Grass-Roots Deviance from Official Doctrine: A Study of Latter-day Saint (Mormon) Folk-Beliefs

Richley H. Crapo, Utah State University

(undated)

Introduction

Mormonism's legitimacy is based on the claim that the church was instituted by divine mandate and by the authorization by God of Latter-day Saint ecclesiastical leaders, whose role as the only acceptable source of doctrine is stressed by church leaders and members alike. Mormons hold their religious beliefs to be based on continuing, literal revelation through the church President who is designated Prophet, Seer and Revelator. Doctrine is seen as flowing from the top of the church hierarchy to the grass-roots level. This study of the doctrinal beliefs of a sample of Utah Latter-day Saint documents shows, in spite of the authority-based concept of revealed doctrine, actual beliefs at the local level may deviate from doctrinal positions issued by church Presidents. In specific areas outside core doctrines of the church, the plurality or even majority of local members may espouse beliefs at odds with doctrines articulated by the Prophet of the church with no apparent awareness by members of their deviance from the official doctrine. The pattern of variation between Mormon official positions and folk-beliefs is outlined, and the processes that maintain this variation are discussed.

This paper will clarify the seemingly paradoxical coexistence in the Latter-day Saint church of an ecclesiastical government that lays claim to authority based on ongoing divine revelation and creedal diversity and independence at the grass-roots level. The church organization is headed by leaders regarded as prophets, authoritative sources of divinely revealed doctrine. Official publications of the church stress the importance of obedience to the directives and counsel of the inspired leaders, and the importance of orthodoxy in matters of belief. One might, therefore, expect a high degree of creedal conformity among Mormons. In fact, outside a small body of central doctrines, a high degree of diversity in belief appears to be fostered among members at the grass-roots level of the church, although the existence of this diversity of opinion about doctrine is not formally acknowledged either by church leaders or grass-roots members. For this reason, controversy exists among sociologists and anthropologists about how best to characterize Mormonism in discussions of doctrine. On the one hand, some note that the unique raison d'etre of Mormonism is the claim of divine authority in both practice and belief (Brewer, 1968; O'Dea, 1957; Whalen, 1964). On the other hand, Leone (1974) and Dolgin (1974) argue that in spite of having a hierarchically structured social organization reminiscent of medieval Catholicism, Mormonism, like the metaphysical churches described by Judah (1967), fits Bellah's (1970) concept of a modern religion, one that incorporates mechanisms for continual self-transformation and fosters the role of the individual over that of the hierarchy in the synthesis of religious meaning. In spite of Mormonism's emphasis on the authority of an ecclesiastical hierarchy over members in matters of faith, the formal doctrinal proclamations by Mormon prophets do not appear to be the central

preoccupation of the typical Mormon when discussing "Mormon doctrine." Instead, grassroots consensus seems to be the primary basis of members' confidence in the orthodoxy of their beliefs.

Ultimately, a complete portrayal of the nature of Mormon doctrine and its sources will have to include the full, dynamic pattern of interaction within and between 1) the formal, officially proclaimed doctrine which arises at the level of church government and which is passed down through the full-time church hierarchy to the grass-roots level; and 2) the informal consensus about doctrine which develops at the local grass-roots level of the lay member. This paper will not attempt such an intricate task as illuminating the complexities of these processes but will address just one aspect of the entire picture: the interaction of Mormon folk-beliefs and bureaucratically sanctioned doctrine when the two differ from one another without successful official challenge or grass-roots awareness of conflict between the two.

Revelation: The Basis of Official Doctrine

Authority delegated directly from God to Mormon ecclesiastical leaders is the basis of their official power as decision-makers for the church, and Mormon doctrine is held to be based on direct revelation from God. In light of the belief that the presiding officials of the church are spokesmen for God, it is not surprising that obedience to church authority figures is among the most frequently stressed values in both the official rhetoric of church leaders (Shepherd &Shepherd, 1984) and in manuals published for the teaching of its members (Crapo, 1982; Crapo & Cannon, 1982). Given a dogmatic view of doctrine and an authoritarian basis for church governance, one might well expect Mormonism to maintain a corresponding emphasis on orthodoxy in matters of doctrine. Indeed, my own work among Mormons has given me the impression that they view themselves as strongly in agreement with one another on matters of doctrine. The most commonly cited source of doctrine is the church's central ecclesiastical leadership, which consists of a body of men known as "General Authorities" and a presiding official, the President of the Church, who is designated "Prophet, Seer and Revelator." Thereafter, scripture is cited as a valid source of doctrine, but it is clear that scripture is viewed among Latter-day Saints as something to be understood only in terms of ecclesiastically sanctioned, rather than individual, interpretation. It is not unusual at all to hear members comment, as a point of pride in their church, about the absence of contention or disagreement among Mormons on matters of belief. Thus, there is no Mormon equivalent of the diverse but respected exegetical traditions based on theological scholarship that are common to many other Christian denominations (Brewer, 1968: 518), and although members are aware of the existence of Mormon splinter groups and historical schisms, these are consistently viewed as consisting of individuals who have separated themselves from the church. This perceived absence of heterodoxy meshes well with statements of Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie (1976: 550-51) on the importance of complete orthodoxy among members:

> *Gospel orthodoxy requires belief in the truths of salvation as they have been revealed in this dispensation through Joseph Smith, and as they are understood and interpreted by the living oracles who wear the mantle of the Prophet. Orthodoxy is the opposite of heterodoxy or of believing heretical doctrines. There are degrees of orthodoxy exhibited by members of the Church. Those who believe the whole law - and who believe it sanely, sensibly, realistically, according to its true meaning and purport - are completely orthodox. Those who intermingle*

gospel truths with the educational or philosophical theories of the world have not yet attained perfect orthodoxy, the orthodoxy which is essential to salvation.

With its emphasis on both authority and the importance of orthodoxy, it is not surprising that Latter-day Saints have developed a church administrative structure that O'Dea (1957: 165) referred to as "an oligarchy of decision-making and command" and that Quinn (1984a: 16) has characterized as "an authoritarian oligarchy."

