Mormon Sexuality and American Culture

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In a recent essay on the Mormons, David Brion Davis observed that "their history, in relation to American history, is much like Hamlet's play-within-the-play."[1] Although analogies have their limitations, this one may prove useful in delineating the changing contours of Mormon sexuality. I am suggesting that Mormon culture experienced a transformation from a traditional to a modern society analogous to the one occurring in the larger American culture but within a different time frame.

Much of the friction between Mormons and Gentiles was a result of the fact that the two metamorphoses were out of phase. In the first half of the nineteenth century, when American culture was experiencing intense cultural transformation or "modernization," the Mormons were attempting to establish their traditionally oriented and yet innovative "restoration movement." By the twentieth century, as the Saints adopted the "modern," nineteenth-century values of their erstwhile antagonists, American society was beginning to move into what some commentators have called a "post-modern" phase. For the purposes of this article the term "traditional" identifies a society in which norms are sanctioned by external controls—by the force and weight of the community; while the term "modern" defines a society in which external controls and communal sanctions have broken down, and have been replaced by an individualistic ethos in which internalized values are maintained by mechanisms of self-control.[2]

In colonial America sexual attitudes and behavior were firmly rooted in a biblically oriented Calvinism or Anglicanism and in a social order reflecting the values of these religions. Fornication and adultery, as well as other less common sexual transgressions, were regarded not only as heinous sins but crimes, and were punished severely. For later generations, "Puritanism" became a synonym for sexual repression. As Edmund Morgan's revisionist study pointed out long ago, however, the Puritans were far from being the sexual prudes that a hostile literature made them out to be. They regarded sex in marriage not only as a means of procreation but also as a natural expression of the love between husband and wife. Celibacy in healthy persons was regarded as unnatural and against the will of God, as, of course, was sexual transgression. In either case, man was wilfully rejecting the laws of God.[3]

However severely they condemned sin the Puritans realized that living as they did in a fallen world, even they could not be absolutely certain about the state of their souls. Virtue could be achieved only at the cost of eternal vigilance.

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The first and foremost responsibility of the family was to monitor the behavior of its members. The community, likewise, saw to the enforcement of morals, a task made easy by a relative lack of privacy.[4] If these institutions should fail, the law held immorality in check. When sin did occur, the Puritans rarely panicked. A relatively relaxed attitude toward transgressors prevailed, no doubt encouraged by a stable social order in which rather infrequent premarital pregnancies and illegitimate births suggest a close correlation between prescription and behavior.[5]

From about 1675 on, however, we can observe an increasing divergence between belief and conduct. By 1790, the premarital pregnancy record in America exceeded 25 percent of firstborn children, prompting historians Daniel Scott Smith and Michael Hindus to surmise that such statistics point to a dissolution of the social and intellectual underpinnings of traditional society. As the social controls of the community slackened, sexual mores slackened also. From this time on the statistics begin a steady downward trend that reaches a low point of less than ten percent by 1860.[6]

Interpreted without a context, such data might suggest that nineteenth-century Americans had reestablished the stable social order of a traditional society. The social and intellectual climate of the period, however, points to a different conclusion. By the 1820s and 1830s, the decades of the birth of Mormonism, American culture had moved a long way down the road from the relatively stable social order of colonial America to the increasingly atomistic society of capitalistic individualism; from the traditional Calvinism which saw God as the center of the universe to an Arminianized evangelism which saw man as the center; and from a society in which behavior was largely controlled by the norms of the community to a society in which moral standards were internalized. In other words, the social order was changing from traditional to modern. Teetotalism and sexual restraint became two of the most important means of expressing this modern attitude. Once again, as in colonial society, prescription and behavior coincided, but for very different reasons.[7]

As social control gave way to self-control, Americans developed a perfectionism that would brook no compromise with the world or sin. In colonial society, sex within marriage was regarded as intrinsically wholesome. In the nineteenth century, however, an army of sexual reformers began to extol the virtues of sexual continence bordering on celibacy, even in marriage. If we can believe the rising chorus of antisexual rhetoric, severe doubt was cast upon God's wisdom or at least propriety for having made human propagation a function that at best was indelicate. Relatively perfunctory in their attacks on public vice, these reformers raised their crusade to a pitch of near-hysteria as they inveighed against the supposedly ubiquitous sexual excesses practiced within the privacy of the marriage bed or, even worse, by the individual alone.[8]

