (‘knowing,’ scientia), and if religion refers to the manner in which being is affirmed as ultimately ordered and meaningful, then there can be no ‘conflict.’” See Wentz, The Culture of Religious Pluralism, 78, 87.
origin.” Two examples are the Free Religious Association (founded in 1867) and the Society for Ethical Culture (founded in 1876).

William Potter, president of the Free Religious Association (a formulation to the left of Unitarianism), led two sessions in the “Denominational Congresses” at the Parliament of Religions on Wednesday, September 20 at the Art Institute. Held in parallel with the great speeches in the main hall, the proceedings of these sessions included the topics of “The Scientific Method in the Study of Religion,” “The Free Religious Association as the Expounder of the National History of Religion,” and the “Unity of Religion.” For Potter and the Free Religious Association, religious fellowship was not defined by some common theological belief (even that of Christianity), but instead “a common spirit of seeking the true and the right.” The association’s main objective, as outlined in its Constitution, was “to encourage the scientific study of religion and ethics, to advocate freedom in religion, to increase fellowship in spirit, and to emphasize the supremacy of practical morality in all the relations of life.” In a commencement speech for the national association in 1887, President Potter referred to members of the Association as having “affirmed that the methods of scientific observation, research, and comparison, are to be applied to the study of all religious problems in distinction from the method of authority that has hitherto prevailed in

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536 Free Religious Association, Proceedings at the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Free Religious Association of America, Held in Boston, May 26 and 27, 1887 (Boston: Published by the Free Religious Association, 1887), 2.
Christendom.” This approach represented an important turn within religious inquiry and Christianity by way of the comparative model, which upheld Christianity as important, but not necessarily supreme.

Organized in 1867, the national Free Religious Association stood for a “New Orthodoxy” that directly challenged the apologetics and religious absolutism and exclamations of supremacy of mainstream churches. By the time of the parliament, the authority of the Bible had been questioned, and it seemed to be under attack from every angle. The role of the Bible within nineteenth-century American society had heretofore been unquestioned and sacrosanct. Now it appeared to many that Darwinism, German Higher Criticism, and the comparative study of religion directly threatened the Bible’s monopoly over truth. Many American ministers found themselves no longer celebrating the glories and unique promises of biblical Christianity, but instead found themselves defending religion altogether. Though the Free Association did not tout the superiority of Christianity (though many of its board members were Christian, such as Frederick Douglass), they represented, like chairman Barrows, an important part of this broader national (and even international) cultural struggle to demonstrate the broader relevance of religion within human civilization. In quoting an unnamed though distinguished professor of divinity at Oxford University, Potter spoke of the “great change” that had been “wrought in the religious world.” “The field of speculative theology may be regarded as almost exhausted; we must be content henceforward to be Christian agnostics.” In responding to this remark, Canon Fremantle argued in the Popular Science Monthly that such a statement twenty
years earlier “would have excited an alarm,” but that now, due to this “new orthodoxy,” had “been accepted without murmur.” To be sure, many American ministers were alarmed at these more liberal trends (such as Charles Hodge, Dwight Moody, and De Witt Talmage), but many saw within these new currents compatible truths that were both edifying and supportive of a broader religious unity.

In 1871, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Civil War veteran and an influential Boston publisher, as well as vice president of the Free Religious Association, wrote an important essay, “The Sympathy of Religions.” In this essay, Higginson argued that religious unity lay not in condescending to other religions but rather in extending a form of sympathy toward all religions. The article’s fame spread throughout New England and by 1880 had reached Chicago. Framed within the larger scientific structures as pioneered by Max Muller and E.B. Tyler, Higginson’s thesis became an important source of inspiration for many at the fair, including chairman Barrows, who introduced Higginson at the parliament as “an American of Americans,” and one whose “own heart has been a Parliament of Religions.” By the time Higginson presented his essay at the parliament, “sympathy for religions” had become an international sentiment and something of a motto for religious reformers.

537 Ibid., 17-18.

Following this generous introduction by chairman Barrows, Higginson assured his audience at the parliament that although science had revolutionized the world of thought, science had not “dethroned religion forever,” but instead dethroned itself so as to make room for its superior – “imaginative aspiration.” The comparative scientific study of religion was important for Higginson, but ultimate truth transcended the forms of knowledge made available through scientific study, just as it had also transcended religion when defined within “methods of authority.” Thus, science was inferior to religion, but still retained an important religious relevance. By stripping religion down to its core “essence” (with the help of comparative religion), even the “humblest individual thinker” can have “not only one of these vast faiths but all of them at his side.” This attempt to reduce religion to its “core essence” and then to study it in a lab was a basic Enlightenment assumption and a new scientific innovation in fantasy. 539

“Sympathy of Religion” represents more than a mere sympathy for difference, but the fundamental belief that all religions share the same ultimate truth (or “essence”) and the same human aspirations (different only in imagination), and the fundamental assumption that such could be objectively studied in a sort of scientific lab. If this new way of thinking about religion was threatening to some, Higginson argued for his listeners to focus on this shared human aspiration, not

comparative and contrasting knowledge, institutions, authorities or theologies. Sympathy for religion was thus an aid in dispossessing ourselves of that which divides us and in allowing us to “become possessed of that which all faiths collectively seek.” In words that resonated with Julia Ward Howe, “If each could but make himself an island there would yet appear at last above these waves of despair or doubt a continent fairer than Columbus won.” For Higginson, “sympathy for religion” was a new Columbian quest of discovery where science was the key of discovery, rather than the treasure itself.

The concept of sympathy, however, had the consequence (intended or not) of bringing about a new ambivalence toward other religions. Americans could now approach religions that had previously been considered un-American and unacceptable—such as Buddhism, Shintoism, Islam, and Hinduism—with new interest and even respect (or “sympathy”). However, this accepting of Higginson’s “sympathy” did not necessarily remove assumptions of religious superiority and patronizing spirit that pervaded the institutional makeup of the larger parliament. Speeches in the main hall continued their bold rhetoric of Christian triumphalism and continued to define non-Christian religions as vestiges of idolatry and heathenism. The major goal of the religious congress was that of unity—however, this “unity” (however broadly interpreted) was designed to favor Christian goals, one of which was proselytism and thus the expansion of Christian civilizationism. As Barrows explained, “Whatever can be done to make the non-Christian peoples less unreal to the Church generally will be an enormous gain to

540 Houghton, Neely’s History, 364-367.
Christian evangelism.” As such, “The study of comparative religion has tended to strengthen Christian missionary enthusiasm.” Dr. Ellinwood, of the Presbyterian Board of Missions, for example, believed that such a display of world religions promised to reveal “the immensely superior truths of the Christian faith,” and would greatly increase “the success of the great work of missions.” Higginson assured his listeners that if anything was to be lost by way of this “sympathy,” that there was far more to be gained. But it was hard to imagine that Higginson and Barrows had the same thing in mind as they spoke of comparative religions as enabling missionary success. Catholic Merwin-Marie Snell, an advocate of Higginson’s notion of sympathy, for example, agreed with both that much was to be gained in the scientific comparative model, but such endeavors were not just advantageous for Christian missionaries, but all missionaries, Christian or not. Indeed, the parliament’s boasted liberality, as understood by Snell, promised new possibilities even for suspect and disliked religions like Catholicism and Mormonism to be re-imagined. Barrows would not have agreed, particularly in reference to Mormonism.

For Snell, president of the scientific section at the parliament, all religions, be they Islamic, Christian or Buddhist, together held the same human instinct “which reaches outward and upward toward the highest truth, the highest goodness, the highest beauty…” Religion is a “universal fact of human experience,” and there is “not one single unperverted human being from whose

541 Barrows, The Parliament of Religions, 455.

542 Houghton, Neely’s History, 367
soul there does not ascend the incense of adoration and in whose hand is not found the pilgrim staff of duty.” Snell held the parliament as a type of didactic museum, or school of comparative religion where all could learn from each other. Suggested was that initial prejudices and animosities toward all religions, including that of pagans, Catholics, and Mormons, were that of ignorance, not truth. Elaborating on a point made in reference to Mormon exclusion, “No one would hate or despise the Catholic Church who knew its teachings and practices as they really are.” For Snell, unity required inclusion of Mormons, Catholics, and even Jews, Muslims, and heathens. Thus unity necessitated a deeper understanding of all diverse religions, best met through “the perfection of the science of religions.” This unity was not the responsibility of the scientist alone, but also the “intelligent religious partisan” and the “professional hierologist [an early neologism for the ‘science of religion’].” The goal was to unite “in golden bonds the whole human family.” Indeed, all could enter into the scientific study of religion, being both scientific and religious in aspiration. “Into this union of religious science all men can enter—Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Mormons, Mohammedans, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists, Jains, Taoists, Shintoists, Theosophists, Spiritualists, theists, pantheists and atheists, and none of them need feel out of place.” Inspired by Higginson’s “sympathy for religion,” Snell called for a “fraternal sympathy” that exceeded the liberal spirit of Barrows and other parliament organizers, focusing on the common “aspirations” of the entire

543 Hanson, *The World’s Congress of Religions*, 817.

544 Ibid., 818-819.
human family and thus fulfilling the noble goal of religious unity and self-
discovery which the memory of Columbus invoked.

There is nuance then, between these various appropriations of the
scientific study of religion and its methodology of comparative religion and its
corollaries. In important ways, the boundaries and overlaps among Higginson,
Snell, Barrows, Muller and Schaff were difficult to discern, as their roots rested
within Christian assumptions of humanity, culture, civilization and religious truth.
All upheld a hope in some larger religious unity and their differences were more
nuance than outright disagreement. Liberalism’s response to the currents and
acids of modernity had inspired each to various degrees and all sought to provide
big answers to a society then asking big questions, particularly regarding the
continued relevance of Christianity and even religion. Many scientists of religion,
such as E.B. Tylor and Sir James Frazer had rejected the legitimacy of religion
altogether, but the fair served as an eclectic attempt for religion to state its case to
an international audience, and science became an important way of doing so.
Scientific advancement had brought forth radical changes in human thought, and
no religious group was more transformed by it than was Christianity. All these
men (and a few women) served as apologists for the importance of true religion to
historical progress and counted division as evidence of false religion and pride,
rather than the impotency of religion itself. For most, science and the scientific
method was not just helpful, but essential in accomplishing these new ends and
recognizing this faith. For all, progress was assured, be it by faith in the scientific
method of comparative religion (as seen by Snell and Higginson), or that of divine
intervention (as awaited by Schaff). They shared optimism for the future state of true religion and unity and its role within the bringing in of a new century. Viewed by the context of an increasing divide between conservative and liberal impulses within mainline churches, the parliament illustrates an important moment of conflict over a responsible response to modernity and its academic and intellectual corollaries within evangelical Christianity (including Christian apologetics, comparative religions, “sympathy for religion,” and German biblical criticisms). As Ahlstrom would correctly state, “the various conflicting responses to the study of religion and religious, therefore, are of by no means only academic importance.” Beyond this, they are not only the creation of historians or the exclusive concern of missionaries. “They constitute,” he argues, “an unfinished task with profound theological, scholarly, and ecumenical implications.” It was an approach to religious liberty and pluralism that would have significant implications for Mormonism.

Though most of its founders might disagree, the parliament represented a significant attempt by its organizers and many of its participants to regain and reestablish Christianity’s past respectability, hegemony, and civil dominion. The fact that the parliament’s organizers perceived this need is a covert confession that such control was no longer assured. Similarly, a widespread quest for religious unity and its various responses toward a united “true religion,” suspiciously akin to liberal Christianity, evidenced this growing division within American Christianity.

545 Ahlstrom, *The American Protestant Encounter with World Religions*, 38.

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Ahlstrom considered these “various conflicting responses to the study of religion” to represent “one of the larger tragedies of the ‘Great Century’ of American Protestantism.” It was hoped that this parliament could, in the words of Bishop Charles C. Grafton of Fond du Lac, make the whole world one, by way of “reunion of all the world’s religions in their true center—Jesus Christ.” Beyond the explicit objective of the parliament to “promote and deepen the spirit of human brotherhood,” Chairman Barrows explains his expectation that the gathering would allow Christianity to redeem false religion through a type of global redeemer that inspired unity through the humiliation of difference. Thanks to the fair and its explicit use of the scientific comparative model, those who thus held faith in the “miraculous revelation centring [sic] in a Divine Redeemer,” would now “have the opportunity to proclaim it as never before.” This call to the world was framed as a “loving challenge to all the world, and has no fears!”

However, the philosophical, cultural, and theological divide within American religious thought had been accentuated by the Parliament’s very attempts to harness and control it. The same emphasis on scientific inquiry to dismiss long held misconceptions, bias, prejudices, and foster a new global unity as outlined at the parliament informed more provincial discussion about the Western Frontier.

Impelled by an “irresistible attraction,” as Turner put it, or “the Script” as Church historian Sidney Mead called it, the Western frontier swallowed a vast array of European (and Asian) immigrants and their religions and cultures whole,
creating through its powerful forces a new race of civilized beings—the American. By comparison and thanks to a variety of forces, including racial and cultural chauvinism that became especially apparent at the fair, Mormons were increasingly perceived as more American than a backward indigenous population or newly arrived foreigners. As it had long been anticipated by Protestants, America’s destiny, indeed the world’s destiny, would be decided on the Western frontier. The transformation of Mormonism would later be interpreted as both example and fulfillment of this hope.

In light of Turner’s frontier thesis, the more material-focused aspects of the fair illuminated Mormonism’s transformation, thus upholding the anticipation of the closed frontier. Mormon barbarism had been proof of the frontier’s existence, and its cessation of polygamy and surrender of political influence, were examples of its closure. In contrast, the more spiritually-focused parliament was less accepting of even a transformed Mormonism. In important ways, the Parliament posed a curious contrast to the broader significance and unifying features of the World’s Fair itself. To be sure, the parliament offered the world great advances in the scientific study of religion and Christian ecumenism, but as will be seen by the Mormon example in the next chapter, the secular aspects of the fair were more friendly and accommodating.

As part of the larger agenda of the World’s Fair, Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” presented an important secular model and mentality toward Americanism that Mormonism could now fit into. The importance of this groundbreaking thesis was not solely in its impact on American historiography, but rather in its ability to
resonate with popular notions of American progress over barbarism at the end of the nineteenth century. In light of the struggles of the 1870s and 1880s, Turner announced in 1893 the “closing of a great historic movement.” Mormons could no longer be seen as part of “the history of the colonization of the Great West,” for that era was now declared over.\footnote{Turner, \textit{The Significance of the Frontier}, 1.} They had to now be reformulated within the context of a new era of development and participation. Throughout the nineteenth century savagery had encountered civilization, and civilization had won. However crude Mormonism appeared throughout the nineteenth century, Turner opened up its Americanization potentials. “I have refrained from dwelling on the lawless characteristics [and scum] of the frontier, because they are sufficiently well known,” notes Turner, but for all “the vices of the frontier in its worst aspect, have left traces on American character, language, and literature, not soon to be effected.”\footnote{Ibid., 20 n49.}

This social optimism among American historians following Turner’s frontier thesis as outlined at the World’s Fair brought forth an implicit moral understanding to historical progress, one that was both blinding and illuminating. Though citing a few exceptions, scholars of the religious congress at the World’s Fair largely celebrate the event as “the dawning of religious pluralism.”\footnote{Seager, ed., \textit{The Dawn of Religious Pluralism}.} A fuller analysis of the presence and non presence of Mormonism complicates this historical moment that took place within what sociologist of religion Christian

\footnote{Turner, \textit{The Significance of the Frontier}, 1.}
\footnote{Ibid., 20 n49.}
\footnote{Seager, ed., \textit{The Dawn of Religious Pluralism}.}
Smith calls a “contested revolutionary struggle” over power and authority within America’s understanding of the sacred and religious.\textsuperscript{551} This “dawning” of American religious pluralism would thus have to take into account the developments of this struggle and the implications of a world that was beginning to make careful and defining distinctions between the two.

The parliament can be seen as an important part of the long protracted struggle over the place of religion within the national soul of America, rather than some starting point of national change toward cultural liberality and religious pluralism. It is not my argument that important development toward religious pluralism did not take shape at the parliament, or that the fair did not make a significant contribution in these developments or the broader study of religion, but rather that the fair’s contributions to religious pluralism cannot be taken for granted as inevitable or altogether positive.

Due to these national, academic, and intellectual developments, the religious congress was one of great interest, contestation, and ambivalence; one filled with significant confusion and sometimes unbridled emotion. As chapter 6 explores, part of this national conflict was over Mormonism and the role it would be allowed to have within American public life. But it is presumptuous to imagine this fight to be just about Mormons or Mormonism. For national figures throughout the nineteenth century, the role of Mormonism within American society was problematic; moreover, the new forms of religious pluralism that

were emerging had not anticipated its inclusion or even competition with the then
dominant Protestant ethos. Having been deemed religiously “inappropriate” by
mainstream churches and then to have that prejudice institutionalized by
evangelical legislators and judges during the anti-polygamy crusades of the 1870s
and 1880s, Mormonism represented something deeper than a national annoyance.
Turner’s thesis had not promised a space for Mormonism in what many now
considered “American,” but provided a role in America for those known as
Mormons to now stand as witnesses of his thesis. In marginalizing Mormonism
throughout the nineteenth century, evangelicals furthered their monopoly on true
religion and its impressive hold on the state. Secularists in the late nineteenth and
early twentieth century, however, used this marginalization of Mormonism to
further their monopoly on state power over religion altogether. In a new secular
era as initiated at the fair, Mormons would find greater acceptance as they
redefined themselves in accord with these new secular definitions of religion –
that is, religion as apolitical and separate from the secular.
Chapter 6

MORMONISM AT THE WORLD’S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION OF 1893

I am glad to know that the world’s religions are to be represented at the World’s Fair. Were they to be omitted, the sense of incompleteness would be painful.

–Boston University President W. F. Warren, 1892

A musical performance also softens hard hearts, leads in the humor of reconciliation, and summons the Holy Spirit.

–Hildegard von Bingen, Scivias

Mormon historian Davis Bitton wrote of the Mormon incident at the Parliament of Religion at the 1893 World’s Fair as a “lukewarm” and “belated effort” by Mormon authorities who generally lacked the foresight to discern the importance of the fair. Mormon attempts at participation came primarily from the energetic thirty-six year old Mormon General Authority Brigham H. Roberts who argued as early as 1891 for Mormon inclusion “in such an important gathering.”

Despite the judgment of a specially organized committee in 1891 that involvement in the fair was “unimportant,” such leaders came around to the sentiment of Roberts in the summer of 1893. Inclusion at such a late date, however, proved futile. In the end the event was considered nonessential and Roberts alone seemed to understand the significance of the lost opportunity. As it


553 From Abraham H. Cannon’s Journal on April 6, 1893: “It was decided on the recommendation of J. H. Smith and myself who were appointed a committee to consider the matter, to send B. H. Roberts and Ben E. Rich to Chicago [Illinois] to represent us at the World’s Fair, and to do missionary work wherever possible.” Leo Lyman, ed., Candid Insights of a Mormon Apostle: The Diaries of Abraham H. Cannon, 1889-1895, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2010).
was, Bitton deemed the event as “not exactly edifying,” and was consequently forgotten within the Mormon collective memory.\textsuperscript{554} Subsequent studies by national scholars of the Parliament of Religions have largely dismissed this peculiar moment as a footnote of the larger success of the World’s Fair. Few have since taken seriously the presence of Mormonism at the fair, and even fewer have sought to take account of the significance of Mormonism’s non presence at its Parliament of Religion.\textsuperscript{555}

However, a more in depth look at the Mormon presence as well as non presence at the fair and parliament is crucial in understanding both the status of Mormonism within the changing national narrative, but also the direct role played by Mormon agency in redefinition of its place within this narrative.\textsuperscript{556} It is here that we see an illumination of Mormon creative agency, the national response to that agency, and finally, the changed environment that such encounters encouraged. As is the case with all significant change, an understanding of the environment that such change takes place within is important, but also important is to contextualize this environment with the internal dynamics of those involved.


\textsuperscript{556} This focus on the presence and non presence comes from Burris, \textit{Exhibiting Religion}. 157. Historiographically then, it is not sufficient to insert an episode like this into a more traditional national narrative of progress, but instead, such moments can be used to allow us to think different about minority agency, the meaning of minority inclusion, as well as that of resistance and assimilation.
Far from a realization of the “dawning of religious pluralism,” as popularly interpreted in traditional scholarship, the World’s Parliament of Religion explicitly sought first and foremost to unify a deeply-divided Christendom and reclaim its waning authority over American culture in preparation to better extend its ideals more effectively throughout the world. It was, in important ways, intended as a type of institutional and contemporary manifestation of the “Nicene Creed” promising unity by way of exclusion under the guise of universal brotherhood. As put forth in an 1892 tract publicizing and justifying the parliament, its chairman and pastor of the prestigious First Presbyterian Church of Chicago, Reverend John Henry Barrows, expressed “a deep personal conviction” that under the presiding power of the Christian faith, the parliament would “deepen the spirit of human brotherhood among religious men of diverse faiths,” reveal the errors of false religion, and finally “bring into glorious conspicuity the supreme power and attractiveness of the cross of Christ.” The parliament was to celebrate humanity’s common groping after truth and to serve as a catalyst for the universalization of the Christian message and the bringing in of Christ’s global kingdom. Barrows explains, “It appears that Chicago is to be made a whispering gallery, from which all nations may hear and know more concerning the kingdom of our Lord.” 557

Despite vaunted claims to ecumenicity, religious toleration and inclusion, it was clear from the outset that Mormonism as a religion did not fit the undergirding plans or agenda of parliament organizers, nor did it fit the limited

ecumenism of such privileged guests as Philip Schaff. Mormonism had long served as the foremost example among both American Protestants and European Catholics of the dangers of American religious freedom. As such Mormonism could not have easily fit in a parliament whose explicit aims were to herald its own American accomplishment within the world of Christian advancement.

Now at the end of the century, for religious intellectuals and practitioners like Barrows, religious pluralism as advocated at the parliament was not a celebration of religious diversity but a reformulation of religious union that upheld evangelical Christianity as normative and paradigmatic. That which did not fit was silenced, marginalized, or left underrepresented. Inclusion into this new American (and anticipated increasingly global) pluralism thus depended upon the religion’s ability and willingness to domesticate itself under this new banner of liberalized Christian brotherhood and unity.

Elder Brigham H. Roberts’s rebuffed efforts at Mormon inclusion reveals this important dynamic within the nation and the structures of religious power at the turn of the century, particularly as it sought to control an ever-growing visible diversity that challenged the cause of an imagined national unity. The initial lack of enthusiasm of other Mormon leaders also reflect Mormon perception of this dynamic and wariness of its implications for Mormonism, particularly in light of the church’s immediate crippling debt and the still open wounds from decades of hostility and prejudice. Not all within the folds of LDS leadership felt the cost of Mormon inclusion on such terms to be either advisable or even possible.
By way of closer examination of the fair and its parliament and particularly the dynamics of Mormon inclusion and exclusion, scholars can use this event to rethink the narrative of progress and unity at century’s end. Just as importantly, this international event allows for a rethinking of the meaning of religion as well as the meaning and makeup of American religious diversity and its markers of acceptable difference. The original exclusion of not only Mormons but representatives of a number of other non-mainstream religious and racial minorities and their response provides important context. This context is particularly important as marginalized individuals and groups all found ways to critique and engage the parliament and the larger American society regarding its assumed norms of supremacy within the realms of faith and culture.

By considering the black presence at the parliament as an example, historian Keith Naylor demonstrates how the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church turned the event into a “world court of opinion regarding racial equality,” directly challenging the “state of mind of the fair planners and fair-goers” when it came to definitions of diversity and implied notions of religious, racial and cultural and even gender superiority.\(^5^5^8\) In his September 22 speech before the parliament, Bishop Benjamin Arnett of the AME Church used the occasion to glance over the last thirty years of black achievement in politics and government (among other things) following the Emancipation Proclamation, to which he concludes, “The negro has appeared upon the stage, and the dramatic power of

the race has been tested, weighed and has not been found wanting.” Arnett’s “more than ordinary pleasure” was to “show the world that we are not a race of ingrates, nor forgetful of the blessings received, when recording the wrongs we have suffered in this land of freedom.” Arnett’s speech was not one of division or complaint of injustice, but of family reconciliation and equality: “We meet you on the height of this Parliament of Religions, the first gathering of the peoples since the time of Noah, when Shem, Ham and Japheth have met together. I greet the Children of Shem, I greet the children of Japheth, and I want you to understand that Ham is Here!”

With less attempts at reconciliation, Hirai Kinzo, a Japanese Buddhist delegate, similarly challenged Barrows’ vision by condemning Christianity and its missionaries in Japan for its “abusive, high-handed, self-righteous, bigoted, and racist attitudes” toward his native home and people. Barrows tried to silence his Japanese guest by confronting him center stage, but was forced to relent when Kinzo exploded in a voice that caught the attention of the audience, “Why do you try to prevent me from speaking? By what rights do you violate my freedom of speech? What authority do you claim to interfere with the speeches of members of this Parliament?”

Well-known abolitionist and social activist Julia Ward Howe indirectly challenged the underrepresentation of women at the parliament. In her speech entitled, “What is Religion?”, Howe defined religion as “aspiration, the pursuit of

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560 As quoted in Neilson, Exhibiting Mormonism, 160.
the divine in the human; the sacrifice of everything to duty for the sake of God and of humanity and of our own individual dignity.” For Howe, nothing in this definition allowed for any sex or race to place itself above another. In words that went against popular nineteenth-century notions of gender and domesticity, Howe went on to say that “nothing is religion which puts one individual absolutely above others, and surely nothing is religion which puts one sex above another.” Irreligion, even as it reveals itself in revered religious institutions, was to be noted and condemned. Any faith system, including Christianity that would “sacrifice a certain set of human beings for the enjoyment or aggrandizement or advantage of another is no religion. It is a thing which may be allowed, but it is against true religion. Any religion which sacrifices women to the brutality of men is no religion.”

The inferior status of women at the parliament reflected the general dismissal and imposed inferiority of women within American society in general, serving as additional proof of the limitation of the original agenda of the parliament.

As illuminated by the protest and correctives of women and the underrepresented racial and religious minorities and the treatment of the Japanese delegate, Roberts’ plea for religious inclusion countered the explicit purposes and vision of the Parliament of Religion. They also place in context and help to explain Mormonism’s exclusion at the parliament and its broader exclusion within much of early twentieth-century American historiography.