The Role of Folk-Belief

In spite of the emphasis on revelation from God to church leaders as the basis of church government, the church's bureaucracy has, in fact, never functioned as a vehicle for formulating an explicit and precise creed. The church has not formalized an officially sanctioned theology beyond a surprisingly small number of central beliefs, most of which were set forth by the church's founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. According to McMurrin (1965: 112), "Mormon theology is young and unsophisticated and is not overencumbered with creeds and official pronouncements. Its structure has been virtually untouched by serious and competent effort to achieve internal consistency or exact definition." Thus Peter Crawley correctly asserts:

Even though it is a revealed religion, Mormonism is all but creedless. . . While certain doctrines are enunciated in the standard works and some doctrinal issues have been addressed in formal pronouncements by the First Presidency, there is nothing in Mormonism comparable to the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Augsburg Confession. Few of the truly distinctive doctrines of Mormonism are discussed in 'official' sources. it is mainly by 'unofficial' means - Sunday School lessons, seminary, institute, and BYU [Brigham Young University] religion classes, sacrament meeting talks and books by Church officials and others who ultimately speak only for themselves - that the theology is passed from one generation to the next. Indeed, it would seem that a significant part of Mormon theology exists primarily in the minds of its members. (Quoted in Buerger, 1982).

It is this fact that has allowed Leone (1979: 168-69) to describe Mormon doctrine as a welter of grass-roots theologizing: "Mormons create their own theology and philosophy in the literal sense, and in the context of the church they work out for themselves most of the problems faced in life. They do their own thinking, which is say that they create their own meanings, in the talks that they give in Sacrament Meetings, in the testimony that they give on Fast and Testimony Sunday, in Sunday Schools and Family Home Evenings, and in at least a dozen other church contexts. "Thus, "Mormonism has evolved a do-it-yourself theology which makes the growth of professional theologians impossible as well as unnecessary" (Leone, 1979: 171-72). Although Mormons view doctrine as flowing down from the church hierarchy to the members, the bulk of what Mormons think of as doctrine actually arises from the grass-roots level as members through their day-to-day interactions construct a distinctive Mormon view of reality, a system of beliefs which they call Mormon doctrine. Thus, Dolgin (1974: 519) asserts that "the apparently authoritarian Mormon Church sustains, and indeed fosters, creedal independence," and on the words of

Leone (1974: 762), "doctrinal flexibility has been the fact that might seem to contradict the Mormon claim to ongoing prophecy and revelation."

Certainly there does exist a central core of doctrine, upon which all or nearly all who identify themselves as believing Mormons would be in fundamental agreement. Nevertheless, as implied above, the essential doctrine is made up of a relatively small number of specific beliefs (Faust, 1985). A century and a half of guidance by "prophets, seers and revelators" has not resulted in a large and constantly growing body of formally proclaimed doctrines to which members must adhere, since, contrary to the implication of their formal titles, Mormon leaders function primarily as conservators of the prophetic tradition of Joseph Smith. This absence of emphasis on creed as the defining essence of Mormonism is evidenced by the common language of Mormons in which a strong adherent to Mormonism is not referred to as a "believer," but rather as an "active member." To the Mormon, commitment is primarily evidenced by participation rather than by "faith" or "belief."[i] The active member is presumed to be orthodox, but it is the participation, not the orthodoxy, that is the primary evidence of a member's allegiance to Mormonism.

Outside the core beliefs of Mormonism, one encounters much variation in what individual members perceive as doctrine, yet members seem generally not to be aware that such variation in beliefs exist. I believe that the perception of variation in belief among members is minimized by a customary avoidance of overt disagreement or controversy in formal church meetings and by a relatively strong taboo on discussing religious questions in which differences of opinion might occur. Such topics are classified as "political" rather than "religious" in nature and are therefore to be avoided in religious contexts. Alternatively, they are said to be "mysteries" - ideas of a religious nature about which no revealed answers exist and on which members should not speculate because of their political divisiveness.

In the intervening ground between core beliefs and tabooed topics lies the realm of beliefs in which Leone's grass-roots theologizing is found. Here, indeed, one finds tremendous diversity of opinion from person to person when members are interviewed individually (Leone, 1969; Dolgin, 1974: 526). yet group processes mask this diversity in official settings (Dolgin, 1974: 527-28). For instance, "contention" is formally disapproved among members. Lesson plans published by the church for use in meetings are structured around rhetorical questions and may include specific instructions for the teacher on how to deal with potentially controversial comments if they should occur. Any response to a question is likely to be accepted with thanks as a "good point," even one which is somewhat at odds with anticipated responses.

The Problem of Defining "Doctrine" in Mormon Research

Since "Mormon Doctrine" has different meanings in different contexts, it is important to clarify possible uses of the concept. Sorenson (1983) has distinguished between Mormon folk and elite cultures and has applied this contrast to members' versus leaders' behavior, world-view, and values. Mauss (1981) considered doctrine specifically and developed a more elaborate typology consisting of canon doctrine, official doctrine, authoritative doctrine, and popular doctrine, categories that he argued form a "scale of authenticity" for Mormon doctrine, with canon doctrine having the most legitimate claim to divine origin in Mormon ideology (32). His category of canon doctrine consists of only those beliefs that have been openly declared by Mormon prophets to have been received by direct revelation and that have been presented to the membership at large and accepted as revelations by the vote of the members. Thus, canon doctrine comprises Mormon scripture. Official doctrine includes other statements from the President or

the First Presidency. Since the President is the presiding prophet of the church and since he and his counselors, forming the First Presidency, are the highest executive body within church government, statements issuing from them on what does or does not constitute an official position of the church must be viewed as nearly-as-reliable as recognized revelations in matters of doctrine. Authoritative doctrine includes the doctrinal interpretations of other holders of high ecclesiastical office and of other influential members whose views are respected as authoritative by virtue of their formal scholarly credentials and research. Popular doctrine has the least claim on authenticity. It consists of the common beliefs of members that may be called Mormon "folklore." Mauss notes that, "Occasionally a popular doctrine will be considered subversive enough by General Authorities to warrant official condemnation, but usually folklore flourishes unimpeded by official notice" (33).

Although Mauss usefully highlights the existence of a spectrum within Mormon "doctrine," some clarifications are necessary regarding its utility in research of the kind to be reported here. As with the scriptures of any religion, Mormon canon doctrine is amenable to broad differences in interpretation. Thus, citations from canon doctrine commonly play a prominent role in the doctrinal assertions of Mauss' remaining three categories. Canon doctrine does not, therefore, lend itself reliably to a role in research requiring precise statements about specific "doctrines." Official doctrine, on the other hand, includes a prominent component of specific and unambiguous "position statements" by church Presidents on specific questions of doctrine. Furthermore, the doctrinal assertions of church Presidents are recognized as taking precedence over those of other General Authorities. According to a statement on this issue by J. Reuben Clark, Jr. (1954), counselor to President David O. McKay,

> *When any man, except the President of the Church, undertakes to proclaim one unsettled doctrine, as among two or more doctrines in dispute, we may know that he is not 'moved upon by the Holy Ghost,' unless he is acting under the direction and by the authority of the President.*

Operational Definitions

For purposes of the research to be reported here, it was decided that official doctrine would be defined narrowly as proclamations by Presidents of the church which address specific questions of belief and which assert an official stance concerning those questions. All views differing from official doctrine, so defined, would be considered to be Mormon folk-belief, examples of which would be drawn from the grass-roots level of lay membership. Since, as recognized by Mauss (1981: 44), official doctrine represents the views of particular church Presidents, this category may contain contradictory views by different Presidents. For this reason, careful consideration must be made of whether particular statements by church Presidents represent the historical consensus of church Presidents and, if not, what historical trends exist in the diverse positions embodied in official doctrine.