In the opinion of one historian, such attitudes "may have had a therapeutic value when [they] took hold in the 1830s, giving men and women an explanation and a set of cures for the frightening world they found themselves in."[9] Another explanation for this seemingly puzzling shift in attitudes may be found in the individualistic, anti-institutional ethos of the period, which placed the burden of reform on the individual rather than on society. If the world was less than perfect, it was the fault of the individual. As a result, private sins assumed

an unprecedented, monumental significance. Charles Rosenberg's assertion that masturbation was widely regarded as the "master vice" of the period finds a plausible explanation in the social and intellectual climate of antebellum America.[10]

Sexual attitudes thus had undergone a profound transformation. To colonial Americans the idea that one particular form of sexual transgression was a "master vice" would have been incomprehensible. As vigorously as they disapproved of departures from the sexual norms, such lapses were merely sins among many other sins. For many nineteenth-century reformers, however, sin had virtually become synonymous with sex.[11]

These were the kinds of sexual attitudes emerging as Mormonism made its debut in America. Such values, however, were not congenial to the early Saints, who scarcely fit into the pluralistic cultural pattern emerging in the antebellum period. Joseph Smith's millennial kingdom was intended as an alternative to the presumed deficiencies of American society rather than as an instrument for its reform. Mormonism, at least in its early phase, attempted to restore a society that reflected traditional values, although eventually, Joseph Smith envisioned a radical reordering of the family and of relations between the sexes.[12] Though Puritans would have regarded Smith's idea of modern revelation as heretical, they would have been comfortable with Book of Mormon theology that asserted that the Fall "was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish."[13]

To the early Mormons this passage appears to have been a fact of life rather than a source of anxiety. There is little evidence suggesting that the Saints—at least prior to the death of Joseph Smith—shared the sexual concerns of their more modern American contemporaries. As in traditional society, adultery, fornication, and other less common sexual transgressions were severely condemned, and unrepentant sinners excommunicated. But an examination of early Church trials suggests that sexual offenses were but one cause among many for excommunication.[14] Although demographic evidence for this early period is scant, it is quite likely that the sexual conduct of the Saints was on the whole exemplary by the standards of the period. This supposition is supported by studies of converts to evangelical religions, which point to stricter sexual behavior of those who had been "saved."[15] Unfortunately, it is all but impossible to document such changes. A perusal of diaries, journals, and letters for this early period is most unrewarding. When it comes to sex, the Saints left little record.

To modern, psychologically-oriented scholars, this silence may itself speak volumes. Perhaps the sexual repression was so severe that it remained totally submerged. Yet it should be remembered that this was the age in which the sexually obsessed reformers articulated their concerns *ad nauseam*. If sexuality had been one of the Mormons' chief concerns, it is unlikely that they would have remained silent on that issue, especially since the new religion, like Puritanism, was very much a religion of the word. That, in fact, was one of its great attractions. Ideally, aspiring Saints would be baptized only after the Truth had been revealed to them by the Spirit, but the preparation for that manifestation involved a rational process of study.

Mormonism, above all, was an ideology preparing the way for a new social

and religious order, and was therefore not particularly evangelical or revivalistic in its appeal.[16] The converted Saints, to be sure, would manifest through their conduct that they had been "born again," but what set the Mormons apart from the world more than anything was their beliefs. After all, many of the Gentiles likewise lived lives of moral rectitude. What they lacked was the True and Everlasting Gospel. Most of those who accepted the Gospel followed its moral proscriptions gladly. Yet it is unlikely that these proscriptions, rather than belief in the Restoration, in priesthood authority, and in the gifts of the Spirit, became the central concerns of their lives.