Factors that would contribute to this exclusion inherent to the conceptualization and planning of the event include popular nineteenth-century notions of race and gender, together with the heavy Anglo-Protestant male bias among parliament organizers. Such biases influenced both the initial organizational structures of the fair as well as who would be invited to participate. While ideas of the congress began as early as 1889, serious organizational efforts and invitations began in the summer of 1891, and proposals and tracts were published and disseminated on behalf of the Auxiliary committee in 1892, which documented widespread interest and general excitement. A few notable exceptions to this enthusiasm were the Sultan of Turkey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and China’s Premier, all of whom flatly rejected the committee’s invitations. At the same time, many groups would be intentionally underrepresented and marginalized, such as Native Americans and African Americans, while the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was simply uninvited.\footnote{Seager, The Dawn of Religious Pluralism, 6-7.}

John Henry Barrows was brought in by President Charles Bonney as the parliament’s chair. According to Barrows, this parliament was to demonstrate the “supremacy of evangelical Christianity,” and thus entrusting it to the hands of this prolific and prestigious liberal Chicagoan pastor was unsurprising. On a popular level, the parliament was nationalized and expected to bring forth, as explained in the *New York Times*, the divine means by which the “Kingdom of Christ in
America” was to be engaged.⁵⁶³ “Who can tell,” wrote Bishop Whitehead of Pittsburg, “that the great Head of the Church may, in his providence, make use of this immense gathering to usher in the triumph of his truth, when at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow?”⁵⁶⁴ Notwithstanding claims to appropriate the findings and sentiments of the new discipline of comparative religions and the scientific study of religion, few participants and organizers doubted the role and hand of Divine Providence. In effect, the parliament had not sought to challenge these new scientific approaches to humanity and religion, but instead appropriated them as God’s new methodology in the establishment of his kingdom.

Lending itself to a variety of concerns and agendas, the parliament was perceived by some of its supporters and detractors as little more than an attempt by white evangelicals to unify a challenged Christendom and clarify and reestablish what they understood to be a proper understanding of Anglo Christianity and its manifest racial, cultural, intellectual and soteriological superiority. Edward Blyden, for example, noted it as a general bias among white Western writers to ignore African Islam, as it could only be “an imitation if not caricature of Islam in Arabia, just as they allege that Christianity among Negroes must always be of a degenerate quality.” It was along these lines that Blyden


criticized the Parliament of Religions for there being “no representatives of Negraic Mohammedanism to tell the story of their faith.”

Not surprisingly, given its multiple agendas and contradictions, other inconsistencies emerged from the parliament that proved troubling. Nevertheless, in many ways, the parliament was an impressive success and represented the first serious attempt at a truly global religious congress. Its organizers were in every respect pioneers of a new global ecumenism, and the first world’s fair to undertake such an orchestration and exhibit of such complex religious diversity. The Parliament of Religions brought together in one venue and locale a dizzying level of diversity whose representatives were for the most part listened to with an unprecedented level of patience and tolerance.

In some ways, the sheer organizational weight of this innovative moment, and awareness of the controversy it would inspire among more conservative evangelicals, explains to some extent the parliament’s exclusion of particular religions and groups. In fact, this parliament represents a radical departure from the limited consensus of earlier nineteenth-century treatments of women and non-mainstream religious and racial minorities which were largely dismissive and negative and condescending. The parliament at its best celebrated a new tone of sympathy and understanding that had only begun to be explored by popular and academic America. It is no wonder that many looked to the fair as the dawning of a new day and a positive and progressive approach to American Christianity and

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its emergent and foreordained prominence in the world. But eulogies over the 
bridges built at the fair distract us from the simultaneous walls under construction. 
In impressive ways religious pluralism had dawned, but in ways just as significant 
in their implications, real pluralism was rendered impossible.

Despite the euphoria and providential expectations attendant at the 
congress, the fingerprints of an earlier nineteenth-century America were apparent. 
In effect the parliament publicized and further legitimated a particular scientific 
environment and a new approach to and understanding of religion which in turn 
illuminated and furthered misunderstandings of American and world religion. 
Moreover, its expansive but limited ecumenical and interreligious orientation 
brought forth a new idealism regarding world religion, yet simultaneously 
furthered a naiveté regarding these religions and the world and the ways in which 
the West understood itself and its religious and cultural offerings in relation to the 
more expansive notion of the world. One of the chief but belated 
accomplishments of the parliament was American’s growing awareness of the fact 
that they were just one of many. Forced was a renewed recognition of the

566 Upon his return from the fair, President Cannon cautioned Mormons about how they should 
receive the world both outside and inside Utah. The Asian religions, such as Buddhism and 
Confucianism, were worthy of Mormon respect; and, as he told the Saints, “they are not so 
imperfect and heathenish as we have been in the habit in this country of believing,” or as 
interpreted by Cannon’s son Abraham, “are possessed of much more truth and intelligence than 
we credit them with having.” Remarks by President George Q. Cannon,” Deseret Semi-Weekly 
in his journal: “[September 24, 1893; Sunday] At 2 o’clock I attended the Tabernacle services, and 
heard Moses Thatcher speak for 35 minutes on the financial situation. He said our present troubles 
will be controlled for the good of those who are faithful. Father followed him and spoke for 35 
minutes on the recent trip of the presidency and choir to the World’s Fair, and said it was 
astonishing how much prejudice has been removed within the last five years concerning this 
people. He also spoke of the parliament of religions which is now in progress at the fair, and 
believed it would be productive of some good. He felt that the heathens who are representing 
themselves at the fair are possessed of much more truth and intelligence than we credit them with

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divisions, religious insecurities and prejudices that many Americans (even those who considered themselves intellectually and religiously enlightened) carried with them.

**LDS Presence and Non Presence at the World’s Fair**

The Columbian Fair honored Christopher Columbus in its title, and speakers such as Julia Ward Howe paid homage to the “daring voyage of Columbus across an unknown sea.” Columbus’ voyage represented a mythical and heroic beginning of discovery and progress that many now felt culminated with the World’s Fair, which marked its four-hundred year anniversary.

Celebration and acknowledgment of humanity’s evolution of religion via the Parliament of Religion stood as one of the greater points of interest at the World’s Fair. But notwithstanding its expansive ecumenical vision and lofty goals and professions, the Parliament of Religions highlighted the growing division within Christianity and the increased inability of both conservative and liberal evangelicals to control the ever shifting social and religious world around them.

The broader social, academic, intellectual, and technological currents associated with modernity proved trying for a religion that had focused so long on emotions (as seen in the Great Revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), and had

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having. President Woodruff spoke then for five minutes on the kind treatment and enjoyable time he and his companions had enjoyed at the fair.” Lyman, ed., *Candid Insights*, 417-418. In the spirit of Hindu reformer Vivekananda’s celebrated parliament speech, Cannon had learned that if the Parliament of Religions revealed anything, it was “that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.” Reprinted in Seager, *The World’s Parliament of Religions*, 82.
in many ways neglected its intellectual components. Even for more progressive
religions and individuals, urbanization, industrialization, and attendant
secularization proved exceedingly challenging.

The final message of the parliament was not just that of the triumphalism
of a Christian message (even of liberal and progressive hue) but also the lack of
unity within the world of Christianity. Some church groups were excluded from
the parliament, some rejected inclusion, and some of those included made clear
their criticisms of Christianity and its identification with the American nation.

Julia Ward Howe decried Protestantism’s support of sexism; Japanese and East
Indian representatives uttered forceful critiques of Christianity’s failings to live by
the teachings of Jesus; and Richard T. Ely of the University of Wisconsin rebuked
the popular notion that America was a Christian nation by pointing out that it
prized materialism over human life. Bishop Arnett highlighted Christian
hypocrisy of heralding liberty, while at the same time embracing and even
institutionalizing racism. Evangelical historian and minister Philip Schaff of
Union Seminary reiterated a common theme by calling all denominations to
repent for their schismatic tendencies, warning that, if Christianity did not
progress (by which was implied “unite”), it would be left behind in a progressive
world.\footnote{Burris, \textit{Exhibiting Religion}, 109, 138; Barrows, \textit{The World’s Parliament of Religions}, 2: 1251,
1193, 1196, 1060, 999; Naylor, “The Black Presence,” 256-257.}

Obviously, even though Christianity was being extolled at the parliament
as the greatest example of religion, even God’s last best revelation to mankind, it
was being weighed by many and found lacking. In the words of Honorable W. H. Fremantle, canon of Canterbury, Protestant Christianity, particularly in the US, was full of discord and confusion, vitiating its national influence. The architects of the Parliament of Religion had hoped such a gathering would mollify or even “shame” this discord and confusion and provide a larger context of brotherhood that would minimize such divisions.\(^{568}\) Originally, it also hoped to counter the less savory currents of modernity then carrying American society and the Christian West toward materialism and sectarianism. Crafted to support a liberal Protestant viewpoint of religion and culture, the parliament also articulated a paradigm within which major “world religions” could also be appreciated within their own social historical context. Also on the agenda of the parliament was an attempt by more liberal evangelical Protestants to challenge a growing perception that religion obstructed peace and progress in America and the world. While partially achieving all of these goals, its most notable achievement was inadvertent: forcing participants and observers to look at other religions, as well as their own, in ways not previously done. Mormonism would not be the least of those affected by this new vision.

Despite the Parliament of Religions ecumenical claims, the Mormon Church was uninvited and deliberately excluded. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the parliament’s assumptions of Protestant hegemony and push for Christian unity and global expansion, together with Bonney and Barrow’s personal animosity

toward Mormonism, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was considered by the general committee a “disturbing element,” and thus out of place in the congress itself. Just how “out of place” the LDS Church was considered is clearly seen in the fact that over forty thousand documents and ten thousand letters of invitation and explanation were sent to thirty countries, yet not one came to the Latter-day Saint Church in Utah, even though Chairman Barrows had personally seen to it that both appropriate literatures about the congress as well as official invitations were extended to all deemed worthy of such an event.

Though slow in its ability to recognize the significance of the fair, the Mormon First Presidency petitioned in July 1893 for Mormon inclusion noting that Mormonism would be of “special interest in such a religious parliament as that proposed.” Nevertheless, when the First Presidency (Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith) wrote to the parliament’s president, Charles Bonney, on July 10, 1893, he did not answer. Ten days later the First Presidency sent thirty-six-year-old B. H. Roberts, a member of the Church’s First

569 According to Reid Neilson, both Barrows and Bonney “were uniquely positioned to act on their anti-Mormon prejudice.” Having preached and published against Mormonism during the 1870s and 1880s, Barrows saw Mormon doctrine as “abominable” and argued that the system itself “ought to be wiped out.” Barrows called for Christianization efforts to “heal this plague spot” in Utah by “touching it with pure gospel instruction.” In 1900 while president of Oberlin College, Barrows became a founding member of the Utah Gospel Mission Executive Committee, who’s stated purpose was to mount “a national crusade against Mormonism.” As Neilson explains, “Barrows wore his anti-Mormonism on his sleeve as a badge of evangelical courage and Christian orthodoxy. He was likely the chief agitator within the organizing committee who lobbied against Latter-day Saint participation in the congress.” For more information and a collection of important resources see Neilson, Exhibition Mormonism, 152-155.


Council of Seventy and long-time lobbyist for church inclusion, to Chicago to inquire in person. Roberts learned that the committee had given some thought to including the LDS Church but held “serious objections” toward their inclusion and thus deemed it unwise to invite Mormon representatives, partly because of their association with the only recently settled controversy of polygamy. 572 Thus although the Woodruff Manifesto against polygamy had been issued in 1890, many Americans continued to hold Mormonism and its authorities with great suspicion, and the parliament committee held doubts over Mormonism’s sincerity.

Explanatory of the early ambiguity expressed by Mormon leaders toward fair and parliament participation were their perceptions of continued suspicion of Mormonism, and the intense national animosity directed toward them just a few years prior. However, impressed by the explicit liberality of the fair (as pressed on them by Roberts), as well as reflective of Mormonism’s own internal dynamics and continued metamorphosis, the Mormon First Presidency eventually came around and conceded in the summer of 1893 that “such a parliament” was of great “value and importance.” 573 In the wake of this decision and implied change of policy, as an emissary for the LDS Church, Roberts’ insistence in Chicago of Mormon inclusion was unrelenting, as it had been in Utah. After several interviews and “much correspondence on the subject,” the increasingly annoyed parliament’s managers sent Roberts a letter on August 28 stating the parliament’s


willingness to host a “statement of its [the LDS Church’s] faith and achievements.” The belated and reluctant invitation extended to Roberts, however, failed to say exactly when and where he would be allowed to represent the Mormon religion, or even if he himself would be allowed to read a prepared speech. Perhaps this lack of clarity reveals the uncertainty within the committee itself, but Roberts had been sure his invitation implied a spot “in the full parliament before all the world, having full time (half an hour) allotted to her, as to other religions, in which to proclaim what to her were the great truths of her faith.”

In response to an anxious letter at the start of the parliament, Barrows assured Roberts by letter a few days later that he would be able to read his own paper, but could not yet give a date. Six days later, Barrows sent a short letter, asking Roberts to read his paper in Hall No. 3, a small committee room at the side of Washington Hall as part of the “Scientific Section” on September 25. Roberts quickly wrote a response that he would be happy to read his speech in Hall 3, provided “that such presentation shall not bar me from presenting the paper also before the full Parliament of Religions in the Hall of Columbus.” In between sessions, Roberts met Barrows and handed him his reply. Without reading the note, the already overburdened chairman hastily explained to Roberts that no other hearing would be given him but in Hall 3. In Roberts’s own account, this represented a “very unworthy effort” by Barrows and Bonney to “side-track” his

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574 Roberts, History of the Church, 6: 240.

already prepared speech and to further minimize the Mormon presence. Thus, as Roberts paraphrases Barrows, the great parliament would hear of the “Mormon faith and church either not at all, or else only as in a corner and darkly.” The indignant Roberts rejected this proposal as an insult and left the parliament deeply embittered. In his official history, Roberts cast Barrows’ offer as rejection and in another letter to Barrows contrasted his exclusion with the parliament’s reputation for broad-minded toleration. According to Roberts’ official records, the LDS Church had “the distinction of being refused a hearing in the World’s Parliament of Religions.”

Further explanation of Barrow’s action was to be found in the parliament’s response to an earlier controversial presentation. Roberts’s “paper was on the program all right enough, but he is a Mormon,” explained the Chicago Herald, “and after Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb’s paper on polygamy,” the congress committee, overly sensitive to additional public criticism, quickly removed Roberts’s paper, as it was decided that Mormonism was simply too controversial and thus “out of place.” For some, like Catholic Cardinal James Gibbon, sexual aberrancy and the wholesale subjection of women to tyrannical men directly linked the two “usurping rivals” of Christendom –


“Mohammedanism” and Mormonism. However uncomfortable the committee had been regarding the presence of polygamous Roberts as a legitimate aspect of Christendom, the unfolding events and outcry against polygamy during Webb’s speech on Islam gave them rationale and opportunity to justify their exclusion of Mormonism.

On Wednesday September 20, the same day Robert’s was asked to give his speech in Hall 3, Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb presented a paper entitled “The Spirit of Islam.” Webb, an Anglo-American convert to Islam, was requested (most likely by Barrow’s himself) to make a brief statement concerning the practice of polygamy. Webb faced the widespread paranoia against polygamy directly: “There are thousands and thousands of people who seem to be in mortal terror that the curse of polygamy is to be inflicted upon them at once.” According to the official summary of the morning session during which Webb spoke, the outburst against Webb’s defense of polygamy had been “sudden” and “unpremeditated,” based not upon issue of doctrine, but as “an attack on a fundamental principle of social morality.”

Interestingly, in the official recorded version of the speech, Barrows omits Webb’s explanation of polygamy with the brief assurance: “The few words omitted here opened a subject requiring more than a bald statement in five lines to be at all rightly

581 Webb’s biographer speculates, “Since Barrows chaired the first session, it is quite possible that Barrows himself prompted Webb to begin his speech by addressing the issue of polygamy.” See Umar F. Abd-Allah, A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 238, 240.
The Mormon-owned *Deseret News* reported that Webb had attempted to represent Islamic polygamy as more of a cultural than a religious practice purportedly stating: “Polygamy is no curse. A man can be a good, honest gentleman and yet be a polygamist. But I do not accept him as such if he be a sensualist.” An unofficial record of Webb’s speech records it slightly different: “There are conditions under which it is beneficial…I say that a pure-minded man can be a polygamist and be a perfect and true Christian, but he must not be a sensualist.” At this point, the crowd reportedly erupted in hisses and cries of “Shame!” and “No, no; stop him.”

In response Webb explained that he was just as American as the speaker before him and that this unhinged animosity toward polygamy was inspired not by a pure mind, but ignorance.

> When you understand what the Mussulman means by polygamy, what he means by taking two or three wives, any man who is honest and faithful and pure minded will say, ‘God speed him.’…I carried with me for years the same errors that thousands of Americans carry with them to-day. Those errors have grown into history, false history has influenced your opinion of Islam. It influenced my opinion of Islam and when I began ten years ago, to study the Oriental religions, I threw Islam aside as altogether too corrupt for consideration.

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583 Ibid.


585 Houghton, *Neely’s History*, 1:460. Though Webb was no advocate of polygamy, Webb’s biographer notes that Webb had argued “that Westerners were ignorant of how it was actually practiced in the Muslim world and that their categorical condemnation of it was self-righteous and hypocritical in view of the problems that surrounded the marital and sexual practices of their own societies.” See Abd-Allah, *Muslims in Victorian America*, 239-241.
The controversy suggested that the comparative model had its limitations, as some things, like polygamy, were deemed unworthy of comparison or even sympathy. In the minds of most Americans, of either scientific or theological orientation, polygamy as had Islam, symbolized the antithesis of human progress and the epitome of digressive religion.\footnote{By way of example of the overt prejudice against Islam at the parliament, Reverend P. Phiambolis, of the Greek Church of Chicago explained at the congress that Islam retarded the advancement of Christianity. The motto of “Mohammedanism” was “‘Kill the Infidels,’ because every one who is not a Mohammedan, according to the Koran of the Prophet, is an infidel, is a dog.” Fitting Philip Schaff’s assessment that Islam is the inveterate foe of Christianity, Phiambolis spoke of “Turkish tyranny” and the sufferings such have and continue to bring upon innocent Christians in the Orient. In the Orient, “Christian virgins are dishonored by the followers of the Moslem Prophet, and the life of a Christian is not considered as precious as that of a dog.” Barrows, The World’s Parliament of Religions, 2:1129. For more on this Muslim-Mormon connection, see Arnold H. Green, “Mormonism and Islam: From Polemics to Mutual Respect and Cooperation,” Brigham Young University Studies 40, no. 4 (2001): 199-203; Green’s essay “The Muhammad-Joseph Smith Comparison: Subjective Metaphor or a Sociology of Prophethood?” in Mormons and Muslims: Spiritual Foundations and Modern Manifestations, rev. ed., Spencer J. Palmer (Provo: Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University, 2002), 111-133; and Timothy Marr, The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, chapter 4, “Turkey Is in Our Midst’: Mormonism as an American ‘Islam.’”}

As it was argued by scientist and preacher alike, polygamy tended toward the degeneration of the human race and led to the ultimate downfall of civilization. Professor Lieber, one of America’s most influential political scientists, contrasted that “polygamy…fetters the people in stationary despotism,” while monogamy frees people from it. Others, such as phrenologist Thomas Laycock, described polygamy as a barbaric characteristic of “gregarious mammals.”\footnote{As quoted in Gordon, Mormon Question, 140; Laycock, “Manhood and Womanhood,” 312.} Polygamy was thus disadvantageously positioned within a social evolutionary scale of human development, which provided the intellectual and organizational structure of the fair. In speaking on polygamy just a few years after
the fair, Barrows placed it at the bottom of this evolutionary chain. Quoting a Scottish theologian, Barrows argued

that polygamy may suit a race in a certain stage of its development, and may in that stage, lead to a purer living and surer moral growth than its prohibition, may be granted. But, necessarily, a religion which incorporates in its code of morals any such allowances, stamps itself as something short of the final religion.588

Polygamy thus ran counter to the larger assumptions of civilization and progress, and was thus out of bounds with the vision of the parliament. Mormonism’s presence and Webb’s defense of polygamy proved too troubling for a congress bent on the promotion of the evolution of civilization. Whether the official who asked Webb to speak of polygamy did so in hopes that he, due to his Anglo-American heritage, would provide a strong denunciation of polygamy, or because he wanted to provide an example of the unacceptability of polygamy, the emotional response against Webb provided opportunity for Barrows to exclude from the mainstream of the parliament Mormonism and its troublesome (and polygamous) representative.

On the heels of the exceptional “outcry” in response to Webb’s address, the officials of the Congress felt more than justified in declaring Mormonism, despite its professed public rejection of polygamy, too controversial to take part in

588 John H. Barrows, Christianity, the World-Religion (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1897), 104-105. In the mind of Barrows, polygamy proved an important symbol of immorality, and thus a hindrance to progress. “The permissions of the Koran in respect to polygamy, concubinage and divorce; the sanction of slavery and holy war, the example of Mohammed himself, the adoption of the principle that the end justifies the means—thereby consecrating every form of deception and lying, every sort of persecution and violence to the cause of religion—these things effectually block the wheels of progress in ethical spheres, so that Moslem nations have hardly ever reached even the planes of moral purity occupied by the most degenerate Christian nations.” Quoting E.M. Wherry, Islam, or the Religion of the Turk, 59, in Barrows, Christianity, 364.
the main parliament. Letters exchanged between Roberts and Barrows in the aftermath of Webb’s speech made clear that these incidents were related.

Following the September 24 announcement by Barrow’s secretary Merwin-Marie Snell, who was also president of the scientific section of the parliament, that Roberts would not be presenting, the Chicago Herald on September 26 made note of the parliament’s “decided opposition to a free discussion of polygamy,” and that members of the congress clearly felt that “an apostle of Mormonism would be out of place in the congress.” 589 Notably the decision was not received without criticism, particularly from an incensed Snell, Barrow’s own secretary, who now declared himself a Mormon to the bewildered audience. Snell argued that “the Mormon Church had suffered through the preposterous ignorance and prejudice of other religious bodies,” comparing prejudice against Mormonism to that of his own Catholic faith, arguing, “I never saw a Protestant whose mind was not full of lies about the Catholic Church.” 590 Seeming a bit unhinged in his responses to the heckling audience, Snell expressed his sentiments that such an exclusion of Mormonism was little more than ignorant prejudice by parliament organizers. “No one would exclude the church of the latter day saints from the family of the world’s religions who had caught the first glimpse of its profound cosmogony, its spiritual theology and its exalted morality.” 591


591 J. W. Hanson, ed., The World’s Congress of Religions: The Addresses and Papers Delivered Before the Parliament and An Abstract of the Congresses Held in the Art Institute, Chicago, 371
Exaggerating the offense against Mormonism and his new friend B. H. Roberts, Snell heightened the offense of Robert’s exclusion as the “darkest blot in the history of civilization in this country.”592 Taking up the cause, the Herald criticized “the managers of the religious congress,” asserting that “Elder Roberts, of Salt Lake City, had good ground of complaint. . . . The gathering at the Art Institute [housing the Columbus Hall] is a parliament of religions—not a parliament of Christians or a parliament of monogamists.”593 Following the fair’s closure, Roberts also took his complaint to a higher appeal, “the Parliament of an enlightened public opinion,” by way of newspaper column in the Chicago Inter-Ocean. Roberts called out Barrows and the other organizers of the parliament to explain themselves for their overt bigotry and hypocrisy in the unfair rejection of Mormonism.

Parliament organizers had earlier told Roberts that their rejection of him was in line with public sentiment. Roberts however, now shot back in his column that public sentiment, inclusive of enlightened people from around the world, now waved its finger of condemnation.594 With important allies like Snell and the Chicago newspress, Roberts revealed an alternative vision within American society as well as the significant disagreements of what the vaunted scientific

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comparative model was all about, since for him like for Snell it clearly demanded the inclusion of Mormonism not its exclusion.

Although it remained undelivered, Roberts argued that his speech did not speak of polygamy or religious persecution, but instead was limited to the great truths of Mormonism – a unique faith that has “attracted more attention and awakened more universal interest than any religious body of modern times.”595 Importantly, Roberts’s speech on Mormonism also provides valuable insight into the internal transformation that the LDS Church was undergoing, as it too sought to address the larger struggles of modernity then under consideration at the parliament and within other religious traditions and the wider culture.

As a representative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Roberts vigorously sought to project Mormonism as both an important American religion, having a “claim upon the respect and thoughtful considerations of mankind” and “as one of the potent religious forces of the age, and as such claims the right to be heard in this Parliament.”596 Moreover, Roberts argued that Mormonism had answers for many of the current problems plaguing Christianity, including the growing disaffection toward Christianity and the challenge of growing sectarianism. Mormonism, he asserted, was “progressive and is destined to become the religion of the age.” And if evidence is what a skeptical scientific age needs to believe in God then “‘Mormons’ have double the amount of evidence of God and the truth of the gospel than other people possess.” Even the

595 Ibid., 758-759.

596 The speech is published in Roberts, Defense of the Faith, 1:3.
widely disputed and even ridiculed *Book of Mormon*, he noted, provides additional proof of the divine authorship of the Bible and the miracles of Christ and hence should be seen as a defense against the excesses of biblical criticism. Thus “‘Mormonism’ has an especial mission,” he maintained, “to prepare the earth for the coming and reign of Messiah.” In spirit of the ecumenical vision of the parliament, Roberts argued that the kingdom was not to be brought forth in opposition to the belief of other Christians, but according to the “fundamental truth of all religions,” namely “faith in God.”

The main emphasis of Roberts’ speech was to explain how Mormonism established faith in God with greater clarity, power, and authority than any other religion. In short, Roberts declared the kingdom of God to be a Mormon engagement—an appropriation, as it was, of Christianity itself. As such, a defiant Mormonism illuminated the hypocrisy of the parliament and challenged its underlying purposes, namely, the imposition of a Protestant evangelical understanding of the kingdom. However, Roberts’ religious Exceptionalist claim that Mormonism represented a higher expression of the Christian faith ran contrary to the expressed agenda of the parliament and could not have set well with Barrows, a long-time anti-Mormon Presbyterian minister. The church’s recent national controversy over polygamy had been sufficient reason for Barrows to exclude Mormonism from the parliament. For Roberts, an open polygamist preaching Mormon religious Exceptionalism, Barrow’s ultimate exclusion is unsurprising.

Roberts response and the sequence of omission, reluctant inclusion, and final exclusion from Columbus Hall of the Latter-day Saint Church is particularly important in light of one of the parliaments declared aims: to create a “Christian brotherhood.” For the parliament organizers, Mormonism was neither a “great Historic Religions of the world” nor even part of the body of Christianity, and Roberts represented little more than an obnoxious out-of-place apologetic for Mormonism. The parliament’s hope was to unite the various sects of Christianity (a prerequisite to Christ’s coming kingdom) and to extol and define a higher religious Exceptionalism. Within this idealistic agenda of the parliament, the reluctance of Mormon leaders, and then the defensive salvo of Roberts affirming Mormon Exceptionalism, the tensions proved too great. Mormonism presented an irreparable division and contradiction that was better kept sidelined.