Sample

In order to establish that the seemingly paradoxical coexistence of formal doctrinal positions by church Presidents and creedal diversity of folk-belief at the grass-roots level exists, and to provide explanations for it, a research study, based largely on interviews with active Latter-day Saints, was conducted. During the course of each interview, the interviewee was queried about his or her views on topics that participant observation had suggested to be ones in which common folk-beliefs might differ from official pronouncements. These topics included the interviewees' beliefs about church doctrine concerning the age of the earth, biological evolution, the creation of Eve, conscientious objection to military service, abortion, and when the spirit enters the human body.

The descriptive statistics presented are based on interviews carried out among 60 active Latter-day Saints (32 female, 28 male). The sample was nonsystematic, but an attempt was made to exclude obvious biases in the selection of interviewees. Thus, previous acquaintances of the interviewer were excluded from the study, only one member of any family or household was interviewed, and the informants were not concentrated in any one residential area. Although most of the interviewees were contacted primarily at church functions, some were located fortuitously in other settings, including a state university campus. Interviews were carried out in settings comfortable to the interviewees, usually their own homes, although some of the students were interviewed on the university campus. Informants ranged from eighteen to sixty-four years of age, with a mean age of 37.6 years. Eighty-five percent of the informants had some college education; sixty-four percent were currently enrolled in a university program. Fifty-seven percent identified themselves as Republican, 14% as Democrats, and 29% as independent voters. The Utah Mormon electorate at large is estimated to be 70.2% Republican, 20.1% Democrat, and 9.7% other (Dan Jones Associates, personal communication, 1985). Although 57% of the sample were female, statistical comparisons of the responses of the male and female informants showed no significant differences.

Instrumentation

The data were gathered using an interview format in which subjects were encouraged to express their understanding of "Mormon doctrine" in their own words, while the interviewer made notes. The use of in-depth interviews rather than a standardized questionnaire permitted the detailed exploration of subjects' views on each issue. During the course of the interviews, all subjects were asked the same six questions that made up the focus of this study: 1) How old do you understand the earth to be? 2) How does the idea of human or animal evolution fit with Mormon doctrine? 3) How was Eve created? 4) Can conscientious objectors to military service be good Mormons? 5) How do Mormons feel about abortion? 6) When does the spirit enter the human body? All subjects were also asked how they recognize that a belief is an "official" doctrine of the Mormon Church. Subjects' views on all questions were probed to clarify their responses, and in all cases the process of clarification included queries about whether subjects believed the church had an "official" doctrinal position on the issue they were discussing and whether they understood the views they were expressing to be official doctrine of the church (however they defined "official") or simply their own views. In those cases in which subjects asserted that their own views differed from the "official" church position, both views were recorded. Clarification was always specifically sought about how the concept of abortion related to the concept of murder.

Official Positions on the Six Issues

Age of the Earth

Historically, Mormonism has accommodated somewhat to the scientific view of the earth being of great age. Jeffrey (1973: 47-50) has made it clear that Mormon prophets beginning with Joseph Smith have not insisted on a fundamentalist literalism concerning the age of the earth. Joseph Smith seems to have thought in terms of billions of years (Phelps, 1845: 758). Brigham Young (1976: 231) argued that the "days" of Genesis was "a mere term" and asserted, "We are not authorized to say what the duration of these days was." Thus, David O. McKay (1956: 6; 1967: 5; Brown, 1958: 7) was not asserting a radically different position when he spoke of "the millions of years that it took to prepare the physical world." In general, statements by Mormon prophets seem best characterized as indicating that the age of the earth has not been viewed as an essentially religious question, and when they have broached the subject, they seem not to have viewed their theology as threatened by the science of the day.

Biological Evolution

Mormons commonly view their religion as a fundamentalist one when it comes to the issue of human origins. What is not widely known is that Presidents of the Church since 1910 have asserted that the church is doctrinally neutral on the question of human evolution (Joseph F. Smith, 1910: 570):

Whether the mortal bodies of man evolved in natural processes to represent perfection, through the direction and power of God; whether the first parents of our generations, Adam and Eve, were transplanted from another sphere, with immortal tabernacles, which became corrupted through sin and the partaking of natural foods, in the process of time; whether they were born here in mortality, as other mortals have been, are questions not fully answered in the revealed word of God.

Joseph F. Smith (1911: 209) also claimed, "The Church itself has no philosophy about the modus operandi employed by the Lord in His creation of the world, and much talk therefore about the philosophy of Mormonism is altogether misleading." Joseph Fielding Smith, who was an outspoken anti-evolutionist before becoming President of the church, remained publicly silent on this question after taking office but privately indicated (1972) that the official position of the church had not changed since the Joseph F. Smith administration. Consistent with the position of doctrinal neutrality is the statement by David O. McKay (1957) that, "On the subject of organic evolution the Church has officially taken no position." President McKay, who in his personal views appears to have been a theistic evolutionist (Christiansen, 1984), affirmed this view on various occasions, both in correspondence (1959, 1960a, 1964) and in public addresses, in one of which (1952: 6) he spoke of "evolution's beautiful theory of the creation of the world." President Spencer W. Kimball (1976a: 72) has reiterated the doctrinal neutrality of the church on this issue.

However, the official neutrality has not been widely proclaimed to members of the church at large since the administration of Joseph F. Smith. President Harold B. Lee apparently made no public statements on the issue of evolution, but he did publish a statement (1972: 2-3) declaring the belief in pre-

Adamite races to be contrary to Mormon scripture (Moses 3: 7) that describes Adam as "the first man." Although this is a slightly different issue than biological evolution, it is related to that concept and is probably a reliable indicator of his personal attitudes about evolution. Nevertheless, President Lee (e.g., 1972) seems, as a matter of policy, to have refused to have given direct responses to individual inquiries about the doctrinal position of the church concerning evolution and referred such inquiries to the questioner's local bishop for response. Like Joseph Fielding Smith, the current President of the church, Ezra Taft Benson, was also firmly anti-evolutionist in his views prior to becoming the presiding official of the church. Since becoming President, he has neither reiterated the position of earlier Presidents nor asserted that biological evolution is in-and-of-itself contrary to church doctrine. He has, however, spoken publicly against the acceptance of evolution as an alternative to religious faith. Whether this represents the foreshadowing of a new official position remains to be seen.