In addition to these intellectual or theological motivations, there were social reasons that may help explain why the early Saints did not share the sexual concerns of their contemporaries. It appears that during the antebellum period, concepts of sexuality were tied to changing perceptions and conditions of class. Some historians have suggested that at this time in England and on the Continent middle-class sexual morality became a necessary adjunct and expression expected of those who became the managers of the nation.[17] In an upwardly mobile society, this ethos was initiated by those who had middle class aspirations. This kind of "Victorianism" also served to provide a sense of identity, to set the middle class off from both the lower classes and the aristocracy, who were either unable or unwilling to live by bourgeois moral precepts.[18] In spite of increasing stratification, class boundaries in America were clearly less defined than in Europe. Charles Rosenberg argues persuasively that "a good many Americans must . . . have been all the more anxious in their internalization of those aspects of life-style which seemed to embody and assure class status."[19]

Sociologist Joseph Gusfield's study of the "bourgeoisification" of antebellum American cultural values provides striking support for this argument. For the overwhelming majority of those involved in the temperance movement, for example, "abstinence became a part of necessary moral action rather than a matter of personal choice."[20] Because "there would be no compromise with Evil in any of its forms," sexual conduct would be of equal concern to upwardly mobile Americans.[21]

The Saints, however, clearly felt that they had escaped the psychological, social, and economic pressures of class. As a millenarian religion envisioning the creation of a "new heaven" and a "new earth," Mormonism, in its attempt to "restore" a more traditional society, promised a radical reordering of nineteenth-century religious, political, social, and economic institutions. Although in this new society temperance and sexual restraint were part of the social order, neither served as a means of social transformation, nor as a response to modernization. Finally, because of its strong emphasis on the concept of free agency, early Mormonism placed personal choice ahead of concepts of "necessary moral action" prevalent among the Gentiles.

The response to the Prophet's dietary rules as revealed in the "Word of Wisdom" illustrates this clearly. Viewed superficially, these directives appear to be a typical expression of the temper of the times. Yet the very wording of the revelation is alien to the emerging spirit of "necessary moral action": "To be sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom, . . ."[22] It is, of course, too much to say that among the Mormons the use of alcohol was governed by the same legal and moral sanctions

that made moderate drinking in colonial America socially and morally acceptable. Nevertheless, Joseph Smith remained an occasional drinker all his life, and it is perhaps safe to suggest that until his death the Word of Wisdom was honored almost as much in the breach as in the observance—a further indication that Mormon social norms, in many ways, resembled those of the seventeenth century more than those of the nineteenth.[23]

There is a point at which the analogy between drinking and sex breaks down. Neither Mormons nor Puritans would have agreed with Benjamin Franklin's moderate use of "venery," if it occurred outside of marriage. When applied to fornication or adultery, the concept of moderation ceases to have meaning. Rather, it can be said that the Mormons, like the Puritans, had a positive attitude toward sex in marriage and, quite possibly, did not share the hysterical attitude of the reformers regarding masturbation. Lest I be misunderstood, I am not suggesting that the Saints condoned the "secret vice." All I am saying is that having removed themselves from the presumed corruptions of the Gentiles, they had no reason to invent a "master vice" in order to cope with the pressures of modernization. Mormons, for example, exhibited little if any anxiety over gender roles. Yet as Charles Rosenberg has shown, concern with masturbation was strongly connected to such anxieties, and was, by some, regarded as an "ultimate confession of male inadequacy."[24] Masturbation was also regarded as socially isolating, thus conflicting with the male role demands for social and economic achievement. The social and economic communitarianism of Mormonism may well have minimized such pressures.[25]

Because the early Saints failed to articulate their attitudes regarding this delicate topic, it is only by way of circumstantial evidence that it may be possible to document this supposition. An autobiographical statement by Joseph Smith suggests an implicit lack of concern over issues that agitated moral reformers of the day. We cannot of course know what transgressions the Prophet conjured in his readers' minds as he confessed, "I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth and the corruption of human nature, which I am sorry to say led me into divers temptations, to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God."[26] But given the preconceptions of the day, it is hard to believe that his detractors would have gone out of their way to read trivial foibles into the passage. The sentence surely has a potential for offending the squeamish. Those editors who much later changed "corruption" to "foibles," and struck out the phrase, "to the gratification of many appetites," must have been sensitive to the uses that could be made of this passage.[27] By that time [1902], as we shall see, Mormons had adopted the "modern," nineteenth-century attitudes of their erstwhile antagonists. Quite possibly, the young Joseph was not only more ingenuous but also more "traditional" in his response to his imperfections.[28]