599 The major distinction between Mormonism and the rest of American Christianity was that Mormons had focused upon the principle of restoration rather than reformation. As such, although Mormons accepted the basic canon of Scripture, namely the KJV Bible, they went further: “But to this testimony,” wrote Roberts in his parliamentary speech, “the common inheritance of all Christendom, ‘Mormonism’ adds special evidences of its own.” He expounded on this idea of evidence, further demonstrating the division between Mormons and Protestants: “By accepting the records of the ancient peoples of America the ‘Mormons’ have double the amount of evidence for the existence of God and the truth of the gospel that other people possess; and since faith must ever have its foundation in evidence, the enlarged evidences accepted by ‘Mormons’ must account for that mightier faith which both their sufferings and their works proclaim they possess.” Roberts, Defense of the Faith, 1:5,7. It was this claim to further evidence, along with the complete rejection of past creeds and philosophies that made Mormonism so un-Christian to Protestants.
Though “banished” from the fair’s main exposition of religion at the parliament, Mormonism ironically found a place of participation in the fair’s more secular venues. The “Utah exhibit” was grand, large, and centrally located. In effect it functioned as a “secular back door” by which the LDS Church entered upon the stage of national legitimacy. In contrast to the church’s “shameful treatment” by the parliament and rejection from the Great Hall in Chicago’s Art Institute, Utah Territory (it would not achieve statehood for another three years) was granted the coveted “Lot 38” in the Congress of States and Territories. Many were surprised that Lot 38 was given to Utah, and demands were made that the Utahans be dispossessed, and at least one unnamed state commissioner resigned. Lot 38, one of the largest lots, was double the size of the Idaho and Arizona lots (and even the lots of at least two of the original thirteen states: Delaware and
Massachusetts). The officiators of the congress of states and territories granted Utah this privileged lot, as they did not want the younger states and territories to be disadvantaged by the older states.\footnote{McDaniel, \textit{Utah at the World’s Columbian Exposition}, 11.}

Moreover its central location made it the most convenient for the curious passerby as it opened to main pedestrian thoroughfares. The site was bitterly contested by other states and Utahan’s were understandably thrilled over “one of the best, if not the best lot assigned to any state or territory.” Though the official Utah report of the exposition claims that by the end of the exhibition “sectional lines were so completely obliterated that not even a trace of their existence could be observed,” it was also clear that at the beginning rivalries were strong.\footnote{Ibid., 11-12.}

**ILLUSTRATION**

Figure 11. Commissioner Lannan staking Utah’s claim to lot 38. As pictured in E. A. McDaniel, \textit{Utah at the World’s Columbian Exposition}, 11.
Understandably the Utah exhibit effectively steered away from religious controversy that could negatively influence the church’s presentation of itself and its acceptance by general fairgoer. The Utah Commission had it as its central aim to counteract the “widespread prejudice against Utah and her citizens.” Though its budget was meager in comparison with other western states, it was hoped that the exhibit in Chicago would help “obliterate” negative impressions of Utah “among the masses of the people, and the good seed sown will continue to bear fruit for years to come.” Its central objective was to make a good impression on visitors, creating an image of Utah characterized by its great potential as a valuable future state with exemplary citizens. With the opportunity before them to demonstrate their material and artistic abilities and potentials, both Mormons and non-Mormons throughout the territory “insisted that Utah must, under no condition, fail to be represented at the Exposition.”602 “Utah Day” thereby became a rare event by which all Utahans could unite; male and female, Mormon and non-Mormon.

Even outside Utah, many heard of Utah’s significant potential investment in agricultural, mineral, and developmental speculation, now that it was approaching statehood and the “frontier” had closed itself around the “Mormon question.”603 Despite continuing distrust, “Utah” was being conceptualized as a separate entity from its dominant religion, and a growing number were speaking up for Utah’s statehood, which was seen by many in 1893 as inevitable.

602 Ibid., 14, 27, 41, 43.
603 Ibid., 44.
Consequently, “A.K.P.,” a contributor for the New York Times, wrote dismissively in the summer of 1892 of the “Mormon threat” in Utah as much overblown. Brigham Young’s “reign” had been reduced merely to a “Mormon quarter—a curiosity to be visited, but no longer part and parcel of the life of the place.” Also, because of its growing mineral wealth, Salt Lake City’s identity was now projected as that of a marketplace, not a religious center of Mormonism. Additionally, it was being argued that the church and its practice of polygamy had given way “to mammon and plutocracy”—meaning that Mormonism had succumbed to worldly influences of a closed frontier and was thus being brought “into line.”

The Times later reported that the only opponents of Utah statehood were non-Mormon ministers, who were overreacting, because polygamy and Mormon peculiarities were “undoubtedly dead and cannot be revived.” Framing this Mormon metamorphosis within the new progressive assumptions of “the frontier” and its civilizing effects on barbarism and religion, A.K.P. argued that Mormonism was “doomed from the time the civilization of the country closed around the Mormon community in Utah and began to pervade it with the social, educational, and industrial influences of modern progress.” This attitude clearly signaled the hope that American secularism, and by implication it’s waning but still potent evangelical counterpart, had appropriated and tamed the Mormon religion. This hope communicated national confidence in the irresistible power of


technological and economic progress. It also demonstrates the resonance Turner’s “frontier thesis” had as articulated in conjunction with and after the fair.

As railroads moved through Salt Lake City, and telephone wires additionally connected the desert-surrounded metropolis to the rest of the country, it was easier to believe that the Mormons were no longer engaging in such primitive and un-Christian activities as many earlier imagined. Thus in arguing for a bill in support of Utah statehood, Utah’s Territorial Representative Joseph L. Rawlins (Dem.) explained that “polygamy was dying from natural causes, and in a short time would cease to exist altogether.” Similar to Senator Vest’s argument that polygamy had ended due to the natural disintegration of Mormon religiosity, Rawlins assured, “The people were not as credulous now as in former years; and, while they believed forty or fifty years ago in Divine approval of polygamy, and Divine protection for those who practiced it, they were more enlightened now.”

Several years after Utah statehood, a letter from Salt Lake to the *Baltimore Sun* repeated the popular sentiment regarding modernity and its impact on Mormonism. This letter testified that the Mormon Church was yet strong, but has

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606 Mormons had largely been isolated from fellow Americans as a result of geography and the lack of transportation that would later make traveling doable for most Americans. As Reid Neilson wrote about nineteenth-century Mormons, “few” Americans had “ever saw, heard, smelled, or touched a Mormon with their own eyes, ears, noses, or hands.” Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism*, 22. With such unfamiliarity and distance, it was easy for rumors and fantasies to spread unchecked and mythologies to emerge regarding the qualities and characteristics of Mormons in Utah, particularly as a consequence of the peculiar practice of polygamy. As Americans encountered their Mormon neighbors at the World’s Fair, the fact that they were not so strange and different was a point of surprise and changed sentiment for many.

607 “Utah Wants to be a State,” *New York Times*, Dec 13, 1893, 2; “Mormonism Waning,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Dec 20, 1893, 1. Newspaper headlines such as these were common: “Mormon Influence Waning,” “Polygamy Dead in Utah,” and “Mormonism Done For” were common in the early 1890s.
been “affected by the incoming of the Gentile world,” such as the adoption of the two-party political system and Utah’s advancements in industry and society. In many ways, “Mormon and Gentile are thrown together,” thanks to the railroad, telegraph, and the electric car. On top of this, “Mormon boys marry Gentile girls and Gentile boys marry Mormon girls.” Consistent with Turner’s frontier thesis, the article added:

> Face to face with the civilization of America, so practical, so democratic, so inquisitive, in the light of the Gospel history accepted in its great fundamental teachings alike by the judgment of the ages and the consensus of the nations of Europe and America, can we say otherwise than that Mormonism is incongruous with Christianity and America, and with the history and customs of humanity, and may we not cherish the hope that not many years will elapse before its adherents shall share in the blessings of the Gospel in common with their fellow-citizens and Mormonism [sic] be as “a tale that is told?”

Though real changes were occurring in Utah and within Mormonism, the fair and its dedication to progress and Turner’s frontier thesis inspired Americans to look at Utah and Mormonism through an altogether new lens. Mormonism was still anathema to what many held Americanism to be, but they were certain its days were numbered. As seen through this lens, a new and more accepting attitude toward Mormonism was not necessarily appreciative nor understanding of the Mormon past, nor optimistic of its future national contributions. If anything, this new national acceptance engraved in stone the legitimacy of earlier animosities against Mormonism.

Headed by Robert Craig Chambers, president of the Utah World’s Fair Commission, organizers of the Utah exhibit set out to demonstrate Utah’s

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strengths and its progress by exhibits of its agriculture, mines, manufacturing, fine
arts, ethnology and archaeology, education, women’s work, and a bureau of
information to address and answer many questions posed by curious spectators. 609

The display gave pride of place to Utah’s mineral and agricultural wealth, for
these two items were obviously points on which the state could be seen as
desirable, with the power to attract potential settlers and speculators so as to spur
continued growth. Dominick “Don” Maguire (1852-1933), knowledgeable
mineralogist, and a Catholic from Ogden, Utah, speaking on “Utah Day” at
Festival Hall (Friday evening, September 9), extolled Utah’s mineral wealth as
unique. Head of the department of mining, ethnology, and archaeology, Maguire
claimed that within its boundaries, “the territory of Utah contains . . . a greater
variety of minerals than any other state or territory in the Union.” 610 He thus
steered the audience’s attention away from Utah’s religious peculiarities to its
highly secular peculiarities. This strategy positioned Utah as an integral and vital
addition to the republic, further shifting Utah way from Mormonism and toward
an agricultural and mining identity. 611 For a state whose fame (or infamy) was the

610 McDaniel, Utah at the World’s Columbian Exposition, 14, 20-23, 29.
611 Leonard Arrington points out Mormonism’s engagement in “iron missions,” which Mormon
leaders considered to hold “quite as much importance as preaching the Gospel.” Various levels of
mining and industrial development programs were held to be part of a divine work, whose workers
were often “called” and whose organizations and finances were directly correlated through church
offices under the influence of the Priesthood. See Great Basin Kingdom, 33, 112-130, 155.
Arrington considered this work the “spiritualization of temporal activity,” but it is important to
note that such an Eliadean dichotomy of the sacred and the profane had not been clearly defined
throughout much of the nineteenth century, and few Americans understood their temporal work in
the extension of the nation as altogether insignificant to their spiritual worldview. Abolitionism,
the Civil War, volunteer and benevolent societies, militia movements, etc, all testify to this fact.
Robert Baird, for example, understood the colonizing efforts of America’s Anglo population to be
Mormon religion, dissuading that relevance while retaining intrigue was a difficult task, though a challenge willingly and successfully engaged on “Utah Day.” In impressive ways, Mormon agency and its institutional transformation were in cooperation. To overcome the previous forty years of opprobrium attached to Utah as a center of religious fanaticism, rebellion and conspiracy, Mormons and non-Mormons (men and women) together sought to remove the Mormon stigma, or at least reduce it. Consequently, Mormon transformation represented an active re-presentation of the Mormon religion, rather than a “matter of fact” cause of modernity.

Notable was The Ladies Board, a subset of the Utah World’s Fair Commission, which worked especially hard to reposition Utah’s women as secular, political beings. Because Utah could claim to be one of the first territories (prior to even states) to grant female suffrage, linking arms with the suffragists as early as 1871, Utah women were credited as a vital element in the national feminist movement. As seen in earlier discussions centered around the directly related to the ultimate realization of Christ’s kingdom. Manifest Destiny, a term coined in 1845, expressed the faith of many Americans in the divine destiny behind their growing empire. As expressed in an 1858 article in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, entitled “Providence in American History,” the author argues that the fundamentals of American democracy developed directly from the idea of a Kingdom of God on earth. Historian Ernest L. Tuveson explains that “mission” is a term that extends beyond the building of churches, into the building of the nation. Part of this “mission” was to “establish a great territorial ‘empire,’ even though much of it, like the Promised Land, might at first be under the Philistines,” where nineteenth-century authors continually conflated political and spiritual and moral elements. See Tuveson, Redeemer Nation, 125-136. It is an untenable position, however prevailing among American historians, that Mormons were altogether unique in the spiritualizing of the profane, which descriptions represent more of an anachronism.

polygamy controversy with social activist Angie Newman, Mormon women were stereotyped as ignorant dupes and pawns of their violent and well-organized Mormon male sociopathic masters. Now in Chicago, however, a changed image was presented to the public as Mormon women revealed themselves potent agents within the Mormon world and worthy of the respect of prominent feminist leaders throughout the nation.613

Several years before the World’s Fair, Mormon women leaders enthusiastically allied the church’s Relief Society and YLMIA (Young Ladies’ National Mutual Improvement Association) into the national feminist movement (ICW – International Council of Women, 1888; NCW – National Council of Women of the United States, 1891). It was a relationship that would continue until 1987.614 Such participation, notes historian Reid Neilson, marked a turning point for Mormon women, in both how they saw themselves and how others perceived the women of the nation.615 Thus, Mormon women were empowered to share in the uplifting of womanhood within the nation, express their Mormon-styled patriotism, lobby congress against anti-Mormon legislation, as well as further Utah’s bid for a long-awaited statehood.

613 Several of these national leaders were Susan B. Anthony, Isabella Beecher Hooker (of the famed Beecher family – father Lyman Beecher, sisters Harriet Beecher Stowe, Catharine Beecher and brothers Henry Ward Beecher and Edward Beecher) and Clara Thatcher (wife of Chicago World’s Fair commissioner Solomon Thatcher Jr.). Even Rosetta Luce Gilchrist, who published the anti-Mormon fiction “Apples of Sodom: A Story of Mormon Life” (1883), became close friends to Mormon female leaders at the fair. See Derr, et al., Women of Covenant, 140.

614 Derr, et al., Women of Covenant, 138-139.

615 Neilson, Exhibiting Mormonism, 79.
In contrast to the rejection of Roberts and Mormonism at the Parliament of Religion, leaders of the Woman’s Branch of the World’s Congress Auxiliary sent invitations to Mormon female leaders to attend the impressive World’s Congress of Representative Women at Chicago’s World’s Fair. Relief Society leader Emmeline B. Wells was even invited to act as honorary president over one of the sessions in the Hall of Columbus. At the event, female Mormon leaders emphasized the secular as they spoke of pioneers, child education, entertainment, patriotism, and their deep connections to their sisters in New England and their commitment to national female suffrage. Besides making allies with national female leaders, Mormon women took pride to see their homemade silk curtains and piano scarf adorning the interior of the Columbian Exposition’s Woman’s Building, and were invited as friends and colleagues to a luncheon in honor of the International Council of Women (ICW) officers. In stark contrast to Robert’s rebuff at the Parliament of Religion, national feminist movements recognized and upheld Mormon female participation, effectively casting the allure of “progressivism” around LDS female efforts in Utah.


618 For more on the important role Mormon women had at the World’s Fair, see Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism*, chapter 3, “Mormon Matriarchs: LDS Ladies at the World’s Congress of Representative Women.”
Utah’s non-Mormon Governor Caleb W. West (1886-89, 1893-96), speaking to a large crowd on Utah Day, minimized Utah’s religious distinctiveness and distanced the secular contemporary territory from its religious past: “In times past there have been struggles and differences, and I mention these only to say that they exist no more. They have been buried and now we bespeak for Utah simply justice.” Notably, in describing the settlement of Utah pioneers, he ignored their religious motivations and presented them secularly. They were loyal patriots, archetypal developers of the American West. He was not making a point about religious liberty but one about secular progress. Not unlike Columbus, “These pioneers of Utah blazed the way for the westward course of empire, and at the time of their first entrance into the valley of the Great Salt Lake planted the flag of the union on foreign soil.” This was a bloodless conquest of what was then part of Mexico, but a conquest nonetheless, and West made sure that Utah received due recognition for its national contributions to Manifest Destiny. By assuring Americans that Mormons were fellow nation builders, he was fully appropriating Mormons into the larger national identity and narrative, as well as allaying fears that Mormons were still intent in building an independent kingdom in the West. The rebellion of which Utahans had been accused (the Utah Expedition of 1857-58) he dismissed as an error of perception.

619 “Mormon and Gentile: Join Hands Heartily on Utah Day,” Sunday Herald (Chicago), September 10, 1893, 8.
“for our flag has never ceased to float over the land that was then taken possession of, from that day until now.”

Even more tellingly, President Wilford Woodruff also spoke on Utah Day, but he did so as Utah’s oldest living pioneer and not as a Mormon prophet. He refrained from taking polygamy or persecution as his text, and spoke rather of the faith of the pioneers—a narrative that resonated with the experiences, memories, and the national narrative of many non-Mormons. President George Q. Cannon of the church’s First Presidency, similarly avoided controversy and directly connected Mormonism to the broader American narrative. As he explains, Mormon pioneers, led by the “noble pioneer” Brigham Young, “proceeded to build up a commonwealth, consecrated to religious liberty and the rights of man.” Like Columbus, who sought out a future “home of Liberty, where the oppressed of all lands might find refuge,” the Mormon westward migration was no different. “Our hearts mingle with yours in affectionate remembrance of the Pilgrim Fathers and all the early colonists who came out from the Old World in search of that freedom of conscience which is the inalienable right of human kind.”

This was not a complaint of injustice as Cannon was known for just a few years prior, or a proclamation of religious Exceptionalism would be attempted by Roberts at the parliament, but instead a plea to be embraced by the national pioneer narrative of “freedom” and “liberty.” The Deseret Weekly News reported: “President Woodruff, Cannon and Smith, the heads of the Mormon Church, made speeches.

620 McDaniel, Utah at the World’s Columbian Exposition, 53.
621 Ibid., 54-56.
If anybody attended with the expectation of hearing the Mormon faith expounded they were disappointed, as the great exponents of Mormonism were full of other subjects relating to what they had seen since their arrival in Chicago.\textsuperscript{622}

Whether part of an orchestrated strategy or not, the Utah exhibition and Women’s congress was successful in bringing Mormonism further into national acceptance. Utah’s participation in the fair represented the finding of—even the creation of—common ground that had not previously existed since Mormons had much to gain in calming popular fears against them, and Utah’s non-Mormon citizens also stood to benefit because a stigma against “Mormon Utah” was a stigma against them as well. Hence, the \textit{(Chicago) Sunday Herald} reported the day after Utah’s celebration that it “was unique. Mormons and gentiles came together as friends. It may have been the music of the big choir from the tabernacle, or the satisfying solos of Tenor Easton, or perhaps it was Governor West’s oratory—something made all the people from Utah friends and all their guests happy.”\textsuperscript{623}

As the \textit{Herald} noted, in addition to the judicious and harmonious tactics of the varied speakers representing Utah, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was an

\textsuperscript{622} “Utah’s Day at the Fair,” \textit{Deseret-Weekly}. September 16, 1893, 29.

\textsuperscript{623} “Mormon and Gentile: Join Hands Heartily on Utah Day,” \textit{(Chicago) Sunday Herald}. September 10, 1893, 8. It described Robert C. Easton was a “tenor of rare training.” Following a speech by Governor West, Easton sang the favorite Mormon hymn written by Eliza R. Snow, “O, My Father,” accompanied by Professor Krouse on the piano. In this solo, given by special request, is recorded as being listened to by the crowd “in breathless silence by all that great audience. Mr. Easton was at his best and never sang better.” The crowd “broke forth in a round of most hearty applause, and would not be contented until the distinguished soloist responded with another song.” At the closing of Utah Day, Easton sang an encore entitled “Annie Laurie.” He was then followed by the entire Mormon Tabernacle Choir singing Handel’s “Hallelujah” Chorus. See McDaniel, \textit{Utah at the World’s Columbian Exposition}, 53-54.
important element in the program’s success. Arguably the choir was the most important and effective tool used to gain national and even international respect for Utah. Standing on the middle ground of art and culture, it linked religious and secular interests but lent itself to use by both, demonstrating once again that divisions between the two at the fair were less than clear. Though singing patriotic and traditional religious songs, the LDS Church considered the choir one of its greatest auxiliaries and its singers some of its best missionaries. As the First Presidency wrote to Conductor Evan Stephens (a Welsh convert) and the members of the choir less than two years after the fair, “Members of the Tabernacle Choir are really acting as missionaries, called for their special work.”

The power of the choir in fashioning public opinion was not lost upon Mormon leaders, bringing forth direction and focus regarding LDS policy at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Inspired by their positive reception at the World’s Fair, the desire on the part of church officials following the fair was “to see this choir not only maintain the high reputation it has earned at home and abroad, but become the highest exponent of the ‘Divine Art’ in all the land.” Musicians and poets were to be stimulated by this choir, “until its light shall shine forth to the world undimmed,

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624 Music occupied a special status at the fair, which makes the choir’s success particularly significant. Chicago’s own Apollo Choir closed the Parliament of Religions on September 27 by singing Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” from Messiah. “To the Christians who were present,” noted Barrows, The World’s Parliament, 172-73, “it appeared as if the Kingdom of God was descending visibly before their eyes.” Reporting the same concert, the Chicago Daily Tribune termed response to the Apollo Choir as a greater “storm and uproar” than had “never before shaken the Hall of Columbus.” It then added, “The great Parliament of Religions had come, and dying, like a swan it kept its sweetest music to the last.” “In Word of Praise,” Chicago Daily Tribune, September 28, 1893.
and nations shall be charmed with its music.” As a continuation of the lessons learned on Utah Day, through the choir and its “perfection in the glorious realm of song,” it was anticipated that it may unstop the ears of thousands now deaf to the truth, soften their stony hearts, and inspire precious souls with a love for that which is divine. Thus removing prejudice, dispelling ignorance and shedding forth the precious light of heaven to tens of thousands who have been, and are still, misled concerning us.

Music was to be a “noble work, a glorious cause, worthy of your earnest efforts…”625 This adulation is impressive, considering the church’s initial hesitance in sending the choir to Chicago.

The choir had been invited to sing at the fair in 1891, but some Mormon authorities were dubious of its appearance as only a public relations campaign, leaving the choir’s participation at Chicago in doubt just months before the anticipated performance in Sept, 1893.626 Nonetheless, the accolade the choir received at the fair left little room for disagreement regarding the correctness of their final decision to participate. It also proved a harbinger of the direction Mormonism would be headed in the next century. It is uncertain the extent to which Americans perceived the choir as Mormons or simply talented and gifted fellow citizens and individuals of faith, but it seemed clear that the choir had successfully complicated earlier and more simplistic distinctions.

Thus in the aftermath of the fair, the choir became the essential component in an explicit public relations strategy by Mormon leaders. “It has often been

625 Clark, Messages, 3:267-68.

626 Neilson, Exhibiting Mormonism, 116-118.
remarked since the choir left here,” explains George Q. Cannon upon his return from the fair, “that their visit would be productive of greater good than almost any number of missionaries.”  

Suggestive of the irony such new perceptions could raise, one newspaper took note of the Mormon Choir’s appearance and laudations in Missouri enroute to Chicago, the state which had issued the infamous Mormon Extermination order and the massacre at Haun’s Mill. Being “immensely applauded” following a brief stop and performance, the Times noted that Mormons were met by a mob, only “this time a friendly mob.”

The two hundred and fifty voice choir performed on September 8 in Festival Hall the day before Utah Day, as part of the Columbian Exhibition’s choir contest. Having this contest close to “Utah Day” was necessary for the choir’s willingness to make the trip to Chicago. Threatening not to compete in the choral competition unless such arrangements were made, the fair’s director, General R. Davis, made willing accommodations for the choir, including complimentary World’s Fair passes to help allay costs. Word of the Tabernacle Choir’s participation was sent out by telegraph all over the US, generating immediate inquires and great interest from all over the nation. On Wednesday, two days after their Monday, September 3 arrival by train, the Tabernacle Choir

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628 “In Jackson County!” Deseret Semi-Weekly News, September 5, 1893. Upon returning to Utah from Chicago, President Woodruff spoke on the kind treatment and enjoyable time he and his companions had enjoyed at the fair. He also referred to their reception at Independence, Missouri, where the mayor and citizens now turned out to meet them, whereas in 1834 he and his companion who traveled through that section of country had to hide by day and travel by night in order to escape the death which the inhabitants had intended to inflict upon them. Lyman, ed., Candid Insights, 417-418.
serenaded General Davis so as to extend their gratitude. According to the *Chicago Times*, Davis was “visibly affected” by the Choir’s honoring of him with a special performance and the gift of a cane made from the wood of the great tabernacle, followed by cheers from “the followers of Brigham Young.”

Finally, on Friday September 8, the Choir competed against three other professional choirs, two from Scranton, Pa., and one from Ohio (known as the Western Reserve Choir). The competing choirs sang the same selections, and at the end, the judges admitted the difficulty in discerning a victor. The judges of the choirs said the Mormon Choir and one of the Scranton Choirs were almost identical in performance. There were one or two points, however, where the Scranton choristers were nearer perfection than that of Utah. Though there was talk of dividing the prize evenly, the Mormon Choir was eventually awarded second place. This judgment though accepted gratefully and peaceably, prompted partisan expressions by those who felt the Utahans had been discriminated against. Even contestants from the other Scranton Choir protested that the Mormons sang better than all competitors and thus deserving of victory.

President Wilford Woodruff also complained privately in his diary,

> I think without Doubt that our Quire was the Best & should have had the first Prize But the Quire that took the first Prize was Welsh and the Welsh furnished the Money And it Could hardly be Expected that they would give it to a Mormon Quire Though one of the Judges said the Salt Lake Quire ought to have it.

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631 Staker, *Waiting for the World’s End*, 397. Abraham H. Cannon wrote in his journal on September 13, 1893: “The Tabernacle choir returned this morning early from its trip to the World's Fair at Chicago [Illinois]. They bring with them the second prize of $1,000. awarded for
The *Deseret News* recorded proudly that a noted organist, one Professor Radcliffe of the Congregational Church, had also given as his opinion to an unnamed reporter that the Mormon Choir should have won first place. Whether the choir was discriminated against or not is unclear, but what is clear was that the choir had an enormous impact on those in attendance, and as stated in the Utah commissioner report, for the Tabernacle Choir “to be almost if not quite equal to the best talent the country could produce was something for the west to be proud of.”