The Creation of Eve

Latter-day Saint leaders have devoted greater effort at publicizing the fact that they hold the Genesis story of Eve's creation from a rib of Adam to have been metaphorical. Official church publications, quoting President Spencer W. Kimball (1976b: 17; 1979: 36) explicitly stated this to be the case.

Conscientious Objection to Military Service

The church has had varied history in its relationship to war and the military (see, for instance, Quinn, 1984b, 1985). Quinn (1985) characterized the church as having pursued an "ambivalent policy toward militarism, war, and peace, which might be called 'selective pacifism'" (16). By and large, presidents of the church expressed support for a government's right to conscript men into military service, praised the patriotism of those who served their countries in the military, and at the same time expressed respect for those who elected not to participate in the military if they did so for reasons of conscience.

Brigham Young (1863: 248) said of those who left the United States to avoid participating in the American Civil War,

> *...I think they are probably as good a class of men as has ever passed through this country; they are persons who wish to live in peace, and to be far removed from contending factions. As far as I am concerned I have no fault to find with them.*

However, throughout most of the history of the church, although expressions respecting the sensibilities of those conscientiously opposed to military service have been consistent, they have generally been much more discreetly expressed than have sentiments of respect for military service as an expression of loyalty to society. This is well illustrated during the war in Vietnam, when the First Presidency under the direction of President David O. McKay (1969: 12) publicly declared, "We believe our young men should hold themselves in readiness to respond to the call of their government to serve in the armed forces when called upon ..." and at the same time (McKay, 1968) instructed that private inquiries about the acceptability of conscientious objection to military service be responded to with the following reply:

As the brethren understand, the existing law provides that men who have conscientious objection may be excused from combat service. There would seem to be no objection, therefore, to a man availing himself on a personal basis of the exemption provided by law.

Abortion

Abortion is clearly opposed by church Presidents, who have condemned it for at least a century. For instance in 1855 the First Presidency under the direction of President John Taylor issued a statement, which read, "...And we again take this opportunity of warning the Latter-day Saints against those...practices of foeticide and infanticide" (as reported by Clark, 1967: 11), and Spencer W. Kimball (1975: 6) asserted, "We decry abortions and ask our people to refrain from this serious transgression" (Kimball, 1975: 6).

Nevertheless, the official opposition to abortion is not rationalized on the basis of defining abortion as murder. Indeed, church publications explicitly treat abortion as an offense different from and less serious than murder. Thus, although those who "encourage, perform or submit to an abortion are to be disciplined by Church councils, as necessary," (Corporation of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Later-day Saints, 1983: 77), excommunication is not mandated as it is for murder (Corporation of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980). In 1973 the First Presidency stated that, "As the matter stands, no definitive statement has been made by the Lord one way or the other regarding the crime of abortion. So far as is known, he has not listed it alongside of the unpardonable sin of shedding innocent blood. That he has not done so would suggest that it is not in that class of crime and therefore will be amenable to the laws of repentance and forgiveness" (Church News, January 27, 1973, p. 7). Consistent with this view of abortion is the fact that whereas excommunication with no option of readmission to the church is mandated for murder, abortion need not be so treated: Unlike murder, "a person may repent and be forgiven for the sin of abortion" (Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983: 78). Furthermore, church Presidents have formally acknowledged the acceptability of abortion for reasons other than protecting the life of a pregnant woman. Abortions are explicitly permitted a woman after prayerful consultation with her husband and bishop in cases of rape or incest or when in the opinion of competent medical counsel the life or health of the woman is at risk (Corporation of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983: 77).

The Beginning of Human Life

The opinions of church leaders as to when the spirit enters the body have varied historically. In spite of the fact that abortion has been strongly opposed by LDS leaders (Keller, 1985: 42-44), this has never been done on the basis of contending that the spirit was present in the body of the fetus. Most often LDS leaders have suggested "quickening" as evidence for the spirit having entered the child; occasionally some have suggested birth as the crucial time. For instance, Brigham Young asserted that the spirit enters the body at the time of quickening (about 4-5 months after conception): "When the mother feels life come into her infant, it is the spirit entering the body ..." (quoted in Smith, 1955: 280-81). Birth has also been cited by church Presidents (Keller, 1985: 42-43).

Results

The de-emphasis on the existence of diversity in the beliefs of members makes possible the perpetuation of folk-beliefs that are contrary to official doctrinal positions taken by the Presidents of the church, even though they are held to be the only officials who are formally authorized to proclaim new doctrine for the church (Clark, 1954: 2). Indeed, in some cases the plurality or even the majority views can be at odds with official doctrine. Such contrasts between the consensus of church members and official church pronouncement can be illustrated by the following six cases: 1) the age of the earth, 2) the concept of human biological evolution, 3) the origin of Eve, 4) the acceptability of conscientious objection to military service, 5) abortion and 6) the concept of when the spirit enters the human body.

Age of the Earth

Only 7% of the males and 3% of the females asserted the extremely literal position of twenty-four-hour days. Another 25% of the males and 50% of the females opted for the fundamentalist view of each Genesis "day" being a thousand-year period. Forty-two percent of the sample (46% of the males and 38% of the females) took the position that the creation "days" were extremely long periods of time. Six of the male interviews and three of the females refused to take a stance on the length of time involved in the creation of the earth. Of those who ventured an opinion, 49% portrayed creation in terms of indeterminate length, while 51% opted for one of the more traditional fundamentalist views.

Biological Evolution

Sixty percent of the sample rejected the idea that humans had evolved. Only 28% asserted a personal belief that some form of evolution had been involved in the origin of our species. Eighteen percent indicated that scientific ideas of evolution adequately account for human origins and 10% specified a divinely guided evolution.

When asked about whether the church had an official doctrinal position on this matter, 57% of the sample believed there was, and that the doctrine was anti-evolutionary. Only 38% identified the official church position as neutral. None believed their church to be pro-evolutionist. Twenty-five percent of those who personally believed in evolution regarded their own views as deviating from what they believed to be the official anti-evolutionary doctrines of the church. A full 70% of those who primarily rejected evolution also held this to be an official doctrinal position of the church. Thus, not only were the majority of these members out of step with the officially neutral stance of church Presidents, but the majority of these were unaware of this discrepancy.