Having thus far stressed the traditional aspects of Mormon culture and Mormon sexuality, I hasten to add that even in its early phase, Mormonism contained many of the germs of its later evolution into a "modern" religion. Emerson's statement that Mormonism was "an after-clap of Puritanism," while containing a great deal of insight, was clearly an oversimplification. Even the Book of Mormon contains too many Arminian heresies to make the comparison stick; and the Prophet's later pronouncement that "men will be punished for

their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" was fully compatible with the beliefs of one form of liberal Protestantism. Taken out of context, the Mormon doctrine of free agency had the potential for placing an undue burden on the individual conscience in the free-for-all of Jacksonian individualism. Like the Puritan community before it, however, the supportive system of the Mormon community seems to have mitigated the possibility of such stress. In a way Mormonism may well have combined the best of both worlds: the optimistic theology of the nineteenth century with the social cohesion of the seventeenth. In fact, this may have been one reason why the liberal side of Mormon thought could find expression in some rather radical social experiments. Having extricated themselves from the pressures of modernization, the Mormons, unlike their Gentile contemporaries, were not compelled to push for a frantic internalization of mores—sexual or otherwise.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that many of Joseph Smith's unorthodox ideas were already contained in the Book of Mormon. By 1833, with the publication of the Prophet's early revelations in the Book of Commandments, the novel side of Mormonism became more apparent. Continual altercations with the Gentiles for the time being prevented the full realization of many of these ideas. It wasn't until the early 1840s, when the Mormon prophet believed he had placed the Kingdom of God on a firmer footing in Nauvoo, that he was able to press for the further realization of his innovative religious, political, and social ideas.

Plural marriage was the most dramatic of these. Aware of its explosive potential, the Prophet initiated only his closest and most trusted associates into its theory and practice. Even then, rumors concerning "polygamy" were sufficient to further alienate disaffected followers, whose resistance to Joseph's "Kingdom" played into the hands of anti-Mormon Gentiles.

By the time of his martyrdom, Joseph's theological and social innovations had accelerated at such a pace that they threatened to spin out of control. Social cohesion, in Nauvoo, was clearly loosening. The Prophet's experimentation with "celestial marriage," if continued in the ad hoc fashion of those secretive liaisons of the last year before his death had a potential for sexual anarchy. Certainly the impact even on his most trusted followers was nothing less than traumatic. In fact, the Prophet himself seems to have had second thoughts as he launched social and sexual practices in direct conflict with the Judeo-Christian ethic and the established mores of American society. According to one of his followers, Smith had to be assured by revelation that he had not committed adultery.[29] To his detractors, particularly those within the Church who were beginning to look askance at his vigorous round of experimentation and innovation, such a revelation could be viewed as justification for sexual transgressions.[30]

It is therefore not surprising that after the death of Joseph Smith, Mormonism continued to totter in precarious balance, and began to split into numerous sects. Brigham Young, who insisted that he was the legitimate heir of Joseph, became the leader of the largest and most successful of these. Although he professed to continue in the tradition of his predecessor, Young's more conservative policies imply a recognition of the centrifugal forces that were pulling Mormonism apart during the second stage of its history. If polygamy in Utah, publicly announced in 1852, was a major aberration from the social mores of

Protestant America, its public, institutionalized, carefully regulated practice implied social controls going far beyond those recorded in the days of Joseph Smith. At the same time, its external controls contrasted sharply with the internal controls and self-repression that were the essential features of "modern," antebellum American morality.[31]

There is some evidence to suggest that in this stage of their history Mormons developed a greater degree of self-consciousness about matters sexual. An increasing defensiveness in Mormon publications seems directly related to the announcement of polygamy in 1852. Anticipating or responding to charges of sexual profligacy, the Saints began to compare their supposedly superior sexual morality to a sexually corrupt Babylon.[32] The Gentiles not surprisingly stressed the idea that polygamy provided a convenient means of sexual gratification for the man. It was partly in response to this charge that the Saints emphasized the idea that the *primary* if not the *only* purpose of marriage—monogamous or polygamous—was to have offspring. Sexual relations, said Heber C. Kimball, were not "to gratify the lusts of the flesh, but to raise up children."[33] One of sociologist James Hulett's informants reported that "his father was sexually interested in his wives only for the purposes of procreation, and the Principle could not be lived in any other way."[34]