The choir repeated its success the next day (September 9) during “Utah Day.” In what Reid Neilson considered to be the Mormon “Cinderella moment,” the Tabernacle Choir was invited to provide the dedicatory music for the official placement of the iconic Liberty Bell at the Columbian Exposition. That afternoon at Festival Hall, the choir again sang as part of the Utah Day celebration. Performing before a cautious but curious audience of between three and four thousand, the choir two-hundred and fifty melted its reserve. The *(Chicago)* Sunday Herald enthusiastically reported of the event:

> Festival Hall has echoed with the music of many famous organizations, but it never witnessed more enthusiasm than followed the Mormon choir’s “Star-Spangled Banner” at the opening of the exercises. The three

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Mormon leaders glowed with pride as the audience burst into applause when their pet choir finished.\footnote{394}

As on the previous day, the audience went “wild with enthusiasm” and demanded an encore, with some shouting “Three cheers for the Mormons!”\footnote{635}

In speaking before the large crowd assembled on “Utah Day,” one fair official candidly confessed that he had visited the Utah Exhibit out of duty, rather than desire, because “deep down in my heart there was a strong prejudice against the people of Utah.” However, “after listening to the music of your great choir I have changed my mind.” He emphatically explained that this change of heart was not mere “enthusiasm of the moment,” but instead could “not find it in my heart to mistrust a people possesses of such musical ability, which is certainly the outgrowth of refinement and noble aspirations.” He added that his feelings were not unique as “I am only one of thousands here to-day whose sentiments in regard to Utah and her people have changed.”\footnote{636} Governor West expressed hopeful optimism that “widespread prejudice against Utah and her citizens” was now past. Thanks to the effects of the Utah exhibit and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the negative “feeling among the masses of the people” had been obliteraled, “and the good seed sown will continue to bear fruit for years to come.”\footnote{637}

\footnote{394} “Mormon and Gentile: Join Hands Heartily on Utah Day,” \textit{Sunday Herald} (Chicago), September 10, 1893, 8.


\footnote{636} Ibid., 52.

\footnote{637} Ibid., 59, 42-43.
Notwithstanding such optimism, mistrust against Utah and its inhabitants was far from obliterated. Nevertheless, these optimistic expressions demonstrate new expectations of public acceptance and respect was indeed positive for Mormons to the extent that they were identified with both an amorphous and identifiable religious and cultural Americana and the larger, secularized image of “Utah.” The very fact that “Utah” was accepted at the more secular exposition while “Mormons” were publicly excluded from the Parliament of Religions demonstrates the dynamic at work. Nor were Mormon leaders slow to appreciate this secular success in the interests of their faith and the seriousness those at the fair seemed to provide. George Q. Cannon, speaking to the Saints after his return from the exposition, ignored the affront from the Parliament of Religions to focus on acceptance in the fair’s White City. “At Chicago everything went off in the most pleasant manner,” he said emphatically. As had Mormon women leaders, Cannon positioned Mormonism squarely in the progressivism that characterized American secular society. “I am thankful,” he continued, “to see people free from prejudice; to see them look at the Latter-day Saints as they truly are; to see us in our true light, and recognize the fact that we are struggling, with them, in our way, to advance the human family and to make progress.”

Thus, as noted by Cannon, the fair represented the first time in Mormon history that the American public took Mormonism and its people with any degree of understanding and sympathy. Mormon agency was also illuminated in their overcoming of reluctance and fears to eventually agree to efforts at situating

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themselves within this broader national narrative, whatever the cost to earlier struggles of Mormonism and religious liberty. In short, Mormons consciously and intentionally worked within their limited options, but did so in a way that furthered their immediate goals. In the immediate aftermath of the Fair, Mormon leaders felt that their decision and efforts had been justified.

Upon the closure of the Columbian Exposition in October 1893 general conference, Apostle Lorenzo Snow remarked: “A great change had come over the feelings of the people of the world in reference to us—especially with the people of our nation.”639 Eighty-five-year-old President Wilford Woodruff recorded with satisfaction in his journal: “There has been the Greatest Changes taken place Concerning the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints during the year 1893 Ever known since its Organization.”640 Apostle Heber J. Grant, then age forty-six, said, “The prejudice, the bitterness, and the animosity that a few years ago existed in the hearts of the people of this country against the Latter-day Saints, because of the outpouring of the blessings of the Lord upon us had almost entirely disappeared.”641 Grant indicated this was a time for renewed vigor in accomplishing the goals of the kingdom, of admitting past follies, and of moving forward in both progress and humility. “If these things were not foremost in our


640 Staker, Waiting for the World’s End, 399.

hearts,” said fifty-three-year-old Apostle Francis M. Lyman, “then all Israel had need of reformation in this regard.”

Despite this new optimism within the LDS Church, it is unlikely that Mormons at the World’s Fair would have understood Turner’s “frontier thesis” in the same secularized ways he intended. For Mormons, the closing of the frontier coincided with the waning bigotry and prejudice in light of their success at the fair, whereas other Americans understood the frontier’s closure as the ending of the barbarism on the frontier that Mormonism had become identified with.

Clearly, the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 had significant and unexpected consequences for the Mormons and other Americans in how they saw each other and in how they perceived themselves and their religious institutions, but also how such visions redefined notions of Americanism and its role in national progress. Much of this effect stemmed from how Mormons and non-Mormons decided to present themselves and their religions at the World’s Fair. The Utah exhibit revealed this new optimism of progress and the major transformations that were sweeping the country; one that was in line with both providential and progressive determinism (As Senator Vast was to argue, “Plural marriages is a part of their religion, and they hate to give it up, but there is no help for it.”). However the change in traditional religious practices on the part of Mormonism did not result in the shift of two opposing national forces: from “religious” to the “secular,” but rather represents an important development in the creation of these two defining terms.

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It is true that in the post war era, or period leading up to the fair, Mormon rhetoric and practice reflected deep anxiety over the role of religion in the protection and upholding of constitutional government, particularly in response to seemingly unconstitutional anti-polygamy rulings and legislations. Obvious that Mormon leaders had in some ways adopted a less religiously-rooted perspective and orientation, evident in response to the polygamy war and the desire for wider civil and political participation, its decision to participate at the fair reveals a faith that still retained a more traditional and multidimensional perspective toward religion. When the Mormon Choir sang the “Star Spangled Banner” to an enthusiastic and largely Protestant audience, they did not abandon their Mormonism to do so. They shared, as Mormons, a joint American patriotism rooted in American religious Exceptionalism. Just before the fair at the April General Conference of the LDS Church, the Los Angeles Time reported that Brigham Young, Jr. made the statement that “politics are as important to the Latter Day Saints as religion, and should be so considered by the Mormon church.”643 Such a view and related statements had long been part of the Mormon worldview and Mormon conscious deliberate action (agency), however secularized it might appear.

Mormon efforts to re-introduce themselves in a less religious and more secular light, and the success attending these efforts, exemplify the ideas of religious scholar David Chidester regarding the negotiation of the sacred. He argues that Americans have been able to negotiate what is traditionally

643 “A Hard Road,” Los Angeles Times, April 6, 1893, 2.
understood to be sacred ground for non-religious purposes. For example, by looking at American football or even Coca-Cola, we find the secular “doing real religious work in forging a community, focusing desire, and facilitating exchange in ways that look just like religion.” The Utah exhibit demonstrated how the Mormon leaders could negotiate the secular in similar ways, such as their use of the fair in the furthering of largely religious ends. The insights of theorist of religion, Jonathan Z. Smith are also helpful. He explains, “We have not been attendant to the ordinary, recognizable features of religion as negotiation and application but have rather perceived it to be an extraordinary, exotic category of experience which escapes everyday modes of thought.” Human life then, “is not a series of burning bushes.” It is within such “negotiations” and meddling with the profane that Mormon transformation and religious agency must be understood.

Consequently Mormons came to understand their secular participation at the World’s Columbian Fair as after all not so distinct from the larger goals they held as an institutional church. Mormons were not the sole organizers of the Utah exhibit, but they took full advantage of it in ways that increased national understanding of Mormonism and Utah itself. After the crushing severity of the anti-polygamy crusades throughout the 1880s, the Mormons, banned from the Parliament of Religions, intentionally tapped into the secular agenda of the


Exposition for primarily religious purposes and successfully re-introduced Mormon Utah in a way that most Americans could sympathize with and appreciate. They too took their place in a less religiously centered narration of American history and joined in praise of scientific discovery, women’s rights and pioneers, intentionally avoiding discourse that would allude to religious oppression and constitutional injustices. Leaving explicit evangelizing efforts behind, the new Mormon policy avoided even the appearance of proselytizing and stirring up controversies, seeking instead to bridge differences and assuage enmities.

Unlike the contentious partisan and propagandist and ultimately unsuccessful and counterproductive strategy evoked by Roberts in relationship to the parliament, Mormon leaders and participant men and women at the Exposition made the choice to be re-understood on terms broader and more inclusive and less contentious and threatening to all parties offered by the fair. The embrace that Mormon female leaders enjoyed among national suffrage leaders and the cordiality among fair organizers surrounding “Utah Day” and the choir competition, serves as an important contrast of the hypocrisy revealed at the parliament in light of its claims of liberality and inclusivity. This is particularly relevant in the study of religion and its contributions to religious pluralism as it was here that Mormons met their worst fate.

This new participation represents a significant strategic shift on the part of Mormon leaders. Rather than just lobbying congress in protest against hurtful legislation as during the anti-polygamy wars, Mormons learned in 1893 through
actual experience the importance of public opinion and their ability to engage and direct it. However intentional or not, Mormon leaders who invoked Mormon participation at the fair now understood the “writing on the wall.” This enlightenment had a dramatic impact on the intellectual, educational, theological, spiritual and missiological efforts, agenda and strategy of the church as it entered the next century.\textsuperscript{646} Having directly engaged the larger world, the Mormon “light on a hill” may not have been as bright as earlier imagined, but it seemed to be promised and guaranteed to extend further and longer, necessitating a shift in policy, both for the LDS Church and the nation.

One of the more tangible institutional examples of this transformation was in the realm of church education. On June 1, 1893, the church sent out a circular letter in response to national and international strides in secular education, which “seemed to demand like progress in the methods employed in our Sunday Schools in imparting that most important part of all true education,” namely “God and His laws.” The stated policy was to “make haste slowly” in furthering a church-wide training course for teachers centered at Brigham Young Academy (now Brigham Young University). These teacher trainings were deemed experimental, but notably attendance was considered by the First Presidency to hold “the same weight and importance and be accounted in the same light as a foreign mission.”\textsuperscript{647}

\textsuperscript{646} For insight into these shifts, see Alexander, \textit{Mormonism in Transition}.

\textsuperscript{647} Clark, \textit{Messages}, 3:246-248.
That same year, the church established the Church University, which was to become “the head of our Church School system.” The hope was that Mormon youth could gain just as high an education at home as they could abroad. But the overlap and competition in Salt Lake City between this school and that of the University of Utah proved problematic and the Church University was closed in 1894. Following it closure, the First Presidency called Latter-day Saints to “faithfully devote their influence and energy” to the University of Utah in the same degree they had to the University of the Church. In furthering the explicit goals toward nationally competitive and professional instruction, the church endorsed the “purely secular instruction” of Utah’s state institution of higher learning which avoided “any species of sectarian religious instruction.” In conjunction with these secular desires, Latter-day Saints’ Colleges were thus developed in close proximity to the University to fulfill the spiritual training of LDS University students. This decision would prove a harbinger to the church’s later seminaries and institutes of religion adjacent to high schools, colleges and universities internationally.648 Following WWI, the church again reevaluated its secular education program, as it became too expensive to compete with state funded schools. Centralizing its colleges and handing over its academies to the state, the church dramatically expanded its successful religious education program.649 These developments demonstrate the continued relationship that Mormons now held with the state and its secular agenda of progress and

648 Clark, Messages, 3:261-263.

intellectual advancement. Such policies as related to the secular state of Utah and the church’s complimentary role were not devoid of the important lessons of progress and social relations learned in Chicago in 1893.

In related response to the rise in the general educational level in America and Europe, church authorities called for an intellectual upgrading of both ecclesiastical leaders and missionaries. Calling for “more enlightened” expounders of the gospel, the First Presidency wrote a letter marked October 20, 1894 to President Lorenzo Snow and the Twelve concerning the “fact” that “a great proportion of those who go out” on missions do “not do justice to the message of which they are bearers,” and whose lack of knowledge was out-of-sync with “the great work of the last days that one would naturally expect them to possess in view of their high calling and of the exalted origin of the Priesthood which they bear.” The letter marked that “a different class of people” were now interested in the church, and that it “is very desirable that something be done, if possible, to make a better impression upon the world through the medium of our elders.” Many elders in the past “were taken from the plow, the anvil, the shoemaker’s shop and carpenter’s bench,” and some could scarcely read or write. But since those days a great change has taken place in America as well as in European land. Education has become very general, and in many countries compulsory. There is no reason now why any one should be ignorant of book learning, and it seems necessary that our elders should keep pace in this respect with the rest of the world.

Such appropriations of the secular world were not without concern for Mormon leaders, as the “secular” was increasingly understood in contrast with the religious and was often understood as contrasting with an earlier and more explicitly
religious agenda of the church. The letter closed with the warning that such attempts to catch up with the world of learning “should be entirely free from any tendency likely to check the Spirit of the Lord or cause men to depend upon their own learning instead of the guidance of the Holy Ghost.” In a discourse delivered at the Salt Lake City Tabernacle on Sunday, April 18, 1894, church president Wilford Woodruff made a similar emphasis regarding changes within the church and the need for the Holy Ghost. As he states, “we should now go on and progress,” but that such progress was to be framed by an “assistance of the Holy Ghost.”

Consequently, it can be argued that by 1893, Mormon leaders had come to realize that if they hoped to accomplish their goals as a religious people—namely social progress and the building of the kingdom of God—they could not do so based upon popular and persistent caricatures of them and their peculiar religious beliefs and doctrines. Nor could Mormonism achieve these ends without becoming more sophisticated as a people and becoming willing to moderate their religious beliefs or at least emphasize less strongly their distinctive religious practices. Mormons highlighted instead their shared history and goals with every day citizens. Finding inclusion as American citizens who believe in intellectual progress and social reform, as contrasted with the religious exclusionary prejudices of the evangelical era, Mormons moved closer to a position of

650 Clark, Messages, 3:265-266.

651 Ibid., 3:252-255.
acceptance and the dominant notion of Americanness rather than marginalization and stigmatization.

However the dilemma presented by these sometimes competing agendas was highlighted by Roberts in his undelivered address, which was affirming that Mormonism was not only “progressive,” but “destined to be the religion of the age.” For Roberts, Mormon claims to a religious-rooted Exceptionalism contrasted with the parliament’s themes of pluralism and progressivism. Thus Barrows seemed content to allow Roberts to read his apology and defense of Mormonism paper in the dark margins of the fair as a point of compromise, but was decidedly against it defining or even participating in the larger dialogue of the parliament. Far from Mormonism becoming the “religion of the age,” Mormonism seemed to have been rejected at the parliament and Roberts left dejected and bitter. However, in the more secular realms of the fair, Mormonism found more success, not as “the religion of the age,” but rather recast its people as every-day patriotic Americans whose past was indeed reproachable, but who were now seen as having repented of their past and had now become “proper Americans.” However distrustful many remained concerning Mormonism, Turner’s frontier narrative made such a plea believable and even welcome.

It was not necessarily surprising that Mormonism did not find as cordial a welcome at the parliament due in part to the national controversy surrounding polygamy only a few years prior and the parliament’s more focused religious agenda, being less tolerant than was claimed. However, as Mormons and fellow Utahans at the World’s Fair recast the Salt Lake-based church in more secular
ways, Mormonism in the sight of many became a more acceptable religion and was even celebrated by some. For many and no doubt most evangelicals, Mormonism had been an anathema in terms of its approach to both heavenly and earthly realms. For the newly emergent material-secular order also, Mormonism typified the dangers of religion in general, particularly as it was seen as unduly mixed its influence with the state. The reintroduction of Mormonism at the World’s Fair as an apolitical faith brought Mormonism “into line” with what was deemed to be a proper and acceptable level of display of public religiosity and religious pluralism.

Mormon success at the fair had as much to do with presentation as with timing. The nation had imagined the closing of the frontier in 1890 and Turner now linked the fair itself to it. Mormonism at the fair would have been more than a curiosity, but rather a living example of the closed frontier and its powerful effects. Mormons embodied the barbarism of the frontier, together with the civilizing effects of the nation’s Christianization efforts. With the real and imagined closing of the western frontier and the era’s newly embraced dichotomy of the secular and the religious, much had now changed in how Americans thought about themselves and their neighbors and their respective religions. At the Columbian Exposition of 1893, the Parliament of Religions sought to define and embrace and appropriate this new and transformed secular-scientific world of progress, and Mormonism had an important role to play.

As seen at the parliament and the larger fair, the scientific study of “comparative religion” had both its critics and apologists of religion. One thing that was
certain was that new ideas were breaking down older theological assumptions regarding the structure and shape of American society and civil governance, leaving a new space where religious minorities could redefine themselves and find inclusion. In this context where a newly defined religion was being set aside for the newly imagined secular, the Mormon case in point provides an example of the religious as it gained ground in its re-appropriation of the secular, adding an important nuance to what has been termed the “Secular Revolution.” As will be seen with the Reed Smoot hearings, the evangelical hegemony of the nineteenth century had been contested, but it retained much of its religious and cultural influence and impact in the next century as reflected in Smoot’s opposition and the later emergent fundamentalist movement and response even to the politicized secularism of the progressive movement. Mormons at the World’s Fair of 1893 expose the new creation of a secular territory that would later form the contests of the next century and it’s marginalizing of religion. And in doing so, encouraging what would become the new definition and understanding of religion in relation to the state and Mormonism and its entrance into America’s religious pluralism during the progressive era and into the next century.
Chapter 7

THE REED SMOOT HEARINGS AND THE DEFINITION OF “AMERICAN”

“And here let me add, the feelings of pure and unalloyed loyalty to our government which were deep-seated in the hearts of the Mormon people then, are still a part and parcel of our very being now, and indeed could not be otherwise, for the simple reason that as a community, we are an integral part of the nation itself, and the God whom we worship is the God of this nation.”

–Joseph F. Smith, 1907

Convened some ten years after Mormonism’s dramatic participation (and non participation) at the World’s Fair of 1893, the Reed Smoot Hearings of 1904–07 provide further insights into shifts within American history and the often difficulty in distinguishing between the imagined dichotomy of the secular and religious. Along with the fair and the anti-polygamy crusades, this episode also represents an important aspect of Mormon transformation, and one that similarly must be contextualized within the broader dynamics of America’s religious and political transformation taking place at century’s end.

Upon winning a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1903, Reed Smoot (1862-1941), an apostle in the LDS Church, generated a public furor, leading to the accusation by a majority of his fellow senators that he was unworthy of the position. It was alleged that his election symbolized and demonstrated an unacceptable breach of the heretofore commonly perceived but little observed boundary between church and state and thereby understood as threatening to the stability of the republic itself. However, other issues at play fed this perception and opposition, namely

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long-held stereotypes and misperceptions of Mormonism and its continued practice and acceptance of polygamy and cohabitation.

Despite the optimism that had been generated by the Mormon presence at the fair, prejudice against Mormons proved more resistant. Though the Protestant national influence had been significantly weakened by 1893, it was still a potent social and cultural force and Mormonism was still its pronounced antithesis. Through the “secular” aspects of the World’s Fair, Mormonism became a recognized national faith, and a viable contributor toward national progress, offering living proof of the truthfulness behind the newly articulated “frontier thesis.” As the Smoot Senate victory in 1907 would reveal, evangelicals were still wary of and distrustful of Mormonism, but they were no longer in a position to altogether marginalize them from American public life. 1893 was not the end of this cultural war, but rather revealed a new level of uncertainty and ambivalence and powerlessness of a particular theological ethos that had earlier defined the nation.653

As symbolized in Turner’s presentation before his professional colleagues at the fair, it seemed as if the parliament had opened a more global frontier, one

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653 This struggle was perhaps most clearly marked by the intense national debate over closing the fair on Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, which many equated with a defeat to national piety. Though the courts declared the fair to remain “open every day,” fair organizers offered on Sunday “music of a sacred nature,” a “quiet Sabbath” for the few buildings that were to remain open, and a hope that Christian preaching “will be carried on.” The Chicago Times referred to legal struggles over the Sabbath as “agony” and “tortuous.” But, as stated in a Chicago paper, “since no Judge will close the Fair Sundays why not open it enthusiastically?” “Wide Open on Sundays,” The Chicago Times, September 7, 1893, 1. The fair remained open on Sundays, but it was clear that the struggle to retain the Sabbath for all attendees (regardless of their faith or non faith) of the fair was to remain. According to Burris, Exhibiting Religion, 139, 176, the fair’s attempts “to separate religious concerns from secular ones proved unfeasible. The secular encroached upon the religious determinedly in the exposition setting, finally leaving even the Sabbath in its wake.”
whose effects would be seen for decades to come. The adoption of the secular, and the pluralism promoted by Utah’s presence at the World’s Fair, despite calls for unity and exclusion from the parliament, demonstrates the dawning of a new era for both Mormons and the nation within an international context and newly formulated secular-science. The World’s Fair had furthered the possibilities of this redefinition of American religious liberty, but it would be in Smoot’s victory over the theologically-fused Senate that Mormonism began to be granted the privilege that accrued to being counted “truly American.” Though many have heralded these dynamics as the bringing in of American’s religious pluralism as proof of American progress, we must be careful in our assessment of what exactly this pluralism looks like and under what definitions and prejudices were religious groups allowed to participate.

For evangelical opponents of Smoot, it was not that Smoot was religious (as such was considered a virtue), or even that he was a religious leader (as there were plenty of those in politics), but it was that his was the wrong kind of religion, and his apostleship only worsened the offense. As evangelical opponents exaggerated the importance of Smoot’s election to the preservation of Protestant privilege in the Senate, they unintentionally illuminated a level of religious influence in the state that belied the claims of separation of church and state and even revealed as hypocritical and bigoted the sentimentalities of a new progressive and more secular era. As such, Smoot’s ultimate victory furthered a new set of exclusionary definitions as articulated by a newly emergent secularized nation regarding the role of religion in the state. For Reed Smoot, inclusion into
the Senate depended upon his sexual orthopraxis and claims for neutrality of religion within the public sphere.

Not surprisingly, Protestant ministers, numerous denominations, and various Christian organizations felt the most intense threat from Smoot’s election and led the protests to preserve the integrity of the Senate and nation against alleged breaches of the Constitution and American (“Christian”) civilization and culture by Mormonism. The fact that Smoot ultimately retained his seat after an intensive four-year investigation and the negative vote of the investigating committee suggests an important shift in the power dynamics of American politics between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A key factor in this shift was the loss of hegemony by the mainstream Anglo-evangelical base, signifying an important transformation in the role and place of religion in American public life. The certainty with which Americans once held evangelical

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654 The display of apparent denominational unity aligned against Smoot by Christian churches throughout the nation was so strong that Mormons, like Catholics earlier, often failed to make any distinction among them. Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, as well as numerous Protestant associations, missions, and assemblies all played a prominent public role during the Smoot hearings. Major black denominations also shared the concerns of their Anglo counterparts. Even the Reorganized Latter Day Saints joined these anti-Smoot efforts. Notable exceptions were the Roman Catholic Church, and to a lesser degree, the Lutheran. The reasons for this minimal reaction against Mormon polygamy by Catholics and Lutherans requires further investigation, but a few articles from the Washington Post in early 1904 offers insight. Here, the Post noted the “debasing” and “brutalizing” influence of polygamy, but reminded its readership that the great Protestant reformer Martin Luther not only declared polygamy scriptural, but gave permission to Landgraf Philipp von Hessen to marry a second wife (whose first marriage was for purely political reasons). The Pope himself made an exception for the crusader Count Gleichen (Ernest III) of the once sovereign house of Hohenlohe to marry the Sultan’s daughter, where he returned with her (as his new wife) to live with him and his former wife in Germany. Finding this union sanctioned by the Pope, the Count’s first wife accepted the new tripartite union, and they all lived, according to the Post, “happily ever after.” Anthony J. Gavigan, “Luther and Smoot,” Washington Post, February 1, 1904, 9; “Rulers with Many Wives,” Washington Post, March 27, 1904, E7. For more on Luther and polygamy, see Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), 223–24, 293.
Protestantism had now become less sure amid the currents of modernity and the growth of pluralism and secularism. In short, the Smoot case demonstrates not only a “coming of age” for the Mormon religious institutional church, but simultaneously, one for the American religious community and the republic itself. Examination of these national transformations reveals significant connections between a newly emerging Mormon and American identity which found mutual benefit in the re-articulation of the dynamics of church and state and their imagined separation.

These transformations had critical implications for how Americans perceived themselves and their Mormon neighbors. Moreover, Mormonism itself experienced significant shifts in self perception as American citizens and how those outside Utah would perceive them. This chapter explores what it meant to be “truly American” at the turn of the twentieth century and how so-called religious “outsiders” like the Mormons came to identify themselves as Americans and be identified as such within these changing concepts of national identity amidst the turbulent background of what historians call the “Progressive Era.” The Smoot hearings reveal more than a struggle between the newly emergent categories of the secular and the religious and the influence either would wield within American society. It also helped formulate these very categories.

During this time of growing religious pluralism and secularization the recession of the Protestant evangelical hegemony can be clearly seen. Smoot’s ultimate victory symbolized more than the retention of his seat. It also symbolized acknowledgment of his identity as an “American,” despite his religious affiliation.
Though his faith was considered peculiar to most Americans, there was a growing national sentiment that his religion, as suggested in the *Boston Herald* at the beginning of the outcry, was “nobody’s business but his own.”655 This new attitude toward the privatization of religion came from the newly defined realm of the secular as separate from the religious. Thus as long as Smoot’s religion was perceived as minimal in influence, then there was no reason to exclude him, even if he wasn’t a Protestant of evangelical hue.

Although evangelical Christianity lost much of its hegemonic power by the time of Smoot, it still wielded considerable influence and was still very much a factor in the halls of congress. The continued emergence of non-evangelical religions to positions of political prominence directly challenged vestiges of evangelical influence and thus heightened the national importance of the Smoot controversy, making it a battlefield that was to define Americanism and the role of America’s religious diversity and its placement within the public life of the nation.