The Creation of Eve

A clear plurality of 43% of the interviewees espoused a literal interpretation of the Genesis version of the origin of Eve. Only 22% percent disagreed with this view, while 35% were unsure.

Conscientious Objection to Military Service

A plurality, 43% of the sample, believed that the church officially opposes conscientious objection to military service. Thirty-six percent believed that the church either supports (13%) or is neutral (23%) on this issue. Another 20% were uncertain.

Abortion

Thirty-eight percent of the sample simply equated abortion with murder and another 23% specifically identified abortion as the "shedding of innocent blood," a particularly heinous and unforgivable form of murder in Mormon terminology. Thus, a full 61% of interviewees defined abortion as a form of murder.

The Beginning of Life

Fifty-three percent of the sample claimed the church had an official position that conception is the moment at which the human receives a spirit. Only 3% cited quickening. Another 3% indicated birth, and 13% were uncertain. Twenty-seven percent asserted that no official doctrine exists. In this case, the majority view clearly parallels the predominant view held by most church leaders, but incorrectly asserts that this position is official doctrine.

Summary

The preceding six examples have illustrated that in areas not central to LDS theology, diversity does exist in the views of Mormons as to whether particular common beliefs are or are not doctrinal. Furthermore, individual Mormons espouse opposing views as being doctrines of the church. In some cases even a majority of members may believe a position to be official doctrine when it is not. That variation should exist in the religious beliefs of the individual members of a religion is not, in itself, exceptional. However, variation in which the predominant view of what is church doctrine differs from the officially espoused position of church leaders who are thought of as prophets, seers and revelators, calls for some explanation.

Discussion

Mormonism is a heavily proselytizing religion. Its nearly 28,000 active full-time missionaries bring approximately 200,000 new convert members into the church each year (Corporation of the President, 1985: 20). The absence of a large body of well-established formal doctrines facilitates recruitment of individuals with diverse views. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that Mormonism, with its claim to the status of a revealed religion based on contemporary prophetic leadership, might differentially

recruit a high percentage of converts for whom a rather literal understanding of scriptural accounts of God's relationship with his followers is appealing. Mormon converts fit Hadaway's (1980) description of denominational switchers, "committed seekers" who adopt a new denomination for its better theological legitimation of the kind of religious experience with which they are most comfortable.

The central theological precepts of Mormonism, those with which a convert must agree in order to join the religion, harmonize readily with a fundamentalist literalism in matters of faith. These include the acceptance of an anthropomorphic concept of God who is the literal Father of human spirits, the portrayal of the Sonship of Jesus Christ as a truly physical relationship to the Father, and a rather legalistic view of the necessity of the Atonement of Christ.[ii] Other central beliefs are especially compatible with a mentality for which clear, neat and authoritative answers to questions of doctrine and practice are desirable. These include the acceptance of leaders who are held to be prophets, seers and revelators. Their authority over the church is legitimized not on the basis of their education, training or pastoral calling but on their inspired selection and ordination by other ecclesiastical leaders whose priesthood authority traces back through an unbroken chain to Joseph Smith, Jr. The authority of the first prophet of the church was based on a series of divine revelations beginning with the literal appearance of God the Father and Jesus Christ in 1820. Converts to Mormonism are joining a religion that lays claim to inerrancy in doctrine and practice, since both are held to be based on divine revelation to prophets rather than on human interpretation of scripture (Faust, 1985: 8). Christensen and Cannon (1974) found a consistent trend toward greater religious conservatism and decisiveness in the religious beliefs of students at Brigham Young University between the years of 1935 and 1973, trends that they (Christensen, 1982: 10) believe represent church-wide changes. These findings are paralleled by those of Smith (1976) regarding the sexual behavior and sexual attitudes of Mormon students, and they fit the idea that a major selective process, such as differential recruitment of new members who have a fundamentalist approach to religion, is at work within the church.

Mormonism's central doctrines set the tone for a pattern of scriptural fundamentalism and literalism which pervades religious thinking at the local level of the Mormon ward, or congregation. Religious discussions at the ward level follow a pattern that allows one to readily predict what ward members will typically agree upon as a valid doctrine or interpretation of scripture. The assumed context for interpreting even ancient scripture is usually that of contemporary American culture, rather than the culture in which the scripture arose. Within this taken-for-granted context of interpretation, a hierarchy of principles seems to guide the choice of interpretations. First, simple explanations are preferred over complex ones. Second, literal interpretations are preferred over non-literal ones. However, more complex or non-literal interpretations will be accepted if this is necessary to reconcile a scripture with other Mormon beliefs. Thus, the principle of coherency sometimes supersedes the principles of simplicity and literalism. Finally, an interpretation, regardless of its simplicity, literalism and coherency with other beliefs will be rejected if it portrays the church or its leaders (modern or ancient) in a way which includes human failings, faults or frailties. The overriding principle of decision-making about what is or is not "true doctrine" (since Mormons do not characteristically speak in terms of "interpreting" scripture, history or doctrine) is, in other words, the preference for views which portray the church and its leaders in the most positive light possible. This preference follows from the fact that the central justification for the existence and authority of the church is the belief that it was instituted and continues to be guided by direct intervention by God through the vehicle of his prophets, the leaders of the church. The church is and must be thought of as a sacred institution (Crapo & Cannon, 1982), symbolic of God's direct involvement in its origins and ongoing functioning.[iii]

Routinization of Charisma and Official Doctrine

In the near century and a half since the death of Mormonism's charismatic founder, the tradition of divine revelation through church leaders as the basis of church government persists in the designation of those leaders as "prophets, seers, and revelators." However, the leadership style has changed tremendously since the days of Joseph Smith, who received more than a hundred and thirty later-canonized revelations during the fourteen years of his tenure as church President. Revelations have become increasingly less common and church leaders devote their most observable energies to perpetuating and increasing the efficiency of established church routines. The shift in emphasis within the role of the governing officials of the church has led to a corresponding shift in one source of doctrines within the church from the central leadership to the grass-roots members. According to Leone (1974: 765), a major aspect of the evolution of Mormonism has been exactly this shift: "...the major change is not doctrinal, it is structural. Those who define belief have changed. The people do it now, the leaders did it then. And this change has occurred not in theory but in practice." In the context of a theoretically authoritarian ecclesiastical structure, the church has achieved what O'Dea (1967: 165) referred to as a "democracy of participation." It is, according to Dolgin (1974: 545), "at those historic moments when the core concepts of the Church are in danger and during times when significant alterations in social reality are increasing the non-isomorphism between Church theology and individuals' beliefs" that revelations to the President of the church occur, bringing the openly espoused official theology into line with folk-belief.