When M. R. Werner, a biographer of Brigham Young, coined the phrase "puritan polygamy," he probably was not far off the mark.[35] It was an impression consistent with the observations of Richard Burton, the famous English traveller and linguist, who visited the City of the Saints in 1861. Burton reported that "All sensuality in the married state is strictly forbidden beyond the requisite for ensuring progeny,—the practice, in fact, of Adam and Abraham."[36] He quoted one of his informants, Belinda Pratt, as saying that according to the Old Testament, during prescribed periods of gestation and lactation, sexual relations were prohibited: ". . . should her husband come to her bed under such circumstances, he would commit a gross sin both against the laws of nature and the wise provisions of God's law, as revealed in His word; in short, he would commit an abomination."[37]

Such restrictions were not necessarily inconsistent with a point of view somewhat more liberal than that reported by Burton. As for modern scriptures, none are extant to suggest that procreation is the only justification for sexual relations. Significantly, I have been unable to discover a pronouncement to that effect by Joseph Smith. Of equal interest is the fact that Brigham Young himself did not fully share Belinda Pratt's opinion. When asked on one occasion "as to sexual connexion during pregnancy," his advice was "just as they please about that suit themselves."[38] Clearly, Young's authoritative opinion was sexually less repressive than that of Pratt. What appears to have happened is that sexual folklore, supported by the "science" of the day, was elevated to a position of quasi-doctrine, not by the authorities, but by the members.

This seemingly innocuous example may well provide a first glimpse into the incipient state of a fourth period of Mormon history, during which the Saints adapted to the forces of modernization by internalizing their sexual mores. This process cannot be imposed by ecclesiastical fiat, but is by its very nature a spontaneous response to cultural change to which the institution must adapt itself if it wishes to survive. This theory is supported by the work of anthropologist Mark Leone, in whose opinion modern Mormonism developed a high

degree of "adaptability" in its value system, which derived to a large extent
from the sensitivity of its members to the cultural environment, as well as the
ability of the Saints to influence the world around them: "Under the guise of
strict literalism exists a diffuseness, individual inventiveness, and variability
through time that contradicts usual views of the Mormon belief system."[39]
What Leone has done, essentially, is to apply sociologist Robert Bellah's con-
cept of "modern religion" to Mormonism; both have an ability to absorb and
generate change. Without this adaptability it is doubtful that Mormonism
would have been able to survive the elimination of those social, economic, and
political institutions that were virtually synonymous with its cultural identity
in the nineteenth century. These institutions rested on a theology that made
Mormonism a "religion of the word," one that had a strong ideological orienta-
tion, stressing belief over behavior. As late as 1867, this emphasis is illustrated
in the Godbeite heresy, which represented a more "modern" view by refusing
to acknowledge the Prophet's right to dictate to them "in all things temporal
and spiritual."[40] In its excommunication trial, "the High Council affirmed that
this was contrary to church doctrine," and that the defendants "might as well
ask whether [they] could honestly differ from the Almighty."[41]

The social and intellectual transformation that occurred is perhaps best illus-
trated by the statement of Church president Joseph F. Smith in 1903, during the
controversy over the seating of Reed Smoot in the United States Senate: "Our
people are given the largest possible latitude for their convictions, and if a man
rejects a message that I may give him *but is still moral* [my italics] and believes in
the main principles of the gospel and desires to continue his membership in
the church, he is permitted to remain and he is not unchurched."[42] By this time
Mormonism was well on its way to adopting the kind of self-revising value
system that Bellah describes in *Beyond Belief,* and that Leone sees as the key to
modern Mormonism.[43]

Among American Protestant churches, this transformation had largely oc-
curred in the antebellum period. Under the impact of a pluralistic denomina-
tionalism, the churches emphasized conduct more than belief, thus serving as
effective tools of modernization.[44] Mormonism now went the route of its erst-
while antagonists. Between 1880 and 1920 Mormonism experienced a profound
cultural transformation reminiscent of the shift from Puritan to Yankee, of the
shift from belief to behavior, of the shift from the total system in which religion
encompassed all facets of life and society to one in which religion became "self-
revising," able to adapt itself to social, economic, and political change.