**Background of the Smoot Hearings, 1904-07**

Reed Smoot was not the first Mormon authority to aspire to high public office. Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith, set the precedent in his bid for the

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655 As reprinted in “The Storm Will Soon Die Out,” *The Washington Post*, Jan 19, 1903. Pg. 6. *The Washington Post* then comments: “That is a correct view of the matter. The constitutional qualifications of the Senator do not require that he shall be equipped with any particular set of opinions on religious subjects. A Senator may be a Christian or an atheist, or entertain any other views that suit him or have no religious views at all. Some of the ablest men who have ever served the country in the Senate have been decidedly non-Christian. What a man believes is nobody’s business but his own. What a man does, if he be an applicant for a seat in Congress, may be the public’s business. Mr. Smoot is charged with no unlawful or immoral act.”
White House in early 1844 just prior to being assassinated by a mob while imprisoned at Carthage, Illinois. Brigham Young was appointed Utah’s territorial governor in 1850 and served until he was replaced by President Buchanan in the Utah War of 1857-1858; George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency served as Utah’s territorial delegate in Congress for ten years before his seat was declared vacant by the Edmunds Act (1882) and before his face appeared on “Wanted” posters offering a $500 reward for his arrest (President John Taylor’s reward was only $300); and Brigham H. Roberts of the First Council of the Seventy, elected in 1898, was denied his seat in the US House of Representative after a brief fight because of his polygamous status and national fears of Mormon political influence. Given this unsuccessful track record of Mormons in politics, a harsh national spotlight again glared on Mormonism with the election of Smoot—a Mormon apostle—to the Senate by the Republican and Mormon majority of the Utah State Legislature on January 20, 1903.656

Only six days later, with the editorial assistance of Republican Edward B. Critchlow, a former U.S. district attorney in Utah, Dr. William M. Paden, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Salt Lake City, as representative of Utah’s Salt Lake City’s Ministerial Association, filed the first petition against Smoot challenging the legitimacy of his election. By January 26, prominent clergymen, business leaders, and public officials in Utah, including Salt Lake City’s mayor,

656 Roberts, Comprehensive History, 6:390; Milton R. Merrill, Reed Smoot: Apostle in Politics (Logan: Utah State University Press. 1990), 8.
signed the petition, giving it significant weight.\textsuperscript{657} Additional anti-Smoot/anti-Mormon petitions came before President Theodore Roosevelt and Congress from throughout the nation and contained millions of signatures. Even many Mormons, recalling the devastating crusades of the 1880s feared the cost of another national crusade and also voiced their opposition against Smoot.\textsuperscript{658}

The major arguments against Smoot and the Mormon Church were “fourfold and woven together,” explained the chief counsel of the House Special Committee, Robert M. Tayler, a former Ohio Senator who had chaired the Special House Committee that had successfully thwarted B. H. Roberts’s seating in the House only five years earlier. These arguments, he declared were “one fabric and not . . . separate threads.” First, he charged that Mormon leaders dictated “in all matters whatsoever, civil and religious, temporal and spiritual,” positioning themselves as authorities in both church and state affairs; second, they use these powers to “inculcate and encourage a belief in polygamy and polygamous cohabitation”; third, they also “countenance and connive at violations of the laws of the State,” regardless of their promises made to the American people and pledges they made in order to become a state; and fourth, they “by all the means in their power protect and honor those who with themselves violate the laws of the land and are guilty of practices destructive of the family and the home.”\textsuperscript{659}


\textsuperscript{658} Michael Harold Paulos, “Under the Gun at the Smoot Hearings: Joseph F. Smith’s Testimony,” \textit{Journal of Mormon History} 34, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 189.

\textsuperscript{659} Smoot Hearings, 1:239, 1.
Smoot understandably declared himself and, by implication, the church innocent of such charges. Nonetheless, as an apostle and senator, Smoot had a “double relationship” with the two major institutions in his life. As the First Presidency put it, Smoot could not escape (and perhaps did not desire to escape) “the interest of the church,” as he pursued his senatorial seat and broader personal interests. “It will not be necessary for us to remind you,” Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund (the First Presidency) quite purposefully reminded him on December 9, 1904, “that the stronger and more complete evidence for the Church is made, the stronger must be your prospects for retaining your seat.”

Thus to retain his seat, Smoot was aware that he had to demonstrate that all the rumors and speculations regarding Mormonism were false, or at least overblown, and that Latter-day Saints could be and should be perceived as patriotic and honorable as all other citizens.

Notwithstanding the 1890 Polygamy Manifesto, much of the opposition came to center on the church’s history of polygamy and political involvement. Thus no matter how sincerely Smoot may have professed his agreement with the church’s decision to end polygamy and its continued honoring of monogamous marriage and the traditional family, the church’s sincerity and his own veracity was markedly suspect. Contributing to this suspicion was the candid testimony of church leaders such as president Joseph F. Smith and Francis M. Lyman, president of the Quorum of the Twelve (being the highest body of religious

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authority in the LDS Church, just below the First Presidency), who told the Senate committee in March 1904 that, although they had not condoned or participated in any post-1890 polygamous marriages, they did continue to cohabit with their plural wives and have children with them. In his testimony before the congressional committee, Smith affirmed that he preferred “to face the penalties of law to abandoning my family.”

Despite his unwillingness to compromise on existing families (for which he paid the maximum fine allowed by law), Smith nevertheless presented the Second Manifesto of the church on April 6, 1904 which prescribed excommunication as the penalty for newly formed plural unions. However, Apostles Matthias Cowley and John W. Taylor (son of earlier church president, John Taylor, who had died in 1887 while in exile during the anti-polygamy crusades), both of whom had married new wives themselves and performed and authorized other post-1890 marriages, dismissed this new move by Smith, at least partly on the basis of Smith’s earlier, personal authorizations of their activities. This division within the church’s leadership revealed the institutional and personal difficulties inherent in such dramatic policy change. It also seemed to

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661 Smoot Hearings, 1:129–31. Reports like “Law of 1890 Violated,” Hartford Courant, March 5, 1904, 2, were common, repetitively declaring that Mormons were still engaging in plural marriages, that Smoot knew all about them, and that President Smith would raise revelation above the nation’s law. See also Paulos, “Under the Gun at the Smoot Hearings,” 181–225; During Brigham H. Roberts contestation over the retention of his House seat in 1898, it was apparent that he was still practicing polygamy, not justifying it as an interpretation of the 1890 Manifesto. He held the same interpretation Smith did, that the Manifesto spoke against future marriages and did not invalidate already established families. See Madsen, Defender of the Faith, 247.

justify fears that Mormonism could not be trusted in keeping its promises to obey
the laws of the nation.

As rumors of new marriages continued to circulate and as these two
“renegade” apostles retained their positions in the quorum, national suspicion and
outrage, rather than patience attended the new policy. By mid-1905, national
opposition toward Smoot and the church had increased significantly. Smoot’s
attorneys reminded President Smith that, if the church could not prove its
sincerity by strong action, not only was Smoot’s seat in jeopardy, but “a
constitutional amendment and perhaps confiscation” of church property were real
threats.663 As president of the Twelve, Lyman vigorously scolded his colleagues
in the quorum: they “must sustain the stand taken by President Smith and must
not talk nor act at cross purposes with the Prophet. What has already been done is
shaking the confidence of the Latter-day Saints. We are considered as two-faced
and insincere. We must not stand in that light before the Saints to the world.”664
Embarrassed and frustrated that his own quorum was providing his political
enemies with ammunition, Smoot complained to his friend Jesse M. Smith:

We have not as a people, at all times lived strictly to our agreements with
the government and this lack of sincerity on our part goes farther to
condemn us in the eyes of public men of the nation than the mere fact of a
few polygamous cases of a polygamist before the Manifesto living in a
state of unlawful cohabitation.665

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665 Smoot, quoted in Merrill, *Reed Smoot*, 52.
Both Lyman and Smoot represent a new and growing concern within Mormonism in the aftermath of the earlier polygamy controversy and World’s Fair to take public relations more seriously. Moreover increased sensitivities related to external national changes inspired important alterations to church policy and doctrine. The Smoot controversy illuminated a church and leadership beset by external and internal challenges and changes.

Obviously, much was at stake for both the church and those who wanted Smoot ousted. Senator Henry C. Hansborough (R–North Dakota), who voted against Smoot when the full Senate made its decision, defended himself: “Were I to fail to do otherwise, I should feel that I had condoned every offense ever committed against good morals and the written laws of the country by the Mormon Church.” Smoot followed this logic, writing as early as December 16, 1902, to John Q. McQuarrie, president of the Eastern States Mission headquartered in New York and a personal friend, “If they can expel me from the Senate of the United States, they can expel any man who claims to be a Mormon.” In other words, the Smoot hearings were as much about re-identifying and affirming Mormonism as both Christian and American and its adherents as due full citizen rights as it was about saving Smoot’s national political career.

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667 Reed Smoot, Letter to John G. McQuarrie, December 16, 1902, quoted in Merrill, Reed Smoot, 31.
The month following the filing of the Paden and Critchlow petition within the Senate, Julius C. Burrows, Republican senator from Michigan, introduced a “Citizens Protest” to the Senate on February 23, 1903, that turned the case over to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, which he chaired. John L. Leilich, superintendent of Missions of the Utah District for the Methodist Episcopal Church, joined his petition to Paden and Critchlow’s three days later on February 26.\textsuperscript{668} However, his sensationalist petition which wrongly declared Smoot a practicing polygamist backfired. It helped to discredit Smoot’s opposition, and induced the threat of a libel suit against him by Smoot. It also brought severe criticism from the Ministerial Association and on March 21, twenty out of twenty-five pastors of the Methodist churches in Leilich’s jurisdiction asked his superior in Denver to move him to another field.\textsuperscript{669} Nevertheless, Leilich’s false claims helped foster the prejudiced sentiments that fueled anti-Smoot assemblies and religious rallies. Meanwhile in DC, the intensity of the hearings waxed and waned as petitions and letters came in droves before Congressmen; until finally the charges against Smoot were proved false and dropped and his seat was confirmed on February 20, 1907.\textsuperscript{670}

On a broader canvas, the Reed Smoot hearings, though understood as a political matter and taking place within the nation’s highest political venue, reveal the conflict and interplay among the numerous ideologies then vying for national

\begin{footnotes}
\item[668] Merrill, Reed Smoot, 34.
\end{footnotes}
attention and position. Indeed, as this chapter argues, the hearings were so
theologically and politically fused that it is easy to see how Congress perceived
Smoot and his unorthodox brand of Christianity as a dangerous threat. The
evangelical crusade-like tone of the hearings expressed not merely an attempt to
preserve the “honor and dignity of the United States and their Senators in
Congress,” as Paden’s original protest stated. It was also an ill-disguised effort to
preserve the hegemony of an evangelical Protestant ethos that had been dominant
throughout the nineteenth century.\(^{671}\) In other words, the Senate’s “honor and
dignity” was code for the government’s traditional Protestant hegemony, which
Smoot’s presence seemed to undermine.

Notably this latest defense of a waning evangelical hegemony was played
out against a new reality—the closure of the Western frontier. Until the closure of
the frontier, Kathleen Flake explains that Protestant homogeneity and hegemony
were traditionally preserved by sending unwanted groups to the “apparently
limitless American frontier.”\(^{672}\) Now, however, as proclaimed by Turner at the
World’s Fair, the frontier had closed. Moreover, Mormon Utah and statehood had
become an undeniable reality within the nation. For many, Smoot’s election made
the reality disturbingly apparent.

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\(^{671}\) U.S. Senate, Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Proceedings before the Committee on
Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests against the Right
of Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat*, 59th Congress, 1st
07), 1:1 (hereafter Smoot Hearings).

Protest

In addition to the protests of his colleagues in the Senate, Reed Smoot and Mormonism also had to face hostile popular opinion, much of it enunciated in resolutions, votes, and media articles and cartoons. Press devoted to religious and secular issues as well as popular comic weeklies frequently depicted Smoot as a clown, buffoon, or puppet, while Mormonism was a kind of monster or serpent threatening the vitality and health of the country. These themes and images had been common during the days of early church leaders such as Brigham Young and John Taylor, but the weeklies revived these images during the national crusades against Smoot, demonstrating an important connection between Smoot’s opposition and those against the earlier church.

A particularly effective image used from the beginning of this period depicted Mormonism as an octopus, many-armed and hard to kill. Polygamy was one of the much-feared tentacles, insinuating itself into the nation’s institutions despite the 1890 Manifesto. Dr. Charles L. Thompson of New York, secretary of the Presbyterian Assembly, in a widely publicized 1903 speech, summarized both popular fear and that of his church and the wider Protestant establishment: “There is a moment . . . to seize it [Mormonism] . . . . It is when it thrusts forth its head. It has done it. Its high priest claims a senator’s chair in Washington.” Thompson concluded to great applause from the assembly: “It [Mormonism] is not to be

educated, not to be civilized, not to be reformed—it must be crushed.”

Thompson’s militaristic imagery evoked not just an exclusionary but a hostile attitude toward Mormon participation in American politics that had long been popular.

Such violent rhetoric also reflects highly charged religious sentiments that continued to inspire and inflame endless public protests, whose aims were not just to eradicate polygamy or unseat Smoot, but to destroy Mormonism from the now-closed national frontier. Much of the logic behind Smoot’s opposition was that Mormonism was perceived to be inherently wrong and thus could not be reformed, thereby explaining why it provoked such wholesale enmity. This campaign against Smoot can be characterized as another national crusade against Mormonism, every bit as focused as its predecessors were focused on making Protestant religious cultural and political hegemony complete and America as a righteous and Protestant nation.

Smoot’s opposition was not just against Smoot, but more importantly, were for the reestablishment of a weakened Christian civilizationism as exposed at the World’s Fair. As had been the case in the previous anti-polygamy crusade,

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675 This hostile attitude toward Mormonism can be further seen in the heavy use of “wartime” metaphors to describe the events surrounding Smoot and the LDS Church, such as Joseph F. Smith taking “fire” from the committee, as well as newspaper titles like “War on the Mormon Church.” See New York Times, November 9, 1903, 2. As linguistics professor George Lakoff recognizes, metaphors are not random, but rather illuminate the mental structure of how we conceive of them, thus framing our actions; as he put it, “we act according to the way we conceive them.” George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (1980; rpt., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 5.

volunteer societies united in defense of a righteous and religiously orthoprax nation. In the forefront of this crusade against Smoot were numerous national women’s organizations including the National Congress of Mothers, the Inter-Denominational Congress of Women of Washington, and Salt Lake’s Ministerial Association. All were pan-denominational volunteer movements that made anti-Smoot/anti-Mormonism their primary activity throughout the Smoot hearings.  

Protestant churches in Utah, evangelical ministers, and women’s organizations were among the many voices raised to decry Smoot. Methodists were especially well known in Utah for their anti-Mormon conferences in the early new century. Ecumenical alliances were also formed in opposition. The Ministerial Alliance of Salt Lake City, led by William Paden, became the major player in this local attempt to expel Smoot from office and embarrass the Mormon Church. This alliance helped organize and unite the state’s once-divided evangelical churches to forge an alliance and cooperate in opposition to Mormonism.

Paden’s anti-Mormon efforts to stir popular sentiment benefited from an accident of timing. In May 1903, at the beginning of his local crusade, a large number of Presbyterian ministers from eastern states were passing through Salt Lake City by train en route to a general assembly in Los Angeles. Salt Lake’s Ministerial Alliance solicited their cooperation and distributed several pamphlets

677 National newspapers throughout the Smoot hearings featured such provocative titles as “Mothers Denounce Smoot,” “Women Unite against Smoot,” “W.C.T.U. Denounces Smoot,” and “Signed by 1,000,000 Women.”

focused on the more sensational and threatening aspects of the “Mormon Question.” According to B. H. Roberts, the Ministerial Alliance gave these ministers more than a thousand pamphlets, which they distributed at the General Assembly. It was also reported that these same pamphlets would be presented to the Baptist Conference in Buffalo, New York; the Congregational Conference in Portland, Oregon; the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, the YWCA and YMCA conventions, and the Inter-Denominational Association of Women.\textsuperscript{679} So successful was this nationwide campaign that the New York Times found it noteworthy that the thirty-second annual conventions of the New York and the New Jersey Evangelical Lutheran Synod adjourned without passing a resolution protesting Smoot’s election.\textsuperscript{680}

As occurred in reaction to the Mormon practice of polygamy, Protestant volunteer societies heightened the rhetoric and importance of Reed Smoot into that of an emotional national preoccupation, thus once again translating the “Mormon question” to that of a national crisis. One of the most disconcerting protests against Smoot came from the Interdenominational Council of Women for Christian and Patriotic Service. They warned in February 1903 that Mormons took secret oaths to “avenge upon the Government of the United States the death of Joseph and [Hyrum] Smith,” thus associating Smoot with treason.\textsuperscript{681}

Orchestrated and choreographed anti-Mormon crusades appeared to have

\textsuperscript{679} Ibid., 1:73.


influence upon the nation and on proceedings of the Senate. In fact, so widely established and uncritically accepted were notions of Mormon anti-Americanism and treachery that Burrows, the chairman of the Committee on Privileges, remarked that it was “impossible for the committee to hear all the protestants.”

Indeed, these protests were said to have come from every state and territory in the nation, in “hundreds of thousands of documents.”

In the halls of Congress itself, Robert Tayler assumed his role as chair of the committee and did not feign impartiality. Not reticent in expressing his opinion that Mormonism threatened the “sacred pledges of the past,” Tayler saw his political appointment as counsel for the complaints against Smoot as both a patriotic and religious obligation. Assuring the committee that his motivations were not “anti-church” bigotry, Tayler declared himself to be the voice of liberty. This fight, as he phrased it, lay “at the foundation of democracy of Thomas Jefferson and the republicanism of Abraham Lincoln. It is the sunlight and air of every true patriot.” Thus according to Tayler and others, the protest against Smoot was not merely a narrow political concern within American governance but represented a struggle “as deep as the human soul, as broad as life.” Tayler questioned whether a Mormon could be a good American, and thus capable of holding public office, as they countered the republican higher law that countered both relics of barbarism (polygamy and slavery). In his first protest, Tayler argued that Smoot’s church “assumes to exercise, supreme authority in all things

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682 Smoot Hearings, 1:70.

683 Merrill, Reed Smoot, 38.
temporal and spiritual, civil and political.” As a member of this church, Smoot, because of “his covenants and obligations,” was “bound to accept and obey” the church in all “things spiritual or things temporal.” 684 Under such loyalties, being a member of the church made it impossible to separate church and state, and thus at odds with Jefferson’s separation ideal.

By evoking the names of Jefferson and Lincoln Tayler argued that his fight was not rooted in religious “hysteria” but an attempt to preserve the propriety and integrity of government itself. 685 In the context of the time, Tayler was in fact appealing to national concerns as he and others perceived them. The history of polygamy, rumors of continuing polygamy, and the supposed church “dictatorship” had long positioned Mormonism as being at odds with nationally cherished ideals of monogamy and democracy. Thus notwithstanding very public changes regarding church teachings and strategies related to polygamy and participation in the political arena, they continued to be central points of reference throughout the proceedings. The idea of a Mormon, not to mention one of its highest leaders, sitting in the highest councils of the nation and in charge of making laws for all Americans, for many justified the intense concern echoed in the heated rhetoric of Paden, Tayler, and others.

Despite the intensity of the campaign and level of protest and alarm directed against him and his religion, Smoot remained confident. He adamantly insisted that he had broken no law, local or national, nor was he guilty of any

684 Smoot Hearings, 1:984, 42.
685 Ibid., 1:984, 42.
practices destructive to home or family. He declared his election proper and himself endowed with “the patriotism and loyalty expected and demanded from every United States Senator.” Moreover, he was acutely aware of the broader religious and constitutional significance of the controversy. As he told his friend John McQuarrie, he clearly saw that, as a politician, he represented a constituency that was predominately Mormon and thus was perceived as also representing the church: “The ministers will have to show their hand to get anywhere and then the people of the United States will know and realize that this is not a fight against Reed Smoot, but that it is a fight against the authority of God on earth and against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Similar to his desire to retain his seat, the opposition against Smoot was largely religious, but such double standards were not a point of concern for the committee. Smoot had confidence in the constitutional fidelity of the American public, particularly in opposition to overt religious bigotry on the cusp of a new and more tolerant century. Thus he confidently expected that the religious motivations behind his opponents’ attacks would ultimately prove counterproductive.

686 Ibid., 1:32.

687 Reed Smoot, Letter to John G. McQuarrie, December 16, 1902, in Merrill, Reed Smoot, 31.

688 Their “hand” was not only based on falsehood but was an illegitimate exclusion of religious influence in public affairs. Significantly, as this fight against Smoot wore on (not unlike Utah’s four decade-long bid for statehood), the opposition began to look more and more like the sole fight of prejudiced non-Mormon ministers in Utah. This fight proved familiar to an earlier fight against Utah’s quest for statehood, where non-Mormon ministers in Salt Lake City were accused in 1893 of being the main opponents. “Is Utah Fit for Statehood,” New York Times, February 16, 1893, 4.
The Progressive Era, 1890S–1910S

In January 1903 U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt had famously dismissed Mormonism’s religious claims, particularly its temple ordinances, as “foolishness.” But like many other citizens, Roosevelt’s tolerance for the emotionally driven paranoia of the crusade against Smoot and Mormonism waned steadily as the hearings dragged on.689 As noted by historian Harvard Heath, “Pro-Smoot speeches . . . appealed to reason and common sense while the heated fulminations of the anti-Smoot senators seemed too mean-spirited to have much credibility.”690 This changing appeal to rational investigation rather than emotional polemics was characteristic of the mood of the changing era itself. The “Progressive Era” broadened and redefined perspectives on a particular “national myth,” namely, the role of religion in society and how humankind could make more progress by secular, rational means.

The unprecedented transformations that took place on a nationwide scale during the Progressive Era cannot be underestimated. Between 1870 and 1900, the United States went from being an agricultural nation of farmers, artisans, and merchants, to the “world’s foremost industrial power.”691 The rural isolationism of the past had ended, not just for Utah, but throughout America. According to even not-disinterested Congregational minister and social activist Josiah Strong in 1893, “steam and electricity are making the whole world a neighborhood and


690 Heath, “The Reed Smoot Hearings,” 73.

every man a neighbor.” Additional changes chronicled by Strong outlined a new era of significant social, economic, educational, agricultural and urban transformations that inspired rapid change. Indeed, the technology boom revolutionized how Americans lived, refashioning the literal (as well as the social and intellectual) landscape where they took up residence. Moreover, growing divisions in American popular thought deepened with the social realities of urbanization and industrialization. A strong upwelling of social and economic discontent and uneasiness was the inevitable result. Technology brought forth industrialization, which called for the organization of new monopoly like corporate industries, the unemployment of skilled artisans, and the exploitation of poorly paid female, child, and unskilled laborers. “The progress of invention, by causing a continual ‘dropping’ of men,” complained Strong, “produces among operatives a feeling of insecurity which ministers to discontent.” Thus, technology brought joblessness, which creates social and economic instability, and finally “much discontent and not a little distress.” For Strong, such discontent was not cause for despair, for such was evidence of “a progressive civilization,” even a higher human evolution that promised to awaken the churches and redeem America, bringing in the “fuller coming of his [Christ’s] kingdom.”

692 The new sense of optimism was astounding. Henry Adams wrote in 1900: “It is a new century, and what we used to call electricity is its God. . . . The period from 1870–1900 is closed. . . . The period from 1900–1930 is in full swing, and, gee-whacky! How it is going! It will break its damned neck long before it gets through, if it tries to keep up the speed.” Quoted in Paul F. Boller, *American Thought in Transition: The Impact of Evolutionary Naturalism, 1865–1900* (Boston: University of Massachusetts, 1969), 227.


694 Ibid, x-xiii, 344–45.
The national myth, as it had always been, continued to be one of “progress.” However, Strong was arguing that evangelical methods to control and shape these massive progressive transformations were “sadly deficient.” In a tone of prophetic utterance, Strong cautioned that if the churches did not “awake to their duty and their opportunity,” then the “present tendencies will continue until our cities are literally heathenized.” Christian activists like Strong urged a new mission of action, even crusade, for the several Protestant churches, which he hoped would both unite and empower Christianity in the US. Strong called for a hands-on approach, one that harnessed these changes, rather than stood idly by. Strong condemned the popular elitist snobbery of many churches that thought they could afford to sneer at these challenges, rather than anticipate a more democratized approach that included the efforts of all within the Christian churches and communities – even those of the cities and working class. Along with others of the time, Strong recognized that the great transformations of the Progressive Era had left Protestant influence weakened and challenged, exposing the difficulty of traditional churches to solve these new problems.696

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695 Ibid., 253, 255, 201.  
696 Celebrated Reverend De Witt Talmage of the Central Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, demonstrated this condescending sentiment of churches toward the working class in light of industrialization and urbanization: “The fact is, if you had all the churches free, by mixing up the common people with the uncommon, you would keep one-half of Christians sick at their stomach. If you are going to kill the church thus with bad smells, I will have nothing to do with this work of evangelization.” This attitude paralleled that of Brooklyn’s Plymouth Church minister Henry Ward Beecher: “God has intended the great to be great and the little to be little.” Both quoted in Boller, American Thought in Transition, 118–19. Josiah Strong, The New Era, 209–11, expressed grave concern with this form of exclusion, then widespread in churches: “But I fear that a very large proportion are indifferent or worse than indifferent in regard to reaching the masses with Christian influence, under the impression that the church is a kind of religious coterie or ‘steepled club,’ existing expressly for ‘our sort of folks.’ They are under the impression that ‘our sort of
Throughout the nineteenth century, evangelicals provided an important millennial worldview that supported notions of America’s Manifest Destiny and Exceptionalism even though they were constantly in tension with the all-too-real sectarian anxieties and social failings. As the world appeared more troubled and as it became more and more apparent that volunteer societies were insufficient for the task, premillennialism grew in importance among more conservative evangelicals. According to this philosophy, Christ’s advent would follow the destruction of the wicked world rather than the traditional idea that a faithful and righteous nation could prepare the world for Christ’s return to a more perfected earth (postmillennialism).\textsuperscript{697} The major distinction between these two oversimplifications of American millenarianism (pre and post millennialism) is to be found in the basic attitude of optimism or pessimism, which defined “progress,” and thus set the social agenda.\textsuperscript{698} These tensions continued and were even heightened during the Progressive Era and helped set the stage for conflicts between social “gospelers,” modernists and fundamentalists, as well as the

\begin{quote}
folks’ would pretty nearly exhaust the list of the elect; they are willing that the masses should be saved, but not in their church or by their instrumentality."
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{697} George Marsden, \textit{Fundamentalism and American Culture}, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49.