This move away from the revelatory process has allowed grass-roots theologizing to play an increasingly important role in determining the course of the theological concepts of the typical member, including those of the leaders who ultimately rise from their ranks. The role played by grass-roots theologizing as a socialization mechanism is enhanced by the fact that folk-beliefs at the ward level are consistently more conservative than are the official doctrinal positions with which they conflict.[iv] The reliance on grass-roots theologizing as a source of peer pressure allows an authority-based ecclesiastical structure which stresses the importance of obedience to church leaders (Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984; 98-100; Crapo, 1982; and Crapo & Cannon, 1982) to avoid, in most cases, the role of enforcing discipline on individual members by formal ecclesiastical mechanisms such as excommunication. Since both the origin myths and the contemporary values of Mormonism place great emphasis on the free will of individuals (see Crapo, 1985), the relatively heavy reliance on informal peer pressure to enforce conformity helps members avoid the perception of conflict between the belief that the church regards their free will as sacred and the church's demand for obedience to its leaders.

Recruitment of Church Leaders

The reliance on a lay ministry at the local and regional levels overseen by a full-time body of professional ecclesiastical authority figures provides a very effective means for recruiting the more socially adept members into positions of higher church government. According to Leone (1974: 750), the degree to which Mormons are involved in the organizational and leadership activities of their ward is

greater than that of Protestants in their congregations or of Catholics in their parishes. In a typical Mormon ward as many as thirty to fifty percent of the numbers may be requested by the bishop, himself a lay minister, to fulfill duties in the day-to-day programs of the ward. In fact, when one includes ad hoc and part-time assignments, virtually all active members of a ward are likely to have at least one assignment. Adler (1978: 70) estimates that a typical ward "requires about 150 positions to staff these many programs (exclusive of the fifty to one hundred home teachers and visiting teachers and countless ad hoc assignments). Ward members devote a staggering number of volunteer hours to their church assignments and meetings." He lists the typical staff positions as including the bishopric and clerks; librarians; presidencies, secretaries, choristers, organists and teachers for auxiliary organizations (Relief Society, Primary, Sunday School, Young Men's and Young Women's); and officers and teachers for Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthood quorums. Additionally, ward members may be called to organizationally higher positions such as stake presidencies, high councils, and auxiliary positions; as temple officiators, and as missionaries. It is responsiveness to these "callings" and the demonstration of skill, leadership qualities and dedication to the church in carrying out assignments, that increase the likelihood of calls to positions of greater responsibility within the church. Albrecht and Heaton (1985: 15) found that there is a positive relationship between education and church activity, a fact which they partially explain on the basis of the skills required in fulfilling the work of a lay ministry - bookkeeping, teaching, organizational management, and interpersonal relationship skills. The calling of members with such skills to positions of responsibility within the lay ministry encourages the active participation of more educated members.

Thus, Bishops, Stake Presidents, and eventually General Authorities are chosen for their demonstrated leadership skills. They tend to be successful businessmen, members of law firms, and to a lesser degree educational administrators in their secular lives (Johnson, 1970) and financially better off than most members (Davies, 1963; Quinn, 1976). Selected for their skills and active loyalty as organization men, the General Authorities of the church have been rather sensitive to issues of public relations with the larger secular society with which the church bureaucracy must deal as a corporate entity. Seen in this light, it is not surprising that the views of church Presidents - or more particularly the views they set forth as official positions - may occasionally contrast with those of members at large, due to the moderating influence of their educational and social backgrounds and to the administrative issues which confront the leaders in their management of the church within the larger society (Sorenson, 1983). The formal, public positions taken by church Presidents do not necessarily represent their private views. Rather, they serve the interests of the organization as a whole in a church that has made the transition from its early charismatic leaders to a bureaucratic leadership style that functions to regulate the dynamic equilibrium that exists between the church and its broader social environment. In the words of Hansen (1981: 215): "In spite of a facade of amateurism, these men in fact represent a dedicated and hardworking group of professionals who are devoting their entire lives to the corporate well-being of the organization they are serving."

Image Management: Avoidance of Controversy

In areas of potentially significant controversy, such as biological evolution, church Presidents have carefully avoided a confrontation between their official positions and the view of the scientific and education communities by asserting the doctrinal neutrality of the church on this issue. At the same time

such statements are not widely circulated among members at large, thereby avoiding conflict with the predominantly fundamentalist views of the church membership and the proselyting goals of the church. Indeed, a few General Authorities of lesser seniority than the church President have occasionally published and preached, even in church-wide semi-annual conference broadcasts to the membership, the anti-evolutionary views which members generally regard as doctrine. Only when individually queried are these views later acknowledged to be "personal opinion" of those church leaders, rather than church doctrine. The tolerance of church Presidents for a one-sided presentation of non-doctrinal opinions at variance with their uncirculated declarations of church neutrality on the issue is well illustrated by the case of Bruce R. McConkie, one of the decade's most outspoken anti-evolutionists among Mormon General Authorities. His book, Mormon Doctrine, originally published without church approval, has been one of the ten best-selling books by General Authorities in the history of the church. Two years after its publication, Mormon President David O. McKay (1960b) commented that it "had been a source of concern to the Brethren ever since it was published." and that it "is full of errors and missed elements." Nevertheless, such misgivings have not been circulated to the members at large, who generally regard this work as the authoritative source for answers to questions about church doctrine. A similar history attends the issue of conscientious objection to military service, where the official mentality is stressed only in response to individual inquiry. However, sermons and writings in church publications stress the tradition of patriotic participation in military service by Mormons.

In less controversial issues, views of church Presidents are occasionally referred to in church publications which reach the individual member. For instance, the church magazine, Ensign, which is published for all members, and the Melchizadek Priesthood Course of Study, a lesson plan used for teaching all adult male members of the church, have both included a statement by church President Spencer W. Kimball (1976: 71; 1979; 36) that the rib story of the genesis of Eve is merely figurative. In this case, a larger minority of the sample (22%) was aware that the official position on the question of Eve's origin is not a fundamentalist one. Contraception is also broached in church teaching materials. It is uniformly discussed in a format that stresses the importance of having children. This is consistent with the findings of Heaton and Calkins (1983: 111) that Mormons are as likely as Protestants to practice contraception, though patterns of contraceptive use among Mormons are guided by pro-family rather than anti-birth control values: "Mormons are apparently committed to a subcultural goal of having children but feel little constraint in terms of the contraceptive means they use to achieve this goal." Although church publications criticize the use of economic reasons for limiting family size and generally cite only the health of the mother as a valid reason for avoiding conception, such discussions typically end by urging the use of "wisdom" and "self-control," thereby allowing latitude in individual interpretation.