Internalized moral norms became an essential gyroscope in this restless new
world. As among the modernizing Protestants of antebellum America, absti-
nence from alcohol and sex became the most important means of acquiring
those basic characteristics that could help them survive effectively in an indi-
vidualistic, capitalistic, competitive environment. It is therefore no accident
that in this period we perceive an intensified campaign for observance of the
Word of Wisdom and an increase in excommunications due to sexual trans-
gressions (even though excommunication in general declined in this period).[45]
As among antebellum Protestants, sin was increasingly equated with sex—if
not according to official doctrine, certainly according to a popular and extremely
pervasive folklore. It should not be surprising that as an indicator of this chang-
ing climate of opinion Joseph Smith's autobiography was expurgated.[46]

These changes were not only necessary but perhaps inevitable. As long as the Saints controlled not only the religious, but the social, economic, and political institutions of the Kingdom of God, numerous sanctions could be applied to enforce sexual morality. As in Puritan society, sexual transgressions were not only sins but crimes, punishable by the legal code.[47] And as in colonial society, the community enforced its moral values informally. This was facilitated by a relative lack of privacy reinforced by settlement patterns. Like the New England Village, the Mormon Village consisted of houses clustered in close proximity. Few families could afford separate rooms for each of its members.[48]

At the same time, in a society that was primarily agrarian, sexual pressures were somewhat minimized because most young people were able to marry early. Brigham Young encouraged young men to marry at the age of eighteen.[49] Richard Burton reports that "girls rarely remain single past sixteen."[50] Thus the need for strict sexual control of adolescents was diminished. But as society became more urbanized and industrialized, early marriage became less socially desirable. As marriages were postponed to a later age, sexual pressures understandably increased, thus necessitating greater sexual control. The need for greater control, however, coincided with the dissolution of traditional institutions. Given the premium Mormons continued to place on sexual purity, internalization of sexual mores was a necessary and inevitable response to social change. At the same time, it was precisely because of profound cultural changes that sexual morality became all the more important to the Saints. Leonard Arrington suggests that in this period the Word of Wisdom became a symbol of identification.[51] Sexual morality, I submit, may well have become an even more profound symbol of identity. Again, we are reminded that sex served an analogous function among upwardly mobile, antebellum middle-class Americans.

This social transformation began at about the same time Mormonism was experiencing an internal backlash against polygamy. Having been branded sexual outcasts, the Saints may well have felt that they had to "out-Victorian" the Victorians in order to become respectable members of American society. Quite possibly, Mormons went through a response analogous to the one Charles Rosenberg has observed among aspiring members of the lower orders of Victorian England and America, who achieved a modicum of autonomy and respectability through "repression of sexuality."[52] If the polygamy backlash contributed to the bourgeoisification of Mormon culture, a more profound and important reason, I believe, was the internalization of modern behavior patterns, a process that probably would have occurred if polygamy had never existed. In fact, development of the modern Mormon personality may have contributed as much to the ultimate demise of polygamy as did the crusade of the Gentiles. Unlike its "twin relic of barbarism"—slavery—polygamy might have died with a whimper rather than a bang had the purity crusaders only understood the internal forces at work in Mormon culture. But if the stiff resistance engendered by the crusade retarded modernization, it could not stop it. Clearly, in the first decades of the twentieth century Mormons became every bit as "modern" as their nineteenth-century antagonists.

Meanwhile, another scene has opened in the American drama. Some commentators have called its sexual ethos *post*-modern, characterized by norms that are becoming increasingly tolerant of pre- and extramarital sex, and a non-

judgmental attitude toward such practices as masturbation and even homo-sexuality. As twentieth-century American society moves away from the inner-directed norms of nineteenth-century individualism, Americans are once again following standards of the community which are ceasing to exert social control and are pointing toward "sexual liberation."

Mormons understandably see such norms as a threat to their own values, and are discovering that internalization of morals leading to expressions of self-control are increasingly difficult to achieve. Considerable evidence points to an emerging tendency of Mormons to return to traditional, externally sanctioned mechanisms of social control. In recent times these have found expression, not only in strict surveillance of sexual morality and the Word of Wisdom, but in enforced standards of grooming and dress. More than anything such standards are symbolic of sexual attitudes and behavior. For better or for worse, it is these that are increasingly determining who and what a Mormon is.[53]

NOTES

[1]In "The Mormons as a Test Case" (unpublished ms).