\textsuperscript{698} BYU scholar of religion Grant Underwood, \textit{The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism}, 3–5, 8, 41, 74, recognized that the “simplistic differentiations about whether Christ will come before (pre-) or after (post-) the millennium are hardly sufficient to distinguish these two schools of thought.” The eschatology of Mormonism, for example, “is thoroughly premillennial,” despite its postmillennial evangelical drive, its social sense of responsibility, and its heavy political aspirations. As a general rule, premillennialists are literalists, while postmillennialists were more allegorists. Mormonism, however, represented a mix of figurative, literal, and allusive tendencies in their biblical interpretations. Therefore, the major differences between the two camps can be seen as differences of scriptural interpretation on such key points as what the kingdom will look like, humanity’s role (or non-role) in bringing forth this kingdom, the need for evangelism, and importantly the relation of the state in this coming messianic millennial kingdom.
alliance of liberals and religious activists with various progressive movements. The national myth of a providentially rooted notion of progress that many mainstream Americans had confidently embraced earlier was undergoing intense transition during this era and giving shape to a new myth of progress rooted in a more expansive embrace of modernity and its corollaries. Relatedly, empirical science replaced theological inquiry in more and more universities, deeply affecting the prominence and prestige of the former over the later.699

As illuminated by the World’s Fair, few Americans at the beginning of the progressive era saw these two approaches (the secular and religious) to national progress as entirely separate. Indeed, many nineteenth-century Americans still understood Protestant Christianity as the leading driver and adjudicator of scientific and social progress.700 According to prominent Protestant intellectuals—among them the influential pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn Henry Ward Beecher—natural science would play an

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699 Historian of religion and American culture George M. Marsden, argues the failure of postmillenarianism when challenged by modernity. Fundamentalism, 50–55. As such, the more “socially responsible” postmillennialism was abandoned for a more isolationistic premillennialistic worldview of politics. Ferenc M. Szasz, The Divided Mind of Protestant America,1880–1930 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 72–75, also offers an important overview of the Bible Conferences that continued to grow since 1876, popularizing a form of premillennialism that would continue to define itself against the growing tides of both modernity and liberal Christianity. Adherents of this reactionary movement against modernity and liberalism soon self-titled themselves the “Fundamentalists.”

700 Ethnographer and theorist of religion Stanley Tambiah, Magic, Science, Religion, 17, notes that, prior to late nineteenth-century debates surrounding Darwinism, Protestant theology and modern science were strongly allied. Historian J. Edward Larson, Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate over Science and Religion (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 23, further noted that, by the end of the nineteenth century, evolutionary theory was not anti-religious but had been incorporated into leading textbooks with a theistic twist that reflected prevailing scientific opinion.
important part in bringing forth Christ’s kingdom in America.  

Similarly at century’s end Josiah Strong, who not incidentally was an avid supporter of anti-Mormon movements and women’s organizations, argued that science not only represented an extension of this evangelical kingdom, but was also a new revelation from God. Strong went so far as to explain that scientists could therefore be seen as akin to ancient prophets declaring “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”  

Although religious leaders and elites had been arguing (both for and against) the connection of science and religion for decades, by the early stages of the twentieth century, these two realms were becoming increasingly distant and distinct. As seen in the previous discussion on the development of the scientific study of religion, these divisions represented more of a historical response than an actual definition of either science or religion. In fact, many in the US during the progressive era still did not see much of a distinction or separation between the two.

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701 Nineteenth-century Protestants in America allied themselves with the American philosophy of Francis Bacon, who had established that careful observation and classification of the facts presented the avenue toward scientific truth. This approach was connected to the popular notion of “common sense realism,” which asserted that things were just as they appeared to be. As Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 7, 14–15, notes, far from excluding religion, as the next century would do, scientists could focus on theology as well as geology, needing only to classify the certainties of that subject and avoid speculative hypotheses. “The Bible, of course, revealed the moral law; but the faculty of common sense, which agreed with Scripture, was a universal standard. According to Common Sense philosophy, one can intuitively know the first principles of morality as certainly as one can apprehend other essential aspects of reality.” See also pp. 24, 50, for more on Beecher and the larger theological connection between science and the kingdom of God, which was to be a literal historical event, taking place “in this world,” not otherworldly, but “here and now.” Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation*, 29–30, had earlier argued that redemption of society had its appointed progression, and natural laws could not be ignored. See also a copy of Beecher’s sermon “Evolution and the Church” as reprinted in Gaustad, ed., *A Documentary History*, 342–45.

But as part of the inexorable engagement with modernity and the increasing antagonistic demands of secularization, popular scientific awareness increasingly rejected the authenticity of traditional religious inquiry and faith, defining it as its antithesis. In reaction, many on the other side (traditionalist) began to define religion against and at odds with an emergent science that was deemed its antithesis.\textsuperscript{703} American scientists were beginning to adopt methodologies and entertain questions that were perceived by many as anti-religious and anti-God. This new secular approach to science was understood as threatening to the very fabric of Christianity itself. In particular, Darwinian theories of evolution brought into question the biblical account of creation of the earth and the divine creation of humankind. In response, Charles Hodge, professor of systematic theology at Princeton, agreed that Darwinism, as a symbol of atheistic empiricism, threatened to “dethrone God” in the quest for ultimate truth.\textsuperscript{704} Together with these controversies and challenges from evolutionary theory, German Higher Criticism challenged the authenticity of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, and the infallibility of the Bible. Finally, German moral relativism and atheistic philosophy questioned the very concept of civilization.

\textsuperscript{703} Marsden, \textit{Fundamentalism and American Culture}, 48–51, shows that, as the popularity of premillennialism rose near the end of the century, postmillenarianism did not disappear, but rather transferred hope for the kingdom from this world to the heavens. In many ways, the Progressive Movement represented and manifested this secularization. Although the Social Gospel demonstrates a continued interest in a type of here-and-now amelioration, postmillennialism became secularized in the sense that it dropped many earlier supernatural expectations, becoming more figurative and less literal. For early controversies surrounding Darwinism and religion, see Bert J. Loewenberg, “The Controversy over Evolution in New England 1859–1873,” \textit{New England Quarterly} 8, no. 2 (June 1935): 232–57.

\textsuperscript{704} Boller, \textit{American Thought in Transition}, 22.
itself and the viability of Christianity altogether. The findings of comparative religion, sociology, new anthropological studies, etc. were also problematic. The conflicted challenges were vividly depicted at the World’s Fair and even more so at the Parliament of Religions. By the time of the Smoot hearings, the contradictions and hostilities (both real and imagined) invoked by the forces of modernity had intensified the stakes for all. Thus the national stage that Smoot had stepped onto was one of growing division and uncertainty, one that was both contested and increasingly complex. Although still a force to be reckoned with during the Smoot hearings, conservative evangelicals had already lost enough ground to the increased reality of religious pluralism and secularization that the national mood was more disposed to let Mormonism speak for and defend itself against the barrage of insults being thrown against it.

The Smoot hearings were indicative that Mormonism was also undergoing its own unique responses to the challenges of the era. Indeed, Smoot represented a church that was also responding to and incorporating significant and radical internal changes. Notable was the 1890 Manifesto in response to the anti-polygamy crusades that radically transformed how marriage would be theologically understood and temporally practiced. Similarly the church had

705 German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, following his intellectual forerunners Karl Marx and Ludwig Feuerbach, tore apart traditional notions of good and evil in 1887. He questioned the very value of values, noting that morals are all manufactured to oppress lower classes, priests being the worst offenders and classifying “all religions” as being, “at bottom systems of cruelty.” Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals, 167, 192. According to sociologist Christian Smith, ed., The Secular Revolution, 1, this drastic societal shift can be attributed to the “Secular Revolution,” which occurred between 1870 and 1930. The secularization of American public life represented more of a “contested revolutionary struggle than a natural evolutionary progression.”

706 Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, 126.
responded to the various internal and external challenges presented by the 1893 World’s Fair. However, additional transitions more directly in response to the currents of the Progressive Era were delivered in an address by Mormon president Lorenzo Snow at the Centennial Services in the Latter-day Saints’ Tabernacle on January 1, 1901. In the welcoming in of a new century and new millennium, President Snow explained in his “Greeting to the World” that progress as seen in technology was not purely a human accomplishment. Indeed, human progress was “prompted by His Spirit which before long will be poured out upon all flesh that will receive it.”\footnote{Lorenzo Snow, “Greeting to the World,” January 1, 1901, in Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, 3:335.} It amounted in effect to an enthusiastic embrace of progress by the Mormon people and its leaders. Emmeline B. Wells, noted suffragist and Mormon leader, also echoed this late nineteenth-century view of progress: “The spirit of progress of this age is the work of God.”\footnote{Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, 96.} Though remaining technically premillennial in theological orientation, such Mormon leanings were representative of a practical appropriation of the Progressive Era. Unlike their more conservative evangelical contemporaries, Mormons were not retreating from this increasingly secularized society, but rather found opportunity in it and its professions, particularly of religious pluralism.

In a broader portrayal of Mormonism in this time of transition, Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, in a First Presidency letter to President Francis M. Lyman, referred with pride to the year 1904 as a “building
era.” In this “Christmas Greeting” to the whole church in 1906, the Presidency commented that “a healthy, progressive spirit has been manifested in almost every part of Zion.” In their growing “intermountain metropolis,” Latter-day Saints found themselves better organized internally, pushing forward with larger social improvements, including communication, architectural structures, agriculture, transportation, and medical care.\footnote{First Presidency, Letter to Francis M. Lyman, August 21, 1903, in Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, 4:64–65; The First Presidency Christmas Greeting, December 15, 1906, in ibid., 4:128–32.} There were also improvements in education, ecclesiastics, business, politics, medicine, and proselytizing. Also within the religious realm, the church was refining itself socially, educationally, theologically, and ecclesiastically. For example, in 1894, illiterate missionaries were no longer being sent out; non-tithe-payers were kept from the temple; the importance of serious and accurate recordkeeping was reemphasized in 1902; stake presidents were advised in 1903 to be more selective when calling stake patriarchs; congregational “floating” was condemned in 1902, and by 1905 widespread non-attendance was strongly rebuked; and members who would not abstain from alcohol and did not keep the Word of Wisdom had their memberships threatened.\footnote{These developments are identified in various First Presidency statements during the period. Ibid., 3:265, 266, 288, 315; 4:12, 35, 58, 64, 100, 130, 185.} “The Church is now seventy-two years of age,” President Lorenzo Snow reminded the Saints in his last conference address in 1901. “We are not expected to do the work of the days of our youth, but to do greater, larger, and more extensive work.”\footnote{Lorenzo Snow’s “last address” from Conference Reports, October 1901, ibid., 4:11.} Thus Smoot’s election to the Senate,
and subsequent defense of his seat, was consistent with the church’s expanded sense of progressive purpose and national destiny. Smoot’s success contributed to a feeling of profound change within the church and its perceptions of the place and role of Mormons in the nation.

Although many prominent Mormons initially questioned the wisdom of Smoot’s run, LDS president Joseph F. Smith assured himself and other believers that God was behind such events. With Snow’s passing in 1901 and his influential address on the providence of progress, his successor Joseph F. Smith upheld it as a manifesto of progress that would take the church into the new century. The church may not have become deemed completely American in its approach toward progress, but its acceptance of progress led to Mormons feeling themselves more a part of national life. Smith himself had enjoyed the accolade of thousands as he spoke at the World’s Fair and as he watched on several occasions at Chicago the church’s own choir receive enthusiastic cheers and calls of encore. His full support of Smoot and his carefully crafted and even misleading responses to the inquisitors during the Smoot hearings demonstrate his desire to retain that positive aura felt by the church just one decade prior.

Moreover, Utah Statehood, so long deferred, represented a new level of acceptance of the church. The New York Times quoted non-Mormon Colonel Isaac Trumbo in 1894, an organizer and leader of the struggle to achieve statehood for Utah, as remarking that Utah had much to offer the nation, and that Mormons during this era were “intense Americans.”\footnote{“Sees a Bright Outlook for Utah,” New York Times, July 23, 1894, 5.} Of course, ridicule and
suspicion against the Mormon Church continued during the new century, but it was becoming perceptibly less violent. According to noted Mormon historian Thomas Alexander, the new century had become more conciliatory and open, providing better opportunities for the Church to launch “concerted efforts to explain the Latter-day Saints to the outside world.” However as protests mounted in the wake of the Smoot hearings, Mormonism began to look again as dishonest and evading. Thus this era of internal and external goodwill seems to have been undermined and threatened by the Reed Smoot controversy.

**Voices Against, Voices For**

The “outside world” was changing its mood and temperament as well. Many Americans at the turn of the century still doubted whether Mormons were sufficiently loyal Americans to be entrusted with high public service, and the ground in which this public and multifaceted contest played out was Smoot’s seating. Throughout the hearings, the confidence of Smoot and his supporters had ranged from optimistic to pessimistic, to once again optimistic. The year 1905 proved particularly difficult, especially in light of apostles Matthias F. Cowley and John W. Taylor’s highly publicized refusal to be questioned by the Reed Smoot committee in Washington. Despite internal concerns regarding their defense of polygamy, there were no public church efforts to discipline or even

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714 Heath, “The Reed Smoot Hearings,” 30–33, demonstrates growing resentment against Taylor and Cowley by Smoot and the rest of the nation, particularly for the apparent stigma of insincerity and untruthfulness it placed on Smoot and Mormonism in light of the 1890 and 1904 Manifestos and the Amnesty of 1901.
counter these apostles. Consequently, the church’s credibility was being seriously eroded. Echoes again of the earlier anti-polygamy crusade were being heard.

Smoot advised Smith, “I dread to think of another crusade against our people, and if it should come, we must remember we have not the full sympathy of our own people behind us.”

Beyond the incense felt throughout the nation, Mormons in Utah had found it difficult to reconcile themselves with the many disclosures of the drawn out hearings. To the nation, Joseph F. Smith’s slowness of response where these apostles were concerned supported suspicions of Mormon insincerity and gave revived legitimacy to any and all anti-Mormon attacks. Mrs. Frederic (Hannah) Schoff, president of the National Congress of Mothers and leader of the National League of Women’s Organizations, declared Mormonism in March 1905 “a menace to every home in America.” Mary E. James in her speech at the same anti-Smoot assembly declared the church’s origin “one of fraud and duplicity.”

One month later the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution passed a resolution embodying its view that the Mormon “hierarchy” sought “the overthrow of the government.” Marian Bonsall of Minneapolis, following a two-month-long visit to Utah, declared in July 1905 that Mormon

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Utah was “practically a bit of foreign territory in the midst of our country” and a greater menace than previously thought.\textsuperscript{718}

The nation’s rapidly growing Catholic population also found itself similarly under attack from a Protestant majority concerned to defend a Protestant nation from perceived challenges from the religious and secular realms and to maintain its hegemony. Reaching a height at the time of the Smoot hearings, anti-Catholic rhetoric long paralleled what was also being directed at Smoot and the LDS Church. Moreover, as historian William Shea explains, “Anti-Catholicism [like anti-Mormonism] was never purely a religious matter for American Protestants; it was from the outset a political fear as well, for the Catholic Church was never a purely or merely objectionable religious system.”\textsuperscript{719} Mimicking the sentiments of many Americans, Samuel Finley Breese Morse, developer of the electric telegraph and Morse Code and son of evangelical stalwart Jedidiah Morse, made the comparison that “Popery, from its very nature,” favored “despotism,” whereas Protestantism, “from its very nature,” favored “liberty.”\textsuperscript{720} Catholic immigrants throughout the nineteenth century were, of course, welcomed to the United States, explained the eminent New England pastor Lyman Beecher in 1836, but only as they became “American,” which to him, according to William Shea, meant Protestant.\textsuperscript{721}


\textsuperscript{719} Shea, \textit{The Lion and the Lamb}, 56; emphasis his.

\textsuperscript{720} Quoted in ibid., 60.

\textsuperscript{721} Quoted Shea, \textit{Lion and the Lamb}, 60, 64.
Mormonism and Catholicism were thus deemed un-American and by nature despotic, justifying, even demanding the monopoly of Protestantism within American politics. Even when acting as individuals, Mormons and Catholics found themselves marginalized. As explained by law professor Philip Hamburger, Protestants “ignored the possible distinction between Catholic images affixed to the wall of a schoolroom and the cross and clothing of an individual Catholic teacher.”\textsuperscript{722} Rhetoric of separation supported these social trends and prejudices, allowing for Protestant individuals to influence state programs and governance while excluding Catholics and Mormons of the same rights. As argued earlier, “Separation of Church and State” meant that individuals (Protestants), not churches or hierarchies (Catholics/Mormons), had the identifying markers of Americanism and were thus legitimate players in American public life. This approach would mark the religious opposition against Smoot, but it would take a different turn with more secular minded Americans.

These external conflicts were related to the internal conflicts and transition within the church itself, which accompanied and were exacerbated by the Smoot hearings. In his testimony before the congressional committee, Smith purposefully downplayed and contradicted all that tended toward these earlier fears of Mormonism, namely its hierarchical male despotism, its obfuscating of human agency, and its uniting of church and state. Smith denied that members of the First Presidency and the Twelve were necessarily apostles (“they may or may not be apostles”), and that their divine inspiration was any different than other

\textsuperscript{722} Hamburger, \textit{Separation of Church and State}, 379-380.
members of the church, including women.\textsuperscript{723} Smith made a special point to address the committee regarding the independence enjoyed by each citizen of Utah:

I should like to say to the honorable gentlemen that the members of the Mormon Church are among the freest and most independent people of all the Christian denominations. They are not all united on every principle. Every man is entitled to his own opinion and his own views and his own conceptions of right and wrong so long as they do not come in conflict with the standard principles of the church.

Regarding polygamy, seen as a divine revelation from God, Smith argued that only three to four percent of the Mormon membership followed “the principle,” and “thousands” in the church rejected it as divine, yet “they were not cut off from the church.” Indeed, when pressed by Senator Dubois, Smith responded, “I know that there are hundreds, of my own knowledge, who say they never did believe in it and never did receive it, and they are members of the church in good-fellowship.”\textsuperscript{724}

Senator Hoar used this moment to further question the implications of divine revelation within the church and the ability of Mormons, as now argued in light of the divine principle of polygamy, to reject it.

Senator Hoar. I speak of the revelations given to the head of the church. Is that a fundamental doctrine of Mormonism?

Mr. Smith. Yes, sir.

Senator Hoar. Does or does not a person who does not believe that a revelation given through the head of the church comes from God reject a fundamental principle of Mormonism?

\textsuperscript{723} Smoot Hearings, 90.

\textsuperscript{724} Ibid., 98.
Mr. Smith. He does; always if the revelation is a divine revelation from God.

Senator Hoar. It always is, is it not? It comes through the head of the church?

Mr. Smith. When it is divine, it always is; when it is divine, most decidedly.

The Chairman. I do not quite understand that—"when it is divine." You have revelations, have you not?

Mr. Smith. I have never pretended to nor do I profess to have received revelations. I never said I had a revelation except so far as God has shown to me that so-called Mormonism is God’s divine truth; that is all.

Smith likewise denied that the church unfairly mixed their influence with the politics of the State. To Tayler, Smith claimed that “as to the church,” he acknowledged that he was “absolutely wholly a nonparticipant in every way.” As a citizen, however, Smith claimed every right afforded any other American. As had become clear during Smith’s many hours and days of intense examination, these hearings were not about Smoot, but rather the compatibility of Mormonism with Americanism.

However successful Smith had been in his attempts to allay popular fears of Smoot’s faith in this “visible” church, inaction against polygamy trumped all. The escalation of internal suspicions and denunciations related to the church’s

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725 Ibid., 98-99.
726 Ibid., 162.
727 For more on these calculated responses between Smith and the committee see Paulos, “Under the Gun at the Smoot Hearings” and Flake, The Politics of American Religious Identity, 72-81. Smith’s testimony was published by the Salt Lake Tribune by the colorful former Utah senator and LDS excommunicant Frank J. Cannon. As Smith’s testimony downplayed the importance of revelation, priesthood authority and the role of obedience in the church, Mormons at home were both confused and shaken. See Flake, The Politics of American Religious Identity, 94-101.
failure to enforce either the first (1890) or second (1904) anti-polygamy Manifesto finally reached a climax when it seemed that Smoot’s political life was on the line. Smoot avoided attending the church’s April 1905 general conference so that he would not have to vote for or against Taylor’s or Cowley’s status in the quorum and, although he attended October’s conference, did not vote to sustain them individually, although he did sustain them in the general designation of “prophets, seers, and revelators.” In late October, Francis M. Lyman, president of the Twelve, asked Taylor and Cowley to resign. They promptly obeyed, and new, monogamous apostles were sustained the following April conference. Considering the extent to which this battle was, at least in part, one of public image, the fact that Joseph F. Smith gave Smoot permission to make the resignations known only if absolutely necessary to retain his seat is significant. Still, this action had its desired effect, as it calmed the opposition against Smoot and made later victory possible. Some made the connection in 1905 that Taylor and Cowley had become a necessary sacrifice to save Smoot and by extension the church, one that came with great unease and disappointment.

728 Merrill, Reed Smoot, 57. In reporting on the April 1905 Mormon conference, the Washington Post notes that, in the sustaining of the First Presidency and the Twelve, two negative votes came from the bishop’s section of the Tabernacle, most likely against apostles Taylor, Cowley, and Teasdale. “Revolt of Mormons,” April 7, 1905, 1.


The opposition engendered against Smoot had given rise to a resurgent anti-Mormon “religious crusade” that remained strong. Nevertheless even some leaders and members of the most hostile Protestant churches were questioning the appropriateness of such a politically focused religious crusades. For example, John I. Platt of the Presbyterian General Assembly in May 1904 created pandemonium in the assembly when from the floor of the Assembly he strongly opposed slanderous reports against Smoot and his religion. “Hold on gentlemen,” he insisted, “I have a right to my opinion. I hold this as a political question with which this Assembly has nothing to do.”

Though achieving some support in the assembly, his objection was voted down. Notably, in attacking Smoot, Platt had argued, the Presbyterian Assembly was not attacking Mormonism but the American principle of separation of church and state as he understood it. Truly, Platt spoke as a minority in the assembly, which had opened with a prayer that God would help to expel Smoot from office, but his view certainly represented a growing concern over the role of religion in American public life and an emergent national debate regarding the interpretation of separation and the appropriateness of religious bodies setting the political standards of the day.

Women’s organizations that opposed Smoot, according to the Washington Post, had gained, by the end of 1905, the support of more than two million women. Nevertheless, some women also took the unpopular public stand of

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attacking such crusades as inappropriate. Nationally known and respected suffragist leader Susan B. Anthony, who had mingled with many Mormon women at the World’s Fair, denounced the female voice against Smoot in 1903 as mere religious prejudice and a waste of time: “The idea of crushing polygamy by action against an individual who does not practice it, instead of a general enforcement of the law, seems to be a small way for our country to be acting.”

Although Roosevelt accepted the implications of social Darwinism, he adamantly rejected the earlier stances toward the poor that pastors Henry Ward Beecher and De Witt Talmage, had long espoused. The “social gospel” movement (together with the unlikely synthesis of the “gospel of wealth”) became the new religious hermeneutical lens that men like Roosevelt engaged to solve the ills of an increasingly secularized society. Quoting James 2:18 from the New Testament, Roosevelt once defined his sole religious creed as “I will show my


734 Taken from the idea of organic evolution as popularized by Charles Darwin, “social Darwinism” applied these principles to society. Not only did this philosophy inform the idea of racial hierarchy, but it also bled into justifying one’s class position within society, where the strong, by natural law, get ahead. The poor were to be left to themselves, so as not to disrupt the social world plan. As articulated by Carnegie, the “gospel of wealth” played off these principles of social Darwinism, but deemed it the obligation of the wealthy to increase the wealth of the community. According to this philosophy, the rich had a trusteeship for the poor. The “social gospel” represented a more aggressive social awareness of this obligation to the poor. In this mentality, righteous action, not dogmatic belief, lay at the heart of “true religion.” Consequently, as historian William Hutchison explained, “Social gospel activity meant exposure to minorities and their problems. Quite often, it involved exposure to their religious forms and religious experience.” This emphasis and embrace of the social gospel on the part of Roosevelt helps explain his more sympathetic stance toward Smoot. For more on these social movements of the early twentieth century, see William R. Hutchison, Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 85–88, 101–106, 175, 177.

faith by my works.” Merit and paraxis, not metaphysics, became the standard for Roosevelt and many co-progressives in national politics. Relatedly, Roosevelt had advised Smoot “kindly but firmly” against his 1903 candidacy for the U.S. Senate; and although he later came to actively support Smoot, he was never comfortable with the idea of a senator who was also an ecclesiastical leader.

In early 1903, Roosevelt, when conversing with C. E. Loose, a mutual friend who was also Smoot’s political ally, had two questions: “Is Smoot a polygamist?” and “Are Mormons good Americans?” Loose’s firm defense of Smoot satisfied the president; but when Apostles Taylor and Cowley continued to evade testifying before the Senate committee support for Smoot significantly eroded during the first months of 1905. Even Roosevelt’s relations with Smoot became, in Smoot’s word, “cool,” especially since Joseph F. Smith still required him to keep the Taylor and Cowley’s resignations a secret. Finally, following the church’s reluctant public sacrifice of Taylor and Cowley, and even then, only for the sake of public opinion, Roosevelt threw solid support behind Smoot as he became wholly convinced that the continued national outcry against Smoot and his religion was simple religious persecution. Under these new rules of

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738 Merrill, Reed Smoot, 28.

739 Milton R. Merrill, “Theodore Roosevelt and Reed Smoot,” Western Political Quarterly 4, no. 3 (September 1951): 440–53; the quotation is from p. 441.

religious inclusion, Roosevelt did not see his own ridicule of Mormon temple work and polygamy as prejudiced, but in accordance with the rules of the progressive era that religions now had to fall in line with in their quest for national acceptance. Also in line with this new era of investigation and exhibition, Roosevelt’s decisions were also influenced by the findings of his close friend and journalist Jacob Riis, whom he had sent with an investigative committee to Utah. Following his travels, Riis assured his friend that there was nothing to fear from Mormons and much to respect.

Roosevelt’s subsequent decision to actively support Smoot was an act of principle as well as political and religious courage that generated wide controversy and criticism. For example, women’s groups, particularly the Council of Mothers, for which Roosevelt had once served as its advisory committee chairman, decried the result of his deliberations.741 National newspapers such as the New York Times also editorialized against his decision. A special in the Times noted that Roosevelt’s own friends found his role “extremely unfortunate.” Consequently, “He is believed to have alienated powerful friendships for the party.”742 Frederick T. Dubois, Idaho’s Democratic Senator and former (1880s) active anti-Mormon federal marshal, whom Smoot’s biographer Milton R. Merrill called “the most vindictive enemy Smoot and the Church ever had,” and his equally vociferous wife, Edna, were as outspoken as any could have been against

741 Ibid., 12–13, 146, 162. See also Merrill, Reed Smoot, 92; “Riis Misled President, Says a Senator’s Wife,” New York Times, December 19, 1906, 10.

the president and his sympathy for the Mormon people. Frederick Dubois charged Roosevelt at the closing of the hearings in December 1906 with using his influence to help Smoot and thus declared him a friend of a pernicious “law-defying and un-American organization.” With great contempt, he continued, “Mormonism is more insidious, more dangerous, and a greater menace to our Government and civilization to-day than it was at any particular period when these messages were addressed to Congress. Yet President Roosevelt does not deem the subject worthy of mention in a message filled with suggestions.”