In issues where official statements are likely to be available to most members but where those statements are out of step with the pattern of biblical literalism typical of Mormon grass-roots theologizing, selective perception can permit the individual to remain true to the overall pattern. Although it is likely that church Presidents are aware that some of their official views differ from the consensus of members in general, it is clear that the membership at large remains unaware that their views contrast with those of their prophets. In fact, the church hierarchy encourages members to avoid the perception of conflict, not only within the church but in life in general.[v] Thus, in spite of its intense missionary zeal, Mormon publications typically do not criticize the beliefs or practices of other religions. Likewise, members normally do not become involved in political activism for the promotion of their own values. Within the church setting itself, the avoidance of controversy is even more evident. Open disagreement with one another in religious discussions is explicitly discouraged, and formal lessons in meetings where

group discussion is appropriate are usually structured around rhetorical questions which channel members into acceptable responses that are not likely to stimulate disagreement. Teachers in such settings typically compliment any response but are less likely to follow up on comments which deviate from the desired response. Potentially controversial topics are carefully avoided in established church meetings. Religious topics of this kind are typically referred to as "the mysteries." They are issues considered dangerous to speculate about because they may lead to heresy. Non-religious topics of a potentially controversial nature are labeled "political issues." They, like "the mysteries," are considered taboo in a church sanctioned setting. Criticism of any church leader, which is likewise taboo, is sometimes described as behavior that "leads to apostasy." These patterns of conflict avoidance encourage the repression of any conflict within the church. Members readily acknowledge the existence of "Mormons" who have not been in harmony with the church hierarchy, such as the various polygamous, fundamentalists past and present, other schismatic groups which have arisen throughout the history of the church, and political activists and feminists such as Sonia Johnson, who have received public attention in the news media. However, these are not discussed as examples of debate over contrasting views within the church. Neither is the pathos of the personal conflicts such persons may have experienced concerning church doctrine or practice a normal part of conversations in which they are mentioned. Rather, such people or groups are described as having "fallen away" from the church and its teachings. Dissension, in other words, never happens "within the ranks," since dissent is merely the act by which individual members separate themselves from the church and its teachings.

The emphasis on minimization of conflict is also extended to external relations, where it is manifest as a concern for the careful public presentation of the image of the church as a monolithic organization in which members universally support common values and beliefs which are in harmony with American ideals. As a part of this process of image management, the church maintains a variety of visitor centers throughout the world, televises its semi-annual church conferences as well as weekly Mormon Tabernacle Choir programs, and in recent years has established a Public Relations office to monitor media portrayals of the church, to respond to adverse publicity, and to deal with outside agencies, especially the news media (see Shepherd & Shepherd, 1984: 184).

Conclusion

A paradoxical aspect of Mormonism is its simultaneous emphasis on the divine authority of its leaders as sources of revealed doctrine and on tremendous tolerance for deviance among members from some of its officially espoused doctrinal positions. Members often do not perceive any difference between their own views and those of the leaders. This results from the fact that the processes by which general members and church leaders are recruited select for different attitudes and values in the two groups. It is adaptive for the typical views of lay-members and those of church Presidents occasionally to stand at odds, with no apparent evidence of awareness of this fact among church members at large.

References

Albrecht, Stan L. and Tim B. Heaton 1985 "Highly educated Mormons are ore religious, study shows." Sunstone (March): 15.

Alder, Douglas D. 1978 "The Mormon ward: Congregation or community?" Journal of Mormon History 5: 61-78.

Bellah, Robert N. 1970 Beyond Belief. New York, New York: Harper and Row.

Bitton, Davis 1982 "Like the tigers of old times." Sunstone 7: 44-48.

Brewer, David L. 1968 "The Mormons." Pp. 518-47 in Donald Cutler (Ed.), The Religious Situation: 1968. Boston: Beacon Press.

Brown, Hugh B. 1958 "What is man and what he may become." BYU Devotional, BYU Speeches of the Year (1957-58), #6.

Buerger, David John 1982 "Speaking with authority: The theological influence of Elder Bruce R. McConkie." Sunstone 10: 8-13.

Christiansen, E. B. 1984 "Compartmentalization denied." Dialogue 17: 10-11.

Christensen, Harold B. 1982 "The persistence of chastity: A built-in resistance within Mormon culture to secular trends." Sunstone 7: 7-14.

Christensen, Harold B. and Kenneth L. Cannon 1974 "The fundamentalist emphasis at Brigham Young University: 1935-1973." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 17: 53-57.

Clark, James R. 1967 Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - 1933-1964. Vol. 3. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft.

Clark, J. Reuben, Jr. 1954 "When are the writings or sermons of church leaders entitled to the claim of scripture?" Church News 31 (July): 2.

Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1980 General Handbook of Instructions. Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

_____,1983 General Handbook of Instructions. Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

_____,1985 "Statistical report 1984." Ensign (May issue). Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Crapo, Richley 1982 "LDS (Mormon) sex role values as revealed by a content analysis of official teaching materials: A comparison and evaluation." Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Pacific Sociological Association, San Diego, California.

_____,1985 "Free will and coercion: The role of paradox in Mormon myth and ritual." Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Utah Academy of Letters, Arts and Sciences, Provo, Utah.

Crapo, Richley and Sharon Cannon 1982 "LDS (Mormon) values as revealed by a content analysis of official teaching materials." Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Western Social Science Association, Denver, Colorado.

Davies, J. K. 1963 "The Mormon church: Its middle class propensities." Review of Religious Research 4: 34-39.

_____, Janet L. 1974 "Latter-day sense and substance." Pp. 519-46 in irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (Eds.), Religious Movements in Contemporary America. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Faust, James E. 1985 "The abundant life." Ensign (November): 7-9.

Hadaway, C. K. 1980 "Denominational switching and religiosity," Review of Religious Research 21: 451-61.

Hansen, Klaus J. 1981 Mormonism and the American Experience. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Heaton, Tim B. and Sandra Calkins 1983 "Family size and contraceptive use among Mormons: 1965-75." Review of Religious Research 25: 102-13.

Jeffrey, Duane E. 1973 "Seers, savants and evolution: The uncomfortable interface." Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 8 (3 & 4): 41-75.

Johnson, F. Reed 1970 "The Mormon church: Resource allocation in a non-market organization." Paper presented at the Conference on Economics and Mormon Culture of Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Johnson, Sonia 1981 From Housewife to Heretic. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

Judah, J. Stillson 1967 The History and Philosophy of the Metaphysical Movements in America. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press.

Keller, Jeffrey E. 1985 "When does the spirit enter the body?" Sunstone (March): 42-44.