[2]Those familiar with the work of David Riesman will recognize that I am indebted here to his *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1950). On the concept of modernization in American history see especially Richard D. Brown, "Modernization and the Modern Personality in Early America, 1600–1865: A Sketch of a Synthesis," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 2 (Winter 1972), 201–228; "Modernization: A Victorian Climax," *American Quarterly,* 27 (December 1975), 533–548. I am fully aware of the inadequacy of ascribing substantive and ideological significance to such terms as "modern" and "traditional." Nevertheless, as analytical tools, and as a shorthand for describing change, the terms have their uses.

[3]Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritans and Sex," *New England Quarterly,* 15 (1942), 591–607; *The Puritan Family. Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Rev. ed., New York, Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 29–64; John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1970); Michael Vernon Wells, "Sex and the Law in Colonial New England," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1974).

[4]I am in obvious disagreement here with David H. Flaherty, who has argued that privacy was a central concern in colonial New England. *Privacy in Colonial New England* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1972). See the review by John J. Waters in *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd Series, 30 (Jan. 1973), 168–170.

[5]Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, "Premarital Pregnancy in America, 1640–1971: An Overview and Interpretation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 5 (Spring 1975), 538.

[6]*Ibid.*

[7]On this transformation see especially Rowland Berthoff, *An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History* (New York, Harper & Row, 1971); James A. Henretta, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700–1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis* (Lexington, Mass., D.C. Heath, 1973).

[8]Much of this literature has been conveniently collected by Ronald G. Walters in *Primers for Prudery. Sexual Advice to Victorian America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1974).

[9]Stephen Nissenbaum, "Sex, Reform, and Social Change," summarized in Walters, *Primers for Prudery,* p. 17.

[10]"Sexuality, Class and Role in 19th-Century America," *American Quarterly,* 25 (May 1973), 136.

[11]David Brion Davis, *Homicide in American Fiction, 1798–1860* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1957), pp. 147–178; Ronald G. Walters, "The Erotic South," *American Quarterly,* 25 (May 1973), 172–201.

¹²This is the theme of Marvin S. Hill, "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830–1844" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1968); and "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and New York," *Brigham Young University Studies,* 9 (Spring 1969), 351–372.

¹³The Book of Mormon, Mos. 16:3.

¹⁴Based on 84 cases prior to the death of Joseph Smith culled from Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* B.H. Roberts, ed. (6 vols., Salt Lake City, 1956 ed., Deseret Book Co.). Sexual transgression is mentioned specifically in only three cases. Out of twenty-seven disfellowshipping cases, only two involved sexual irregularities.

¹⁵See for example Smith and Hindus, pp. 544–545, 551.

¹⁶Marvin Hill makes this point in "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind," p. 361.

¹⁷Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New York, Basic Books, 1966).

¹⁸Ronald Walters makes this point in "Sexuality and Reform in 19th Century America" (unpublished paper presented at Seminar in American Civilization, Columbia University, September 19, 1974).

¹⁹"Sexuality, Class and Role," p. 143.

²⁰Joseph R. Gusfield, "Temperance, Status Control, and Mobility, 1826–1860," in David Brion Davis, ed., *Ante-Bellum Reform* (New York, Harper & Row, 1967), p. 127.

²¹*Ibid.,* pp. 130–131.

²²Doctrine and Covenants, Section 89.

²³See for example Leonard J. Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the 'Word of Wisdom'," *Brigham Young University Studies,* 1 (Winter 1959), 40–41. Significantly, references to violations of the Word of Wisdom were eliminated from the 1902 edition of the *History of the Church.*

²⁴"Sexuality, Class and Role," p. 145. H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., "The Disease of Masturbation: Values and the Concept of Disease," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* 48 (Summer 1974), 234–248.

²⁵"Sexuality, Class and Role," p. 46.