In response to such attacks, Roosevelt explained that he sought to emulate the “unfaltering resolution” and “unyielding courage” of his hero Abraham Lincoln, who stuck up for the “plain people,” rather than the “demagogue.” As “chief” of this “democratic republic,” Lincoln was to Roosevelt the embodiment of the “masculine Christianity” that he had learned at Boston’s Trinity Church when he was a student at Harvard. Young Roosevelt must have been influenced by statements by Trinity’s pastor, Philip Brooks, that it was concern for “one’s self” that represented the “root of every cowardice.” It was the more liberal and expansive socially concerned gospel, infused with “muscular Christianity,” that undergirded Roosevelt’s hardheaded support of Smoot. To Dubois, however,

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Roosevelt’s warm relations with and active defense of Smoot were appalling. As such, he accused Roosevelt in the final phases of the hearings, of breaking the long chain of American presidents who have failed to respond to national threats. To Dubois, Roosevelt was selfishly courting the Mormon vote at the expense of the national welfare and he blasted Roosevelt for doing what “no president heretofore” had done, namely, to make national security “a matter of partisan politics.” Indeed, Roosevelt acknowledged that he welcomed the Mormon vote, but that Dubois’s accusations resonated were overheated polemics.

Hoping to diminish Roosevelt’s influence, Dubois argued two months later, before the Senate took its final vote on February 20, 1907, that not ten senators, if they actually read the testimony, would vote for Reed Smoot. “But I know that strong influences are at work here,” Dubois continued. “The president of the United States is the open friend of the Senator from Utah. He wants him seated. You have got the Mormon vote. You have every one of them, my friends on the Republican side. But it has cost you the moral support of the Christian women and men of the United States.” Roosevelt refused to be swayed. He was convinced, based on investigation and his personal acquaintance with Smoot, that the accusations outlined in the original protests against the LDS Church were “without so much as the smallest basis in fact” and dismissed the women

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747 “Dubois Attacks President,” 7.

crusading against Smoot as manifestations of “hysterical persecution.” A few years later in a letter to Collier’s magazine, he even praised the Mormon people for their “unusually high” standards of sexual morality. When Edna Dubois declared Mormonism a “treasonable organization” and “an even greater blot than was slavery,” and accused Mormon children of being taught to “spit upon the American flag,” Roosevelt declared bluntly, “You don’t know what you are talking about.” He apparently was equally dismissive of any and all organizations that accused Mormonism of being un-American. Public misrepresentation was a political reality for which Roosevelt had little tolerance. In November 1904, Roosevelt announced that all federal departments in Washington were to provide no information and news to the Boston Herald which had published “deliberate falsification” and “malicious inventions” about his own family.

While his support for Mormonism was rooted in his progressive religious and political views, Roosevelt’s support of Mormonism may have been additionally linked to his perceptions of Mormon culture as fostering a stern and rugged individualism and his own valuing of the “strenuous life.” Changing norms of gender and sexuality and accompanying roles may also have been a

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750 Theodore Roosevelt, “Mr. Roosevelt to the Mormons,” Collier’s, April 15, 1911, 28.

751 “Smoot Is Assured of Victory To-day,” 5; see also “Riis Misled President,” 10.

factor. Historian Joan Smyth Iversen makes the important observation that Roosevelt’s support of Smoot coincided with an understanding of sexuality compatible with the new secularism of the Progressive Era.  

Roosevelt and his policies signaled and represented an important national shift in perceptions of male sexuality, from genteel Victorian “manliness,” to a sturdier yet composed “masculinity.”

Crusade in the Halls of Congress

The irony and inconsistencies inherent in the fact that evangelical ministers had spearheaded the stormy emotions raised in opposition to Smoot being seated in Congress were not lost on the senator. The Presbyterian Convention for example, had been forefront in its influence upon Congress to get it to enact anti-Mormon laws that would serve to “stamp it [polygamy] out forever.” However, his hopes that the Senate debates would be ruled by reason and investigation rather than bigotry and paranoia were, for the most part, disappointed. Dubois’s ferocity was only one chord in a loud chorus. Dubois accused Senator Albert J. Hopkins (D–Illinois), who voted in support of Smoot, of placing the Mormon Church above all other Christian organizations. Burrows claimed in April 1905 that to allow Smoot to retain his seat would drag “the churches of this land, Jew and Gentile, down to the level of abomination.”


Women in the gallery applauded his statement.\textsuperscript{755} The very extremity of these statements cast into high relief the deeper issues at stake in the Smoot case. For many of his evangelical opponents, the issue was not control of the Senate, but the country’s fidelity to the religious ideals and identity believed to have been enshrined at its founding. Although overshadowed by the hysteria regarding polygamy, Mormon theology and its relation to traditional Christianity was of great interest, and questions over these matters arose early in the hearings. Late in the afternoon of March 3, 1904, attorney Robert Tayler questioned Joseph F. Smith about the nature of God in Mormon thought. Smith explained that, although the leaders of the church declare that they have divine authority to speak for God, “there is not, and can not be, any possible restraint held over the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints except the restraint which people themselves voluntarily give.”

Mr. Tayler. In your conception of God then, He is not omnipotent or omniscient?

Mr. Smith. Oh yes; I think He is.

Mr. Tayler: But do you mean to say you, at your pleasure, obey or disobey the commands of Almighty God?

Mr. Smith: Yes sir.

Mr. Tayler. Communicated to you?

Mr. Smith. I obey or disobey at my will.

Mr. Tayler. Just as you please?

Mr. Smith. Just as I please.

Mr. Tayler. And that is the kind of a God you believe in?

Mr. Smith. That is exactly the kind of a God I believe in.

Tayler seemed to purposefully highlight the supremacy of man’s will over even that of God’s in Smith’s theology; however, Senator Joseph B. Foraker (R–Ohio) reminded Tayler that this doctrine of “free moral religion” was the same that “every good Methodist believes in.” Moral agency had become a core philosophical issue among early twentieth-century progressives. By tapping into it, Smith placed Mormonism directly in line with other notable politicians who similarly upheld the importance of the human will, like William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. Thus Tayler’s zealousness to embarrass Mormonism demonstrated his inability to engage its theology rationally or seriously. Clearly, Tayler was making more of an attempt at exposition than investigation. However, his rhetoric reflected the relationship between religion and political ideology shared by many evangelical critics of Mormonism. The theology of the former (religion) informed the assumptions and policies of the latter (politics). To Tayler, Mormonism had to be either totally despotic (denying free will) or completely chaotic (God is unable to control his people) before he dared recognize it as viably Christian and by implication “American.” In a land that idealized religious liberty and national unity (however

756 Smoot Hearings, 1:161.

757 For a detailed social and political analysis of moral agency, see Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 50.
illusory), Mormonism had always stood as the quintessential “other,” America’s direct antithesis.

The next morning, March 4, Senator George F. Hoar (R–Massachusetts) continued this challenge against Smith and the Mormon religious worldview by referring to “our scripture—what we call the New Testament.” He was surprised when Smith replied that this was his scripture also. As this simple fact had been known throughout the hearing and even acknowledged the day before by Hoar himself, his accusations were a fairly clumsy attempt to discredit Mormonism as something other than a Christian or biblically based religion. Illuminated also was the ironic paradox that although one of the central concerns over Smoot’s election had been whether Mormonism could separate church from state, here, clearly, was a member of the Senate (Smoot) being “sized up” for political office according to an explicit scriptural model. Nevertheless for all the illusions to constitutional guarantees, an inherently religious national identity was at stake. Predictably, polygamy promptly became the center of this theological wrangling between Smith and the committee. As recounted in part below, after Hoar quoted 1 Timothy 3:2, which states that a bishop must be the husband of one wife, a familiar verse often used by Protestant ministers to discredit Mormon polygamy:

Senator Hoar: I understood—and I am not sure I understood you aright—that it [the injunction of polygamy] was permissive, but did you mean to say that or do you mean to say that it is obligatory, so far as a general principle of conduct is concerned, but not mandatory under the circumstances?

758 Ibid., 1:209.

759 Ibid., 1:179.
Now I will illustrate what I mean by the injunction of our scripture—what we call the New Testament.

Mr. Smith. Which is our scripture also.

Senator Hoar. Which is your scripture also?

Mr. Smith. Yes, sir.

Senator Hoar. The apostle says that a bishop must be sober and must be the husband of one wife.

Mr. Smith. At least.

Senator Hoar. We do not say that. [Laughter] The bishop must be sober and must be the husband of one wife. I suppose that is generally construed to enjoin upon bishops the marriage relation. But I have known several bishops, two in my own State, of great distinction, who were bachelors. . .

To support the idea that polygamy is a legitimate biblical practice, Smith commented that this particular scriptural injunction was given “in the midst of polygamous people, and that all the people believed in the practice of polygamy at that time.” However inaccurate Smith’s commentary might have been, neither Hoar nor any other member of the committee disputed it.

Scriptural interpretation and theological commentary proved an important aspect of both attacking and defending Mormonism as a legitimate American religion. Both sides used this tactic to determine whether Mormonism had a place in civic life. As theological disputes continued, not just against Smith, but throughout the hearings, it grew apparent that Mormons had answers to back up their claims about revelation, temple worship, and most importantly, polygamy. To the chagrin of the committee members, discrediting Mormonism’s claims by appealing to the Bible proved more difficult more frustrating than expected.

Recognizing this, Tayler pushed a new approach that he hoped would decisively expose the incompatibility of Mormonism with American political and social culture.

Thus on April 26, 1904, Tayler attacked Mormonism on the grounds of lack of patriotism and “manhood,” and the restriction of individual choice in the LDS Church. As a witness, he called former Mormon apostle Moses Thatcher. Tayler attempted to present Thatcher as the heroic embodiment of individuality and agency who had been deposed as an apostle for standing up against the powerful church hierarchy. This depiction enabled Taylor to remind the committee again of Mormonism’s breach of church/state separation, an influence perceived as fundamentally different from the influences of Protestantism upon the free moral agency of the individual. According to his superiors, Thatcher had been dropped from the quorum in April 1896 for his “un-Christian-like conduct” and not being “in harmony” with his quorum, and was subsequently replaced by Matthias F. Cowley.

As evidence that he was not “in harmony” with his brethren, Thatcher was accused of hurling heavy public “insults and hard language” against President George Q. Cannon’s ecclesiastic, business, and political endeavors, of being lethargic in his (Thatcher’s) duties as an apostle, and of refusing to put forth any real effort to promote good-will with his colleagues of the Twelve. But he had also refused to sign the Political Manifesto of 1895, which required high officials

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to seek permission for a “leave of absence” prior to running for public office. Thatcher, who had been an unsuccessful candidate for the U.S. Senate in 1895 had accused church authorities of influencing his defeat and also viewed the Political Manifesto as another attempt by the church to control local politics.762 After the election, Thatcher wrote to Lorenzo Snow, then president of the Twelve, demanding an opportunity for a public hearing to counteract what had already been printed about him in the Deseret News, and thus defend his reasons for defiance. He accused the Twelve of taking his case as a light matter while he was really “in the position of a victim.”763 Lorenzo Snow denied him this permission for a public hearing on the grounds that his standing in the church was not at stake, otherwise “specific charges would be made, and he would have to answer to them in the usual way, which is not and has not been by public demonstration.” Snow was convinced that Thatcher had been given an unusual allotment of “consideration and mercy” by the quorum, and that it was entirely in Thatcher’s power to make amends “without great exertion or much time.”764 Predictably, Thatcher’s refusal to do this, together with his repeated insistence on a public hearing put him further out of touch with the sympathies of his quorum.

Not surprisingly, Tayler praised Thatcher for refusing “to be made a subservient tool in the hands” of his ecclesiastical superiors, who required a “full

762 Merrill, Reed Smoot, 14.
renunciation of his rights and manhood as an American citizen.” Reading from a quote by the earlier Mormon president Lorenzo Snow, Tayler argued that Thatcher had been dispensed from the quorum for his “rebellious spirit.” Tayler made it clear that Thatcher had been punished for his progressive American spirit and patriotism. Tayler thus cast Thatcher’s individualistic heroism and patriotic manhood as the antithesis of Mormonism’s “unmistakable indications of narrowness, prejudice, and injustice,” which made it incompatible with true Americanness. Thus evoking two of the nation’s most famous presidents, Tayler argued, “Of all the Mormon high priesthood, Moses Thatcher is the one that stands for the principles of Jefferson and Lincoln as the American people understand those principles.” Thatcher had surrendered his position in the church on the basis of an “emasculated manhood and civil agency,” making him, as Tayler declared, “a humble instrument in His Omnipotent hand.” Furthermore, Mormonism (as viewed through the example of Thatcher) was “inimical to liberty, and the genius of American citizenship.” Indeed, the church was “opposed to the true spirit of progress,” which “the Mormon Church has already solemnly pledged itself against.” With Thatcher as his example, Tayler gloomily forecast the “end of Jeffersonian Democracy in Utah” if Mormonism continued in its political dictation. In such a terrifying vision, Tayler explained that if Smoot retained his seat, “in the end there will be violence and loss of life; the whole State will be storm-swept.” Mormonism and its religious influence over secular matters represented a “priestly junta” that was comparable to the “serfdom”
imposed by Jesuits. These bold religious declarations demonstrated the religious sensibilities and fears that Tayler was trying to evoke to discredit Smoot and Mormonism.

However, Thatcher testified on April 26, 1904, to Smoot’s attorney Waldemar Van Cott, that the Political Manifesto “left all the officers of the church absolutely free as an American citizen to exercise my rights as such.” He repeated: “It [the political manifesto] left all the officers of the church absolutely free, and the members, as I understood it, and as I now understand it. It simply applied to the higher authorities of the church, to which I had no objection.” His initial opposition was due to simple misunderstanding of the manifesto’s implications, and he would have signed it had he properly understood its implications:

Mr. Van Cott. Mr. Thatcher, as that rule [regarding the political manifesto] was interpreted by the high council of the Salt Lake stake of Zion, and your acceptance of it, did that meet with your free and voluntary judgment, or not?

Mr. Thatcher. Entirely so, for the reason that that was the contention. You will notice in the correspondence which is now filed for record that my objection to the political manifesto was in reference to the fact that it was not definite, that it might be applied to all officers in the church, and seriously I objected to that. I would object to it to-day just as seriously, because I apprehend that under such a condition it would absolutely put the state in the power of the church. That was my objection; but when an authoritative tribunal, holding coordinate jurisdiction with that of the twelve apostles, decided that that was not the meaning—that there was no conflict between the former announcements and the political manifesto itself—I accepted that decision on those grounds, and held that that would be the finding, and it would be the understanding throughout Utah. Whether it was or not, it was my understanding, and I am left perfectly free to stand where I have stood in all that discussion, barring any unkind

765 Smoot Hearings, 1:968–71.
references while under that misapprehension to my friends in and out of the church.

Thatcher continued to testify that nothing “has come to my knowledge” which shows that “the church had ever undertaken to dominate the political affairs of Utah,” thus making Tayler’s argument appear more and more specious and overblown.\textsuperscript{766} The objective of Tayler’s attack on the church was to convince others that church leaders (including Smoot) controlled both state politics and individual agency in a “crafty conspiracy.” By using Thatcher as an example of a victim of this conspiracy, he tried to show Mormonism as antipatriotic and anti-American; moreover, this argument raised the stakes of patriotism since “true” patriots would have to be out of favor with their church, and even disciplined, like Thatcher. “Thatcher’s war with the Church was not a religious or personal one,” announced Tayler, but rather “a war with the individuality and independent manhood required by the Declaration of Independence.” According to Tayler, “Everyone [in Utah] relinquishes his individuality. He no longer acts from the dictates of his own will, but from the will of the Church.”\textsuperscript{767} Tayler had declared Mormonism inimical to true American “manhood” at a time when Anglo-Protestant manliness and masculinity were markers of civilization’s evolutionary triumphs and millennial expectations.\textsuperscript{768} Clearly, according to Tayler, while

\textsuperscript{766} Smoot Hearings, 1:1038–50.

\textsuperscript{767} Ibid., 1:987, 1:1007–8.

\textsuperscript{768} Bederman, \textit{Manliness and Civilization}, 44. See literary historian Ann Douglass, \textit{The Feminization of American Culture} (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 327, on the new masculinization of American culture in reaction to growing concerns of an overly effeminate one. Revivalist Billy Sunday embodies this cultural shift in his depiction of Jesus as “the greatest scrapper that ever lived.”
remaining a good standing Mormon and an apostle, Smoot could not be a true American, a good citizen, or his own man.

Following a series of spirited criticisms and denunciations of Joseph F. Smith and his testimony during the Smoot hearings, which appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune, prominent politician and editor Frank J. Cannon (a well-known son of President George Q. Cannon) was excommunicated on March 15, 1905. This incident gave Cannon the persona of a hero of American liberty for Tayler and anti-Mormon activist groups. As Tayler had similarly argued a year earlier regarding Thatcher, Cannon’s excommunication was celebrated as a true demonstration of American patriotism. A resolution adopted against Smoot and Mormonism by the Mothers’ Congress in a March 18 1905 conference proclaimed, “Though expelled by the Mormon hierarchy,” Cannon was ironically “welcomed into the ranks of loyal, law abiding citizens as a brave defender of home and purity.”

For such efforts, Frank Cannon, and by extension Moses Thatcher, acted the part of a true American patriot, rendering “valuable service . . . to the Nation.” The obvious and intended conclusion was that the examples of Cannon and Thatcher, the former excommunicated and the latter dropped from his

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769 Frank J. Cannon’s indiscretions with prostitutes and alcohol while a young married man (monogamous) in 1885, were an “open secret” in Salt Lake City. During the Smoot hearings, Cannon threw his support behind the American Party that oversaw the controversial construction of Salt Lake’s Stockade, making prostitution legal and medically supervised. Therefore, being honored as one of America’s brave defenders of home and family by one of the nation’s women groups, demonstrates the deep polemics and hypocrisy that were involved regarding national perceptions of polygamy. Due to the energized anti-polygamy wing of the American Party, women of the nation, including non-Mormon women in Utah, surprisingly sympathized with and supported the American Party, despite their official and unofficial disapproval of prostitution. See Jeffrey Nichols, Prostitution, Polygamy, and Power: Salt Lake City 1847–1918 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 65, 138.

quorum, demonstrated one could not be a member of the church and also a law-abiding manly American citizen. At least, that was the argument being presented.

Finally, in Tayler’s campaign to deny Smoot (or any Mormon) his rights as an American citizen, he labored most strenuously to clarify what he understood to be the separation of church and state. Notably, while speaking the words below, he held his fingers in the Bible: “Under the American system there are two distinct spheres for church and state, and they must be kept separate from inception to culmination. In the one sphere, according to the words of Christ, we must ‘render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.’” Delving deeper into theology, he declared that “individual souls of men and women created by God in His image and after His likeness,” were “endowed in the nature of things with inalienable rights of life, liberty, and happiness.” These God-endowed rights, he explained, were independent of government, which exists as “an expansion and administration of these primal rights.”

771 In this larger Protestant metanarrative, government was in the service of God, and those who defied God (as had Smoot) had no business in such service.

The interpretation of separation has a history all its own. Far from being a static principle of American individuality, freedom, and liberty, separation had been used in the past as a powerful political and religious tool by nineteenth-century Protestants and other nativists to marginalize (if not crush) the public presence of Catholicism and later Mormonism. This dynamic explains Tayler’s  

771 Philip Hamburger, *Separation*, 1–17, demonstrates the ambiguity of the meaning of separation throughout U.S. history, and thus the possibility that it could be used in various ways to accomplish various agendas.
curious re-appropriation of what might be called civil theology to define the separation of church and state. But this was no generic theo-political rhetoric that had no real implication on policy, but instead represented a serious engagement of the state that attempted to unseat Smoot due to his unorthodox religion.\footnote{772} The very fact, however, that Smoot’s seat was hotly debated for four years, attacked primarily by ministers, female Christian organizations, and attorneys quoting both the Declaration of Independence and the Bible, demonstrates that this hearing, beyond confirming Smoot’s fitness to sit in Congress, provided a public occasion for an intended reaffirmation of what it meant to be an American, an American male, and an American Christian and citizen amid the changes and challenges confronting the nation in a critical era of transition. Smoot’s opposition represented an affirmation of what American Christian civilizationism was all about and the definition of American power and identity that sought to both preserve and restore. Indeed, the very frameworks of congressional inclusion presupposed a particular biblical metanarrative, or “higher law” that American public life was to be fashioned and understood within. It was this very metanarrative that was perceived as being under attack by Smoot’s presence and consequently Smoot’s victory.\footnote{773} Smoot won the right to retain his seat, becoming

\footnote{772} Ibid.

\footnote{773} During the plenary debate preceding the final Smoot vote on February 20, 1907, Senator Foraker justified his support for Smoot by recognizing the dilemma, even contradiction, between the “higher law” and the oath of office. “This higher law we all appreciate. The Senator from North Dakota [Mr. HANSBROUGH] is not the only man who thinks of the higher law; we all think of it; but the trouble about following the higher law is that every man writes the higher law to suit himself. [Laughter.] What we are here to follow and to be governed by and to observe—and we violate our oaths of office if we do not do it—is the Constitution of the United States in its requirements.” Smoot Hearings, 3413.
potent evidence that this narrative and its religious, political and cultural corollaries were in transition—in fact, in public decline.

The case against Smoot and the Mormon Church illuminated both the continued potency and growing weakness of what Senator William H. Seward (R–New York) had argued in Congress more than fifty years earlier on March 12, 1850. That when it comes to government, explained Seward, there is commonly acknowledged to exist a “Higher Law” above the American Constitution, and that is God’s law as understood in the Bible. The Reed Smoot hearings presented a waning echo of this “Higher Law,” that had served to keep the “Mormon” debate alive but, simultaneously, contributed to the exhausting of public patience with the debate and the cultural and constitutional contradictions, inconsistencies, basic unfairness and hypocrisy that were now much more apparent the beginning of the new century. Inconsistent with a changed and changing public perception of Mormonism as presented at the fair and within Mormonism’s own counsels, the exclusionary ventures of the US Senate ultimately softened. By its decision to seat Smoot, the Senate decreed that the Constitution trumped notions of the “Higher Law” as evoked and defended by evangelicals in the early twentieth century. It heralded the beginning of a broader civic inclusion of minority religious groups, though ironically by the exclusion of religion as backward and private. In the end, what the Smoot hearings revealed was not just a reluctant acceptance of the

774 Senator William Seward told Congress: “The Constitution regulates our stewardship; the Constitution devotes the domain to union, to justice, to defense, to welfare, and to liberty. But there is a higher law than the Constitution, which regulates our authority over the domain, and devotes it to the same noble purposes.” Quoted in Frederick W. Seward, William H. Seward: An Autobiography from 1801 to 1834. With a Memoir of his Life, and Selections from his Letters, 1831–1846 (1877; rpt., New York: Derby and Miller, 1891), 126.
constitutional and citizenship rights of adherents of Mormonism, but also a reduced place for religion altogether in the public sphere.

The emergence of American religious pluralism was not the celebration and defense of national difference, but rather the assurance that religion would no longer define itself as relevant to the newly emergent secular state. In the wake of the Smoot hearing, in ways that Baird, Schaff, and Colwell had earlier considered politically and religiously dangerous, separation now had popular reference to an actual separation of all religion from the state, not just that of non-Protestants. In effect the Smoot incident as a dynamic encounter between the nation and an adherent of a minority religious population was arguably an important step in the realization of religious pluralism and constitutional guarantees. The limitations of this pluralism and its guarantees however, are reflected in the candidacy of Alfred Smith, John F. Kennedy, the rise of the Religious Right, and more recently, Mitt Romney.

Officially beginning its process on January 16, 1904, the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections opened up a national debate on the place of religion within the state. The committee voted on June 6, 1906 to recommend Reed Smoot’s expulsion, due to him being a Mormon. One day before the final Senate plenary debate and vote, Smoot addressed the president and the Senate in a prepared thirty-minute speech. Smoot forcefully spoke against the false claims surrounding him being a polygamist, but more importantly on his relationship as a Mormon official and a national legislator. In summing up his argument, Smoot attests,
…let me say, under my obligation as a Senator that what I have said under oath or obligation, religious or otherwise, which conflicts in the slightest degree with my duty as a Senator or as a citizen. I owe no allegiance to any church or other organization which in any way interferes with my supreme allegiance in civil affairs to my country—an allegiance which I freely, fully, and gladly give.  

Here, Smoot established the precedent that other politicians would follow in their public addresses on religion, including Catholic presidential Democrat nominees Alfred E. Smith (1928) and John F. Kennedy (1960), and two-time contender for the nominee of the GOP Mormon Mitt Romney (2007). With the support of

775 As reprinted in Michael Harold Paulos, “‘…I am not and never have been a polygamist’: Reed Smoot’s Speech before the United States Senate, February 19, 1907,” in Utah Historical Quarterly, 75:2 (Spring, 2007), 105.

776 At the height of political attacks against his faith, Alfred Smith spoke on the campaign trail in Oklahoma City, “I here emphatically declare that I do not wish any member of my faith in any part of the United States to vote for me on any religious grounds. I want them to vote for me only when in their hearts and consciences they become convinced that my election will promote the best interests of our country.” Smith then continued, “By the same token, I cannot refrain from saying that any person who votes against me simply because of my religion is not, to my way of thinking, a good citizen.” See Alfred E. Smith, Campaign Addresses… (Washington, D. C.: Democratic National Committee, 1929), 52-53, 56-58.

777 Before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, presidential candidate John F. Kennedy spoke before a group of Protestant ministers on the question of his Catholic faith and its potential influence in his politics. Kennedy did not speak about Catholicism, but rather his vision of America. “I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.” Like Al Smith, Kennedy believed that the affront against one religion was an affront against all, and that his choice of faith is irrelevant to his political office. “But let me stress again that these are my views. For contrary to common newspaper usage, I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party’s candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me.” See “Transcript: JRK’s Speech on His Religion,” NPR March 22, 2012 (accessed 3/22/12) http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16920600

President Theodore Roosevelt, the final Senate vote on February 20 was positive (28 voting for the resolution to oust Smoot, and 42 against it). This vote allowed Smoot and by extension his religion to become engaged in the nation’s political life on much less hostile and religiously focused terms—so long as he retained a proper relationship (which Smoot had actually defined) between faith and politics.

In celebration of Smoot’s and the church’s victory, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors issued “An Address to the World,” which was read in general conference and unanimously adopted by the Church on April 5, 1907. This letter emphatically declared Mormonism to be a pure “Christian church”—indeed, “the most distinctively American church.” However, despite claims that it was conciliatory in spirit, the letter seemed to affirm Mormon religious Exceptionalism and thus provoked an outcry among the non-Mormons in Utah. To claim itself a pure form of Christianity as well as the most distinctively American church directly challenged remaining notions of the unique standing of Protestantism in the US, and their vision of the Republic and its agenda – their vision and role in realization of the “Kingdom of God in America.”