Kimball, Spencer W. 1976a "The blessings and responsibilities of womanhood." Ensign (February), pp. 70-72.

_____,1976b "Speaking today." Ensign (March), p. 70-72.

_____,1979 "The divine origin of man." Pp. 35-40 in Choose Ye This Day: Melchizedek Priesthood Study Guide, 1980-81. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Lee, Harold B. 1972 "Find the answers in the scriptures." Ensign 2: 2-3.

Leone, Mark 1969 "Modern cultural patterns in east-central Arizona." Unpublished paper. Princeton University.

_____,1974 "The economic basis for the evolution of Mormon religion." Pp. 722-70 in Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (Eds.), Religious Movements in Contemporary America. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

_____,1979 The Roots of Modern Mormonism. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Mauss, Armand L. 1981 "The fading of the Pharaoh's curse: The decline and fall of the priesthood ban against blacks in the Mormon Church." Dialogue 14: 10-45.

McConkie, Bruce R. 1976 Mormon Doctrine. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft[1958]

McKay, David O. 1952 "A message for LDS college youth." Speech to BYU student body. October 10, 1952.

_____,1956 "Gospel ideals - Life's surest anchor." BYU Devotional, BYU Speeches of the Year 1955-56, #5.

_____,1957 Unpublished letter to Professor William Lee Stokes, February 15, 1957.

_____,1959 Unpublished letter to A. Kent Christensen, February 3, 1959. (On file with author.)

_____,1960a Unpublished letter to A. Kent Christensen, February 3, 1959. (On file with author.)

_____,1960b Official Journal. January 7, 8.

_____,1964 Unpublished letter to Pertti Felin, May 8, 1964. (On file with author.)

_____,1967 "Gospel ideals - Life's surest anchor." BYU Devotional, BYU Speeches of the Year 1966-67, #31.

_____,1968 Unpublished letter. (On file with author.)

_____,1969 "First Presidency statement." Deseret News Church Section 24 (May): 12.

McMurrin, Sterling 1965 The Theological Foundations of Mormonism. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press.

O'Dea, Thomas 1957 The Mormons. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Phelps, W. W. 1845 "The Answer." Times & Seasons 5 (January 1): 758.

Quinn, D. Michael 1976 The Mormon Hierarchy, 1832-1932: An American Elite. Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University.

_____,1984a "From sacred grove to sacral power structure." Dialogue 17: 9-34.

_____,1984b "The Mormon culture and the Spanish American War: An end to selective pacifism." Dialogue 17: 11-30.

_____,1985 "Conscientious objectors or Christian soldiers?" Sunstone 10: 14-23.

Shepherd, Gordon and Gary Shepherd 1984 A Kingdom Transformed: Rhetorical Patterns in the Development of Mormonism. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Smith, Joseph F. 1910 "Priesthood quorum's table." Improvement Era 13: 570.

_____,1911 "Philosophy and the church schools." Juvenile Instructor 46: 208-09.

Smith, Joseph Fielding 1955 Doctrines of Salvation. Vol. 2, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft.

_____,1972 Unpublished letter to Michael E. Derr, January 25, 1972. (On file with author.)

Smith, Wilford E. 1976 "The persistence of Mormon sex standards of college campuses (Deal us out of the sexual revolution)." Dialogue 10: 76-81.

Sorenson, John L. 1983 "Mormon folk and Mormon elite." Horizons 1: 4-18.

Stephenson, Shirley E. 1981 "Fawn McKay Brodie: An oral history interview." Dialogue 14: 99-116.

Whalen, William 1964 The Latter-day Saints in the Modern World. New York: The John Day Company.

Young, Brigham 1863 Conference address, as recorded in Journal of Discourses 10: 248.

_____,1876 Journal of Discourses 18: 231.

i   Mormon language is replete with phrases which emphasize its focus on instrumental-activism: e.g., eternal progress, temple work, work for the dead, genealogical work, missionary work, active member (a committed member), church assignments, obedience, and testimony bearing. Such phrases are much more common in Mormon discourse than is the language of "faith." Particularly noteworthy is the large number of hymns which stress work and action: e.g., "Come, Come Ye Saints, No Toil Nor Labor Fear," "Do What is Right," "Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?," "I Have Work Enough to Do," "Improve the Shining Moments," "Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words," "Let Us All Press on in the Work of Lord," "Choose the Right," "Shall the Youth of Zion Falter?," "If you Could Hie to Kolob," and "Sweet is the Work, My God, My King."

ii   The necessity of the Atonement involves a rather concrete conception of God as a Being bound by Natural Law. L.D.S. Church publications portray God as constrained by the fact that justice requires that sin be punished. Thus, the sins of humans may not be forgiven simply by an act of divine mercy, for justice may not be arbitrarily set aside. The suffering of Christ in His act of atonement was a necessary voluntary payment for humankind's debt of sin by one who, himself sinless, need not have suffered. Only by such an act was it possible, even for God, to allow humans who accept Christ's proxy suffering for their sins to re-enter his presence, cleansed of sin.

iii   This is illustrated by the recent censuring of various LDS historians for engaging too strongly in objective historical research that might undermine the faith of members (Bitton, 1982).

iv   For this reason, it is conservative deviance from the predominant folk-belief system (e.g., the espousal of polygamy) rather than liberal deviance which is more likely to be dealt with by formal excommunication proceedings. Traditionally, the liberal deviant from folk-belief was more likely to simply fall into inactivity than was the ultra-conservative member who was more likely to create the threat of schism within the church. Publicized cases of excommunications of liberal members such as Fawn Brodie (Stephenson, 1981) or Sonia Johnson (1981) are exceptions to this pattern and occur only when the liberal member publically attacks the image of the church or its leaders. The greater tolerance for academically-based liberal church members manifests itself in the existence of publications such as Dialogue and Sunstone which are widely read by liberal members. These publications can even be purchased in Church bookstores in spite of the fact that they are commonly viewed as suspect by mainstream members. On the other hand, affiliation with or sympathy for fundamentalist groups (e.g., Mormon ultratraditionalists who espouse practices no longer accepted by the mainstream church, such as polygamy or the withholding of the priesthood from Black members) is grounds for denial of a temple recommend or excommunications.

v   The major exception to this pattern is the emphasis on the overt persecution which Mormons have experienced, especially in their early history. This is usually confined to discussion of history, but even here, the antagonism is phrased in terms unrelated to contemporary relations between Mormons and other groups. Religiously and politically motivated persecution is discussed in terms of the individuals, now dead, who were involved, rather than as problems between Mormonism and government or other religious denominations.