²⁶Quoted in Davis Bitton, "B.H. Roberts as Historian," *Dialogue,* 3 (Winter 1968), 31–32.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸These changes appeared almost simultaneously in the revised version of the Pearl of Great Price as edited by James E. Talmage, and in B. H. Roberts' edition of the *History of the Church,* both of which were published in 1902. See P of GP, Joseph Smith, II:28, and *History of the Church,* I, 9–11. See also Davis Bitton, "B. H. Roberts as Historian," Dialogue, III (Winter 1968), 31–33; and Dean Jessee, "The Reliability of Joseph Smith's History," forthcoming in Journal of Mormon History, III (1976).

²⁹Joseph Lee Robinson, Journal, (ms, LDS Historical Department), p. 22.

³⁰The accusations in the Nauvoo *Expositor,* for example, make this quite clear.

³¹I am taking my cue here from Leonard Arrington, who has argued that "the conditions under which Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles assumed leadership assured a hierarchical structure designed along authoritarian lines. The theophanous works of Joseph Smith were canonized into doctrine, and the doctrine and organizational structure of the Church became more dogmatic and inflexible." "The Intellectual Tradition of the Latter-day Saints," *Dialogue,* 4 (Spring 1969), 18; see also Ephraim E. Ericksen, *Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1922), pp. 35–36. My argument here is admittedly somewhat hypothetical, and needs to be sustained by further empirical research.

³²See for example *Millennial Star,* 17 (1855), 725–726; *Journal of Discourses,* 16 (1873), 176; 17 (1874), 152–153; William I. Appleby, "History of the Signs of the Times for the Benefit of the Church of Latter Day Saints" (unpublished ms, LDS Historical Department), pp. 119–120.

³³*Journal of Discourses,* 5 (1858), 91.

[34]James Edward Hulett, "The Sociological and Social Psychological Aspects of the Mormon Polygamous Family" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1939), p. 37.

[35]*Brigham Young* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1925).

[36]*City of the Saints* (London, Longmans, 1861), p. 520.

[37]*Ibid.,* p. 529.

[38]Record of Meetings, Microfilm 348, April 29, 1849 (LDS Historical Department), p. 40.

[39]Mark P. Leone, "The Economic Basis for the Evolution of Mormon Religion," in Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone, eds., *Religious Movements in Contemporary America* (Princeton, 1974), pp. 751–752.

[40]Edward W. Tullidge, "The Godbeite Movement," *Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine*, 1 (1880), 32.

[41]*Ibid.*

[42]U.S., Congress, Senate, *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protest Against the Right Hon. Reed Smoot, A Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat* (4 vols.; Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904–1907), I, 97–98.

[43]Robert Bellah, *Beyond Belief* (New York, Harper & Row, 1970).

[44]See especially Sidney E. Mead, "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America," in *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York, Harper & Row, 1963), 103–133.

[45]See for example the Minutes of the St. George Stake High Council, 1862–, as reported in Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints* (Chicago, 1966), pp. 346–348.

[46]Bitton, "B.H. Roberts as Historian," pp. 31–32.

[47]This is borne out by an examination of both the laws of the State of Deseret and those of the Territorial Legislature. According to the laws of the Kingdom of God, adultery was punishable by death, though it is uncertain whether or not this was enforced. Gustive O. Larson suggests the possibility of enforcement in "The Mormon Reformation," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 26 (1958), 60–63. It is clear, however, that the standards of the community condoned and perhaps encouraged extra-legal action. A famous case that was clearly precedental was *The United States v. Howard Egan*, in October, 1851. Egan had tracked down and killed the seducer of his wife, James Monroe. In his plea for the defense George A. Smith argued that by the standards of the community Egan had no choice but to kill Monroe. Egan was acquitted. See *Journal of Discourses*, 1 (1854), 95–103.

[48]See Lowry Nelson, *The Mormon Village: A Pattern and Technique of Land Settlement* (Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1952).

[49]*Journal of Discourses*, 12 (1869), 194.

[50]*City of the Saints*, p. 518.

[51]Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the 'Word of Wisdom'," p. 47.

[52]"Sexuality, Class and Role," p. 149.

[53]Harold T. Christensen and Kenneth L. Cannon have provided striking evidence for a shift towards conservatism in "The Fundamentalist Emphasis in Contemporary Mormonism: A 1935–1973 Trend Analysis of Brigham Young University Student Responses" (unpublished ms).