Further illustrative of continued controversy and conflict of Smoot’s victory was the response from members of the Ministerial Association of Salt Lake City,779 which issued its own “Review” of “An Address.” Their response strongly discredited such claims and declaring that until the LDS Church authorities themselves radically changed, “there can be no peace between them and pure

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Christianity.” Furthermore, until the church’s doctrines are radically altered, Mormonism can “never establish a claim to be even a part of the Church of Jesus Christ.”

Likewise, the Salt Lake Tribune critiqued the LDS letter “to the world” for its “evasions” and “dishonesty.” The article accused its authors of “but half-hearted efforts . . . to make the world believe in their patriotism, their piety, their selflessness.” Mormon leaders could not have believed their own letter, charged the Tribune, for they know “their own corruption, treason, blasphemy and corroding selfishness, avarice, lusts of power, and of the flesh.” The Tribune characterized the Ministerial Association’s response as “calm, deliberate, and temperate in tone,” and announced that it was “warmly welcomed and approved by the loyal citizenship of Utah,” and characterized it as looking “a good deal in the nature of a revelation.”

However, from the perspective of its authors, it can be argued that the letter of the First Presidency actually signaled and revealed a deep intention on the church’s part to affirm what had been held for many years prior: that

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780 “An Address: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to the World, April 5, 1907,” in Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, 4:143–55, particularly pp. 144, 146. The Ministerial Association’s letter was reprinted in full in Roberts, Defense, 2: 525–51. Interestingly, in response to the Ministerial Association’s “Review,” Roberts offered his own defense of the Church’s “letter to the world.” Before an audience of between four and five thousand listeners at the Mormon Tabernacle, Roberts forcefully argued that the LDS “world letter” was “truthful” and was meant to be “conciliatory in spirit.” Roberts opposed the Ministerial Association’s accusations as “unjust; conceived in spite and vengeance; brought forth of malice; and nurtured by hate.” Roberts also dismissed its representative ministers for being, “as a class, narrow, bigoted, intolerant, petty; and I say that in the very best of feeling” Defense, 2:587, 605. For his entire lecture, see 2:552–605. The Ministerial Association had long been a convinced enemy of Mormonism for theological reasons, and Smoot’s seemingly legitimation of it fueled the enmity. However, in proclaiming it to be not so different from other Americans, the First Presidency letter provoked some in its claims of not be just another Christian denomination, but rather a “pure Christianity,” which was not just American, but “the most distinctively American.”

Mormonism was both Christian and American and, by its reckoning, even quintessentially so. The debate over the seating of Reed Smoot had provided occasion for an intense debate within the highest levels of the LDS Church regarding the meaning and cost of American inclusivity and the meaning of American citizenship. Its outcome indicated that the church’s official position on American inclusion and cooperation was changing, and thus opened up new potentials regarding Mormon self-identity in the new “modern” era.

Prior to 1890, Mormon claims of Americanness were dismissed outright and protests of injustice were met with severe animosity and even threats of violence and war. The anti-polygamy crusades had witnessed religious liberty, republicanism, religion, and Americanism all defined through the courts and by Congress as non-applicable to Mormonism. Attendance at the fair however, taught Mormon leaders that a flag-wielding faith was much more acceptable than a half-masting one. Through these new tactics, the World’s Fair made Mormonism more public and less frightening. However, animosities and distrust remained, and the Smoot hearings provided a prolonged national conversation that allowed all sides to publicly contemplate Mormon inclusion. President Theodore Roosevelt had asked whether or not Mormons were good Americans, and the final Senate vote that allowed Smoot to retain his Senate seat, however divided and hesitant, answered this question in the affirmative.

Reed Smoot retained his seat in 1907; however, the question of religious minority inclusion into national public life remains an important point of debate as revealed by Mitt Romney’s Mormonism being a significant problem for him
winning the GOP nomination in both 2007 and 2012. In becoming the nominee of a party largely made up of evangelical voters, it will not be because he was Mormon, but in spite of it. At a major conference of Christian conservatives in 2011, prominent Southern Baptist Texas pastor Robert Jeffress endorsed Rick Perry (“a genuine follower of Jesus Christ”) for the GOP presidential nomination in October 2011, and afterward explained that Mormon presidential contender Mitt Romney was “not a Christian” and that the Mormon religion was in reality a “cult.” In defending his comments, pastor Jeffress simply added, “This isn’t news. This idea that Mormonism is a theological cult is not news either. That has been the historical position of Christianity for a long time.” Romney may be a “good, moral person,” but Jeffress notes that his Mormonism is a “major factor” in why evangelicals won’t vote for him.782 Smoot’s success opened new doors for Mormons in American public life, but those doors remain qualified and hesitant.

After September 11, 2001, another religious minority in the United States found itself under severe suspicion by the majority of Americans, demonstrating a scenario with important parallels to the hearings of Reed Smoot. Muslims have similarly found themselves on the defensive when it comes to their faith and patriotism. Similar to the Smoot hearings that targeted a particular minority faith, the US Congressional hearings on Islamic radicalism that began on March 10, 2011, led by Republican Rep. Peter King of New York, chairman of the House

Committee on Homeland Security, has similarly targeted Islam. In a striking parallel, the basic question of these hearings, as many have suggested, has been regarding whether or not Muslims can be good Americans. While critics of the hearings say they represent little more than the execution of a thinly veiled prejudice against Islam, many have expressed optimism that these hearings might allow for a clear-headed investigation into Islam and replace popular ignorance with understanding. In making sense of these contemporary debates, perhaps the Smoot hearings offer insight, both into the revived potency of evangelical Christianity within American politics and the unfair demands Muslims will be forced to adopt in their attempts to look “more American.”
Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

The journey of Mormonism from “un-American” to “quintessentially American” is not a pluralism success story about a minority faith that finally learned how to “behave,” but rather stands as a testimonial of the level of tolerance of a nation which demanded such modifications. Indeed, it is not Mormonism that we learn the most about while reading the records of the Polygamy crusades and the Smoot hearings, and history of Mormonism at the Chicago Exhibit, but rather the definitions and limitations of “Americanism.” In charting the conflicts between Mormons and other Americans during the Evangelical era, conventional historiography usually emphasized Mormon provocations and eccentricities (polygamy, Mountain Meadows), thus marking Mormons as “un-American” and justifying their ill treatment. The work at hand has instead focused on dynamic encounter of Mormonism and evangelicals as representative of the similar treatment of a number of America’s minority populations during the last few decades of the nineteenth century. The national Americanization project that sought to control minority faiths and re-create and shape their adherents into an image “more like us” was understood as consistent with the demands of the American ideal of the kingdom of God and its quest for a racially pure Anglo-Christian civilizationism.

This vision of Christian civilizationism takes inspiration from John Winthrop’s “City on a Hill” speech, which galvanized a chosen people narrative with that of America as a chosen land. Explicit in this speech was that of an
American covenant, or contractual agreement between God and Americans and their providential connection to the land of America. This perceived connection between God’s divine will and the political and social forces within America becomes central in understanding how Americans related and responded to themselves and their neighbors (fellow European immigrants, an indigenous population and subsequent enslaved population). It was through notions of this kingdom that Americans formulated imaginations of national progress, ultimate destiny, and the place and limitations of American diversity. In the first part of the nineteenth century, evangelicals refashioned this earlier Calvinist rooted narrative of the kingdom of God in America to that of the new nation and a new national identity and agenda.

As evangelicals came to prominence in the nineteenth century by way of a new series of religious revivals and awakenings, they posited themselves as key agents and actors in a Divine errand immediately focused on the building of a new and righteous nation. Correspondingly, a negative response toward non-evangelicals and America’s religious and racial minorities were a direct and crucial part of this vision and agenda. Jefferson’s and Madison’s vision of religious liberty had been a dramatic departure from this Puritan vision of the kingdom, but evangelicals like Baird, Beecher, and Schaff in the mid-nineteenth century effectively recast the “lively experiment” to uphold earlier notions of religious, racial, and gender privilege.

Though departing from that of their evangelical counterparts at important junctures, the Mormon vision of God’s kingdom was not altogether unique, nor
was it in total contradiction to that envisioned by other Americans. In impressive ways, the *Book of Mormon* actually enshrined many assumptions of chosen people/chosen land in ways that parallel that of the evangelical reading of the Bible. Although Mormons and evangelicals often exaggerated their differences in their attempts at establishing dominance over the other, their mutual development in the first half of the nineteenth-century America reveal a similar and shared set of uniquely American anxieties and hopes. However different Mormons and evangelicals were in their final descriptions of God’s kingdom and the American covenant, it is important to remember that in their essentials these ideals were embraced and actively advance by both. As such, to distinguish between them, as is often done, by categories of “American” and “un-American,” deviate us from the more important questions as to what “American” actually means and the implications of these definitions in the historiographical treatment of minority groups and especially minority religions.

Part of the problem minority groups posed to a traditional national narrative decisively shaped by Evangelical hegemony and agenda, was that they directly challenged popular definitions of Americanism. Antebellum America was one of great transition and tumult, with many discontented by both the extremes of revivalism and Calvinist absolutism and deistic secularism. Americans were not united in biblical hermeneutics, but they were united in the idea that each individual had the right, however educated and of whatever class, to discern the meaning of this kingdom and covenant for themselves. Although groups sought to delegitimize each other though points of interpretation or expose, it was the
shared practice of rethinking the blueprints of the kingdom that made Methodists, Baptists, Adventist, Disciples of Christ and Mormons so American. Indeed, evangelical women challenged the dogmatic sexism within the evangelical kingdom, blacks challenged its institutionalized racism, Oneida’s and Mormons challenged its sexual norms, and Southerners challenged its trends toward Abolitionism while Northerners challenged its upholding of slavery. The American vision was thus deeply contested regarding what the American kingdom of God should look like, who its primary players and architects should be, and finally what its relationship with republicanism should look like and be.

These challenges to the dominant white-male evangelical Protestant narrative of the kingdom caused great uneasiness among those of the mainstream religious and political establishment. With perhaps the exception of slavery, threats against American sexuality became one of the more provocative points of this national debate, and thus generated the most emotional response. These responses reveal the living nature of this covenant within American society and public life. It is here that we begin to see the explicit link between this covenant and its role within the formulation of government policy toward minority religions. The Mormon bedroom therefore mattered because the American kingdom and its self-perceptions of “righteous nation.” Though historians have for many years employed a model of separation between religious and secular motivations in nineteenth-century America, the Mormon anti-polygamy crusades provide opportunity to reexamine these assumptions and employ a historiographical and methodological model that recognizes the interweaving and
even unity of the two (religious and secular) motivations. The Courts did not just strike down polygamy, they defined the acceptable limits of American diversity through actually defining, by way of Protestant terminology, what proper religion was and minimizing what was meant by its “free exercise.”

Though traditional historiography surrounding the polygamy wars in the US tend to posit drastic difference between Mormons and the government, this dissertation argues that the story of Mormonism cannot be rightfully told when divorced from contested notions concerning the American kingdom of God and its corollary notions (covenant, choseness, etc.). The anti-polygamy crusades then represent a moment of dynamic encounter between the Mormon kingdom of God and the evangelical, revealing important parallels, shifts and transformations in both. Though it is tempting to suggest that the latter won over the former, it becomes a point of interest that both had already begun to show signs of challenge by a more secularized image and agenda.

By 1890, the temporal dimensions of the Mormon kingdom had ended and Mormons now purposefully redefined their faith as one more directly connected to the temporal definitions and demands of mainstream cultural America. American partisan politics and laissez-faire capitalism helped fill the holes left by the new de-emphasis on the more temporal dimensions and aspects of the Mormon kingdom, with many Mormons now embracing it with renewed zeal and religious anticipation. It was a shift that would be critical to the Mormon embrace of Americanism and their subsequent characterization as “quintessentially American.”
In the wake of such dramatic national and internal shifts, Mormon leaders hesitantly embarked on their journey to Chicago in 1893. They found themselves marveling at a very different national mood and temperament; indeed, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was met with cheers and thanksgiving. Also at the fair, Mormon men and women were likewise gratified by the overwhelmingly warm treatment by other Americans, which extended even to the invitation of the church’s choir to provide the music for the dedication of the fair’s grand icon of Americana—the Liberty Bell. As Mormon leaders (both men and women) spoke at the fair, they left behind the theological jargon and introduced themselves in more nationalistic ways, namely as American pioneers of the West. Wilford Woodruff for example, presented himself as Utah’s oldest living pioneer. Returning to Utah from the fair, Mormon leaders disseminated a feeling throughout the Mormon communities that a new era had indeed dawned, and as such, it was time for Mormons to match the sophistication observed at the fair. The fair had been both humbling and exhilarating, providing both context and vision for future Mormon policy and attitude toward the rest of America and the era of progress.

The World’s Fair however had not been without disconcerting problems for the church. Of particular challenge was the reception accorded Mormonism at one of the fair’s seminal events, the World’s Parliament of Religions. For organizers of the fair, the parliament was perhaps the most important event of the generation and the shining star of the fair itself. Some even speculated that Christ’s Advent would be connected to the consequences of such an event,
Inspiring pilgrimage to sacred Chicago many years hence. In discerning unparalleled opportunity for disseminating the Mormon message, Mormon representative Brigham H. Roberts sought inclusion at the parliament, but soon found that Mormons were uninvited and decidedly not wanted. Thus the Mormon Church was unwelcome in Chicago, even while pioneers and performers who happened to be Mormon were heartily embraced and welcomed. Roberts did his best at gaining religious inclusion for Mormonism, but in the end was rebuffed and silenced by leaders of the parliament who positioned religion, specifically Anglo-Protestantism of liberal bent, as the pinnacle of human achievement in science and technology as well as religion. The “heresy” of Mormonism, bearing the additional burden of its Western roots then, seemed altogether inappropriate and out of place.

The Parliament of Religions had employed the perspectives and insights of the “comparative study” of religion and its promised new liberality toward non-Western and non-Christian religions. This liberality did not come, however, without religious, sexual, racial, and cultural condescension and prejudice that were inescapable characteristics of the era. As the parliament heralded a global liberality and pan-religious inclusivity, Barrow’s exclusion of Roberts and Mormonism appeared hypocritical. A few Chicago newspapers and at least one official from the religious congress took issue with this unfair treatment, siding with Robert’s and his claims of injustice. At the parliament, however, there were at least two major metanarratives being simultaneously played out. On the one hand there was the new liberality that called forth for the celebration of a common
groping after God, no matter how unfamiliar and pathetic; on the other, there was an explicit agenda to exalt Anglo-Protestant Christianity through a comparison of world diversity. Thus, science and religion came together at the parliament in important ways that directly contributed to popular apologetics of Anglo-colonialism and supremacy. Evident at and in the aftermath of the parliament was the use of prevalent academic, intellectual, cultural, religious and racial theories about social evolutionary hierarchies of race, religion, and culture. However, in seeking to harness and control the growing religious and cultural divide at the end of the nineteenth century, the parliament actually accentuated them. The same emphasis on the role of scientific and academic inquiry in dismissing long held misconceptions, bias, and prejudices at the parliament simultaneously upheld and gave scientific backing to those same biases.

Frederick Jackson Turner’s “frontier thesis,” as presented at the fair in a special session of the American History Association (AHA), provided a similar emphasis on scientific and academic inquiry that both upheld and challenged prior bias. It also attempted to provide a new and modern sense of clarity to the American narrative and infused it with a new sense of mission. In Turner’s historiography, the empirical environment was the chief agent in history. His historiography and interpretation of American history represented a significant shift from that of an earlier generation of religious historians whose historiography and craft was primarily defined by theologically rooted notions, categories, and assumptions. The fundamental principle of Turner’s “frontier thesis” was that the frontier provided a new historiographical paradigm that
unlocked the mysteries of the entire “record of social evolution.” According to Turner the frontier was characterized by savagism or in the terms of an earlier generation of religious historians “Barbarism,” but that once civilization encountered it through the medium of adventurers, traders, fisherman, miners, cattle-raisers and farmers, a higher form of independent civilization emerged. The seeds and virtues of American individualism and democracy had not come from evangelical revivalists or even enlightenment philosophers, but instead the rugged physical forces and individuals of the frontier. Daniel Boone and Kit Carson were thus upheld as the new American heroes of the national narrative. As such, it was “the frontier” that “promoted the formation of a composite national identity for the American people.” In revitalizing Lyman Beecher’s *Plea for the West* and Horace Bushnell’s *Barbarism*, Turner gave new meaning to an old idea, and new promise to an old covenant.⁷⁸³

The significance of Turner’s narrative was not just in the revived vision of America and the American West which he proposed, but more critically the diversity which he ignored in his re-invention of the “American.” Altogether missing from Turner’s frontier are distinctions and contributions of race, women, and class. Consequently it privileged notions of American Exceptionalism that furthered an American narrative of colonialism. Giving this paper just three years following Wounded Knee, Turner referred to “Indians” as providing a necessary fear among white settlers, thus inspiring nation building and maturation. Native Americans were therefore only relevant in as much as they “bumped into” and

⁷⁸³ Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier*, 1, 4, 8, 11-12, 13-14.
affected white settlement and the dynamics of an internal-colonialism. Importantly, his discussion of Utah’s development likewise ignored the importance of Mormon settlement, attributing the rise of civilization instead to the “sudden tide of adventurous miners” in Utah, California, and Oregon.

As argued in this work, the Western frontier stood as an “in-between space,” not where savagery met civilization (as suggested by Turner, et al.), but instead, as posited by scholar of comparative religion David Chidester, a space of “unexpected contacts, exchanges, and interchanges,” one of significant contestation and struggle between the colonial intruder and the indigenous. In *Savage Systems*, Chidester argued how the imagined closing of the frontier and its presumed victory over barbarism upheld the exploitative colonial structures of power in apartheid South Africa. In effect, frontier closure rested upon the colonial conquest and domination of others.

With relevance to Mormon history as it relates to the Western frontier, Chidester demonstrates that the formulations of knowledge (as construed through the “comparative study” of religion) used by the British in southern Africa directly related to the principles and agendas behind European conquest and the subjugation of Africans. By way of example, indigenous Africans were deemed by British colonialist as being without religion, as “the enemy had no religion.”

This situated the colonial European Christian powers as both justified in extending control over the African “frontier,” and in crushing its indigenous customs and power structures. In their crusades against Mormons and polygamy,

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the US government likewise deemed Mormonism to be “not a religion” and polygamy not a religious practice for similar reasons and agendas—namely the extensions of US Christian power.\textsuperscript{785} However, when colonial control was ensured in southern Africa and the frontier was deemed closed, Africans were no longer deemed enemies and African indigenous religions could now be valued rather than de-valued and dismissed. Thus, in exchange for losing political independence, Chidester explains that “Africans acquired this small compensation: they had a religion.”\textsuperscript{786} It can be argued that a similar dynamic was a play with Mormonism in the US at the end of the nineteenth century. Amid academic, political and cultural declarations of the closure of the American frontier at the World’s Fair, it appeared as if Americans had similarly re-discovered Mormonism. But a Mormonism that appeared willing to trade such acceptance for loss of political independence (in Utah) and compromise of particulars related to its unique version of the Kingdom of God in America (ie, polygamy, cooperation, etc).

In speaking of this period of frontier closure in Africa, memory historian Terence Ranger similarly outlines the extensions of colonial power in Africa. Of particular importance is his notice of the role played by the “invention of tradition” that foreign colonial powers imposed on its indigenous populations. One crucial component and efficacy of these new “invented traditions” is that


\textsuperscript{786} Chidester, \textit{Savage Systems}, 219.
such traditions soon appear indigenous and are heartily appropriated.\footnote{As written in his critique of Kenyan elites, Ngugi wa Thiong’o wrote in his \textit{Prison Diary}, “The black pupils now do the same, only with great zeal: golf and horses have become ‘national’ institutions.” As quoted in Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in \textit{The Invention of Tradition}, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 261.} Such inventions thus become important markers in the extensions of colonial authority as it offers indigenous populations an important entry point into the new colonial world.\footnote{Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition”, 227.}

Playing a similar role and serving as an important example of the effectiveness of this principle was the appropriation of Turner’s frontier thesis (an “invented tradition” upholding state power) among Mormon historians of the early twentieth century. With degrees from prestigious universities like Harvard, Stanford and the University of Chicago, Mormon historians such as Nels Anderson, Levi Edgar Young, Andrew Love Neff and Leland H. Creer produced impressive regional histories, stressing economic, social, and geographic factors with a “frontier history” worldview.\footnote{Walker, \textit{Mormon History}, 42-44.} The attraction of Turner’s frontier model was that it provided “a ready-made vehicle for the Americanization of the Mormon past.” “In fact,” notes Klaus Hansen, “several of these scholars probably would have invented Turner had he not existed, so readily did they apply the frontier hypothesis to Mormon history.” Backward practices and ideas like the kingdom of God, polygamy and economic cooperation were dismissed as necessary responses to a hostile frontier environment, rather than essential
characteristics of Mormonism and its move toward Americanization. Though once having played the part of the savage and savagism in traditional historiographies, Mormon historians now presented Mormon pioneering and settlement building as vital aspects of the Mormon march of American progress and Anglo-Saxon colonization. Mormonism had become, notes BYU historian Ethan Yorgason, “yet another brick in building the nation.” Sanitizing, suppressing, or ignoring “the social implications of past struggles between the Mormons and non-Mormons,” this historiography presented episodes such as the Utah War or the anti-polygamy crusades, as amounting to little more “than another episode in the American West’s development.” In appropriating this frontier thesis and its mythology as the new interpretive lens for early Mormonism, Mormon historiography made it increasingly difficult to come to terms with and explore the motives and needs of Mormonism during the nineteenth century. Thus within the framework of this new historiography shaped by the thesis of the closure of the American frontier, Mormons were no longer pictured as the victims of the American colonization project, but instead as both an extension and a new apologetic of it.

Within this context, Chidester’s thesis has additional import since there is arguably a strong connection in how science and reason particularly as informing the insights and presumptions associated with the “comparative study” of religion

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was used in both Africa and the US in the upholding of power in a way that furthered a particular ideological, political and religious expansion into the once “unruly frontier.” Indeed, Mormonism represents just one minority group among many that came to be disadvantaged and redefined in the service of the new master narrative of the secular state. William Cavanaugh reminds us that the more we tell ourselves that “barbarism [was] progressively conquered by rationality and freedom,” as the triumphalist view of the liberal state likes to characterize itself, “the more we are capable of ignoring the violence we do in the name of reason and freedom.”

Similarly, Chidester challenges scholars of religion to rethink these rationalized frontier closures and to “once again” find themselves “on the frontier.”

Tomoko Masuzawa explains that the historian of today who celebrates 1893 and its Parliament of Religions as the harbinger of what we have now become (that is, pluralistic and nonsectarian), unknowingly taps into an ideal of progress that was inseparable from the liberal Protestant agenda that informed the parliament’s organizers. Religious pluralism then did not necessarily emerge from the structures and presentations of the nineteenth-century World’s Fair (the paper of Turner at the session of the historical society, participation of Mormon pioneers or choir; or celebration of the parliament as ecumenical and interfaith conclave), but ironically was significantly advanced instead by arguments and

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presentations that directly countered and challenged these structures, as illuminated by Catholic Merwin-Marie Snell, Mormon B.H. Roberts, Presbyterian John I. Platt, female suffragist Susan B. Anthony, Buddhist delegate Hirai Kinzo, and Bishop Benjamin Arnett of the Methodist Episcopal Church. All directly challenged and countered existing cultural, religious, and even legal structures in their insistence that multiple voices and interpretations be heard and respected.

By the end of the World’s Fair, some Mormon leaders were weighing the strategic advantages and disadvantages of accommodation – that it was much better to fit in than to have their unique voice and vision heard. Importantly, this new discovery (and formation) of Mormon-Americanism as facilitated by the World’s Fair and later Mormon historians’ appropriation of the frontier model emerged simultaneously with new secularized twentieth-century definitions of Americanism. However, the Smoot hearings in the opening years of the new century illuminate the limitations and difficulties of applying modern definitions of Americanism to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Mormonism. Even at the end of the Smoot hearings in 1907, it was clear that traditional, primarily evangelical notions of religion and the Kingdom of God in America was still a powerful force within American society and structures of power. Although it was true that Smoot’s success resulted in part from the ability of Mormonism to re-introduce itself as a “well behaved” religion, nevertheless it was as much the case that the evangelical hegemony was no longer dominant enough to reject a senator on account of his personal faith. With his final speech before the Senate prior to its final vote, Smoot allayed further fears as he promised that the particulars of his
faith orientation would be separate and unrelated to his seat and role in the Senate. Notably, such statements remain necessary for contemporary adherents of non-Protestant faiths seeking to enter the nation’s highest public office. The model and double standard for American pluralism seems to have been set at the end of the Smoot hearings – if a non-evangelical, your faith was to remain, in no uncertain terms, separate of politics. Though it was a compromise that did not solve the larger problems of American religious pluralism, it was an important development that allowed Smoot, a Mormon, to serve as a national legislator for three decades. As such Smoot’s model may have facilitated the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 and impacted the 2007-8 campaign of Mitt Romney.

By bringing together and examining the three major intersecting events of American and Mormon history, namely the anti-polygamy crusades of the 1870s and 1880s, the World’s Fair of 1893 and the Reed Smoot hearings of 1904-1907, the limits of American religious pluralism, and the emergence and meaning of a more secular America in the twentieth century become more obvious. Consequently, in relief, important aspects that have been often neglected in American religious historiography become clearer and demand new attention. Central among these is the importance of reexamining competing and contested notions of the American kingdom of God and the continued status and role of religion within the republic and the public sphere and the role played by Mormonism in the reconception of these.

All too often, Mormon and American religious historiography has neglected to place Mormonism with the larger national transitions. This study has
sought to bring together Mormon and popular notions of the American kingdom of God into a single narrative that sheds important light on both. This dissertation was not meant to be conclusive nor has it been exhaustive of the topic. Indeed, in focusing this study as I have, it is expected to provoke further study of the dialectic between minority and majority faiths as they transitioned over time and circumstances. As has been seen, this dialectic and related transitions have not been isolated nor have they always come about without physical violence or compromises to religious values and principles dear held in both minority and majority traditions.

American religious pluralism remains a noble and progressive endeavor within a country that has prided itself on the principles of inclusivity and freedom. In many ways this praise is worthy, but in important ways, as revealed in this study, religious pluralism is not so simply or always plural, neither has progress always been progressive. As Mormon and American historians of the West have largely appropriated and celebrated models of pluralism and progress, particularly since the announced closing of the imagined frontiers, much remains to be done and discussed. This dissertation hopefully can play a part in that discussion by doing as Chidester asks, that is, reexamining the boundaries and meanings of the frontier and the multiple and varied dynamics (academic, intellectual, cultural, religious, judicial, etc) of the extended encounter between minority and majority groups.
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